



City of San Rafael

# San Rafael Public Library Service and Facilities Vision

Final Report 2017-07-26



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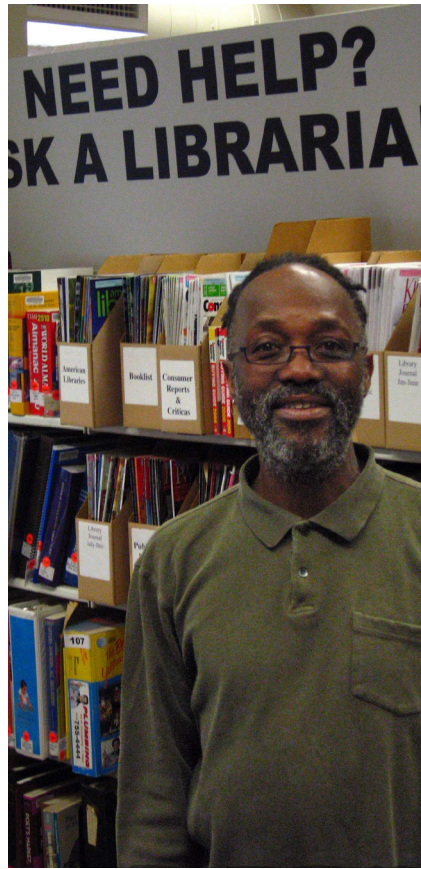
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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This study was initiated to: confirm current and future needs for library services in San Rafael; evaluate the suitability of the City of San Rafael’s existing library facilities to meet these needs; and identify the community’s vision and priorities for library services and facilities.

Through outreach to more than 1,400 San Rafael residents over the past two years, a clear vision has emerged of improved library services and facilities. The community wants access to **expanded resources**, including a larger and richer collection. It wants **increased access to services**, including library programming and technology as well as expanded hours of operations. And it envisions the library as a **place for people** – an inviting, comfortable environment with plenty of seating and space for a wide range of activities, from contemplative to collaborative.

The San Rafael community recognizes how hard SRPL staff work to provide excellent service. In April 2017, the City released the results of its biennial City Satisfaction Survey, in which SRPL was again the second-highest ranked city service. Community surveys conducted by SRPL over recent years — including the survey conducted for this Vision study — have consistently found that the community values the efforts of library staff and the quality of service they provide.

However, the community also recognizes that San Rafael’s current library facilities place limitations on the quantity and quality of service that SRPL can provide. Both the Pickleweed Library and the Carnegie building are **too small** to meet the community’s needs and demands for service; the collection cannot grow, seating is scarce, and there is little space for programs. The Carnegie building’s age, condition, and **inability to be cost-effectively modernized** are well documented in other studies. Multiple expansions of the Carnegie building over the last 60 years have also resulted in a configuration that is highly **inefficient to operate**.



This Vision study concludes that additional library space is needed in order to achieve the San Rafael community's vision of library service. Community priorities include:

- Creating a significantly larger library in or near downtown San Rafael. At least triple the space of the current library is needed for San Rafael's current and projected future population, which will require an alternate site.
- Expand space for the Pickleweed Library at the Albert J. Boro Community Center.
- Explore development opportunities and operational feasibility of a new library presence in north San Rafael.

Recommended next steps for each of these priorities are described in this report. This report also discusses opportunities for potential reuse of the highly-cherished Carnegie building, because that site cannot accommodate a downtown library of the recommended size.

# Library facilities history



1905  
Andrew Carnegie donates funds

1909  
5,160 SF Carnegie building opens

1960  
10,240 SF addition

1976  
Underground parking converted to children's room

1980  
Asbestos abatement

1992  
Seismic retrofit; elevator addition

2003  
Downtown Library Feasibility Study

2015  
SRPL Vision Study Initiated

1980s  
Pickleweed Community Center with small library



2006  
Pickleweed Community Center renovation with expanded library



## PROJECT BACKGROUND

The San Rafael Public Library has been at the heart of cultural and community life in San Rafael since the late 1800s. In 1906 Andrew Carnegie donated funds for construction of the City of San Rafael's first dedicated library building, which opened in 1909. In the late 1950s, the City undertook a project to more than double the size of the library through the addition of a new wing on the north side; the Carnegie building's original entry and steps were removed and the facade was modified.

Within a decade after the 1960 library addition opened, San Rafael's population had nearly doubled. Another library expansion project was initiated to enclose the ground-level parking area beneath the 1960 addition. The 14,800 square foot library re-opened in 1976, and has continued to operate at this size and configuration ever since.

In the early 1980s, the City built the Pickleweed Park Community Center (since renamed the Albert J. Boro Community Center) to serve the growing Canal neighborhood. The community center included a small library. In the mid-2000s, the community center was renovated and significantly expanded. This expansion project more than doubled the space dedicated to the Pickleweed Library to its current 2,185 square feet. The new design also allowed it to be operated independently from the rest of the community center as needed.

San Rafael has a current population of nearly 60,000 people — about 50% more than when the Carnegie library building was last expanded. During the last four decades, the building has struggled to keep up not only with population growth, but also with more diversity in collection formats and the increasingly rapid evolution and adoption cycle of new technologies. Although the Pickleweed Library has been vital for the east San Rafael community, this small addition of space has not been able to meaningfully address the increasing deficit of library space and resources in San Rafael.



**Project purpose**

- Develop a **clear vision** for the future of the San Rafael Public Library
- **Leverage** previous Library and City work
- **Engage** staff, stakeholders, and the community
- Provide a **platform** for moving forward

**PROJECT METHODOLOGY AND PARTICIPATION**

In 2015, the City commissioned a study of the community’s library space needs through 2035. Group 4 Architecture, Research + Planning, Inc., led the development of the study overall, including the system analysis and assessment of library development strategies. Kathryn Page Associates prepared the space needs assessment.

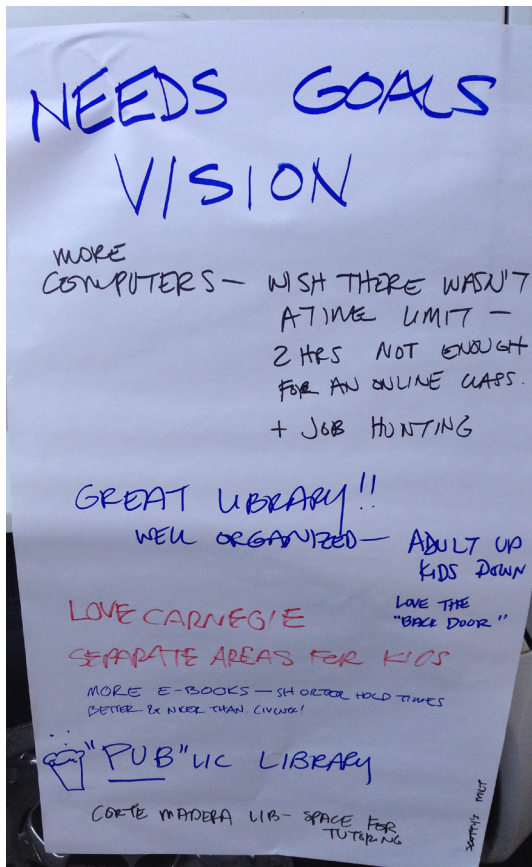
Group 4 worked closely with SRPL administration and staff throughout the project. The project also included multi-method engagement of stakeholders and the community. Hundreds of community members provided input on library service priorities at kiosk events facilitated by SRPL staff in 2015 at various locations such as B Street Community Center, the downtown farmers market, Mi Rancho, Starbucks, and more. A City Council subcommittee reviewed project progress periodically to confirm findings and provide feedback on analysis and directions.

To supplement the kiosk outreach events, in 2016 the San Rafael Public Library Foundation commissioned a community survey about library perceptions, use patterns, and vision and priorities for the future. The survey was made available in English and Spanish on the City’s and SRPL’s website as well as in paper versions. San Rafael residents were notified about the survey via a citywide mailer. More than 1,000 San Rafael residents responded to the survey, including more than 175 responses to the Spanish language version.

Project findings were presented to City Council in June 2017.

*“I love the library!”*

— community member at downtown farmers market, 2015



## COMMUNITY LIBRARY VISION

The vision for libraries in San Rafael has emerged from extensive community input gathered over the course of many years. This Vision study process engaged more than 1,400 people, and that input is reflected in this section (and throughout this report). Also included are key findings from previous community surveys conducted by SRPL in recent years.

Through all methods of engagement, San Rafael community members voiced their love and appreciation for the library. “I would like to say thank you to our wonderful library. This library has done amazing things over the last several years. I don’t know what precipitated such a swell in AWESOMENESS but I am very proud of our home town library!”

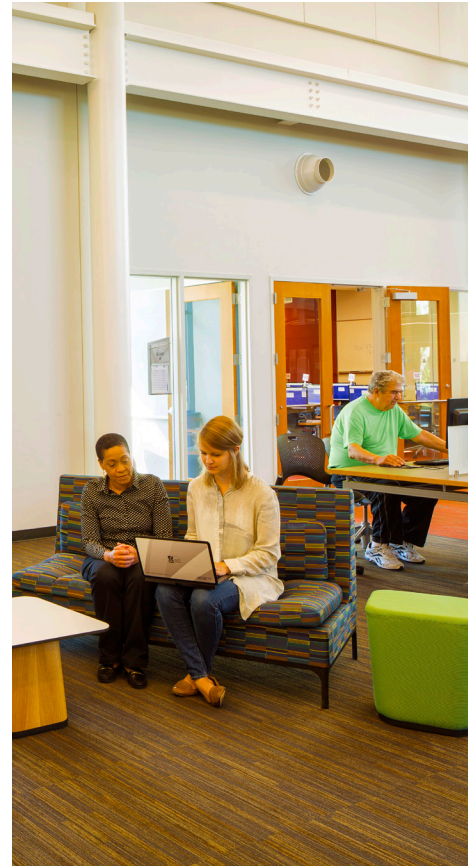
Community members generously gave their time to share creative, diverse, innovative, and thoughtful input and ideas about their library vision. Major themes that emerged include the San Rafael community’s vision of:

- expanded core resources;
- increased access to services and programs; and
- a place for people in the library.

“We have the best library staff.  
So helpful!”

— community survey respondent





## EXPANDED CORE RESOURCES

The library's collection is still very much at the heart of the San Rafael community's love for its library. The community envisions a high quality collection that appeals to all ages and diverse interests, promoting literacy and learning as well as a lifelong love of reading. Expanded access to an improved collection has been a high priority for the community for many years. In a 2012 survey, "well-stocked shelves with lots of books" was the second-highest ranked response — just behind "clean and safe facilities" — to the question "what services do you think are most important for your library to have?"

The collection is still valued as a core library service, and will continue to be an important resource to San Rafael in the future. The community's vision for libraries includes a significantly expanded collection, with a greater quantity and diversity of print materials and physical media (including CDs, DVDs, etc.) as well as growth in digital materials. The library should be able to retain items for as long as they are of community interest and value. The community is also interested in exploring opportunities for lending that goes "beyond the book," including the potential to share things like tools and seeds.

In addition to a larger quantity and selection of materials, the community wants the collection to be more accessible, with lower shelf heights and generous aisles. Shelves should have the room to support easy location of specific items. There should

*"I love libraries and hope that we will continue to have beautiful spaces with room to sit and read, do work, gather (and natural light); and plenty of shelves of books, periodicals, cds and dvds. This is more important than ever now that brick and mortar bookstores have almost disappeared."*

— community survey respondent



also be copious opportunities for face-out display to increase the chance for serendipitous discovery of an intriguing book or DVD. One community respondent described "...the value of \*browsing\* as opposed to merely searching for something in a database and then clicking on it."

Computers and technology are also seen as a core library service by the San Rafael community. In a 2012 community survey, nearly 60% of respondents said the "computers and other technology" were important services for the library to provide. Technology was the top-ranked library service priority among San Rafael residents engaged through informal kiosks at various community locations in 2015.

In the 2016 survey, one east San Rafael resident spoke of the library's role in building a strong future for community youth through access to technology: "Tengan en cuenta el futuro de nuestros niños y jóvenes de Canal.... Hagamos de Pickleweed Library un lugar más adecuado, espacioso, y con los recursos tecnológicos dirigidos a nuestra juventud."

The library also is envisioned as a place for community members to use their own technology, providing "comfortable places to sit and work at a laptop with plenty of electrical outlets available." In the 2012 survey, more than half of respondents said that power and wifi support for patrons' laptops is important for the library to provide.

*"Lots of books on the stacks.  
Tool lending library.  
Seed lending library."*

— community survey respondent,  
in response to "What else would  
you like to see at the San Rafael  
Public Library?"



#### INCREASED ACCESS TO SERVICES AND PROGRAMS

The community's enthusiasm for the San Rafael Public Library includes a strong desire for increased access to services and programs. One aspect of access is hours of operation, which survey respondents in 2016 identified as the most important factor in deciding which library location (in San Rafael or otherwise) to visit. One community member said, "Hours are critical! After school hours, evening hours, morning hours, 7 day (or as close to it as possible) access."

There is also a desire for more activities and programs for all ages in the library. Community survey respondents strongly supported the vision of increased space for programs, meetings, and events. A number of community members talked of the opportunities for expanded library programming with increased program participation. Others envision civic and community events, such as "events promoting diversity and inclusion."

Space and programming to support children's learning, play, and growth ranked highly in the informal kiosk events in 2015. One survey respondent wished for: "...enough distinct spaces for small kids, elementary, middle and high school kids – for everything from storytime to middle school homework clubs to SAT prep classes."

*"I suggest cross-cultural events that might bring together folks from the many communities that make up San Rafael. Diversity is one of the town's great assets, and the library can help us get to know and appreciate one another."*

— community survey respondent



Enhanced geographic access to library services in San Rafael is an important element of the community's vision. Throughout the community, there is strong support for maintaining a significant library presence in downtown San Rafael. The community is fiercely passionate about preserving the Carnegie Library as a symbol of the community's shared history and heritage. At the same time, many community members recognize that a new site might better support improved and expanded access to library services. A number of survey respondents proposed potential new uses for the Carnegie Library building that would maintain and celebrate its importance to the community; this is discussed in more detail later in this report.

East San Rafael residents cherish their ability to access services at the Pickleweed Library. Several survey respondents from other neighborhoods even spontaneously mentioned the importance of maintaining a library presence in the Canal district to meet those residents' diverse needs.

Similarly, there is an awareness in the community of the potential to increase the library's presence and access to services in north San Rafael. Currently the closest library to this community is operated by the Marin County Free Library at the Marin Civic Center.

*"Libraries are so important. Have them open all the time with lots of helpful staff and in beautiful environments."*

— community survey respondent



#### A PLACE FOR PEOPLE IN THE LIBRARY

Some survey respondents have grown accustomed to San Rafael's libraries as places that are so full of books, there is little space for much of anything else. But many can easily envision libraries that are attractive, inviting, comfortable, and spacious enough to support a wide range of services and activities as well as the collection.

In a 2014 community survey, respondents used words like "clean, modern, light, friendly, open, and welcoming" to describe their ideal library. These respondents also prioritized improved space for children and teens in the library.

In the 2016 survey, the Mill Valley Library was mentioned by many as a positive example of what San Rafael's libraries could strive to be. Descriptions of the ideal library included "a beautiful environment in which to learn and share information" and "a space of contemplation and learning...." One community resident described their vision of a library with "modern, clean interior design, spaces with lots of light, comfy reading areas...."

The importance of providing copious and comfortable places to sit was mentioned by many community members. Survey respondents placed a high priority on having more seating choices in a variety of settings, both quiet and active. Flexible space and furnishings that support collaborative work and study are an important part of the community's future library vision.

*"Design of space and building must be beautiful and appealing to make people enjoy spending time there!"*

— community survey respondent

## SUITABILITY OF CURRENT LIBRARY FACILITIES

So how do San Rafael's current libraries measure up against this clear vision of library service? This process examined how well-suited San Rafael's current library facilities are to supporting modern library service.

The community is keenly aware that San Rafael's library facilities are inadequate to meet their needs. In a 2012 community survey, nearly one in five respondents said that they do not use the library because space is limited and/or uncomfortable.

## PICKLEWEED LIBRARY

The Pickleweed Library occupies dedicated space at the end of the west wing of the Albert J. Boro Community Center in east San Rafael. The original small space was expanded in the mid-2000s, funded through a competitive grant program administered by the California State Library. That expansion increased space for the collection, seating, and staff work areas; provided a new dedicated entry and bathrooms for the library; and added a computer lab. The community center expansion also increased the size and quantity of program and classroom spaces intended for sharing with the library.

While the Pickleweed Library is vital to the community, it struggles to meet demand. Hundreds of community members visit the library every day, but there is little space to enable them to stay for very long. SRPL does not widely promote programming at the Pickleweed Library, as it lacks the space to accommodate large attendance.

One 2016 community survey respondent described the Pickleweed Library as as "muy reducido y confinado." Many survey respondents spoke about the importance of the Pickleweed Library to the community, and noted the need for expanded space and service:

- "Necesitamos una biblioteca de Pickleweed más grande."
- "Expandir Pickleweed. Muchas familias visitan ahí."
- "Hagamos de Pickleweed Library un lugar más adecuado, espacioso, y con los recursos tecnológicos dirigidos a nuestra juventud."



*"Ampliar Pickleweed."*

— community survey respondent



### CARNEGIE BUILDING

The Carnegie building has served the community for more than a century – during which San Rafael’s population grew ten-fold in number and increased significantly in both density and diversity. The last century also saw significant evolution in industry, technology, arts, culture, and even community life. This growth and change has placed a great deal of pressure on the Carnegie building, which has been expanded twice in order to accommodate increased demand.

It is easy to see the signs of wear and tear that the Carnegie Library building has experienced. These conditions are well documented in more detail in other studies (see, for example, *San Rafael Downtown Library Feasibility Study, 2003*). While the community is proud and passionate about the Carnegie building as a symbol of heritage, they are keenly aware of the building’s technical shortcomings. Many survey respondents commented about poor air quality, inadequate lighting, long wait times for inadequate restrooms, accessibility challenges, and other barriers to their easy and comfortable use of the library. In a 2014 community, more respondents rated the building’s condition as fair or poor than as good or excellent.

However, even if the Carnegie building were to undergo significant renovation, it would still struggle to provide modern library service to the San Rafael community. The building is **simply too small**, which reduces its ability to serve the community on all measures.

*“I find the existing library small, somewhat dark, and crowded feeling. The meeting room is tiny so I do not attend events there.*

*In a more spacious, modern, up-to-date facility with meeting rooms, a stronger collection, and a community focus, I would be happy to come more often and support the library. I know these are all aims of the library personnel, but the facility it is currently housed in, while fabulous in its day, is no longer capable of housing a modern library.”*

— community survey respondent



- Space for the **collection is maxed out**. The shelves are full, preventing the library from responding adequately to the dozens of survey respondents who asked for “more books!” Even the lowest and highest shelves are filled, which some community members noted are difficult to reach. To make room for each new book acquired, another book must be discarded – regardless of whether it is still of community interest and relevance. One community member described shelving areas as “claustrophobic.” Another described the Carnegie building as “endless shelves with very little display, making it hard to find things serendipitously.”
- The quantity of **seating is limited**. There are fewer than half the recommended number of seats for a community of San Rafael’s size. Patrons who cannot find an open seat must choose between sitting on the floor or leaving the library. One survey respondent noted that “...there often are not enough seats to do research.”
- The library **cannot provide enough computers** to meet public needs. The Carnegie building provides less than one-third the number of computers recommended for a community of San Rafael’s size. It also does not provide adequate power connections for customers who bring their own computers and technology devices.
- **Teen space is inadequate** and mostly indistinct within the upstairs library level.
- The **Children’s Room is disconnected** from other parts of the library, which means that caregivers cannot access other library services while still keeping an eye on children participating in programs. It occupies space that used to be a garage, which has low ceilings and little daylight.
- Programs are essential to modern library service, but the Carnegie building’s **meeting room is too small**. San Rafael’s main library should be able to accommodate at least 150 program participants, but this meeting space can only accommodate about 30 people. High-interest programs must be held offsite.





The Carnegie building also **operates inefficiently** as a library, in part because of the multiple building expansions over time. Staff spend a significant amount of time compensating for the shortcomings of the building, which reduces their availability to provide personal, high-value service to the public.

- Ideally, a library of this size would be designed on a single level, with one main staff service point that has excellent visual access of major public areas. The Carnegie building requires three staff service points: at the front entrance, in the Children's Room, and upstairs. The upstairs service desk has some visibility into the large reading room, but not adjacency.
- Work space for staff is extremely limited. Staff work desks are split up and shoehorned into tight places on both floors. Some desks are very crowded and shared by multiple staff.
- Materials flow is inefficient. The Carnegie building's multiple levels and very small circulation work room present challenges to efficient receiving, processing, and shelving of new and returned collection items. The building cannot easily accommodate technologies that would increase materials flow efficiency and enable staff to expand service.

*"I would like to see a new library that is not only energy efficient, but is built with least toxic [sic] to nontoxic materials, and windows that open....*

*We are all stakeholders when it comes to the air we breathe."*

*— community survey respondent*

# Library space needs – citywide

## Service component targets

	SAN RAFAEL TODAY	PLANNING TARGETS	SAN RAFAEL NEEDS TODAY	SAN RAFAEL 20-YEAR VISION
POPULATION	~59,000 pop	independent city library	~59,000 pop	~65,000 pop
SEATING – OPEN ACCESS	~115 seats 1.9 per 1,000 pop	5.9-6.5 seats/1,000 pop including 60 seats in 8-10 group study rooms	~350 to 380 seats lounges, work, group study	~380 to 420 seats including 60 seats in 8-10 group study rooms
COLLECTION	~140,000 volumes (2.4 vol/cap) print + digital	3.8-4.4 volumes per capita print + digital	~220,000 to 260,000 volumes print + digital	~245,000 to 280,000 volumes print + digital
COMPUTERS	17 library computers + 16 in shared computer lab @ Pickleweed ~0.6 per 1,000 pop	2.5 to 2.9 computers/1,000 pop including training lab, laptops, tablets	~145 to 170 computers including technology lab/training	~160 to 185 computers including technology lab/training
PROGRAM SPACE	30 seat meeting room @ Downtown shared small/large space @ Pickleweed no dedicated storytime seats at either	150 to 200 seats per library – adult/multipurpose + 75 storytime seats per library	150 to 200 adult/multipurpose seats per library + 75 storytime seats per library	150 to 200 adult/multipurpose seats per library + 75 storytime seats per library
LIBRARY SQ FT	~17,600 square feet ~0.30 square feet/capita	0.7 to 0.75 square feet/capita	~40,000 to 45,000 square feet	~45,000 to 50,000 square feet
PARKING	Three (3) spots at Downtown shared at Pickleweed	40 spaces for first 10,000 GSF then 20 spaces per additional 10,000 GSF	100 to 110 spaces	110 to 120 spaces

### LIBRARY SPACE PLANNING TARGET

“Square foot per capita” is an important and commonly-accepted metric for library space planning. Because population growth is strongly correlated with the demand for library services, it is appropriate to plan library space relative to the size of the community population. However, there is no universal standard ratio of library space to population that is appropriate for all communities. Rather, the specific square foot per capita ratio is tailored to each community, taking into account a range of variables including community profile, patterns of mobility, and service needs, as well as the library’s organizational characteristics and resources.

San Rafael Public Library is an independent library operating as a department of the City of San Rafael. SRPL’s membership in MARINet enables San Rafael residents to borrow materials from any other MARINet member library with their SRPL library card. This also means that residents of other Marin County communities can access and use SRPL’s collection with their library card. One in six respondents to a 2014 SRPL survey lived outside of San Rafael.

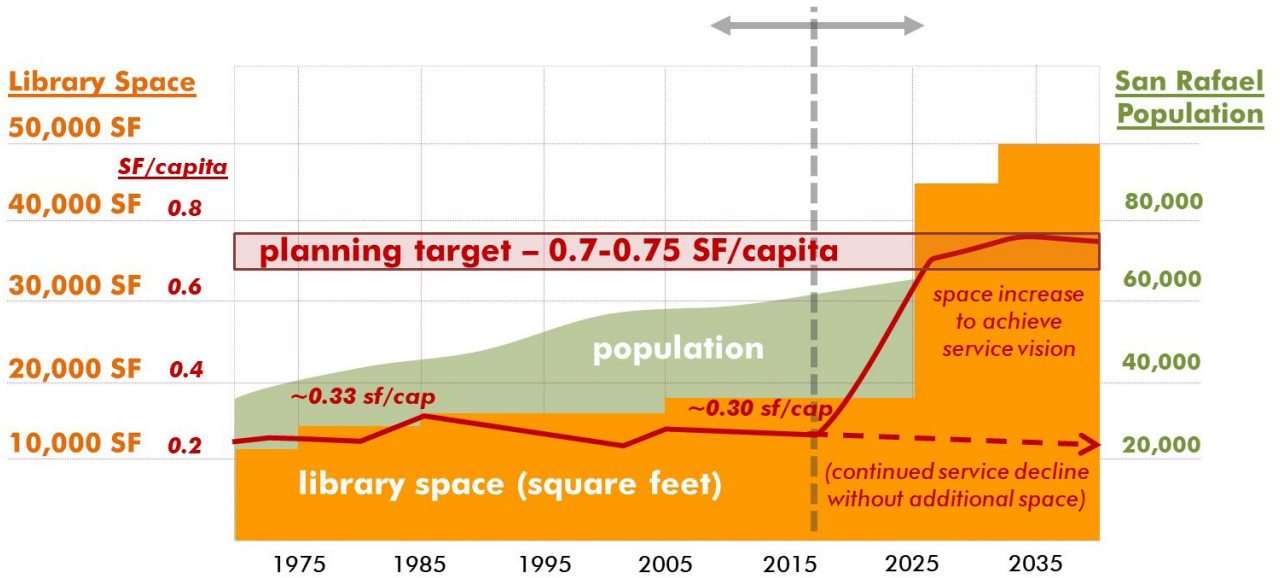
San Rafael has a current population of nearly 60,000. Moderate future population growth is expected, with a projected 2035 population of about 65,000 (approximately 8% growth). Per the City’s General Plan, some of this growth is anticipated to be transit-oriented development in central/downtown San Rafael.

*“It’s amazing to go [to the library] and see it so busy in the middle of the day. They need more space!”*

— community member at  
downtown farmers market, 2015

# Library space needs – citywide

## Space planning target



The recommended library space planning target for San Rafael is 0.7 to 0.75 square feet per capita. Based on this space planning target, it is recommended that San Rafael provide at least 45,000 to 50,000 square feet of library space citywide to meet the needs of its estimated 2035 population of about 65,000 people.

This amount of space will provide SRPL with the capacity and flexibility to respond to the community's vision for library service. This space planning target will enable SRPL to more than double the collection; triple the amount of seating; and significantly expand space for technology and programs. (Specific quantities of these service components will be determined in discussion with the community in future phases.)

Below the 0.7 SF/capita threshold, SRPL will face more significant compromises to its long-term ability to meet the community's need for services. This challenge is clearly demonstrated in SRPL's current facilities, which today provide less than half the recommended amount of space per resident.

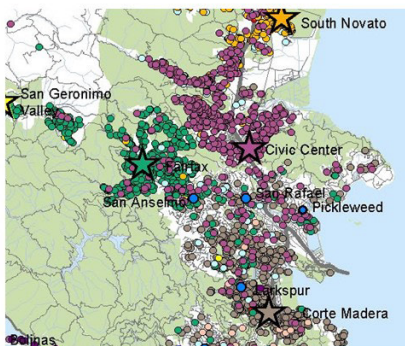
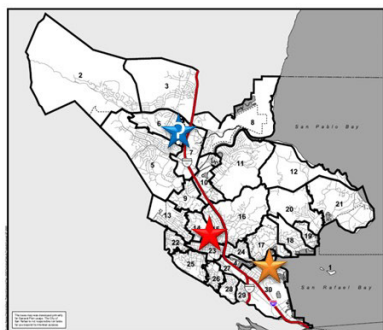
*"I hope you don't decentralize and create other branches at [the Downtown Library's] expense. The staff, services and facility are high caliber. I would hate to see a decline in hours or services."*

— community survey respondent

# Library development strategies

## How many libraries should San Rafael have?

- *How is the community using libraries today? What drives their choices?*
- *What would be important to the community in an expanded system?*
- *What priorities would the community have for improving libraries?*
- *What impact would an additional library have on the operating budget?*



### QUANTITY AND LOCATION OF LIBRARIES

How many libraries should San Rafael have? Finding the right balance between access and resources is at the core of this decision for most communities in planning libraries. More libraries can mean increased access to library services, as each new library location can reduce the distance that people must travel to reach a library. On the other hand, each new library location requires additional staff and resources to operate and maintain, which — in the absence of an unlimited operating budget — must be reallocated from other uses.

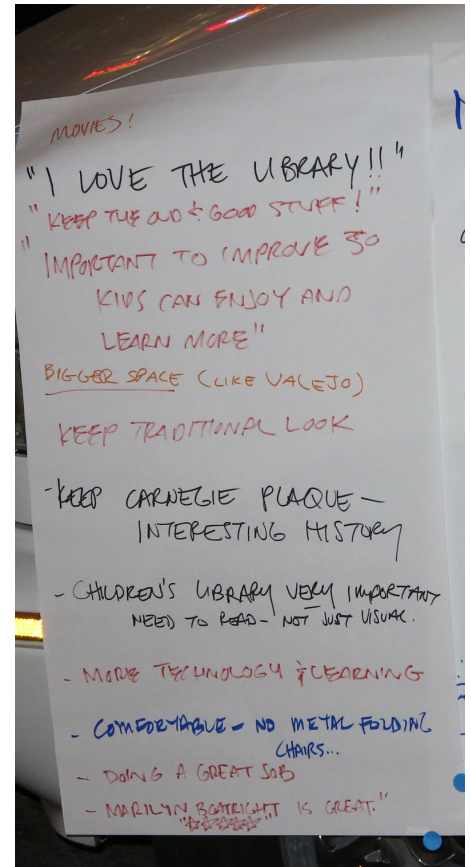
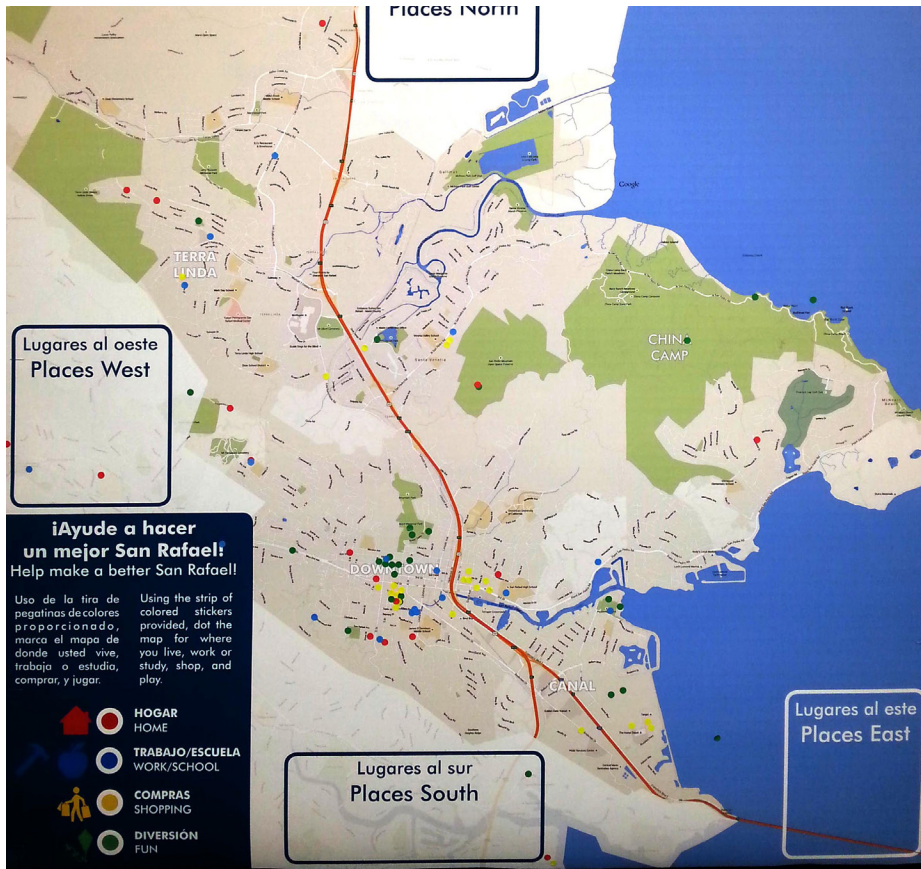
#### Central San Rafael

In a community with high mobility and good connectivity, concentrating library staff and resources in one location can be a highly cost-effective strategy for providing library service. For decades, the Carnegie building served as the sole library location in San Rafael. This single-library strategy was an effective way to deliver library service at a time when most people lived in the central San Rafael area.

Community members throughout San Rafael — including east and north San Rafael — still see downtown as an appropriate location for San Rafael's most significant library facility. About 90% of survey respondents said that having a full-service library in downtown San Rafael is important. This Visioning study recommends that the City continue to operate a major library in downtown San Rafael.

#### East San Rafael

Geographic barriers and other connectivity challenges can reduce access to library services. Highway 101 and the San Rafael Creek somewhat limit connectivity between the Canal neighborhood and other parts of San Rafael. The relative isolation of east San Rafael, coupled with the demographic and socioeconomic characteristics of its growing population, were primary reasons behind the City's decision to include a



library in the Pickleweed Park Community Center when it opened in the 1980s. Today, the Pickleweed Library represents about one-third of the San Rafael Public Library's annual operating budget.

This Visioning study found that there is strong community support for continuing to operate the Pickleweed Library, particularly among residents living in the 94901 ZIP code. The Pickleweed Library has an important positive impact for the community, and its continued operation is recommended.

### North San Rafael

There is community support – particularly among Terra Linda residents – for improved access to library services in north San Rafael. Although Highway 101 is a significant connector between north and central San Rafael, the hills and limited surface street connections can make Terra Linda residents feel somewhat isolated from the rest of the city. Until the early 1970s, Terra Linda was an unincorporated community served by the Marin County Free Library. Once Terra Linda was annexed, responsibility for library service shifted to City of San Rafael; however, many Terra Linda residents continue to use the Marin Civic Center Library, which is just across Highway 101.

While there is strong support in north San Rafael for an increased SRPL presence in Terra Linda, the feasibility of developing and operating it has not yet been determined. There are a number of possible service models that may serve this need, depending on the availability of capital and operating resources; some are described in the next section. Feasibility analysis and recommendation of a specific service model will be an important next phase of planning for the City.

## Community priorities

### New Downtown Library

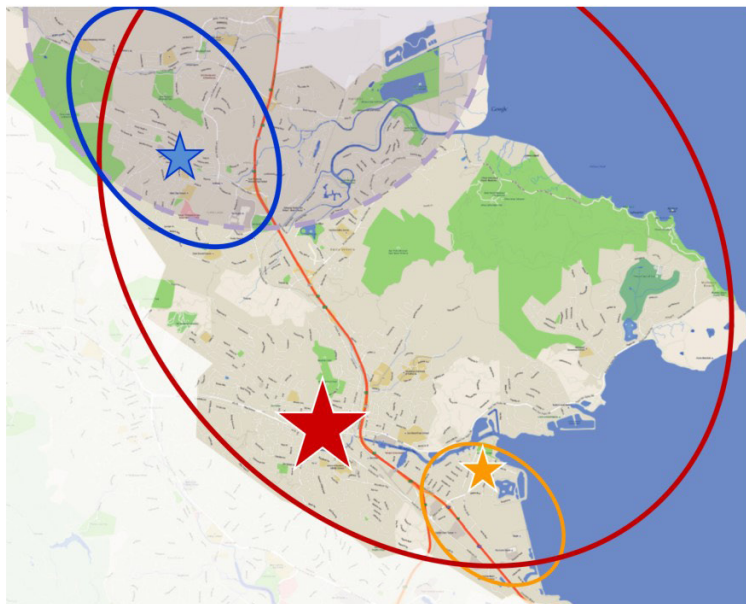
- Develop ~45,000 SF library on alternate site in downtown San Rafael
- Retain Carnegie building for other community uses

### Expand Pickleweed Library

- Increase dedicated library space

### Terra Linda library presence

- Location, size, and service model to be determined



## COMMUNITY PRIORITIES

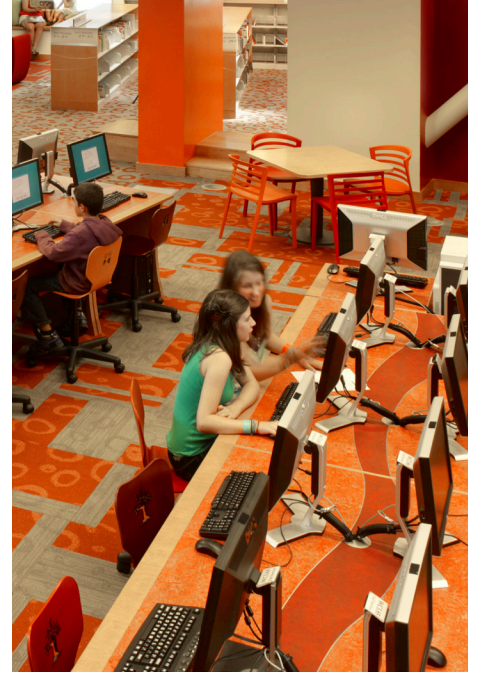
The 2016 community survey showed support for expanded libraries in San Rafael in general. Regarding expansion priorities for specific libraries:

- Nine in ten survey respondents value having a full-service library in downtown San Rafael. Nearly three-fourths of respondents overall said that they would be likely to visit an expanded downtown library – even including many respondents living in north San Rafael.
- Forty percent of San Rafael residents said that they would be likely to visit an expanded Pickleweed Library as their first or second choice. More than 96% of residents who completed the Spanish version of the survey ranked an expanded Pickleweed Library as their first choice of library to visit. One resident who lives west of downtown remarked, “Pickleweed deserves to be improved in size because it takes care of that community.”
- More than one-third of San Rafael residents overall – including nearly 90% of 94903 ZIP code residents – reported that they would be likely to visit a library in Terra Linda as their first or second choice.

Recommended next steps for each of these are described below.

*“It seems to me that libraries are at a transition period in history. The idea of visiting a central place to read books or just to check out books is changing. I can access a huge variety of material sitting at home or anywhere. I think in the future libraries should be more about places to facilitate what we do after reading or why we read. There is definitely a place for institutions like libraries to create communities. The power of books and other materials plus people. There must be a book on that somewhere.”*

— community survey respondent



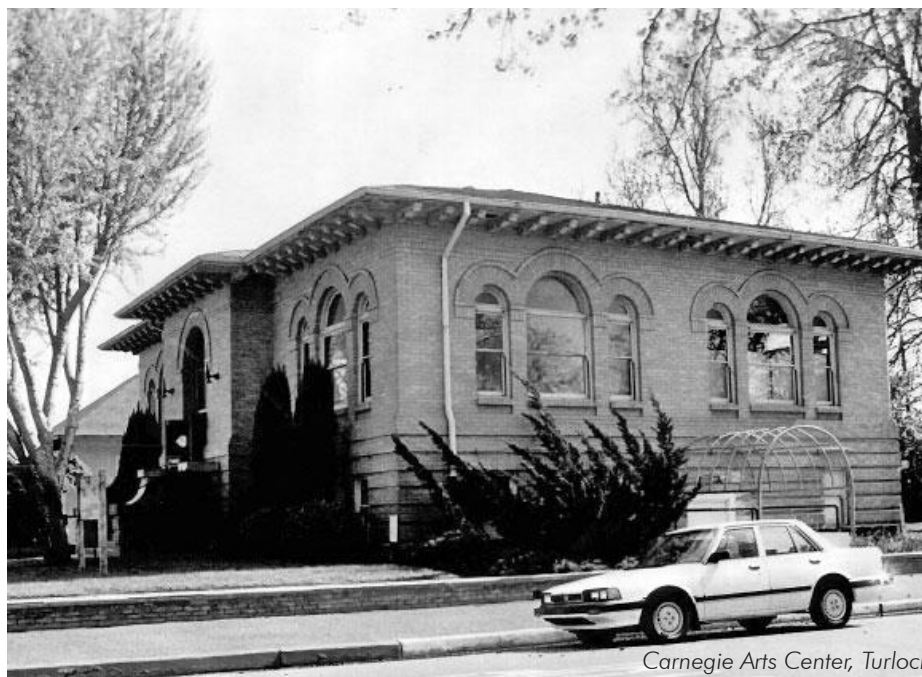
#### DOWNTOWN LIBRARY

It is recommended that the City provide a library of 45,000 square feet or more in central San Rafael. A library of this size will allow SRPL to fulfill all aspects of the community's vision for future library service – including expanded resources, increased access, and plenty of space for people to read, study, work, participate in programs, and engage in civic and community discourse with friends and neighbors.

As previous studies have found, the existing Carnegie Library site cannot reasonably accommodate a library of 45,000 square feet through either expansion or replacement. A building of that size on that site would likely be at least three stories, which would be even more staff-intensive to operate than the current two-story library. Also, as one survey respondent remarked, “there will never be enough parking to put in a big library at 5th and E.”

It is recommended that the City find an alternate site in or near downtown San Rafael for development of an expanded library. A suitable site will have capacity for development of a 45,000 square foot library on two levels, for maximum operating efficiency and effectiveness. It will be highly visible and easy for the community to find, preferably with good proximity to other popular community destinations. It will have good access via car and transit, as well as sufficient parking on site or nearby.

Next steps include evaluating the feasibility of developing a new library on a City-owned site such as Boyd Park. The City may also explore the possibility of acquiring another site, perhaps even one with an existing building that can be converted to a library. There are many successful examples of communities that have created modern, high-performance, high-impact libraries out of existing buildings, including former grocery stores, office buildings, and even indoor skating rinks.



Carnegie Arts Center, Turlock

### What would happen to the Carnegie building?

It is not in question that the San Rafael community cherishes the Carnegie building. Many survey respondents wrote beautifully about the importance of this building in San Rafael – historically, architecturally, and culturally. According to one respondent, “great care must be taken to see that this historic gem remains part of San Rafael’s community culture.” Another said, “It is in our hands to preserve this building, to pass it along, in good shape, to the next generation.”

There was notable concern among some survey respondents that the Carnegie building would be renovated beyond recognition or even demolished. To be clear, this Vision study does not recommend that the Carnegie building be torn down – only that it be decommissioned as San Rafael’s main library and repurposed.

Moving library functions out of the Carnegie building will provide the City and the community with an opportunity to develop a new vision for its future. San Rafael survey respondents proposed some ideas:

- “Build another library if you must, but keep this building going; perhaps house a special portion of the collections. You could also strip off the addition, restoring it to its original state.”
- “Is there any way to build a new library but maintain the older building as a satellite library or meeting space?”
- “Repurpose the existing library as the new home for the Marin History Museum and community gathering place.”

Many other cities have found new uses for their former Carnegie Library buildings that celebrate community heritage, such as cultural arts centers, fine arts and history museums, and community event space.



## Next steps

### Pickleweed Library

- Site analysis
- Confirm potential for expansion of dedicated library space



### PICKLEWEED LIBRARY

It is recommended that the City consider expanding the Pickleweed Library. The existing building and site appear to offer opportunities for a fairly straightforward expansion that could at least double the current dedicated library space. The feasibility, capacity, and general scope of the proposed expansion should be confirmed and refined as a next step. Program priorities for the expanded library (for example, whether to include meeting space, new services, etc.) should be developed in partnership with the community.

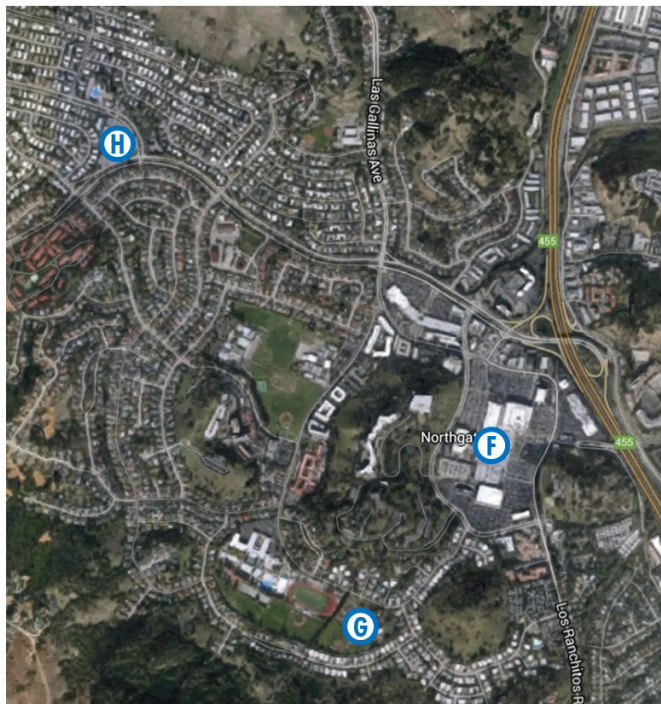
*“El espacio. Más grande por favor.  
Me gusta mi biblioteca de mi  
comunidad.”*

— community survey respondent

## Next steps

### Terra Linda library presence

- Identify options and opportunities
  - Standalone library – leased space? City-owned?
  - Joint library-community center?
  - Other co-location/joint-use/retail opportunities?
  
- Confirm feasibility
  - Additional operating costs for a new library location



### TERRA LINDA LIBRARY

It is recommended that the City conduct more detailed analysis of the opportunities for a library presence in north San Rafael. There is a range of possible service delivery models that the City could consider.

- One would be the partnership model of the Pickleweed Library, in which a library could be co-located with recreation facilities (or and/or other department or agency). One community member remarked, “I love the idea of making the library integrated into a wide range of recreation activities. You’ll reach more people.”
- Developing a standalone library branch, through new construction or adaptive reuse of an existing building, is another possibility for the City to evaluate.
- As an alternative to an owned facility, the City could also explore the feasibility of leasing retail space for library services.

Next steps will include evaluation of the feasibility and effectiveness of these possible models, including the availability of resources to operate an additional library branch.

*“I really appreciate the San Rafael Library — it is a real asset to our community. Thank you for the great work.”*

*— community survey respondent*



**OTHER NEXT STEPS**

More than 1,400 community members were engaged in the development of this Vision study, but there is much more to come. It will be important for SRPL and the City to continue the conversation with community members, leadership, and partners about the need for improved library facilities in San Rafael. Continuing to build a community-wide awareness of the needs and vision for improved libraries will be critical for securing support and building momentum for implementation.

The community’s highest priority is the development of a new downtown library. The City is moving forward with the next steps, with the initiation of a study to evaluate potential sites. This study will also confirm the feasibility and capacity for expansion of the Pickleweed Library at the Albert J. Boro Community Center, and explore potential service models and operating costs for a new library presence in Terra Linda.

*“We should have a world class library in San Rafael.”*

— community survey respondent



**G R O U P 4**

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