

From: Brad Sears [REDACTED]

Sent: Monday, June 3, 2024 1:54 PM

To: Distrib- City Clerk <city.clerk@cityofsanrafael.org>

Subject: For the record: The abandonment of the Carnegie Library, a short story.

MONDO BONDAGE

While shopping last month I was surprised at the number of people that eagerly signed the San Rafael Library Foundations ballot initiative petition for a New Downtown Library without reading it. The San Rafael Library Foundation plans to abandon the main library on Fifth Avenue for a combined library and community center where the lightly used Albert Park Community Center exists and was recently rezoned as part of the Downtown. The Foundation's presentation to the Library Trustees last September <https://www.cityofsanrafael.org/meetings/board-of-library-trustees-september-12-2023/#/tab-video> admits to the questionable success of their bond since their polling barely reached statistical significance and was long, artfully confusing, and avoided posing the pivotal question directly, to choose the Albert Complex or remodel the uptown Carnegie. The initiative avoids stating the cumulative costs that parallel what doomed Measure A last March, especially its second order effects like what to do with the Carnegie. The meeting video takes on many of the issues below and estimates the cost to be about 100 million not including the CPI over 30 years.

The purpose of our group is to alert voters that are fond of the Carnegie and offended by the abandonment of it as our main library, plus we provide an appropriate alternative. Our group Keep the Carnegie believes the need for a grandiose community center is overstated and counter to

what the public wants. The analysis of their polling indicated that if there was resistance it would be defeated. There will be resistance.

What to do? In 2011 local architect Ron Kappe's Carnegie new Revival design satisfies everything the city financed 2017 "Needs Assessment" for a library of the future at a fraction of the Albert Park Complex cost. Kappe's handsome plan continues the same design elements as the large classic sitting room and utilizes the massive concrete parking structure engineered for automobiles in 1960 and reinforced later in the 70's to support several floors of new library space and a roof garden with views of Mount Tam to Oakland over the amazing heritage oak tree. "Keep the Carnegie" will post the design on the Marin Post It's a natural solution.

The City of San Rafael hired the architects Noll and Tam seven years ago to draft a Needs Assessment. At the core of their "Needs Assessment" the Foundation intentionally excluded local public libraries in their square footage calculations, the Civic Center and Dominican both being a part of the MARINet system and surrounded by the City of San Rafael. Stale population demographics are still being used. <https://publicrecords.cityofsanrafael.org/WebLink/DocView.aspx?id=19789&page=19&>

Remodeling the Carnegie and expanding the Pickleweed Branch would have brought the system up to the industry standard's square footage metric. A numbers game since the Albert Complex and library are combined under Parks and Recreation and the difference between today's definition of a library and recreation is not as simple as it was when you could rely on the dictionary. The initiative doesn't fund the conversion of the Carnegie to "another

public use" or state what is lost by the Carnegie and gained by the Albert Complex in terms of space. Losing the Carnegie would add 12,500 SQ feet of excess city owned venue space. It is difficult to conceive of a credible new use for the beloved Carnegie on San Rafael's Cultural Corridor.

The crux of the matter is that the Carnegie sits on high ground and can not be replaced in the hearts of the community, this is a preference of locations and an example of how a very few well financed politicians and business people have gamed the initiative process. A "Citizens Initiative" lowers the threshold for passage from 66% to 51%. Moving the goalposts and the wealthy gaming the system is the only way that this could pass

We believe the public prefers the traditional uptown site on Fifth Avenue. The "New Downtown Library" would be built on drained marshland that was recently rezoned as part of the last General Plan, not really downtown.

Worthy of attention are possible legal conflicts of using charity money for a political purpose, the original owner's deed restrictions and especially whether it is truly a citizens initiative.

Architectural insensitivity, (cheap white vinyl replacement windows with green glass) is the City's doing, perhaps their undoing. The city should have fixed the roof 15 years ago but images of wet books have played perennially across the IJ's front page and star in the Foundations PR pitches. Negligence for the purpose of abandoning the library is shameful and means the wrong people are in charge.
Brad Sears