TO:           HONORABLE CITY COUNCIL

FROM:       CITY MANAGER     DEPARTMENT: COMMUNITY SERVICES

DATE:      JANUARY 22, 2002   CMR:125:02

SUBJECT: TRANSMITTAL OF LIBRARY ADVISORY COMMISSION
RECOMMENDATIONS REGARDING ALTERNATIVES TO THE
NEW LIBRARY PLAN AND IDENTIFICATION OF ISSUES
SURROUNDING LIBRARY BUILDING EXPANSION PROJECTS

RECOMMENDATION
This report transmits a Council-requested recommendation from the Library Advisory
Commission (LAC) that identifies alternatives to the New Library Plan (NLP),
specifically for building expansions at the three identified Resource Libraries, Main,
Children's and Mitchell Park. (See Attachment A.) Staff requests that the Council discuss
and provide feedback on the report, and on the policy issues identified surrounding NLP
implementation.

BACKGROUND
This is the first of several reports planned to come to Council addressing implementation
of the NLP from the Library Advisory Commission. This report focuses on the building
expansion element of the plan. Future reports will discuss staffing and resource
elements. It is anticipated that Council will review the LAC’s recommendations on
building, staffing and operating resource data before making final decisions on the
proposed projects.

The LAC completed its NLP report in May 2000, which describes a plan for current and
future library service delivery. (See Attachment B.) The NLP includes recommendations
for improved and expanded, full-service Resource Libraries, in both north Palo Alto
(Main/Children's) and south Palo Alto (Mitchell Park). Council conceptually approved
the plan in October 2000, and directed staff to proceed with development of Phase I of
the plan, components of which include developing feasibility and costing studies for
expansion of the Resource Libraries. In July 2001, given concerns about the overall
scope and ability to fund all elements of the NLP, Council requested that the LAC
develop alternatives.
DISCUSSION
In its response to Council, the LAC makes the recommendation to fully implement the NLP, basing its decision on the years of study, planning and public input that has shaped the plan. Its recommendation focuses only on physical facility improvements and funding alternatives. The LAC is not prepared to comment on staffing and operational resource alternatives until the in-progress staffing study is complete.

In its recommendation to Council, the LAC provides two alternatives to fully implementing the plan: funding the NLP building program in phases, and reducing the Library Building Program by 17 percent by reducing both programs and space at Mitchell and Main Libraries. Both of these alternatives are fully described in the attached report.

As the LAC, site committees and staff move forward on these building projects, it would be helpful if Council could provide some feedback and direction on some of the issues that have surfaced. Addressing these issues at this juncture will help keep the process on track and allow staff to meet some of the near term deadlines inherent in designing and funding these projects. These issues include:

- Constructing the Mitchell Park Library and Community Center as a single project: Due to the limited space at the Mitchell Park site, any expansion of the library may be severely impacted by the adjacent location of the community center. Folding the 40-year-old Community Center building into this project may provide enough flexibility on the site to fully implement the NLP vision for an expanded Mitchell Park Library as well as provide greatly needed space for the community's recreational needs.

- Phasing of construction: It is possible that the Mitchell Park and Main projects can be phased to initially construct only a portion of the buildings and then complete the project in later years as funding becomes available. (The new Mountain View Library has used this model, constructing approximately 60,000 square feet out of a design that specified a larger square footage total.)

- Phasing of library projects: The LAC recommends considering phasing the funding of projects over time. A bond election could be held in 2002 for the Children’s Library and Mitchell Park projects, with a subsequent bond measure five to seven years in the future, after Mitchell and Children’s were completed, to fund expansion of the Main Library.

- Programmatic Reductions: Council discussion on the programs identified in the LAC’s 17 percent reduction scenario will assist the LAC and staff as it considers staffing and operational cost issues.
RESOURCE IMPACT
The full cost of building and operating expanded libraries is not yet available. The LAC's building program expense projections are ballpark estimates and will be more complete and reliable as each stage of site planning and conceptual designing proceeds in the coming months. As noted by the LAC, each of the expanded buildings will require operating expenses, including staffing, collections and other resources. The LAC plans to return to Council with further recommendations at a later time.

POLICY IMPLICATIONS
Council has authorized funding for development of conceptual planning for the three Resource Libraries in order to prepare for a potential bond measure in November 2002. By the end of April 2002, Council must decide which project/s to include in the bond measure and the relationship of Library projects to other proposed City projects.

ATTACHMENTS
Attachment B: CMR:345:00 (Transmittal of LAC report: New Library Plan to Council), including the plan and minutes of the Council meeting of 10/10/00.

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