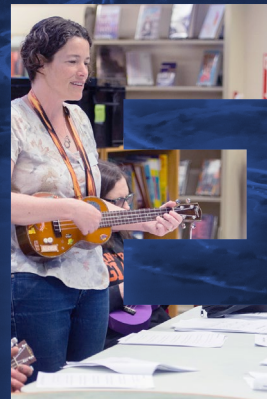




San Mateo
County
Libraries

Annual Report 2018-2019



for Exploration



Mission

San Mateo County Libraries strengthen our community by creating an inclusive sense of place and environment for learning.

Vision

San Mateo County Libraries ignite growth through transformative experiences.

Director’s Message



When people think of our library system, we want them to see an inclusive place where everyone is welcome to explore, create and learn. I am so proud of the incredible milestones we have reached, and I am pleased to showcase some highlights from our successful year. Our commitment to the community is constantly expanding through innovative practices and resources.

This year was marked with a transformative announcement—our libraries are now fine-free! Our decision to eliminate fines speaks to the heart of our mission and ensures that all members of our community have equitable access to our invaluable library services. We have also expanded our services, reduced barriers for people with disabilities and created impactful programming to ignite growth and discovery at any age.

And of course, we couldn’t look back on the year without mentioning the resounding success of our new Half Moon Bay Library. In its first year, the Library won five awards celebrating its design and sustainable features while significantly boosting patron registration and visits. Above all else, it’s been truly heartwarming to see the entire Coastside community embrace their new library.

Our many accomplishments wouldn’t be possible without the support of our Library JPA Governing Board and Operations Committee, our wonderful volunteers and exceptional staff. This report is full of impactful stories, inspiring accomplishments and resolve for our vision—igniting growth through transformative experiences. I am honored to present our 2018-2019 Annual Report.

Anne-Marie Despain
Director of Library Services

6th
In California
Star Library Ratings

33rd
In National
Star Library Ratings

San Mateo County Libraries Joint Powers Authority Governing Board

Atherton

Rick DeGolia

Belmont

Charles Stone

Brisbane

Karen Cunningham

East Palo Alto

Regina Wallace-Jones

Foster City

Catherine Mahanpour

Half Moon Bay

Adam Eisen

Millbrae

Reuben Holober

Pacifica

Mike O’Neill

Portola Valley

Maryann Derwin

San Carlos

Sara McDowell

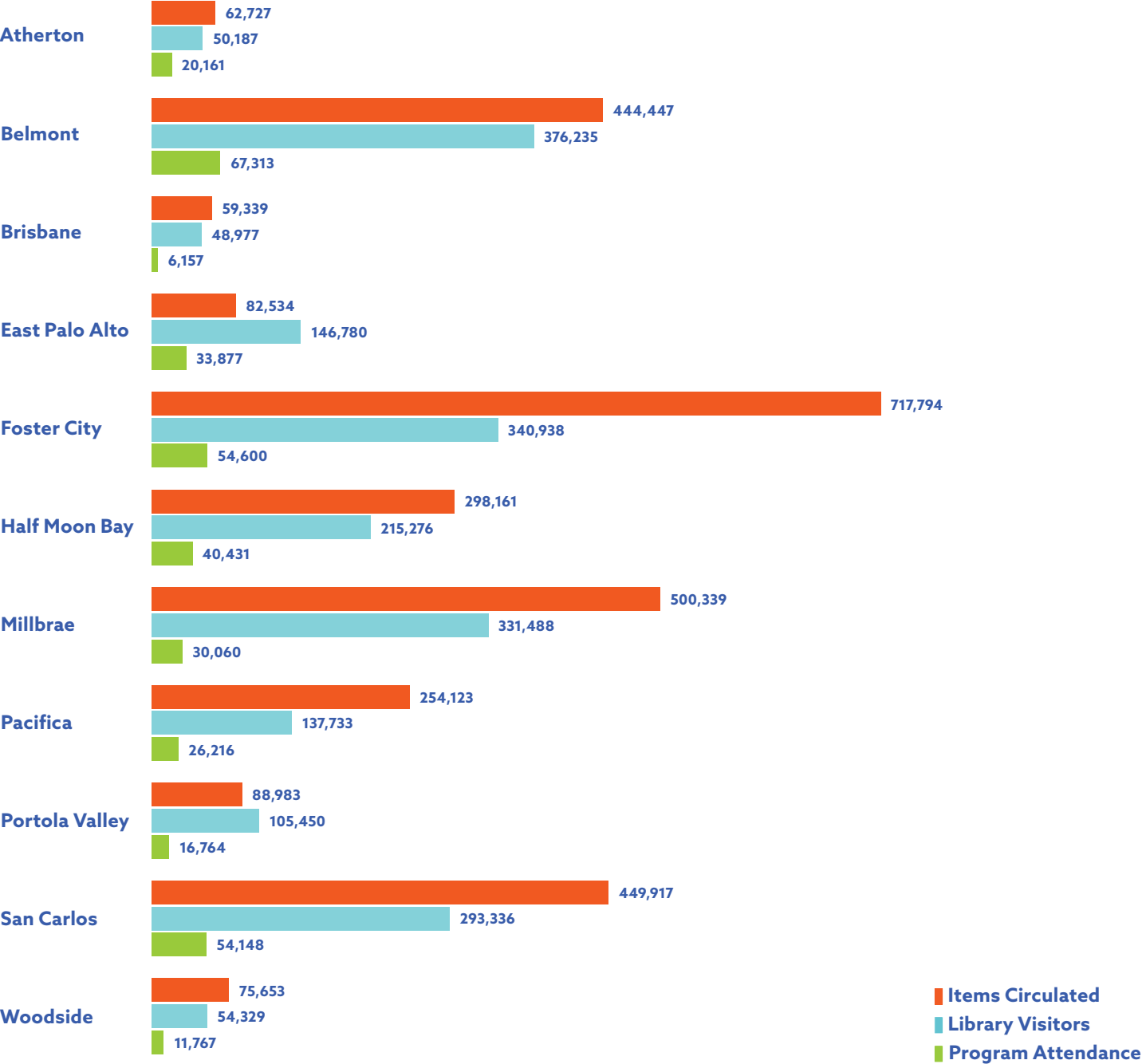
Woodside

Dick Brown

San Mateo County

Carole Groom

Year In Numbers



12,436
Programs and Events

380,754
Program Attendance



67%
Population with
Library Card

2.1M
Library Visitors



89%
Customer Satisfaction



3.7M
Items Circulated

285,000
Service Area Population

“No more fines is fabulous!
I thought it was wonderful
when I was able to renew
online, but this is a great
bonus that makes it even
MORE user friendly!”

Library Patron

Equitable ACCESS

Farewell to Fines

San Mateo County Libraries kicked off 2019 by eliminating all fines! Our goal is to ensure that all members of our community have equitable access to library books and other valuable resources and materials. Studies have shown that late fines can be a significant barrier to access and can drive borrowers away, particularly individuals with low or fixed incomes.

This new policy builds upon previous successful initiatives approved by the Governing Board. We introduced fine-free library cards for children and teens in 2016

and launched fine-free library cards for seniors in 2018. Libraries that moved to a more customer-focused policy reported that the elimination of fines resulted in higher use, increased customer satisfaction, and positive interactions with library patrons.

15%
Increase in Circulation
After Going Fine-Free

“This is a proud time for all of us at San Mateo County Libraries as we continue to look for better ways to serve our community through innovative solutions.”

Charles Stone, Library JPA Governing Board Chair



Growing our Community

San Mateo County Libraries proudly partnered with four local school districts to issue 6,052 new library cards to students. Through the Student Success program, all students receive a library card that will support their academic success.

25%
Increase in Student
Success Cards

“I’ve been a library patron here for over 45 years. Staff are extremely helpful, extraordinarily courteous, and always research my book club books.”

Library Patron

Welcoming Everyone



“They have such balanced offerings. I especially enjoy Maturing Gracefully, coloring, and music. I am disabled and staff are particularly considerate and helpful.”
Library Patron

Open for All

We’re steadfast in our commitment to assuring that everyone—no matter their race, age, gender, religion, sexuality, immigration status, or abilities—has access to our libraries and feels welcome. And we’ve had quite a few initiatives this year to demonstrate that.

One exciting highlight was our “Changemakers” exhibit which showcased

disability pride. Touring six of our libraries, the exhibit included stories and unique portraits of individuals with disabilities who have made important contributions to our community. Each portrait was commissioned by artists with a disability and accompanied with large print and braille reference guides.

90%
Staff Trained
on Disability Awareness

To promote inclusion and equity in our communities, we partnered with other Bay Area libraries to expand services and reduce barriers for people with disabilities. Together, we developed and implemented innovative practices and programming that is accessible and designed for all of our customers’ needs.

To assist our efforts, we were proud to be awarded a \$250,000 Library Services and Technology Act grant to support projects that promote equity and strengthen our communities. Staff have been trained on disability awareness, our collections and programs have been expanded, and new resources, such as inclusive literacy and sensory kits for families, are now available to the community. Additionally, we installed assistive technology in three libraries to improve access and the functionality of equipment for those with disabilities.

Nourishing the Community

To fill nutrition gaps in our vulnerable communities, we offer a free, year-round meal program open to all ages. Our meal service not only allows us to fight hunger, but it also helps us nourish and engage the community so families can enjoy time together at the library.

The healthy, balanced meals are served five days a week with additional snacks offered in the summer season. This daily program has resulted in positive feedback and overwhelming support from the community. Our program eliminates the stigma of getting help with food and strengthens the bond we have with our community members. This year, we provided over 20,662 meals to youth and 6,153 meals to adults.

26,815
Meals Served



“It’s difficult to maintain focus and retain information on an empty stomach. With our Lunch at the Library program, families can get the nutrition they need in a safe and welcoming environment.”
Supervisor Carole Groom, Library JPA Governing Board Member



Positive

IMPACT

"All the programs offered
for kids and adults are great,
educational and fun!"

Library Patron

Endless Discovery

Our libraries aim to provide opportunities that deepen, develop and grow young minds to think critically and creatively. RISE, a free youth-mentoring program, has been doing exactly that for two years. The program offers elementary school-aged scientists the opportunity to explore and experiment through numerous science courses.

RISE has exposed more than 50 young scientists to the beauty, complexity and diversity of life. This year, our scientists explored more than 30 sciences and performed more than 70 experiments. Each lesson focused on introducing challenging topics in an accessible and fun way.

In 2019, RISE was able to serve a low-income community by bringing a special five-week science program to the area. For many, it was their first time performing science experiments. According to Library Assistant Ricardo Buzo, one of the most popular experiments was when the young scientists put two of their fingers, one dirty and one recently washed, on a petri dish. Over the next week, they watched with equal parts excitement and disgust at which sample grew the most bacteria.

"I always tell my young scientists to have an openness to everything, because the world is filled with unforgettable experiences."

Ricardo Buzo, Library Assistant



"When I grow up, I want to
be a scientist."

Audrey, Kindergartner

1,334
STEM Programs

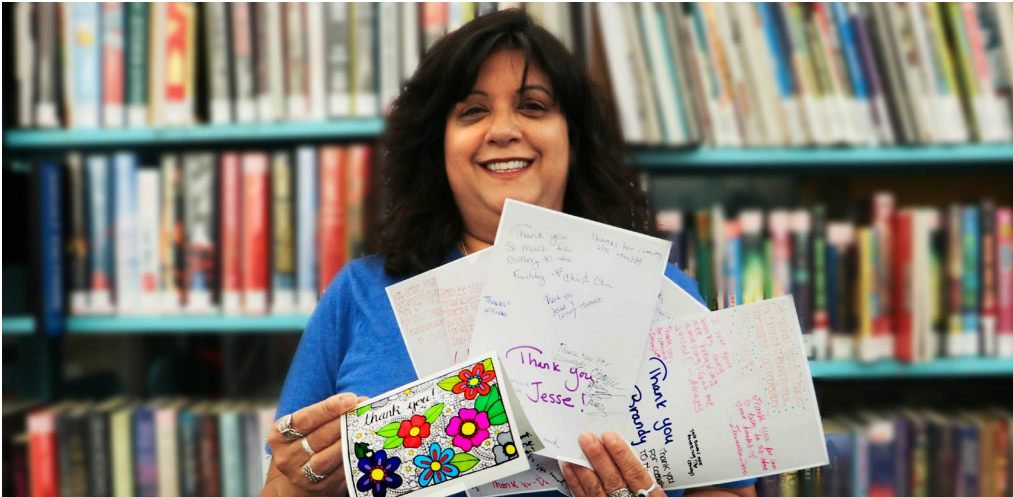
23,833
Attendees

Love of Literature

We are committed to the growth of language and literacy skills for all, including disadvantaged youth. Throughout the school year, our Youth Services staff visit incarcerated youth to host monthly book club conversations.

Christina Olsen, a Library Assistant and lead for the program, has many cherished moments from the book club. Her favorites are seeing the delight when a teen told her that the book she received was the first book she has ever owned and when she found a secret thank-you note tucked in her bag.

We also host author visits to bring unique perspectives and expanded experiences. Jesse Andrews, author of “Me and Earl and the Dying Girl,” had an “inestimably profound experience” hearing the participants’ stories and connecting with them through reading.



“Listening to these kids’ stories and connecting to them through reading and literature was an inestimably profound experience that every adult in this country (let alone author) should have. Whatever your preconceptions are about incarcerated youth, they will surprise you.”

Jesse Andrews, Author

Enhancing Patron Experiences

Providing a special opportunity for our community to connect with their favorite authors in person has always been a gratifying goal for us.

Most notably, Congresswoman Jackie Speier sat down with a few of our board members to read excerpts from her recent memoir, “Undaunted: Surviving Jonestown, Summoning Courage, and

Fighting Back.” At each library author visit, Congresswoman Speier gave inspiring answers to the community’s questions and shared impactful stories of her past.

2,164
Author Visit
Attendees

2,573
Book Club
Participants



Inspiring Summers

Eager students got ready to tackle a new school year thanks to an uplifting experience with our Big Lift Inspiring Summer camps and the support of County of San Mateo Measure K funds. Serving seven school districts, our camps aim to transform early learning and help reverse summer learning loss. In summer 2019, 1,193 children attended at least one day of the program with a retention rate of 91%. Throughout the four years of the program, children have gained an average of 1.5 months of reading skills based on pre/post-testing.

The four-week, full-day summer camps are free to low-income families with children entering kindergarten through second grade. The program includes a morning literacy component, an afternoon STEAM (Science Technology Engineering Art and Math) enrichment segment and two healthy meals. The enrichment curriculum offers engaging activities like yoga, crafts and science experiments. This year the library system served community meals at three of our camp sites.



96%
Kids Tried
New Things

98%
Kids Enjoyed
the Program

“I am very happy and grateful that my child was able to participate in such a wonderful program. Thank you to Big Lift and all the teachers for all the effort and support for our children.”
Parent

Family Investment

This year, parent engagement presentations and activities were introduced into our summer camps. The programs included themed workshops on children and technology, and supporting literacy development. In addition, each child received a set of three books to take home to read with their parents.

Parents who are English language learners received a free copy of the Oxford English-Spanish picture dictionary to support their English literacy growth.

Bridging Divides



“For the past three years I have been fortunate to utilize the library’s Wi-Fi hotspot and laptop to get me through nursing school and save HUGE amounts of money! I’m incredibly grateful for that service.”
Library Patron

Our communities are nestled near the heart of Silicon Valley, a global center for technology and innovation. Yet, many community members have limited or no access to digital and technological tools that are rapidly becoming mandatory today.

We’re proud to help bridge the digital divide by providing free access to technology and internet connectivity and by building skills on how to use these tools to improve equity in our communities. Our libraries offer Wi-Fi hotspots and laptops available for checkout free of charge as well as a variety of computer classes. These services allow individuals and families, particularly those with lower incomes, to access email, apply for jobs, pay bills online, complete homework, and connect with loved ones.



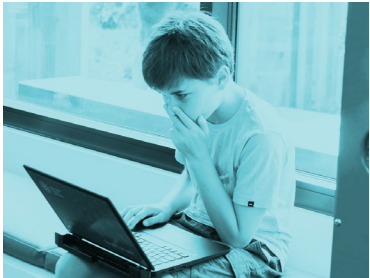
Tools to Impress

This year, our libraries led a series of Technology Showcase events for Make-It-March, a month-long collection of maker programs. These free events provided library users the opportunity to learn and tinker with our vast array of maker technology, such as laser and vinyl cutters and virtual reality stations.

Additionally, we added digital media stations in each of our libraries. These stations include a vibrant 28” display screen, surface dials and pens, and a full range of software applications to create sensational digital content for free.

629,831
Digital Downloads

45%
Increase in
Digital Downloads



190,878
Public Wi-Fi Users

2.5M
Website Visitors



1,690
Maker Programs



29,140
Maker Program
Attendees

273,980
Public Computer Users

"I feel like the staff really care about me, and my needs, and they promote services I love."

Library Patron

Igniting GROWTH

Library Champions

Our staff support and challenge each other to create the best experience possible for our patrons. This year, more than 100 professional development opportunities were attended by staff and 3,370 hours of training were completed. Our commitment to excellence is reflected in our patron surveys, too. 89% of patrons agree that library services meet or exceed their expectations.

Overall, the diversity of our staff has increased, allowing us to better reflect and serve all our communities. More than 60% of our staff identify as a race other than white. Additionally, 35% of permanent staff are bilingual, which enables us to provide 18% of all programs in a language other than English. We're proud to foster an inclusive workplace where diversity and differences are valued and leveraged to achieve our goals.

Additionally, our Youth Intern Program continues to employ over 200 local college and high school students each summer.

98%
Interns Would
Recommend Library Work

93%
Staff Feel
Appreciated and Valued



"I love how accepting and flexible staff and management are to new ideas and trying new practices. I like that our library system continues to open access rather than restrict it. Finally, we work in some of the most beautiful libraries in the country."

Staff Member

Investing in our Future



Creating a Legacy

In 2018, The Foundation for San Mateo County Libraries was established to build a legacy for our communities. Funds raised by the Foundation will support programs and activities that the library system could not otherwise afford through its annual operating budget. In the first year, the Foundation has brought together a strong board of directors who are passionate about libraries to lay the groundwork. As the Foundation grows, we look forward to funding and enhancing library buildings, collections and technology, and programs and services—ensuring the continued strength of San Mateo County Libraries.

Vision: Promote the long-term financial health and success of San Mateo County Libraries
Mission: Provide annual resources to support the San Mateo County Libraries' goals and initiatives



"I am thrilled to be a part of the Foundation where we will be able to invest in the Libraries' innovative nature as they meet the needs of everyone in the community."
Marina Fraser, Foundation Board President

San Mateo County Libraries is fortunate to have the strong support of our Friends of the Library organizations who advocate and provide direct support for our local community libraries. Collectively, our Friends of the Library groups provided a total of \$255,465 to support local library programs and services. Their continued support and generosity allows us to expand popular programs and pilot new ideas. Supported programs include musical concerts, youth after-school programs, special events and family activities.



Engaging Volunteers

Our volunteers are a constant source of inspiration to the community and our staff. Every week they donate their time and talents to conversation clubs, technology classes, and afterschool activities. Over the last year, more than 684 dedicated volunteers provided over 25,752 hours of outstanding service. Their continued dedication creates opportunities for growth and community connections by supporting programming, tutoring, literacy, and technology services. Our volunteers range from teens to seniors, and this spring, we honored five outstanding volunteers who individually exceeded 1,000 hours.



95%
Volunteer Satisfaction

99%
Recommend Volunteering

"I helped my student prepare for and pass the U.S. citizenship exam! She is a proud citizen now."
Library Volunteer



Lawyers in the Library

Over the past year, 15 lawyers have shared their expertise through our Lawyers in the Library program in partnership with the San Mateo County Bar Association. These dedicated professionals volunteer their time monthly to provide legal advice on topics including immigration, housing and business to members of the community for free.

"In the many years I have been a part of Lawyers in the Library, I have been able to help dozens of people understand their legal situation with compassion."
Library Volunteer

Transformative SPACES

"Well done! It's quite amazing to see our libraries become pillars of our communities."

Library Patron

Award-Winning Half Moon Bay Library

The new spectacular Half Moon Bay Library has become a Coastside haven that draws people in for enjoyment as well as vital support. Answering the community's desire to have a library with a soul, the two-story, 22,000 square foot library is designed to be the heart of the community and a place for people of all ages to feel at home with endless opportunities for growth and transformative experiences.

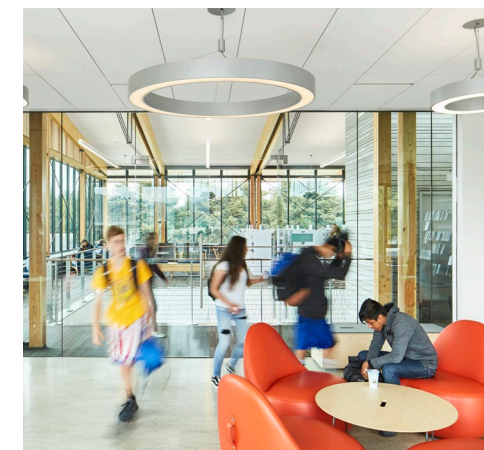
The community-driven design celebrates the small town feel of Half Moon Bay, reflecting the beach and agricultural roots, while simultaneously using materials that hold up to the coastal environment. Immediately embraced by the community, the new Library has exceeded aspirations and received five prestigious awards celebrating the library's unique design and sustainable features.

146%
Increase in New Library Cards

50%
Increase in Patron Visits

"This library levels the playing field and opens vistas for young people who would otherwise never dream so big. The core of the Coastside is now a gleaming edifice made of so much glass you can almost see a brighter future."

Half Moon Bay Review



Awards

- ▲ The Project of the Year Award in the Sustainability/Green category from American Public Works Association, Silicon Valley.
- ▲ One of six libraries recognized by the American Institute of Architects and the American Library Association for excellence in architectural design.
- ▲ A Green Building Award sponsored by Sustainable San Mateo County and the American Institute of Architects of San Mateo County.
- ▲ An Honor Award in the GIVE | Social Responsibility category from the International Interior Design Association Northern California Chapter.
- ▲ A Special Commendation for Sustainable Community Infrastructure from the American Institute of Architects, San Francisco Chapter.

Future Destinations

Exciting progress has been made to create warm and welcoming destinations for all. Engaging our communities to imagine the potential of future libraries has inspired creative plans that will enable us to support and uplift future generations of lifelong learners.

Atherton Library

The new Atherton Library is under construction and projected to open in Summer 2021. The 9,600 square foot, elegantly designed building bends gently on the site to pay homage to the historic Town Hall. The two buildings will connect via a generous front porch that will provide both buildings with an expansive outdoor gathering space, views of the heritage oak trees, and natural light.

The interior design features an open, simple and flexible approach and embraces quiet contemplative work along with active engagement spaces. Renovating and repurposing the Town Hall increases the space for events to just under 11,000 square feet.



Pacifica Libraries

Conceptual designs have been completed for Pacifica Libraries to rebuild and transform the two facilities into 21st century community centers and learning spaces for all. The plan envisions a new contemporary library to replace the existing Sharp Park Library, providing expanded hours, robust services and a strong civic presence.

Sanchez Library will be remodeled to serve the community through a new alternative service model and community center partnership with the City’s Parks, Beaches and Recreation Department. Two modern libraries would meet the community’s long-term needs, providing safe learning environments and spaces that invite inspiration and build community connections.



“I love our beautiful new library! So grateful for all of the staff that make it what it is.”

Library Patron

Brisbane Library

We are thrilled to celebrate the opening of our newest library this Fall. The new 7,600 square foot Brisbane Library, located in the heart of the City, is imagined to be both unique in its connection to the outdoors and San Bruno Mountain, while simultaneously fitting in well with the scale and proportions of the City’s main street.

Library spaces are flexible to allow the building to adapt to changing technology and community needs over time. Interior spaces include dedicated areas for children and teens, a makerspace, a quiet room, and a community space that can serve the community even during off hours.

Beautiful native gardens and patios will create larger gathering spaces and serve as a demonstration of sustainable water practices. The project is designed to be equivalent to LEED Silver.



“I think the San Mateo County Libraries system is one of the best library systems I’ve ever used. For those who explore deeper, it’s got a tremendous breadth of resources freely available.”

Library Patron

East Palo Alto Library

Conceptual designs for a new East Palo Alto Library have been completed. The proposed two-story building design features flexible spaces that are based on community-defined wants and needs. Plans include ample spaces for a variety of ages and uses, natural light, a strong connection with nature, and access to an array of technologies. It will also

provide community spaces for building connections, hosting large events and collaborating with partners. Acting as an anchor institution, the library of the future will encourage involvement and serve all facets of the community so patrons can discover and learn in a safe and enriching environment.



"I grew up with the San Mateo County Libraries. They were always my safe haven to spend time and explore my interests away from whatever turmoil was happening elsewhere. Whether I wanted to read, write, draw, do homework, or volunteer, it was a great place to do so. I am grateful to them and the impact they have had on my life."

Library Patron



San Mateo
County
Libraries