

The Alameda Free Library *Campaign for a Great Library*

It is from personal experience that I feel that there is no human arrangement so powerful for good, there is no benefit that can be bestowed upon a community so great as that which places within reach all the treasures of the world which are stored up in books.

Andrew Carnegie

When Andrew Carnegie and the people of Alameda jointly invested in our second library in 1902, they did so with the goal of ensuring that knowledge and information would be free and accessible to all. Our campaign for the new Alameda Free Library continues this mission and creates the opportunity to invest in the quality of life for all people in our community. It is an investment in children and families, lifelong education, service to the elderly, support of a strong economy and assurance of an informed citizenry. Our new library will connect our community to the world; provide open and user friendly access to information technology; house a first-rate collection of books, periodicals and other library materials; and be designed with adequate space to serve our current and future needs.

Background

Alameda opened its first library on August 25, 1877 in a storefront on Park Street near Lincoln. From that date until the 1903 opening of the Carnegie building, the library moved to four additional locations, each one larger than the last. The moves culminated in a move into the 11,500 square foot Carnegie Library, a size well suited to serve the community of 20,000 people. Alameda's first dedicated library building was truly a public/private partnership - Andrew Carnegie agreed to provide \$35,000 for construction while the City agreed to provide a suitable location and operational support.

The community grew quickly and by 1926, the Carnegie was already too small. That year the Boys and Girls Library was moved from the Carnegie into an Arts and Crafts bungalow next door; this 2,000 square-foot children's annex was connected by an enclosed ramp to the rest of the library. Amazingly, this arrangement continued for the next seventy-two years! As the population of Alameda grew so did the demand for larger collections and more and better library services, but the lack of space severely restrained the ability to meet these community needs. By the 1990's books were stuffed in every nook and cranny, shelved in closets, the washroom and on stairway landings. Despite numerous studies and much community interest, nothing changed until 1998, when the library was forced to move out of the old Carnegie building due to seismic safety issues. Today, the library is leasing interim space in the historic Alameda High School. But even this interim building is much too small, lacking adequate space for children's programs, seating, bookshelves, computers, and there are no meeting rooms.

Every week over 8,500 people visit the Interim Main Library and two branches libraries (West End and Bay Farm). They come by bus and bicycle, on foot, in wheelchairs, on skateboards, or strapped to their parents backs. Forty-six thousand five hundred individuals in Alameda have active library cards; 62 percent of our population are library users. Why? For the books, for information discovered through newspapers, microfiche, reference materials, on computer, or for personalized service at the information desk. They come to plan a career, choose a college, evaluate an investment, or learn about a new hobby. Collectively, they check out over half a million items each year. Over 39 percent of these checkouts are by and for young people under 13 years of age. There are 17 languages in the collection. And, our library is much more than books – twenty percent of the items circulated are non-print materials including cassettes, videos, CDs and audio books. Our thirteen Internet computers are almost 100 percent utilized; even in the current cramped quarters well over 50,000 people get their Internet access at the library. These computers are so popular that we had to implement a reservations system and restrict usage time to manage the demand. When considered together, these statistics show that the Alameda Free Library is well used and well loved.

The Alameda Free Library Foundation was created in 1998 by a group of visionary community leaders. The Foundation has three purposes: to assist in the replacement of the current library with a more modern, accessible institution; to enhance the operational funding for the library in order to improve collections, programming, and technology; and to build an on-going base of private funding support for the library.

The Need

Twenty-eight percent of Alameda's households are families with children under 18, so service to young people is extremely important. From learning to read, to homework help, to computer literacy, the library helps children learn to learn. Our community is also aging with 13.2 percent of the population over age 65. Seniors are avid library users and need large print and audio materials, along with other specialized programs and services. Alameda is also a multiethnic and multicultural community with a wide socio-economic spread among community members. Seventy-two different languages are represented with approximately forty-eight percent of Alamedans identifying themselves as Hispanic, Asian, African American, Filipino, multiracial or other non-Caucasian category. In order to meet the needs of our changing community, library collections and service must be improved and offered in multiple languages.

Beginning in 1999, and over a two and half year time period, the library and the city conducted extensive needs assessments to determine which current library services met community needs and which services should be improved, eliminated, added or expanded. Input was gathered through workshops, forums, focus groups, interviews, community meetings and surveys. The three most important features identified for the new library were:

- Expanded, newer and better collections;
- Meeting rooms and group study areas; and

- More computers.

The New Alameda Free Library - a Public/Private Partnership

The operation of the Alameda Free Library is supported by the City of Alameda. With the passage of state Proposition 14 in March of 2000, 65 percent of the funding for a new library could be provided by the State of California if the balance could be provided locally. The voters of Alameda passed Measure O in November of 2000 (78.6% voting yes) to supply the local match for the new main library as well as to provide funding for the branch library improvements.

The City has already secured the property for the new library at the corner of Lincoln and Oak (the old Linoaks Motel), and has selected an architecture firm with extensive experience in public library design and construction - Thomas Hacker Architects of Portland, Oregon. The new library will open in the fall of 2006. However, as we plan for our new library, it is clear that public funding alone will not be enough. As with Alameda's Carnegie Library, a public/private partnership will be needed.

The Campaign for a Great Library

The Campaign for a Great Library is the means by which individuals and organizations will take the Alameda Free Library from good to great. This is our chance to build a library for future generations. The campaign also creates the opportunity to build a permanent and growing base of private sector support for our library. We will build an efficient public building that celebrates knowledge, inspires learning and creates an environment for learning. Our library can and should be a permanent resource and the heart of our community.

The Campaign for a Great Library will achieve the following:

- Provide funding for expanded collections when new the main library opens (circulation in our new libraries typically increases 50 to 100 percent). This will include collections for children and young adults, multi media and multi lingual collections.
- Enhance the collections in the branch libraries - West End and Bay Farm
- Provide for art to be integrated into the design of the new building
- Begin building an endowment to support collections, programming and technology for the library
- Build a base of private donor support that will continue to sustain the library into the future

Financial Goal

To create a new Alameda Free Library that is truly worthy of our community, \$1.35 million in private funding is needed. And there is good news - we are already halfway to this private funding goal. The Library has received a \$650,000 bequest from the estate

of Regina Stafford and the Foundation has received a \$300,000 bequest from the estate of long-time library activist Jane Felker. In addition, 100 percent of the Foundation Board have stepped forward and pledged \$14,000 to the project and have already raised \$20,000 for art.

Join In

Be a part of building a strong community, supporting democracy and connecting our community to the world.

Be a part of the Alameda Free Library Foundation and the Campaign for a Great Library.

Project Budget

Expenses

Site Acquisition, Design, Construction, Furnishing and Finishes	\$27,073,249
Foundation Funding for Collections/ Art/Endowment	\$750,000
Fundraising Expenses	<u>\$20,000</u>
Total Expenses	\$27,843,249

Revenue

Public Funds

State of California (Prop 14)	\$15,487,952
City of Alameda (Measure O)	<u>\$10,830,000</u>
Total Public Funds	\$26,317,952

PRIVATE FUNDRAISING GOAL **\$1,525,297**

Private Funds

Regina Stafford Estate	\$650,000
Jane Felker Estate	\$300,000
Foundation Board of Directors	\$14,000
Foundation Gifts to Art	\$20,000
Total Raised to Date	\$984,000

BALANCE To be Raised **\$541,297**