

Office of the City Clerk
M E M O R A N D U M

Date: September 14, 2005

To: Palo Alto City Council Members

From: Council Members Hillary Freeman and LaDoris Cordell

Subject: \$100,000.00 FOPAL GIFT

The Friends of the Palo Alto Libraries (FOPAL) have generously offered to give to the City up to \$100,000.00 for a modular building to provide additional library space for the Children's Library during the remodeling. This modular could also be utilized by the Downtown and Main branches, as well.

The purposes of this donation are (1) to offset the loss of 2,300 square feet of public space due to the closure and renovation of the Children's Library for approximately two years, and (2) to eliminate the need to move Technical Services permanently from Main into the Downtown Library.

It is our hope that the City Council will vote to accept this offer and that we will authorize the acquisition of the modular unit. To this end, we ask our colleagues to immediately agendaize this matter for a discussion and a vote prior to any movement of personnel or any new library build-outs at Main or Downtown. We further request that this agenda item include input from the Library Advisory Commission.

Thank you.



September 7, 2005

Palo Alto City Council
City of Palo Alto
250 Hamilton Avenue
Palo Alto, CA 94303

Dear City Council Members:

We are pleased to report that the board of the Friends of the Palo Alto Library recently voted to offer the City up to \$100,000 for a modular building to provide additional library space for the Children's Library, Downtown, and Main branch reorganization. These funds are available now and we seek to work intensively with the City to expedite the necessary details.

Our organization has followed closely the library reorganization and the community concerns that have arisen. Although formal plans have not been released to the public as of this writing, the reorganization appears to entail:

- Closing down the **Children's Library**, with an attendant loss of 2,300 square feet of public space for approximately two years and one half to two-thirds of the collection being put into storage.
- Moving Technical Services permanently from Main into the **Downtown Library**, shrinking space for the public by about 2,000 square feet, including about 800 square feet of the community room that had long been promised to return to the public.
- Adding space for the public at the **Main Library**, of which perhaps 900 square feet will be available for children's services.

This reorganization, while creating some additional space at Main, has some major drawbacks:

- Children's library services in North Palo Alto will be compressed over the next two years into a space at Main just 2/5 the present size. This will be quite a problem, as the Children's Library circulates almost as many items as the Main Library and offers large, well-attended programs.
- The Downtown Library will be significantly smaller, even though it serves the fastest-growing area in Palo Alto.
- Friction is likely with some residents permanently losing public library space while others gain.

We have heard considerable opposition to the reorganization, from both advocates for children's services and Downtown Library users. That this plan was triggered by the fund-raising efforts to expand the Children's

Library upsets some of our donors and supporters, as they fervently back the entire branch library system. They don't wish to see their money and volunteer time lead to shrinking a branch or curtailing children's services.

For those reasons, and in particular because we wish to help avert conflict between the city and library users, we are offering the city funds to lease or purchase a modular building, most likely to be sited alongside the rear wing of the Main Library. Although there are several ways this space could be utilized, Library Director Paula Simpson has proposed eventually moving Technical Services and ideally Library Administration into it. This will obviate the need to shrink the Downtown Library, and in fact significantly increase its public space. The branch can thus provide far more space for children's services and hold all the children's collection that would otherwise be in storage.

A past supplier to the City provided us with a quote of \$56,310 for the purchase and installation of a 2,160 square foot modular building. The remainder of the \$100,000 we offer can cover project management, site preparation, and other costs. There may also be concerns about the aesthetics of having a modular building at Main, but that of course is where extra public space is being gained.

In closing, let me add that we have worked diligently to find a solution that benefits everyone: library users, library staff, donors, and taxpayers. The hoped-for improvements at Main will proceed under this plan, as will the goals of the Downtown community to restore and enhance their library. Minimal tax dollars are required and new public library space is provided at a very low-cost per square foot. Quick action on this by the City will avoid the considerable expense of moving Technical Services into Downtown and then back out. The Friends look forward to working with city staff and you to make this happen.