



Agenda Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Agenda Item: \_\_\_\_\_

## STAFF REPORT

**Date:** January 12, 2016  
**To:** Bryan Montgomery, City Manager  
**From:** Nancy Marquez, Assistant to the City Manager

Approved and Forwarded to City Council:

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Bryan H. Montgomery, City Manager

**SUBJECT: Resolution directing City Staff to prepare all the necessary documents to place a Ballot Measure for voter consideration at the June 7, 2016 Election that would fund the construction of a new Oakley Library and Learning Center in the Downtown.**

### **Background and Analysis**

In 1999 Oakley's Community Library moved to the Freedom High School, in what was supposed to be a temporary five-year arrangement. Seventeen years later, the Library is still located at Freedom High School and is very limited in all regards. Currently, the library occupies about 3,000 square feet and can, at times, access an additional 3,000 square feet of the School's Library space for programming. The collection, technology, space, parking, and visibility are all lacking at this location.

Last year the Library served 59,650 visitors (an average of 27 visitors per hour); saw 89,640 items borrowed and provided 7,698 of computer logins by patrons across the total of eight computer terminals. The Library is currently open 41 hours a week.

### ***The Evaluation Process to Develop a Recommendation:***

A number of graduates of the 2014 Leadership Academy voluntarily took on the project of assessing the feasibility of a stand-alone library. This group was further joined by a number of concerned citizens who too wanted to lend their time, support, and energy to the effort. Since February of 2015, the group has met on at least a bi-monthly basis to evaluate community support for a parcel tax which would allow for the construction and operation of a new stand-alone Library and Learning Center in downtown Oakley.

Utilizing the renderings prepared by Noll & Tamm Architects and made possible through the City Council's allocation of one-time monies, the Feasibility Group set off to engage the community. Over 100 face-to-face conversations were held with community members with the purpose of gaining an understanding of the perception of library services, programs that they would like to be available, as well as, the tolerance threshold for a property assessment. These conversations

were held with attendees of the Book It Run, Cityhood Celebration, as well as other community members accessible and willing to offer their candid opinions (friends, neighbors, etc.). The information learned later informed the formal survey that followed.

These conversations with the community were positive. In brief, residents communicated that they would be willing to pay something for a new facility that prioritized children's story time, youth programs, after school/tutoring programs, followed by access to books and the Internet.

Meanwhile, the Feasibility Group toured the Lafayette and Walnut Creek libraries for its own research and held follow-up meetings with key individuals who had been instrumental in the realization of these and other community libraries. Most importantly, at the suggestion of the Contra Costa Library, the Feasibility Group secured a commitment and assistance of pro-bono consulting by *Every Library*, a national political action committee with a superb record of guiding citizen committees to run successful library campaigns.

Per *Every Library's* recommendation, even more effort was made to survey the community and to differentiate between "library users" and "non-library users." Computer stations were made available at the Heart of Oakley Festival and at the Harvest Festival for residents to complete an online survey. Group members also walked neighborhoods to get to the ultimate goal of at least 360 surveys as a sample size. Approximately half of the surveys were completed at events vs door-to-door. In total, 380 residents participated and here are the key learnings:

- 89% of surveyed residents believe there is a need for a new Library & Learning Center
- 91% of users and non-users think a new library is a good investment for Oakley
- 89% of those surveyed agree the Library should be in the Downtown area
- The desired services at a new library included:
  - Availability of computers and Wi-Fi
  - Small group/meeting rooms
  - Community meeting areas
  - Dedicated teens and children's areas
  - Local art displays
  - Tech center/computer labs

Next, the Feasibility Group proceeded to conduct numerous conversations with key stakeholders in the community to hear their thoughts, suggestions and concerns. Again, the conversations were very optimistic and supportive of pursuing this endeavor. The only concerns expressed spoke to: 1) the challenge of securing the necessary votes to pass the ballot measure; 2) a fiscally

responsible ballot amount; and, 3) the prevalent misconceptions regarding the services offered by libraries today which far exceed just a collection of books.

It is important to note that this positive feedback were the results of no prior information or persuasive arguments, just simply a request for honest feedback on their opinion with regards to a library and learning center in our community.

***Current Library is Inadequate:***

In addition to the more obvious anecdotes shared by residents that the Oakley Library is too small and has not kept pace with the growing community, the many scenarios of the inconveniences/challenges presented by the Library currently sharing space with a high school presents the following problems:

- There are no community meeting rooms
- There is only one single outlet for people to plug in laptops, I-pads, etc.
- The shelf space is already exhausted, meaning less books and movies (limiting the collection, but also the opportunity to accept even newer “floating” items shared across all libraries)
- Any family programming (which is highly requested) is limited to afterschool hours
- There are no quiet study/work spaces
- The parking is inadequate

Most importantly, the current location prolongs what was supposed to be a temporary solution that presents equal challenges to the services available to the students of the High School, as well as to the broader community. The High School needs the space currently occupied by the Oakley Library.

***The Proposal:***

According to the California State Library 2007 “Public Library Needs by Library Jurisdiction” report, Oakley’s library would be best-suited at 20,000 square feet to meet the current and future demands.

With regards to a site, the community has clearly indicated a preference for the Library to be in the Downtown. In 2012, the Friends of the Oakley Library conducted an analysis of three potential sites for a stand-alone library -- ultimately opting for the renovation of the former CentroMart Building because of the reduced costs and its Downtown location. Similarly, in the 2013 Town Hall meeting conducted by the Contra Costa County Library System the desire for a stand-alone library with a better location/building in the heart of the community was emphasized by local residents.

The current proposal, depicted in the attached renderings establishes a Library & Learning Center in the Downtown, more specifically, within the Civic Center Plaza just east of City Hall and just south of the Civic Center Park.

Being fully cognizant of the need to present the most cost-effective alternative, this site presents no associated land acquisition costs, as well as cost savings stemming from the existing utility connections and paid development fees.

***The cost:***

Noll & Tam Architects, who prepared the preliminary renderings for the Downtown Library & Learning Center, believe the 20,000 square foot, two-story facility will cost about \$12 million to design, construct, and mostly furnish. To obtain the funds necessary for the project, a parcel tax is needed of approximately \$7.75 per month for each parcel within the City of Oakley. A summary of the preliminary financing plan is attached.

**Fiscal Impact**

The cost to hold the election as part of the June Primary Election is estimated to cost about \$40,000. The City's participation in the educational outreach materials and efforts related to the ballot measure could cost up to \$10,000.

**Recommendation**

Staff recommends that the City Council adopt the resolution directing City Staff to prepare all the necessary documents to place a ballot measure for voter consideration at the June 7, 2016 election that would fund a new Oakley Library & Learning Center in the Downtown. (These documents would come back to the City Council final consideration and action).

**Attachments**

1. Conceptual Renderings
2. Resolution
3. Preliminary Cost Estimates
4. Survey Executive Summary