



City of Arts & Innovation

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City of Riverside Plans to Open New Main Library in 2020 Following Approval

Vote by the City Council ends nearly a decade of work to replace the existing downtown structure

RIVERSIDE, Calif. – Riverside residents will be able to enjoy a new, \$39.7 million, state of the art Main Library by 2020 that includes an outdoor arcade on the ground level that will serve as an attractive public gathering space, following approval of the project by the Riverside City Council.

Riverside is moving its Main Library from its existing location on Mission Inn Avenue between Lemon and Orange streets downtown to a new location at 3911 University Avenue, just a few blocks away. The new, three-story building will front along Mission Inn Avenue and make a dramatic statement about the city's commitment to 21st century learning and innovation.

“Modern day libraries not only spur a love of reading and provide all of our children with access to the internet, but they also spur interest in technology and the crafts, and provide job seekers and entrepreneurs with resources for success,” Mayor Rusty Bailey said. “They offer valuable public spaces for community building and life-long learning”.

The 42,329-square-foot Main Library will be designed for flexibility, allowing it to change with ease alongside future innovations and service needs. It will be elevated off the ground and feature a walkable arcade area underneath that will connect the library to surrounding landmarks and attractions like the Fox Theater, Riverside Food Lab, Coil School for the Arts and White Park.

The arcade under the two-story library building will create an open-air first floor that can be used for author signings, youth performances, farmers markets, concerts and family festivals. The library will include meeting rooms for community groups to gather and work together.

The Main Library is expected to cost \$39,692,600, creating a per-square-foot cost of about \$938. That per-square foot cost is lower than nearly all of the 17 library projects studied for comparison purposes, with most of the comparable library projects costing at least \$1,000 per square foot.

The site for the new Main Library once housed a bus station, which has relocated off site. The property is large enough to accommodate the Main Library and a new, multi-story, mixed-use development that

could include residential, commercial and retail uses. The city's Community and Economic Development Department will issue a request for proposals in the coming months for that project.

"This project is going to improve the quality of life for Riverside residents, while simultaneously setting the stage for a major economic development project," Mayor Pro Tem Jim Perry said. "The fact that we are accomplishing this on the site of an old bus station that frequently generated complaints from nearby residents is a huge bonus."

Library staff conducted community meetings over the summer to introduce Johnson Favaro Architects and library consultant Linda Demmers to the community and get feedback on what the community would like to see in terms of space, services and programs.

People who attended the meeting said they wanted a library that will provide excellent services to the community and extensive community meeting spaces while making a bold architectural statement and providing for future library needs.

Other respondents said they wanted a building that would connect with existing developments, be a catalyst for economic development on surrounding properties, centralize the city archives and bring more activity to nearby White Park.

"The new Main Library will offer 21st Century resources and services to cultivate and support the community's educational and personal goals," Library Director Tonya Kennon said. "3D printers, a makerspace and business incubator, and the lending of "things", such as toys and tools, will be offered alongside traditional print materials".

City staff is expected to return in three months to discuss creating a centralized, 4,000-square-foot city archive within the Main Library arcade area at a cost of \$3.6 million. Staff found that building the archive alone and apart from the library would cost about \$7 million.

The existing Main Library site on Mission Inn Avenue is scheduled to be converted, once the library is relocated, to the new Cheech Marin Center for Chicano Art, Culture and Industry. That world-class art museum and cultural center also is expected to open in 2020.