



# Agenda Report

July 8, 2024

**TO:** Honorable Mayor and City Council  
**FROM:** Department of Libraries and Information Services  
**SUBJECT: CENTRAL LIBRARY PROJECT UPDATE: COMMUNITY AND ECONOMIC IMPACTS OF CONTINUED CENTRAL LIBRARY CLOSURE**

## **RECOMMENDATION:**

The following report is for information only. No City Council action is requested at this time.

## **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:**

As follow-up to the presentation on the Central Library Earthquake Retrofit and Building Repairs Project to City Council on June 10, 2024, this report provides additional information on topics discussed by Council Members during the meeting. The information provided in this report includes (1) a summary of the work of the Pasadena Central Library Programming Committee, highlighting the need for the Central Library and its potential to serve the community while meeting the challenges of the twenty-first century, (2) a summary of the service impacts associated with the continued closure of Central Library and including loss of programming, access and services, and (3) a summary of the economic costs of the continued closure of Central Library including costs of maintaining status quo of a vacant Central Library and the range of costs in securing replacement space. With the centennial of Central Library approaching in 2027, the City is poised for essential earthquake retrofitting, building repairs, and safety enhancements vital for re-opening this historic landmark and all restoration of its important services.

The Central Library is not just a building. It is a critical resource to the community for access to information, resources, programming and services at no cost to the community. As intended by its founders almost 100 years ago, Central Library has served as the cornerstone of a library system, offering a comprehensive collection of resources and services that surpass those available at branch libraries. It also acts as the main repository for specialized and rare materials, ensuring that researchers,

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students, and the general public have access to a wide range of information. The Central Library is equipped with advanced technological resources, extensive digital archives, and specialized research tools that branch libraries may lack. Additionally, it hosts large-scale programs, workshops, and cultural events, serving as a hub for community engagement and educational initiatives on a broader scale. The expertise of its staff, including subject matter specialists and archivists, provides invaluable support for in-depth research and specialized inquiries. Overall, the Central Library's extensive resources, advanced facilities, and broad-reaching programs make it an indispensable institution within the library system, ensuring that comprehensive information and services are accessible to the entire community. Without access to the Central Library, the City has already seen a drastic reduction in services provided to the community.

### **BACKGROUND:**

Designed by Myron Hunt in 1924 and opened in 1927, Pasadena's Central Library was the first building completed in Pasadena's historic Civic Center Plan. It is currently listed on the National Register of Historic Places. Since it first opened, Central Library has provided free access to information for all community members. Over its nearly 100-year history, Central Library has evolved from a model of service focused on collections of books and other materials, to playing an even more active role as an important community hub where people come to learn, share ideas, and connect to one another.

Through the years, the Pasadena community has come to rely on the abundance of trusted services provided by Central Library as set forth in detail in the separate section below. In the year prior to its closure, Central Library welcomed an average of 1,000 daily visitors and hosted 232 events and 876 community and organization meetings. In recent years, an average of 30,000-40,000 community members attended story times, author visits, cultural events, recitals, plays and many other programs. What is not easily captured in the numbers is the sometimes life-changing impact the library staff and available resources has on individual lives as a safe space for many of Pasadena's residents.

People often overlook the diverse and essential services the Central Library provided to the community beyond just being a repository for books. Whether it be accessing information or the internet, the Central Library provided support for job seekers and entrepreneurs. It was a resource for job hunting, including resume-building workshops, job search assistance, and access to job listings. It also supported small business owners and entrepreneurs with information on starting a business, market research databases, and networking opportunities.

The Central Library provided social services. It collaborated with other City Departments and local organizations to provide social services such as health, legal aid, housing assistance, and mental health support. This made critical services more accessible to the community. The Central Library on a daily basis also provided for cultural enrichment. It hosted a variety of cultural events, such as author readings, art exhibits,

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film screenings, and music performances. These events enriched the cultural fabric of the community and provided entertainment and educational opportunities.

Most importantly, the Central Library provided for future generations through youth and family programs and services. The Central Library offered a range of services for children and families, including storytimes, homework help, summer reading programs, and activities that encouraged early literacy and educational development. Programs enabled residents for success; an investment for the community that provided for a healthy city in return.

Overall, the Central Library played a crucial role in enhancing the quality of life for residents by providing a wide array of services that supported education, economic development, social inclusion, and cultural enrichment.

In May 2021, the City was forced to close Central Library when a structural assessment confirmed that its unreinforced masonry construction makes the building unsafe to occupy. Although Central Library has beaten the odds through past earthquakes, that speaks to good fortune, not the soundness of the building from future seismic activity. Critical assessments of the structure, including independent geotechnical and material testing, were conducted to confirm seismic issues and to determine the most cost-effective way forward. In February 2023, the City Council selected an architectural design team led by Gruen Associates and including an historic preservation consultant to move forward with the design phase of the earthquake retrofit and building repairs project. In August 2023, City Council approved staff's recommendation to use the concrete shear wall earthquake retrofit approach and to proceed with the development of the schematic design of the project. In June 2024, the City Council approved a recommended scope of work for the project that will lift the red-tag so the Library can open its doors to the community again; provide functional enhancements to address community needs; flexibility for the future; and replacement of outdated technology and critical buildings systems that are near the end of their useful life. The City is committed to re-opening the doors of Pasadena's Central Library as a safe, historic, and functional space for all. This project will ensure the library remains a cornerstone in the community.

### **PROGRAMMING:**

A continued role for the Central Library in the 21<sup>st</sup> century and how that role might change was the first issue tackled. The Library's closure provided an opportunity to begin a community-driven examination and reimagining of how the treasured Central Library could better serve the community and meet the challenges of the twenty-first century. The work of the Pasadena Central Library Committee was presented to the City Council on January 22, 2024, and was applied to the recommended scope of work the City Council approved on June 10, 2024.

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The Pasadena Central Library Community Programming Committee was established with eleven members appointed by then Interim City Manager Cynthia Kurtz. Six meetings were held over the course of four months from September to December 2022. The Committee was comprised of representatives from non-profits, former library commissioners, retired librarians, Pasadena Public Works staff, senior Pasadena Library staff, and Tim McDonald, then Acting Director of Libraries and Information Services. The meetings were facilitated by Cindy Cleary, retired Director of the City of Glendale's Library, Arts & Culture Department. Ms. Cleary, who is a Pasadena resident, was selected because of her wide-ranging background in library service and experience leading major renovations of the downtown Glendale Central Library and the Brand Library and Art Center.

The mission of the Pasadena Central Library Community Programming Committee was to recommend how Central Library spaces could be reimagined to draw more people into the building and continue to serve as a primary gathering space for community, artistic, and theatrical events, while remaining the central building in the library system. The intended outcome of the committee's work was to provide a vision for reimagined library programs and services to inform the design team as they planned the retrofit and restoration of Central Library. A report of the Committee's programming recommendations is provided as an attachment (ATTACHMENT A).

Following these recommendations, continuous outreach to the community has been conducted to further define the community's current needs and to anticipate future needs. Community town hall meetings, focus groups, pop-up events, and an online survey are among the methods used to gather feedback from the community on its vision for a re-opened Central Library.

Community engagement has driven the design process, with input from the community being applied in every iteration of the schematic design. The design presented at City Council on June 10, 2024, incorporates the vision of the community for a safe, accessible library, preserving its historic character while developing spaces that better meet the needs of a twenty-first century library and create positive user experiences. Once reopened, the Central Library will continue to serve as a destination for traditional and forward-thinking services to accommodate the many needs of Pasadena residents.

### **COMMUNITY IMPACTS:**

The closure of the Central Library has significantly impacted overall access to library services in Pasadena, as evidenced by key metrics comparing Fiscal Year 2019 (FY19), when all libraries were open, to Fiscal Year 2023 (FY23), with the Central Library closed. Despite the continued operation of the branch libraries, Central Library is both the hub and the core of Pasadena's library system. The absence of the Central Library has led to marked declines in various aspects of library usage, highlighting its critical role in the Pasadena community.

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One of the most noticeable comparisons is in the use of computers. Single-use computer reservations decreased by 86.6%, from 128,515 in FY19 to just 17,165 in FY23. This decline reflects the reduced availability of computers; the Central Library had a dedicated Internet Commons with over 70 computers, while branches offer only 2 to 6 computers each. The closure of the Central Library has drastically limited access to information and technology, particularly for those without home access.

The Central Library served as a safe space, especially for those experiencing homelessness, offering a temperature-controlled, safe space. It also hosted a full-time Care Navigator from Pasadena Public Health Department, providing essential social services—a resource not replicated at the library branches. The proposed Central Library Building Retrofit project includes plans for permanent office space to reinstate this vital service.

For individuals facing isolation, the Central Library provided a place to connect, participate in programs, and escape harsh weather. It offered quiet spaces for study or work, essential for those without such environments at home. The Central Library connected people to social services, assisted with job searches and resume creation, and supported educational and lifelong learning. It also fostered digital literacy, crucial for those lacking technological skills.

Overall visits to Pasadena's libraries have fallen by 51.0%, from 803,274 in FY19 to 393,429 in FY23, highlighting the Central Library's role as a major draw for patrons. Library circulation decreased by 45.8%, from 1,251,793 items in FY19 to 679,068 items in FY23, demonstrating its importance in borrowing and lending materials. The decline in technology access underscores the necessity of reopening the Central Library to ensure community members can connect to social services, find employment, combat isolation, and enhance their education and digital skills. Keeping it closed would disservice vulnerable community members, widen the digital divide, and hinder the community's growth and empowerment.

The total number of in-person programs also decreased by 35.3%, from 2,462 in FY19 to 1,594 in FY23, and attendance at these programs dropped by 45.7%, from 55,260 attendees in FY19 to 30,016 in FY23. This highlights how the closure has impacted the Library's ability to offer diverse programs, impacting community enrichment. For instance, the biannual ArtNight drew over 2,500 attendees at the Central Library in FY19, but only 191 at the Lamanda Park Branch Library post-closure. Similarly, the One City, One Story program saw 2,500 attendees at the Central Library in FY19, but just 250 at a rented space in FY23. Pasadena prides itself on access to education, literacy, and art, and without the Central Library, the City cannot provide library services to the community at the same capacity.

Service impacts of the Central Library closure are listed in the table below.

<b>Change in Library Usage Since Central Library Closure</b>	
<b>Total In-Person Programs Offered</b>	
FY19	2,462
FY23	1,594
<b>Total In-Person Program Attendance</b>	
FY19	55,260
FY23	30,016
<b>PC Reservations</b>	
FY19	128,515
FY23	17,165
<b>Library Visits</b>	
FY19	803,274
FY23	393,429
<b>Circulation (Number of Library Items Checked Out Annually)</b>	
FY19	1,251,793
FY23	679,068
<b>Reference Desk Questions Answered</b>	
FY19	122,167
FY23	66,028

**COSTS ASSOCIATED WITH CENTRAL LIBRARY CLOSURE:**

Costs for Upkeep and Preservation of a Vacant Central Library Building

Leaving the Central Library vacant is not a no-cost solution. Since its closing in May 2021, Central Library has continued to require on-going maintenance to ensure the integrity of the building. If Central Library is to remain vacant for the foreseeable future, preventative measures must be taken to preserve its building systems and historic fabric, which exclude the required earthquake retrofit work. As such, Central Library's physical condition would be maintained, but would remain closed to the public and vulnerable to damage by an earthquake.

Annual costs associated with the typical upkeep of a building include routine and scheduled maintenance for mechanical, electrical, and plumbing equipment, roofing system inspection, localized repairs, and tarps. Each of these is required in order to maintain Central Library's current physical condition and appearance. As such, the

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annual estimated cost to maintain the status quo of a vacant Central Library is \$450,000.

The alternative to performing localized repairs and utilizing tarps to cover compromised areas of the leaking roof would be to perform a complete roof replacement. Preliminary estimate of the roof replacement cost is between \$5M - \$6M. Replacement of the roof would mitigate current leaks and reduce annual roof related maintenance costs; however, this is solely an interim measure, and portions of the roof would still require removal for installation of building retrofit measures in the future.

If the Library is to remain closed to the public, several one-time installations would need to be implemented to ensure site security and prevent any unlawful usage. These recommended measures include installation of security surveillance cameras and site perimeter fencing, and the boarding up of windows. These recommended one-time costs are estimated to total \$200k.

## Anticipated Costs and Lost Revenues Associated with Continued Closure

The Central Library building spans approximately 120,000 square feet. Finding a property of similar size, especially in central Pasadena, would prove challenging. Even if such a property were found, securing it would typically necessitate a lease exceeding 15 years, with most capital improvements, if not all, funded by the tenant (City). After a current search using similar criteria, staff could not locate any retail location within the City of Pasadena and had to expand the search to nearby cities. Please refer to the matrix below for current average market retail rates along with potential fiscal impacts.

	<b>Average Rate</b>	<b>Sq Ft</b>	<b>Monthly Rent</b>	<b>Annual Impact</b>
<b>Retail</b>	\$ 2.00	120,000	\$ 240,000.00	\$ 2,880,000.00

Relocating library operations to multiple sites might be less costly than renting one very large site. Staff have pinpointed several locations where some replacement library operations are continuing, albeit at a significantly reduced capacity. It is important to consider that the cost of further relocation and setting up access across multiple sites for all of Central's services would be a substantial cost. These costs include logistics of transporting materials, installation of necessary infrastructure, and ensuring seamless connectivity between sites to maintain operational efficiency like what has been done at Jefferson Elementary and Rose Palace. The estimated costs for leasing, tenant improvements, and maintaining these alternative library sites are stated below.

## MODULAR OFFICES

While the City has nine branch libraries, the Central Library is home to almost 300,000 items in its collection. As such, it is not possible to relocate any substantial part of these materials to the branches or to secure a space where they are accessible to the public as they were at Central Library. Soon after closure, Library staff pursued options for the

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continued operation of Library programs and the partial relocation of the collections, including use of a modular building in the Central Library parking lot that currently serves as a materials handling location to ensure new materials are making their way into the system and are circulating.

### ROSE PALACE WAREHOUSE

The City-owned Rose Palace on Raymond Avenue was identified to store a large amount of the Central Library book collection, where it would be accessible to Library staff to retrieve and deliver to the branches as needed. Library users may find these items through the online catalog, but they cannot browse the collection in person at this warehouse location. After requesting items, library users may check out items from the Rose Palace after they have been delivered to the branch location of their choice. This process takes longer and involves more staff time than if the materials were openly accessible to library users at Central Library.

This City-owned facility was leased to a private party when Central Library closed in 2021. Three years later, the current market rent for a comparable industrial building is approximately \$1.25 per square foot per month. The resulting current market rent annually would be approximately \$403,320. Rental revenue is no longer being generated as the space is being used for Central Library materials storage and so represents an approximately \$400,000 annual subsidy from the General Fund just to store the Central Library collections.

### JEFFERSON SCHOOL

In 2021, the City of Pasadena also leased the vacant Jefferson School through its joint-use agreement with Pasadena Unified School District (PUSD) to offer library services to children, teens, their caregivers, and educators. The temporary Jefferson Branch Library also houses the City's Office of the Young Child and Teen Mental Health information centers. Tenant improvements were made, an annual lease was established, and ongoing maintenance costs were budgeted. The current lease is for six years. Upon expiration of the lease in 2027, the City will need to renew the agreement with PUSD, if that is an available option, or identify an alternative location and re-establish these services elsewhere.

### PARK CENTER OFFICE SUITE

In 2021, the City leased an office suite at 221 E Walnut Street to house the Library's administrative staff. These employees, who normally work in Central Library, needed a temporary work location until Central Library reopens. Tenant improvements were made, an annual lease was established, and ongoing maintenance costs were budgeted. Those costs are set forth below.



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## SUMMARY OF SPACE COSTS

Following the closure of the Central Library, a range of expenses have been incurred to maintain services and prepare the building for retrofitting. These costs, which began accruing in FY2022, reflect a comprehensive effort to ensure continued Library operations across different locations at a reduced capacity while Central Library is closed. The charts below summarize current and projected expenses. Including rent paid and the lost opportunity rent of the Rose Palace, it is presently in the \$1,664,000 range per year.

<b>Cost for Tenant Improvements FY22 to date</b>	
<b>Location</b>	<b>Cost</b>
Jefferson	1,110,337
Park Center	474,541
Rose Palace	791,171
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>2,376,049</b>

<b>Category</b>	<b>Reoccurring Annual Costs Due to Closure</b>	<b>Lost Revenues</b>
Jefferson Rent	52,000	-
Park Center Rent	162,000	-
Mobile Trailers	55,000	-
Landscaping	25,000	-
Janitorial Services	52,000	-
Utilities - Jefferson	234,000	-
Central Library Security	84,000	-
Rose Palace Rental	-	400,000
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>664,000</b>	<b>400,000</b>

Overall, the closure of the Central Library has necessitated a multifaceted financial strategy. From building maintenance and housekeeping to extensive tenant improvements and logistical support, every effort has been made to minimize service impacts to the community to the extent possible and ensure the effective preparation for the Central Library's retrofit and building repairs. The annual upkeep cost for Central Library (\$450,000), ongoing annual expenses related to relocating library services for the community (\$664,000) and the lost potential revenue to the City (\$400,000) are

significant. **The ongoing cost impact of maintaining a vacant Central Library is estimated at \$1.514 Million annually.**

**CONCLUSION:**

Central Library is not just a building. It is the core and hub of Pasadena's Library System and a key element of the no-cost services provided to any resident who wishes them. If repair is not undertaken, the question will be how to fund the status quo of a vacant Central Library and how to continue essential library services otherwise. The current design phase of the Central Library Earthquake Retrofit and Building Repairs Project is fully funded, which will include preparation of environmental documentation, final construction drawings, and cost estimates for the scope of work approved by City Council on June 10, 2024. The construction phase remains unfunded. Without funding for the construction phase of the project, the service impacts and costs described in this report can be expected to continue.

The City provides a number of critical services to our residents. Be it public safety or keeping the lights on, from clean drinking water to the streets and sidewalks that community members travel on – Central Library provided a service to its residents that enabled everyone to have access to future opportunities. Whether it is access to education and the power of knowledge, or opportunities for programs and services, Central Library provided a gateway to success. The City faces the stark reality that without the Central Library, opportunities for so many may be unreachable and future goals unattainable.

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Support for the Central Library remains strong in the community according to recent community surveys. High percentages across all age groups, regardless of education level or family status, agree that the Pasadena Central Library is a vital educational and cultural institution. Nine-in-ten agree that the Central Library is an important community asset, an important part of the City's history, and an important architectural building. Survey results also demonstrate there is community support for a funding measure to help address the Central Library's need to seismically retrofit its structure; meet current fire safety regulations; and attend to infrastructure repairs and upgrades.

Respectfully submitted,



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Attachments: (1)

Attachment A – PASADENA CENTRAL LIBRARY COMMUNITY PROGRAMMING  
COMMITTEE Programming Report