

# Agenda Report

January 22, 2024

**TO:** Honorable Mayor and City Council

**FROM:** Department of Public Works  
Department of Libraries and Information Services

**SUBJECT: CENTRAL LIBRARY EARTHQUAKE RETROFIT & RENOVATION  
PROJECT - PROGRAMMING AND SCHEMATIC DESIGN UPDATE**

**RECOMMENDATION:**

This is an informational item.

**BACKGROUND:**

Constructed in 1927, the Pasadena Central Library, designed by Myron Hunt and H.C. Chambers, was the first building completed in Pasadena's Civic Center Plan. Listed on the National Register of Historic Landmarks, the Civic Center consists of Central Library, City Hall, and the Civic Auditorium. Central Library is comprised of two stories above grade and a basement story below grade and is approximately 120,000 square feet in area.

As mentioned in prior staff reports, a preliminary seismic evaluation of the library's structural system was completed in April 2021 indicating that the building is an unreinforced masonry (URM) structure and not in compliance with Pasadena Municipal Code. Based on this evaluation, the building was determined to be unsafe for its occupants in the event of an earthquake and prone to collapse. As such, on May 3, 2021, City officials were forced to close the Central Library acting in the best interest of the public and its employees.

On February 6, 2023, City Council authorized the City Manager to enter into a contract with Gruen Associates as the best-qualified design team to prepare environmental documents and construction drawings for the seismic retrofit and building repairs to the Central Library. From February to August 2023, the Gruen Associates design team vetted multiple retrofit alternatives with the Mayor's appointed Technical Oversight Committee (TOC) and the City's structural peer review advisory team comprised of Nabih Youssef and Associates (NYA) and Krakower & Associates. The number of alternatives was narrowed to three based on the evaluation criteria set forth by the project's established goals and objectives. The final three approaches were noted as Baseline, Concrete Shear Walls, and Base Isolation.

On August 21, 2023, the three approaches were presented to City Council. After deliberation, City Council concurred with staff's recommendation and directed the design team to proceed with Concrete Shear Wall structural retrofit approach. In addition to the three viable approaches, several other retrofit schemes were considered and deemed inadequate to meet minimum code requirements and/or the project's design criteria by the project team and the Mayor's Technical Oversight Committee (TOC). Subsequently, members from the public requested for City team to further study another approach, the Center Core Method. To assure every possible option has been considered, the City team asked the City's Independent Structural Peer Reviewer, Nabih Youssef Associates (NYA) to evaluate the method. NYA's findings were shared with the TOC on January 11, 2024 and TOC concurred with the City team that the Center Core Method is not applicable to the Central Library project and is unable to meet several of the project's key goals.

For this report, staff will provide City Council with an update on the library programming, schematic design, and the on-going community outreach efforts as it pertains to defining the library's future programming. Discussion regarding project funding is expected to take place at a later meeting in April 2024. Staff initially planned on discussing funding with City Council last October, but it was necessary to gather additional public input before discussing funding options.

### **LIBRARY PROGRAMMING UPDATE:**

The Central Library has been a home to a wide variety of programs and services for all Pasadena residents. Annually, 30,000 – 40,000 community members attended story times, author visits, cultural events, Art Night, recitals, plays, and many other programs. In the year prior to the COVID-19 pandemic closure, the library hosted 232 group events and 876 community and organization meetings. In addition, the library is home to the Office of the Young Child which leads the implementation of the City's Early Child Development Policy.

In February 2023, the project's Community Programming Committee appointed by the City Manager issued its "Recommendations for Central Library Programming" report (Attachment A). As named in the report, members of the committee include former library directors, members from the Library Commission, Friends of Pasadena Public Library, Pasadena Heritage, Pasadena Senior Center, Union Station, Pasadena Community Job Center, Pasadena Community Foundation, and the media.

### **REPORT RECOMMENDATIONS**

The report's key recommendations are as follows:

- Maintain historic character of the building;
- Design spaces for the 21<sup>st</sup> century;
- Make improvements to accessibility;
- Remain true to the mission of the library;

- Conduct program workshops/interviews with library staff;
- Consider new and innovative ways of offering service;
- Respond to Community needs; and
- Reach out to the Community to further identify needs.

As part of the report, the Committee also recommended partnering with community organizations to avoid duplication of services and to balance spaces dedicated to a singular purpose with flexible spaces that can accommodate multiple functions.

The project team has incorporated elements of these recommendations into the schematic design such as conducting on-going outreach efforts to engage directly with the community and ask what they are looking for in the future library; interviewing library staff on improving functionality and services and hosting workshops to discuss the evolving iterations of the schematic design; and maintaining the historic integrity of the building. Results of the feedback received from the community are summarized in the Community Outreach section of this report.

Based on the community's desired programming and coordination with Library staff regarding functionality, Gruen's design team has developed a schematic design illustrating the proposed new layout for Central Library. The shear wall structural retrofit approach approved by City Council provides opportunities to incorporate identified programming and functionality improvements.

### **SCHEMATIC DESIGN UPDATE:**

The development of the schematic design of the project is driven by the scope of work needed to retrofit the building and meet the life safety and accessibility code requirements of this project. In addition, the library has numerous historic character-defining features that the design is tasked with preserving. The required retrofit of the building also presents opportunities throughout the building to make functional improvements and where possible also restore modified spaces to the original design intent envisioned by the original architect, Myron Hunt.

One key objective of the schematic design is to maximize the flexible use of each space to allow the library to accommodate a variety of current and future programs and services. Given the need to remove the added book stacks in order to retrofit the building's structural walls supporting the stacks, the space has been redesigned to provide the required number of book shelves in a manner that provides more open floor space for programming use, returns the space to its original grandeur and reveals the original skylights of the building that had been blocked by the stacks. Named the Circulation Hall, it is a high-volume space that replaces the low-ceilinged book stack area. The Circulation Hall has two levels of mezzanines above the main floor ringed with built-in book stacks and a large opening in the floor which opens to the Lower Level (basement level) of book stacks. Sunlight from the existing skylights above provides natural light throughout, including down to the Lower Level.

Another example of providing increased flexibility in the use of space while improving operational services of the library is the simple move of the circulation desk from the Great Hall of the Library to the Circulation Hall. Doing so provides unimpeded space for community events in the Great Hall and makes both entrances of the library readily visible for staff working at the circulation desk. By removing the stacks, a large existing opening is revealed between the two halls, thereby creating a strong connection between the two high-volume spaces of the Great Hall and Circulation Hall.

Leveraging the need to remove the Lower Level slab to access the footings as a part of the earthquake repairs, the slab in the Lower Level will be placed back in at a constant elevation, providing access to all portions of the Lower Level and increasing the headroom clearances in the spaces, thereby maximizing the ability to utilize the space for a variety of staff and program functions.

Additional interior re-designs include accessible restrooms and elevators to access all areas of all floors of the library. Along the exterior of the building, key updates include addition of accessible pathways to the building's south and north entrances, as well as an outdoor learning space off of the Children's Reading Room.

Attachment B shows proposed floor plans and renderings of the Central Library's schematic design.

During the schematic design process, staff has presented updates to the following commissions:

- November 7, 2023 – Historic Preservation Commission
- November 14, 2023 – Design Commission
- November 15, 2023 – Library Commission

### **COMMUNITY OUTREACH EFFORTS:**

Adhering to the Programming Committee's recommendation, Gruen Associates and City staff conducted the following six outreach events from May to December 2023 with the intention of gathering information on the community's desires for programming at Central Library:

- May 24, 2023 – Community Meeting at Jefferson Auditorium – Programming Outreach
- July 8, 2023 – Victory Park Farmers Market Pop-up Booth – Programming Outreach
- July 15, 2023 – Colorado Street Bridge Heritage Party Community Booth – Programming Outreach and Project Information Update
- August 1, 2023 – National Night Out Booth at Police Headquarters – Programming Outreach and Project Information Update
- September 21, 2023 – Community Meeting at Robinson Park Recreation Center – Programming Outreach and Project Information Update

- December 13, 2023 – Community Meeting at Pasadena High School –Schematic Design Presentation, Programming Outreach and Project Information Update

Two more community meetings are to be scheduled in early 2024 at La Pintoresca Teen Center and Villa Parke Auditorium.

In addition to hosting outreach meetings, a public survey was posted on the City's project webpage on December 13, 2023 soliciting feedback on programming and services desired at the Central Library. To date, the survey has received 321 responses. Currently, no end date has been identified for the survey as the City would like to continue and receive input from the community as each milestone is reached towards the reopening of Central Library. Attachment C shows the results of the Pasadena Central Library Survey as of January 16, 2024.

### COMMUNITY FEEDBACK RECEIVED

Throughout the outreach process, many of the respondents indicated they had a long-standing personal history with the library. The in-person interactions at the planned community events are consistent with the online survey responses.

In general, the community has asked for the following:

- Retain historic character of the building;
- Create a welcoming space for the community to gather;
- Special events are very important;
- Upgrade building technology including access to computers;
- Improve the restroom facilities; and
- Retain the ability to browse through the book stacks.

More specifically, respondents requested the following programming spaces be incorporated into the final design:

- Innovation Lab (Maker's Space);
- Multipurpose areas for community gathering events;
- Small group study and tutoring rooms;
- Art exhibition rooms;
- Music practice studio;
- Copy Center with printers and copiers;
- Coffee cart in outdoor courtyard;
- Community/non-profit meeting rooms;
- Gift shop/bookstore; and
- Outdoor play area

Based on the community's desires for the listed programming and coordination with Library staff regarding functionality, the schematic design has continued to evolve and

accommodate as many of the community feedback and programming recommendations as possible.

### **NEXT STEPS:**

Pursuant to previous City Council direction, the design team will continue with development of environmental documentation and construction documents. As design moves forward, staff will provide updates to City Council at project milestones.

The following is the projected timeline for completion of the project:

### **PROJECT TIMELINE**

- March 2024 – Complete 60% (Design Development) Plans and Cost Estimate
- April 2024 – Design & Cost Estimate Update to City Council
- July 2024 – Council Decision for Potential November 2024 Bond Measure
- Spring 2025 – Complete 100% (Construction Document) Plans, Cost Estimate and Plan Check
- Summer 2025 - Bid and Construction Contract Award (pending funding)
- Fall 2028 – Anticipated Building Re-opening

### **ENVIRONMENTAL ANALYSIS:**

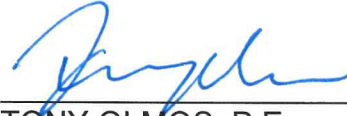
This step in the process is not subject to the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) in accordance with Section 21065 of CEQA and State CEQA Guidelines Sections 15060 (c)(2), 15060 (c)(3), and 15378. The specific design and subsequent improvements to Central Library will be subject to appropriate project-level environmental review at the time each is brought forward for first discretionary action.



**FISCAL IMPACT:**

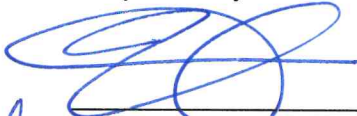
To date, the City has secured \$9 million from the State to fully fund the project's design and environmental documentation phase. Currently the construction phase of the project is unfunded. The City continues to seek funding opportunities from State, federal, non-profit, and private sources to support the construction of the project. This may include applying for grants, utilization of CIP funds, earmarking additional general funds, seeking out community stakeholders and non-profit organizations, and engaging partnerships with our current library organizations vested in historic and architectural preservation of the Central Library - all of which can offset the final cost estimate. The project's aggressive design timeline provides the City the option to consider voter-approved financing should it be necessary to close the gap and fully fund a project of this magnitude.

Respectfully submitted,



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Attachment A – Pasadena Central Library Community Programming Committee Report  
Attachment B – Schematic Design Drawings and Renderings  
Attachment C – Pasadena Central Library Programming Survey: Results through  
1/16/2024