



Memo

To: City of Santa Cruz Subcommittee on the Downtown Branch Library
From: Susan Nemitz, Library Director *Smy*
cc: Amanda Rotella
Date: December 15, 2019
Re: Renovation Cost Assessment of the Downtown Branch of the Santa Cruz Public Libraries

I would like to acknowledge the hard work and talent of Jayson Architects. They have done a thorough job outlining the current building's deficiencies, the Library's needs and the goals of the Santa Cruz community as well as formulating an approach to remodeling the Downtown Branch within the \$27 million budget by reducing the physical size of the facility.

From my perspective, the Jayson Architects' proposal presents five major concerns:

1. **It maintains an inadequate infrastructure.** The proposal fails to meet the basic infrastructure needs for elevators, public restrooms and perimeter control. A single elevator is inadequate to serve the accessibility needs of our patrons as well as serve the staff in restocking returns for the entire adult collection. Five single occupancy restrooms will not serve the nearly 1,000 people a day we have entering the building. Large, unprogrammed spaces surrounding the building will exacerbate the negative effects of loitering and camping.
2. **It reduces access to collections system wide.** A permanent reduction to the collection will reduce access to adult materials at all ten branches by about 12% overall. The Downtown branch serves as the warehouse for many items that patrons put on hold for delivery to their local branch. Materials such as genealogical resources, local history and the Sentinel Newspaper Archive will be downsized.
3. **It fails to serve teens and provide other high demand services.** The Downtown Branch has meager space and collections for teens. The proposal also limits the adult literacy

services, genealogy and local history research area, technology literacy programs and quiet study spaces.

4. **It provides no services to the Downtown patrons for the two years of construction.** The loss of key library services such as public bathrooms, weather shelter, computing/Wi-Fi/printing, and free meeting and study spaces will have a profound impact on some of our most vulnerable patrons. Taking the entire Downtown Branch collection offline for this time period will make 40% of the system's collection unavailable for the entire Santa Cruz County community. At a minimum, the Library will be required to find office space for fifteen employees and warehouse space for the collection. These costs are not included in the analysis and will have to be paid by the project budget.
5. **It limits the long-term ability to expand or add green features.** Because the proposal fails to upgrade the City water and electrical hookups, the Library will not be able to expand square footage or add green features like solar panels in the future without significant expense.

This building needs to last a generation. The report says: *"the base, while achieving significant programmatic and layout improvements, is of low quality and excludes many building elements that would be typical of a modern library."* It outlines 14 alternates at an additional cost of approximately \$5 million and goes on to say *"even with these additional features, the building is only improved to a low-medium quality facility and will lack many of the amenities the public has come to expect in a modern library."*

To guarantee that best use of taxpayer funds, I support the proposal to evaluate the costs and benefits of incorporating the library into a mixed use facility.