



To: Honorable Mayor and Members of the Atherton City Council
Jerome Gruber, Atherton City Manager

From: Anne-Marie Despain, Director of Library Services

Date: February 17, 2010

Subject: Atherton Library Needs Assessment

Background

The Town of Atherton is a participating member in the San Mateo County Library Joint Powers Authority (Library JPA). Formed in 1999, the Library JPA is a library service organization comprised of and serving the cities of Atherton, Belmont, Brisbane, East Palo Alto, Foster City, Half Moon Bay, Millbrae, Pacifica, Portola Valley, San Carlos, Woodside, and unincorporated San Mateo County. The Library JPA is governed by a Board consisting of representatives from each member entity. Library services and operations are provided by San Mateo County Library staff. Facilities are owned and maintained by each member entity.

Based on expressed interest in the improvement of the Atherton Library and recent completion by the Town of a Structural Facility Evaluation, the Library identified completion of a Library Needs Assessment as a project for FY 2009-10. A Library Needs Assessment has two primary goals. The first is to describe how the building enables or limits the provision and enjoyment of the library's collections and services. The second is to describe the minimum space required to provide for the library's collections and services at present and into the future. When considering new or improved library spaces, a Library Needs Assessment is an essential part of the planning process.

Atherton Library Needs Assessment

A Library Needs Assessment involves a thorough service analysis and facility evaluation resulting in the identification of service objectives and corresponding space needs. This process typically takes several months and begins with selecting a consultant to facilitate the gathering of data through a combination of quantitative and qualitative methods, such as surveys, questionnaires, interviews, focus groups, and onsite observations. Service needs are identified and then translated into space requirements for areas such as collections, user seating, meeting and study rooms, and computer resources. The assessment also involves determining the shortcomings of a library as related to current space limitations and building deficiencies. Once this data has been gathered, it is analyzed and a Library Needs Assessment Report is prepared.

In September 2009, San Mateo County Library selected Anderson Brule Architects (ABA) to complete the Atherton Library Needs Assessment. ABA provides a full range of planning, architecture and interior design services, and has extensive experience working with library facilities.

The subsequent report provides a description of the library's service program and comparative data, followed by an evaluation of the library's facility and its services and collections as they are affected by the building. The report also concludes with a building program detailing space needs and recommendations for the size of a library building needed to serve the community into the future.

Findings of the Atherton Library Needs Assessment

Facilities can support or inhibit the ability to meet the operational needs of a library. The Library Needs Assessment findings suggest that the existing facility presents significant barriers to the effective delivery of library services including:

- Inability to house an adequate collection for a community of its size
- A need to increase the number and types of seating available
- A need to increase the number of public computers available
- A need to provide areas for library related programs and events
- A need to create spaces or zones for various uses, such as quiet study areas, browsing areas, and spaces dedicated for children and teens

The report recommends that in order to effectively meet identified service needs, the facility would require an increase from the current 4,790 square feet to approximately 11,100 square feet.

Recommended Next Steps

Based on the findings of the Library Needs Assessment, we recommend that the Town partner with San Mateo County Library, Friends of the Atherton Library and other key stakeholders to create a work group tasked with reviewing this report and two others associated with the Atherton Library facility (ASCA 31-03 Structural Evaluation Report 2/11/09 and FEMA 356 Life Safety Building Performance Evaluation and Probable Maximum Loss (PML) Analysis 9/24/09). This work group would identify and examine options in order to make a recommendation for creating a facility that meets current and future needs.

The San Mateo County Library wishes to thank the Town of Atherton for its enthusiastic support and interest in the improvement of the Atherton Library.

Attachment

Atherton Library Needs Assessment, February 5, 2010