City & County of San Francisco
Branch Library Improvement Program

New Portola Branch Library
Frequently Asked Questions

Q. Why are we building a new branch library?
A. We voted to renovate and build new branch libraries across the City – it's happening! One of the priorities of the November 2000 bond measure is to replace four branches currently housed in leased facilities with City-owned buildings. The Portola branch on San Bruno Avenue is located in a leased facility.

Q. What will be some of the benefits of the new branch?

- Main entrance on Goettingen Street
- Expanded collections of books, CDs, videos, DVDs & other materials
- Program room for library programs such as story time and after school homework help, with after hours access for community meetings
- Flexible design to accommodate future technologies
- Increased Chinese language collection
- Prominent reading area
- Expanded children's area and space to accommodate school visits
- More functional staff work areas
- New garden area
- A designated teen area
- New furniture
- Clear signage
- More computers
- Wireless (Wi-Fi) access to the internet
- Express self-checkout machines
- A variety of seating choices, including lounge and reader seats
- Accessible restrooms
- 24-hour book return
- Maximum use of natural light
- Public art

Q. How big will the new branch library be?
A. The new branch will be one story high and approximately 6,300 square feet.

Q. Where will the new branch library be located?
A. The San Francisco Public Library has purchased a corner of the Martin Luther King, Jr. Middle School grounds at Goettingen & Bacon to build the new branch library.

Q. Who are the architects?
A. The architecture team of S. Meek/Noll & Tam.

Q. When will it be built?
A. Construction is scheduled to begin in summer 2007, with the new branch to open in early 2009. Construction may be delayed due to design issues, complications arising from the bidding, contracting or permit process, or other matters.

Q. Will the branch library close during construction?
A. No. The current branch will not close until the new one is completed. There may be a short disruption of service while books and materials are transferred to the new building.

Q. Will the amount of books increase?
A. Yes. The materials (books, CDs, DVDs, videos, books on tape, etc.) collection will expand. There will also be additional tables, chairs, and computers.

Q. What happens to the existing furniture?
A. The furniture will be replaced. The Library has developed interior design guidelines to help the architects and staff choose appropriate furniture based on functionality, ergonomics, durability, maintenance, flexibility, and sustainability.

Q. Will there be Public Art?
A. Yes. The Portola Branch Community Artist Selection Panel chose Dana Zed to create art glass shutters near the entrance of the new branch. In November 2005, the community met with Dana to discuss ideas and plans for the art.

Q. Is the community involved in the design process?
A. Yes. A community needs assessment was conducted, that included interviews with community stakeholders about materials, facilities, and services and a community survey analysis. Eight community meetings were held (April 2001, March 2002, October 2002, January 2003, September 2003, March 2004, April 2005, & May 2007) to discuss sites, services and designs. The plans were also discussed at local organization meetings, at hearings regarding the property acquisition and during a public design competition to choose the architect. In June 2005, the Library Commission held a public Peer Review where independent architects and an urban planner reviewed the design.

Q. Where does the money come from to build the branch?
A. In November 2000, the voters overwhelmingly passed a bond measure for $106 million to upgrade San Francisco's branch library system. While the City bond grant pays for a significant portion of the costs, it does not pay for all the furniture, fixtures, and equipment. The Friends of the San Francisco Public Library will raise $16 million from private donations to pay for these costs citywide. Call (415) 626-7512 ext. 106 to help with the Friends campaign.

Q. How much will it cost for the new Portola Branch Library?
A. The project has a budget of approximately $6 million for site acquisition, construction costs, permits, fees, consultant services, public art, etc. All designs are subject to change in order to meet this fixed budget limit.

Q. How do I find out more information about the new branch?
A. Contact the Branch Library Improvement Program at (415) 557-4354, check www.sfpl.org, or email BLIP@sfpl.org.