



## MEMORANDUM

**Date:** 2/7/2018  
**To:** Siting Meeting #3 attendees  
**From:** Nick Szegda – Assistant Director of Library Services  
**Re:** Main Library Siting FAQs

### Why do we need a new library?

Both of our existing library buildings are out of date and do not meet current or future user needs. We asked library users and the community what they wanted to see in an updated library, and they told us that it should be a center for lifelong learning, a hub for technology and a gathering place for collaboration, connection and growth. These added demands on public library space require all new facilities.

### Why now?

The idea of creating new library facilities grew out of community input received during a Departmental Review of the Library in 2015 and the Strategic Planning process in 2016. In June of 2017, Mr. John Arrillaga came forward with a generous offer: If the City paid the first \$20 million of construction costs for a new Main Library, he would pay the rest. On the basis of public feedback, the City Council asked staff to plan new facilities for both the Main Library and the Belle Haven branch.

### What about the branch? Shouldn't it be updated first?

Planning for the new branch library is proceeding along the same track as taken by the new Main Library, through conducting a Belle Haven Neighborhood Library Needs Assessment and forming a Belle Haven Neighborhood Library Advisory Committee. The Belle Haven Branch Library is located inside the Belle Haven Elementary School; since the City does not own the school grounds, a new location must be found. In the meantime, the City Council approved funds both for updates to the existing facility and its collections, and an increase in open hours and staffing. A facility and collection update was completed in January 2018, and expanded branch hours are in effect.

### How do we know what kind of facility we need? Where will the new libraries be located?

Library staff sought community input during the development of the Library Strategic Plan and the Library Space Needs Assessment and is currently doing the same regarding the siting and uses of the Main Library building. Future meetings will be held to gather input from neighborhood residents for Belle Haven Library services and uses. Council also funded a community based needs assessment for the Belle Haven branch. That process is underway.

### **Are there plans to eliminate child care?**

No. The child care provided by MCC fulfills a community need. There are no plans to eliminate child care.

### **Are there plans to relocate the child care provided by MCC off site – away from the Burgess Campus?**

No. Relocating the childcare services provided by MCC away from the Burgess Campus does not make sense and has not been considered.

### **Will there be any impacts on MCC or the Library during construction?**

There could be some construction impacts for MCC if the Laurel site for a new library is chosen because of its proximity to MCC. If that site were chosen, staff would work to mitigate those impacts so that MCC could continue normal operations. If the Alma site were chosen there would be impacts to library services and a cost associated with running a temporary facility during the construction period. Staff estimates that the cost of running a temporary library facility is an additional \$1-\$2 million per year.

### **How much will it cost?**

Staff estimates that in addition to the \$20 million needed to trigger the Arrillaga donation, there could be up to an additional \$10 million in soft costs paid by the City associated with a new Main Library. These costs would be for preparing the building site, relocating/reconstructing utilities, and outfitting the new facility with shelving and furniture. It is anticipated that constructing a new Main Library could cost as much as \$60 million. A cost estimate for a new Belle Haven Library has not yet been determined.

### **How will the City's share of the construction costs be funded?**

The City's Finance and Audit Committee recommended several options: using reserves and paying back the funds with an increase in transient occupancy taxes or utility users taxes; taking out a loan to fund the costs; placing a bond measure for the costs before the voters, or a combination of these.

### **Shouldn't we pay for other City improvements before we build a new library?**

Mr. Arrillaga's gift enables the City to significantly leverage the money it spends toward a new Main Library facility; it is not transferable to other City projects. It also saves money by allowing the construction to begin sooner, as building costs increase over time.

### **Why don't you just remodel?**

The Main Library was originally constructed in 1957, and expanded and remodeled in 1967, 1991, and 2012. The large scale renovations needed under the current plan would cost nearly as much as a new facility.

### **What about the books?**

There are no plans to reduce the size of the Main Library's current collection; on the contrary, a new building will have more space for reading and sharing stories. A new library in Belle Haven will allow for an increase in the size of the collection housed there now.

### **What's the timeline for the Main Library project?**

The Library's Needs Assessment and Space Needs Analysis have been completed. The siting and uses input process is wrapping up, and is scheduled to be presented to Council in March 2018. If approved, schematic design would follow, and funding would need to be secured. A full environmental review process that began in September 2018 would be completed in September 2019. Council would need to approve the project before a building permit could be issued. Using this timeline, construction could begin in February of 2020 and be completed in February of 2022.

### **Why include the Council Chambers in the project?**

The current Council Chamber building was constructed in the 1950's. Because of its dated design, it is currently used only a few nights a week for Council or Commission meetings. Integrating a large, flexible meeting room space into the Library's design would allow for Council meetings at night and Library or community uses during the day and on the weekends. It would also create more open space and allow for improvements to the park on the Burgess Campus.

### **What about housing?**

Combining housing with the library would have significant impacts to the project's timeline and cost. Housing remains a possible use for a repurposed main library building (if the Laurel site is chosen) or as an additional phase of construction on the Alma site.

### **How can I get involved?**

Join us and share your thoughts. Two public meetings to gather input on the new main library's siting and uses have been held. The City has formed a Belle Haven Neighborhood Library Advisory Committee to assist with the process of building a new branch library, and the neighborhood library assessment is under way. Check the project page for other ways to give feedback and get involved:  
<https://www.menlopark.org/Library-system-improvements>