



San Diego Public Library Master Plan Framework

FINAL REPORT | November 2021





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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

MASTER PLAN FRAMEWORK PURPOSE AND PROCESS

This San Diego Public Library Master Plan Framework was commissioned to create a comprehensive vision and guiding principles for future development and improvement of San Diego's library network.

The process combined analysis of internally and externally-sourced data with robust engagement of community members, stakeholders, and leadership and staff of the San Diego Public Library and the City of San Diego. Although the COVID-19 pandemic extended the originally-planned project timeline and shifted engagement into virtual spaces, the disruption also offered unexpected and beneficial opportunities for observing SDPL's creativity, innovation, and potential for positive community impact in real time.



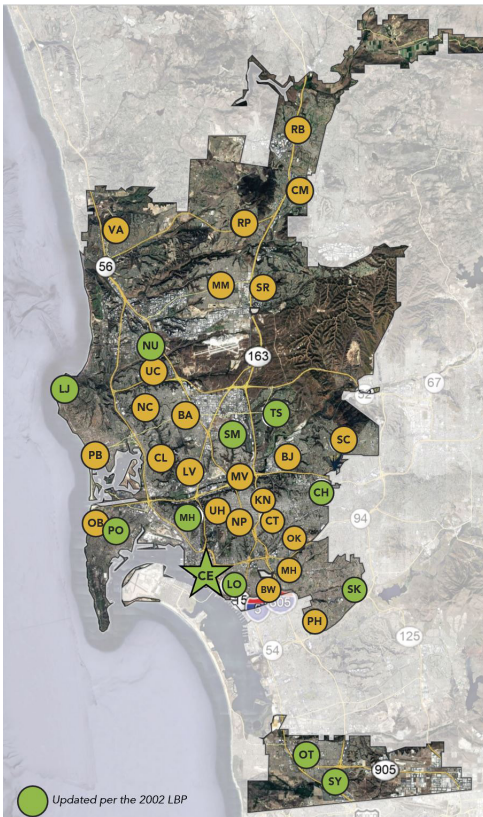
STATE OF THE SAN DIEGO PUBLIC LIBRARY NETWORK TODAY

In 2002, the City of San Diego announced a bold and ambitious 21st century vision for its libraries. It adopted the *Library Building Plan (LBP)*, which for the last two decades has guided capital investment in San Diego's libraries – including more than a dozen new and expanded branches as well as a new landmark Central Library showcasing innovative services, distinctive architecture, and robust partnerships. All of these projects were successful through significant stakeholder and community engagement and ownership as well as with the City's resources and management. All of the facilities improved through the LBP were performing well pre-pandemic, and many of them are re-opening safely.

Despite this substantial investment, there are still striking inequities among San Diego's diverse communities in terms of their access to library services, technology, spaces, and resources. More than half of its 35 branch libraries were not improved through the LBP — including many branches in San Diego's older and less affluent communities. Many of these branches are small, crowded, and unable to meet the breadth and diversity of their communities' needs. Many of these same buildings also have moderate to major deferred maintenance backlogs, putting them in stark contrast with the accessible, comfortable, and welcoming experience in San Diego's newer and renewed libraries.

Although the LBP significantly expanded library space in San Diego, it has not been enough to stay ahead of strong community growth. Today, SDPL's branches still cannot fully meet San Diegans' needs for programs, technology, and collections as well as for places to work, collaborate, and gather. The San Diego Association of Governments (SANDAG) projects additional growth of 20% or more by 2050 – much of which will be in the same communities with the City's most overtaxed and outdated branch libraries. More branch library space is needed to build equity of access and accommodate future growth.

Compounding the lack of library space in San Diego is a shortage of resources for library operations. As a result of the LBP, SDPL is operating 80% more space today than it was 20 years ago – but its operating budget has not increased nearly as much. Even with considerable support from community donors and organizations such as the San Diego Public Library Foundation and the Friends of the San Diego Public Library, SDPL's per-capita operating budget is still less than 70% of the California state average, and well behind many of its urban library peers. This has myriad impacts on SDPL's ability to provide service: a collection that is too small to meet the community's interests, particularly for materials in multiple languages; insufficient and outdated technology, especially in the neighborhoods where it is needed the most; and staff who are stretched too thin to provide all of the services and assistance their patrons need. SDPL is a highly creative and innovative organization, but innovation and creativity alone cannot fill the gaps and build capacity for the future.



Map of SDPL libraries today



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

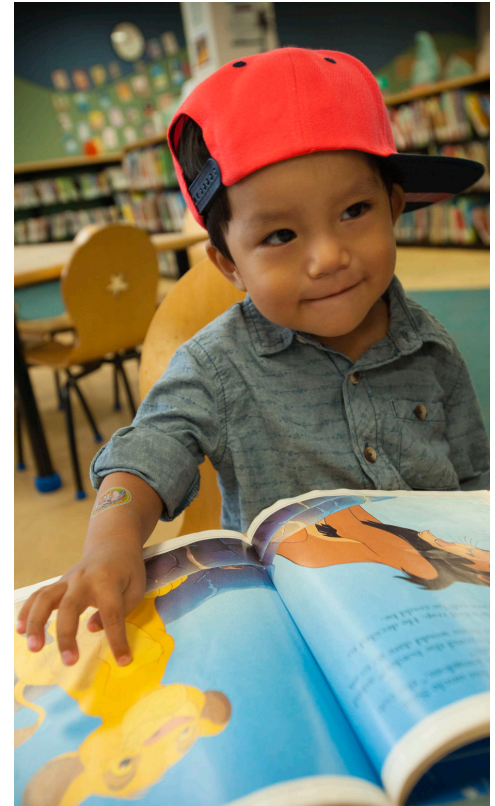
MASTER PLAN FRAMEWORK FOR SAN DIEGO'S LIBRARIES

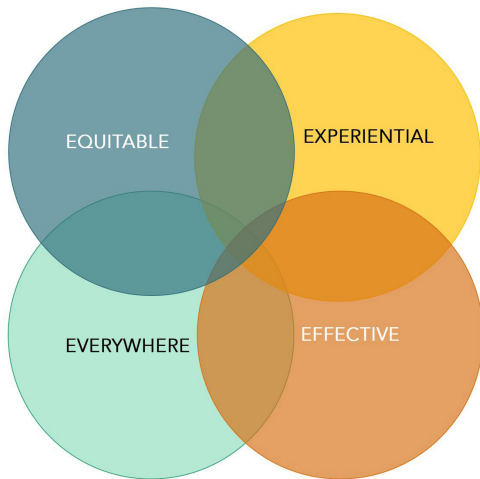
This Master Plan Framework is built on analysis of SDPL's experience, innovation, and successes as well as input from thousands of community members, stakeholders, and City and Library staff who participated in the process. The Framework proposes a set of principles, concepts, and considerations to guide City investments in San Diego's library network over the next 20 years.

Strategies for building an equitable, resilient, and high-performing SDPL network include:

- All of San Diego's libraries should be fresh, comfortable, welcoming, and well-maintained.
- Library services and spaces should be tailored as needed to meet the distinct and specific interests and priorities of their local communities within available library space.
- All communities should have access to library space for programs, meetings, and events.
- San Diego should continue building a network of larger library branches (at least 20,000-25,000 square feet). It should not add more small branches to the library network.
- A branch library space planning target of 0.35 to 0.45 square feet per capita is recommended to provide capacity for people, programs, technology, and collections in San Diego.
- Library space needs should be calculated and met equitably based on the population of planning zones. The initial planning zones proposed in this Master Plan Framework should be revisited and updated periodically in light of community development and mobility changes.
- SDPL should have sufficient and stable operational funding in order to provide robust programs, services, technology, collections, and staff development equitably throughout San Diego.
- To ensure that San Diego's libraries are fully aligned with the needs and priorities of its diverse communities, the community must be engaged in the planning and design of all library improvement projects.

Developing recommendations for specific library improvement projects was beyond the scope of this master planning process. Next steps include identifying and evaluating opportunities to improve, expand, and/or replace branches that were not addressed in the *2002 Library Building Plan*, as well as to build capacity for future population growth in every planning zone. In order to remain effective, the planning zones created in the Master Plan Framework will need to be revisited periodically. Strategies to build up SDPL operations will be needed, as well as to fund library maintenance and improvement projects.





VISION FOR SDPL

- **Equitable** — SDPL serves all of San Diego’s diverse communities, with space and service provided equitably throughout the city. Facilities and services are tailored to local needs and interests.
- **Experiential** — SDPL provides inviting, attractive, and appealing places for people in safe, well-maintained, and accessible facilities. Its spaces and buildings are flexible, adaptable, resilient, and ready for the future.
- **Everywhere** — SDPL uses a data-driven planning zone approach to ensure that all major library services and spaces are accessible to communities throughout San Diego. Even outside the walls of SDPL’s buildings, the community can access library services through robust digital channels, outreach, and partnerships.
- **Effective** — Revenue and resources are stable and sufficient to provide robust and responsive service, maximize community access, and maintain welcoming and well-maintained facilities. Buildings support efficient and effective service, and staff are empowered with training and resources to provide high quality, personalized service to patrons and the community. SDPL manages all of its services and operations with a high degree of efficiency and effectiveness.





II. INTRODUCTION

San Diego has a long and proud tradition of library-building. In 1899, San Diego became the first community in California to receive Carnegie library construction grant funding. After opening that first library in 1902, the City built seven more libraries within a span of 15 years. By 1922, San Diego had the highest per capita use of any library in the United States, and the Carnegie building was already too small to serve as the Central Library for the fast-growing population. The City expanded the Carnegie building and built even more new branches. Following World War II, the community approved the issuance of bonds for construction of a new Main Library, which opened in 1954. By the end of the 20th century, 22 more new branches were constructed, with some of the largest branches being built between 1989 and 1999.

By the turn of the 21st century, it was time to update the City's master plan for library facilities. In 2002, the City adopted a new *Library Building Plan* (LBP). The LBP proposed 20 new or expanded library branches that would increase library space in most city council districts by at least 40% — and in some districts by as much as 340%. The LBP also articulated the vision for a new landmark Central Library more than double the size of the 1954 Main Library.

Guided by the LBP, 11 branches were expanded and the long-awaited new Central Library @ Joan A Irwin Jacobs Common finally became a reality. A couple of projects are in the design phases. Eight of the LBP-recommended projects were not implemented.

The LBP did not provide specific recommendations for the other branches in SDPL's network. Other than maintenance updates, most of these buildings were not meaningfully improved during the past two decades.



WHAT HAS CHANGED OVER THE PAST 20 YEARS

San Diego is not the same community it was when the LBP was adopted in 2002. Since that time, San Diego's population has grown by more than 200,000 – the equivalent of more than 130 MTS busloads per day moving into the city. The population has also been growing more diverse, with Asian, Hispanic/Latino, and African American communities all growing steadily. As San Diego's population grows and diversifies, so does its demand for library services.

Over the past two decades, library services have also evolved significantly to respond to changing community needs. Patrons come to the library seeking services and places for gathering, learning, entertainment, and social connections in addition to books and spaces for quiet study. Technology has become a driving force in modern libraries – including SDPL – helping bridge the digital divide in community access to devices and the internet, and increase patrons' skills and confidence in using them. All of these patron needs and priorities for services, programs, technology, and collections have implications for space, and SDPL's facilities must be ready to accommodate them equitably throughout the community.

Libraries are vital places of meaningful interaction, representation, and inclusion. San Diego has welcomed immigrants and refugees from all over the world for decades, and SDPL has been an essential source of information and resources for new residents. Libraries are important venues for convening conversations about issues deeply affecting San Diego communities – climate change, social justice, wildfires, LGBTQ rights, human trafficking, and more.

The need for a resilient and equitable library system was further underscored during the COVID-19 pandemic. Libraries played a major role in connecting communities with information and resources, from hosting virtual programs for entertainment, to providing access to technology and internet to children and families learning and working from home. SDPL has had to adapt quickly to accommodate a new range of services, such as curbside pick up, even as many of its facilities are still unable to re-open for service.

MASTER PLAN METHODOLOGY

In 2019, a new master planning process was initiated to assess the state of San Diego’s library network, confirm the needs and vision for library facilities, and establish a framework and guiding principles for the next two decades of library facility improvements.

Commissioned by the San Diego Public Library Foundation, the plan was developed through close collaboration with Library leadership and staff with representatives of other City departments and stakeholders and community groups. The process was facilitated by Group 4 Architecture, Research + Planning, Inc. with Carson Block Consulting. The process was guided by a core Project Management Team (PMT) consisting of SDPL leadership team members as well as Library Foundation board and staff members.

The process began with a preliminary “Planning to Plan” phase to explore the context, confirm objectives, and identify the right scope of services for the Master Plan Framework. The planning team met with SDPL leadership and staff, the City’s Office of the Independent Budget Analyst, Council District 6 staff, SDPL Foundation and Friends representatives, and community members and staff at the Oak Park Library. The results of this preliminary phase were presented at the December 2019 meeting of SDPL’s Board of Library Commissioners, which was attended by dozens of community members, SDPL staff, Friends of the San Diego Public Library, and City Council District staff.

The next phase of master planning work began in February 2020. The onset of COVID-19 in March 2020 necessitated the extension of the original 12-month project timeline. During the spring and summer of 2020 (while the outlook for engagement was still uncertain), the process focused on analysis of available data. Data sources included SDPL’s 2018 and 2019 service statistics (pre-COVID), the American Community Survey (demographics), and SANDAG (population projections). The City’s GIS team developed geo-spatial maps of a two-week sample of library circulation data from early 2020 (pre-COVID) which was used to inform the analysis of library access.

While robust data analysis revealed a number of interesting findings and trends that materially shaped the recommendations, the Master Plan Framework is not a purely data-driven product. The master planning process also included extensive, COVID-safe engagement of staff, stakeholders, and the community.



- **Community survey.** In February 2021, a community survey was published asking respondents to share thoughts about where they live; important roles SDPL can play for them and their communities; their day-to-day access to and comfort with technology; and why they visited and used SDPL before COVID. The survey was available in seven languages: Arabic, English, Chinese, Farsi, Spanish, Tagalog, and Vietnamese. Most people participated via the online version, but library locations offered paper formats which were completed by several hundred respondents. The survey was widely promoted through diverse channels and as a result, received a tremendous number of responses – including more than 2,000 in just the first 24 hours. Nearly 7,500 respondents participated in total during the 75 days that the survey was open. This survey was not designed to be statistically representative of the community; rather, it sought to include diverse community voices.
- **Community focus groups.** To complement the community survey, 15 focus group discussions were conducted by the Nonprofit Institute at the University of San Diego. The intent was to reach demographic groups that have historically been under-represented and excluded from decision-making. Focus group discussions were held with immigrants; refugees; predominantly Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC) communities; families with children; people with disabilities; people with unstable housing; and military families. Focus groups were held in both English and Spanish in the Oak Park and Barrio Logan communities. A report summarizing the focus group discussions is published under separate cover.
- **Library Staff Team.** A working group composed of SDPL staff representing different divisions and facilities met multiple times to provide ideas and input.
- **Library and City technical meetings.** Periodic meetings were held with the Planning Department to share information and findings about the library master planning process to update the City's Developer Impact Fee (DIF) plan. Focused meetings were held with staff of SDPL's Centralized Collection Development, Innovation and Community Engagement, and Information Technology divisions.
- **SDPL all-staff survey.** In late 2020, a digital survey was circulated asking about the opportunities and challenges facing SDPL; about the community's changing needs for service and technology; and about how SDPL's facilities are used. More than 50% of library staff participated in this survey, which is a high rate of response given that many staff were on furlough at that time.
- **Stakeholder Committee.** A sounding board was composed of representatives from the City's Planning and Public Works Departments; the Library Commission; the Friends of the San Diego Public Library; the San Diego Public Library Foundation; and community members.
- **City committee/commission presentations.** A planning progress update was presented to the Community Planners Committee in the spring of 2021. Preliminary plan findings were presented to the Library Commission at its June 2021 meeting. A presentation of the preliminary findings was made to the Public Safety and Livable Neighborhoods Committee in September 2021.

A partial list of participants in this master planning process is included as an Appendix.



III. FINDINGS

A GREAT LIBRARY MAKES A GREAT COMMUNITY

ESSENTIAL COMMUNITY RESOURCE

Performing an assessment of SDPL during the COVID-19 pandemic provided a rare opportunity to see how a library system performs while in the midst of global uncertainty. The takeaway? Even in a time of unprecedented stress and hardship, the San Diego community deeply values and relies upon the Library, and library staff rises to the occasion to serve the diverse communities that they clearly love. The community makes the Library great, and the Library helps make the community great.

The Library’s initial response to COVID-19 was focused on positive, flexible, and adaptable moves. As one manager put it, staff “stopped on a dime” and changed work styles to fit the conditions. One result was a tighter connection between staff by shifting to more frequent team communications (via video conferencing platforms) to allow for daily status check-ins and service adjustments as conditions changed.

To help the community with urgent needs early in the pandemic, innovative library staff leveraged the tools in its IDEA Labs (maker spaces) to make face masks and shields for area healthcare workers, City staff and community members and signage for multiple uses throughout the library system. Library Wi-Fi systems were left on to allow people to access the internet around library buildings in a safe, socially-distant manner. The SD Access 4 All program (mobile Wi-Fi internet hotspots for patron use) helped spread connectivity even further in the community.



"I am very excited about the recent changes we have made to allow for equitable use of our resources. Fine-free checkout, allowing laptops to be checked out at three branches, and providing Wi-Fi access to lower income communities are wonderful initiatives.

It is my hope that we continue keeping this access a priority and, perhaps, do even more to serve this community."

— SDPL staff survey respondent

For ongoing needs, the Library shifted its programming and outreach efforts to contactless, online options, including extensive video programming via YouTube covering the sorts of services that patrons were missing in real life, including storytimes, book talks, "how to" videos, arts and cultural topics, teen programming, interviews, bicycle maintenance, cooking, and much more. This shift is key, since many patrons rely on library staff to be their trusted guides to the omniverse of knowledge and experiences.

One unintended benefit of the pandemic is that it helped put a spotlight on digital library services that are sometimes unnoticed by patrons. Unsurprisingly, use of the Library's digital offerings (including downloadable materials like eBooks and access to real-time services such as learning software) exploded, with an increase of 200% to 400%. The Library's downloadable eBook platform was swamped to capacity (showing both the need for and the challenge of providing downloadable books).

The Library is also a creator of digital content, via access to its cultural heritage and historic collections (called SDPL Digital Collections). Not only did the archive experience increased use by patrons, but staff were able to work remotely to prepare more digital content (notably the Library's clay tablet and postcards collections) to share with the world online.

Library technology staff were at the epicenter, supporting, troubleshooting, and actively adapting the back-end technology platforms and systems that patrons and staff rely on for access. Library technology staff worked with a myriad of hardware, software, partners, and vendors that make up the Library's technology mosaic to work out kinks and anticipate new problems.

Perhaps the system that needed the most attention was the Library's Integrated Library System — essentially the electronic version of the old card catalog that also manages accounts for patrons and enables the circulation of items throughout the library system. Staff worked with the Library's vendor to successfully tweak the system to better manage new circulation requirements necessitated by COVID. On the public service side, staff were responsive to patron concerns when the servers housing downloadable materials were not able to keep up with demand from across the country. SDPL's stellar staff continually demonstrate their dedication to serving the community.



"We offer equal access to information for all residents of San Diego, regardless of their economic or cultural background and regardless of the color of their skin, their gender, or their creed."

I am very proud of my colleagues and our supervising staff. Our people make us great."

— SDPL staff survey respondent

STAFF PRIDE IN THE LIBRARY + COMMUNITY

In September of 2020, a survey was conducted among library staff to tap into each person's unique knowledge and depth of experience with SDPL and the community they serve. Nearly 400 staff members (more than half) responded to the survey, representing a broad diversity of roles, expertise, experience, and tenure at SDPL with responses from public-facing and support staff at almost every SDPL location — including the Central Library and 34 of the 35 branches. Other respondents included representatives of Administration, Programming, Circulation, Youth Services, Collection Development, and Public Technology Services. Some respondents had worked at SDPL for less than a year, while others had 30 years — or more — of experience as part of the SDPL organization.

Respondents demonstrated a great deal of pride in the Library and how library services improve equity throughout San Diego and help improve people's lives.

"I am most proud about SDPL's programs and initiatives that engage diverse communities (such as our involvement with PRIDE) and tackle challenging community issues (such as homelessness and sex trafficking)."

I believe we set the bar high for other libraries in San Diego County by pushing the limits of what a public library can offer beyond what it is traditionally known for (such as storytime or book club.)"

The traditional services are of course incredibly important, but I'm proud that as an organization we aren't afraid to try new things."

— SDPL staff survey respondent

"It's in sunny San Diego with beautiful weather year-round, we're convenient to everything, and our library is open on Sundays!"

— community survey respondent

"Estoy muy agradecido por el servicio que dan sin ningún costo para toda la comunidades que desean aumentar sus conocimientos en lugares asados y seguros."

— community survey respondent

"A friend only has access to the internet at her local library. There are many people who can't afford internet at home and the library is their only safe place for it."

— community survey respondent

"Having someone non-judgmentally assist one-on-one helps a lot to build skills, confidence & independence."

— community survey respondent

"As an Asian American I have always felt safe and comfortable at the San Diego local libraries. Thank you so much for keeping it alive and active."

— community survey respondent

"I am a member of the LGBT community and love that the library community feels like an ally."

— community survey respondent

THE COMMUNITY'S LOVE FOR THE LIBRARY AND THE CITY

Effectively hearing the diverse voices of the San Diego community required several different approaches, including a survey and focus groups reaching out to historically underserved populations with the aim of giving as many San Diegans as possible equitable input to the master planning process. Engaging community members in San Diego began at the beginning of 2021 and continued through early spring.

As well as asking questions about specific needs and desires for library spaces and technology, the community survey offered respondents a number of open-ended questions to allow freedom of expression. One unique aspect of San Diego that emerged in the community survey results was the pride and passion residents feel for their community. When asked about what respondents love about where they live, a top keyword was "everything," and when asked about what they want to change about where they live, the majority of respondents said they would change "nothing." Of course, questions also resulted in helpful suggestions for building an even greater community and a stronger library system.

The Library was among the top topics mentioned in response to the question, "what do you love about where you live" (other top responses included the outdoors and nature; the community; walkability; and proximity to community amenities).

Community respondents deeply valued services provided by SDPL. In particular, they ranked the following services as most important to them: 1) free programs, books, and materials for recreation/ entertainment; 2) lifelong learning; 3) access to technology; 4) connecting the community with information; and 5) a safe place in the community.

Respondents pointed out how critical the Library can be as the only access point to digital materials and the internet, for example. They also emphasized the positive impact of technology learning and practice at libraries.

Many respondents also left comments expressing appreciation for how SDPL fosters safe, welcoming spaces.

COMMUNITY SURVEY

Participation in SDPL's community survey was impressive, with nearly 7,500 responses. In the planning team's experience, this is a far higher level of participation than many communities get on similar "convenience surveys" (i.e., surveys that are available to anyone wishing to participate, rather than a managed sample designed to generate statistically representative data).

The survey was offered between February 15–May 3, 2021 in seven languages (Arabic, Chinese, English, Farsi, Spanish, Tagalog, and Vietnamese) in online and paper versions. The survey was promoted widely via radio, TV, email, social media, and other channels. Response rates from different parts of the city were monitored based on respondents' self-reported ZIP codes, and supplemental focused outreach — including patron engagement by library branch staff — was used to encourage participation in areas with lower response rates.

Nearly 90% of community survey respondents reported that they live in the City of San Diego. Most respondents were 30 years old or older, which is not unusual for a convenience survey of this type. English topped the list by a wide margin as the primary language spoken in respondents' households (95%); 10% reported that their households speak Spanish in addition to or instead of English. More than two-thirds of respondents identified as White or Caucasian; 11% identified as Hispanic or Latino; and 7.5% identified as Asian or Pacific Islander.



"I have three kids, and I've taken them to the library because they help them with their homework. The teachers there are very friendly and teach very well."

— parent participating in a focus group

"I just see it as a peaceful place to go to events [...] The library for me is just a type of a vibe, like a calming, relaxing place where you can learn, meet people, have events; it's a great free community activity."

— teacher participating in a focus group

"I do go to Malcolm X, and Skyline... because they tend to have some events that are really, really great for the African American community. And I love to attend those events."

— senior focus group participant

THE LIBRARY'S TOP STRENGTHS

The Nonprofit Institute of the University of San Diego conducted 15 focus group discussions with 87 San Diego residents to learn more about current use of the Library, the needs of users, and ways the Library can better serve them in the future. The focus groups were performed in multiple languages and reached Vietnamese speakers, Spanish speakers, Promotoras (Spanish-speaking community health organizers), refugee groups, immigrant groups, people with insecure housing, military personnel, people with disabilities, high school students, parents, and seniors.

Similar to the community survey respondents, focus group participants said the most common uses for the Library included checking out books and reading; attending community events; using technology; borrowing movies/DVDs; bringing children for homework help, participating in activities; and visiting a safe space.

Focus group participants spoke positively of SDPL's many strengths, and the following themes emerged frequently:

- Local libraries are easy to access by car, on foot, or via public transit.
- Libraries are a safe space to spend time — for respite from the heat, for peace and quiet, and even for a clean restroom.
- SDPL is an invaluable resource for children to participate in programs and literacy activities.
- SDPL is a great place for cultural and community events.
- The community cherishes the books, movies, technology, broadband, and other vital resources that SDPL provides.





VISION OF LIBRARIES IN SAN DIEGO

COMMUNITY AND STAFF AMBITIONS FOR THE FUTURE

Best Library in the U.S.

Staff and community engagement revealed ambitious dreams for SDPL's future. When asked what they would like SDPL to be like in 2025, staff outlined a vision of a thriving library performing impactful and inclusive patron services, and harnessing the power of technology for smooth service delivery. One staff member declared, "I would like SDPL to be a serious contender for the best library in the United States."

Staff hoped for:

- *"A well-funded, well-regarded, civil and safe community resource that people want to visit for both traditional resources and exposure to new ideas and technologies that they will need in the future."*
- *"A place where employees are excited to come to work and patrons are excited to visit. A highly respected organization among community members and other library systems."*
- *"A place in touch with the advancement of technology, being able to provide individuals in our community with knowledge and access to these platforms with no problems regarding funding."*
- *"I would like [SDPL] to be at the forefront of a diverse, forward looking society, pushing the envelope on inclusivity and focusing on the uplift of voices of previously marginalized communities."*

"[We need] better equipped facilities to meet community needs, including up-to-date technology (for staff and patrons), teen spaces, computer labs, new tech labs, meeting rooms, and career centers/programs."

— SDPL staff survey respondent

"I felt a little sad because we don't have a library available with all of the programs like the Central Library in our communities, District 4 and District 8. So hopefully all the people who are listening... know that low-income communities also like to go to the library."

— focus group participant

"We need upgrades, indoor-outdoor spaces, space for our communities to congregate/study/hang out/learn/explore, places where people can see into our buildings and not just look at exterior walls; we need to be a place of hope and resilience and inspiration!"

— SDPL staff survey respondent

"I would like to see more accessibility on the websites.... I use the BARD website (a database for the visually impaired), and it's completely accessible. But I would like to see more websites being implemented....

I would like to see more accessibility features."

— focus group participant with a disability

Equitable Access to Welcoming Branches

Survey respondents and focus group participants had many ideas for future improvement opportunities. Both staff and community members suggested improvements to library buildings and spaces. Focus group participants wanted each branch to have dedicated spaces for diverse purposes, be attractive and modern, incorporate art and culture, and include outdoor spaces. Numerous residents commented on the beauty and functionality of the Central Library and noted that they would like the branches, though obviously smaller, to also feel inviting and reflect this same level of functionality.

The majority of focus group participants lived in historically underserved neighborhoods with high rates of poverty. Many of the participants hoped for more equitable distribution of resources across libraries and noted that currently, libraries in more affluent communities have more amenities and programs than libraries in lower-income communities. Participants also suggested ways that libraries could better serve the community by instituting practices that are more inclusive of the diverse needs of residents.

As part of SDPL's commitment to inclusivity, increased accessibility for people with disabilities was noted as an important goal. Focus group participants recommended more accessible computers; improved signage with larger font sizes, more contrast, etc.; more programs available virtually and through streaming; and more accessibility on library websites (like BARD).



Removing Barriers

According to the focus groups, common barriers to visiting the Library included lack of awareness of what the Library offers; limited book collection; limited hours; and perceptions of a lack of safety. Focus group participants discussed many ways to overcome these barriers in the future. Marketing, strategic partnerships with community-based organizations, and more customer service helping patrons maximize use of the library services, could increase awareness of available library services. SDPL also has an opportunity to further expand its collection, including more physical and online multilingual resources. More investments in technology to increase computer and broadband access inside and outside library facilities can expand access to library resources outside of library hours. In particular, this could help many community members who have unreliable or no internet access.

"I want to also throw in there... allowing people Wi-Fi access, even though the library may be closed for operational hours... for many of the neighbors that live around here to have reliable, fast Wi-Fi accessible, whether you're inside or outside the building, I think would be important. And that's not just Oak Park Library; that should be any library across the city."

— focus group participant

"I think [Wi-Fi] is essential. It's how 99% of services are accessed. And a lot of time people that need the services have limited broadband access and so, you know, it's a lifeline for people and it's essential."

— focus group participant



"I have kids of different ages, and they have one or two computers, but not all [of them] have [a computer] so they always have to use one from the library... So not all of us have computers and the library does not have enough."

— focus group participant

"It's very difficult at times to find [available] computers. In fact I almost never was able to get one because they were always in use or assigned for other people... Like if they had more technology available, newer [technology], more computers."

— focus group participant

Technology programs and services were generally very important to focus group participants. In particular, participants felt strongly that more computers and greater access to reliable Wi-Fi were an absolute necessity. Although many participants reported they had access to a personal computer and some had recently received a personal computer during the pandemic, they still felt strongly that the libraries of the future need ample computer access. Residents who visited many branches, including the Central Library, reported that all of the computers were often being used at any one time.

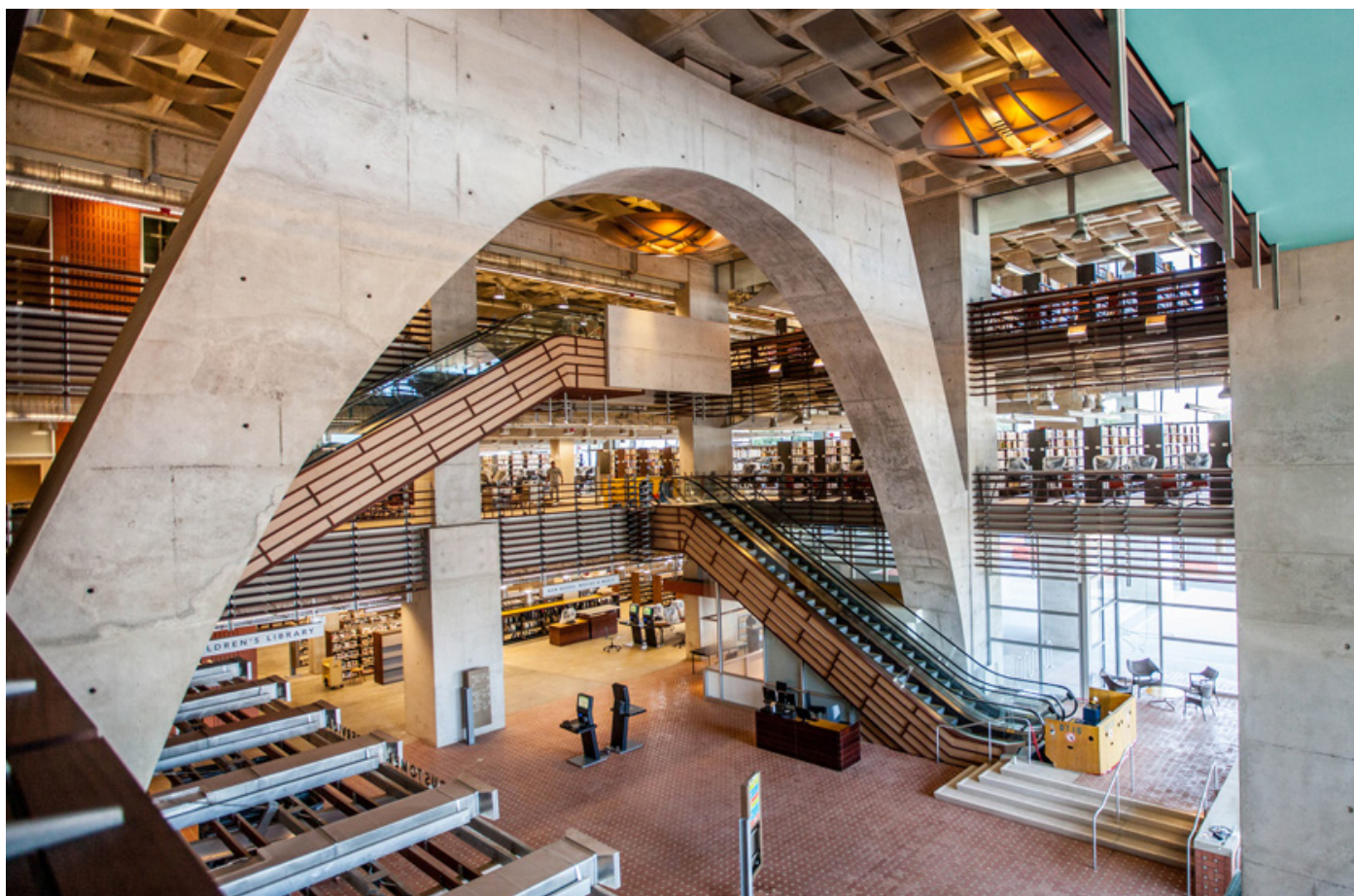
In imagining the libraries of the future, participants would like to use technology more flexibly through the library. Because computers were often occupied and the need for extended time on the computers was prevalent, participants suggested either more devices or computers/tablets designated for specific purposes with varying time limits depending on the purpose. Participants also suggested laptop loans for library or home use, as well as more opportunities for streaming library events.

Many of the focus group discussions also addressed the need for the Library to provide a safe environment. However, participants varied considerably in how they defined a safe environment. For example, homeless participants expressed gratitude that the library was one of the only places they could go for some peace and quiet and a bathroom. In contrast, other participants reported that the homeless population and possible drug activity outside libraries contributed to a feeling of a lack of safety. For others, a safe environment meant culturally sensitive staff who were welcoming to all.

VISION OF HIGH PERFORMING LIBRARIES

In their first working session for this master planning process, the SDPL staff working group (the Library Staff Team or “LST”) explored definitions of a “high performing library.” As well as articulating an aspirational vision for libraries in San Diego, this discussion also helped frame the ways in which analysis and interpretation of library use statistics and branch data are valid — and in which ways they are not.

- **Customized range of services.** First and foremost, LST members were clear that high performing libraries are tailored to the needs and interests of the communities they serve. More than just a building with books and computers, high performing libraries are vibrant and energetic places where patrons can find resources and support to help them succeed. Staff are engaged with the community both within and beyond the library’s walls, building their understanding of local needs and interests and sharing what the library has to offer.
- **Welcoming, spacious facilities.** High performing library buildings reflect the community’s culture and ownership. They are attractive, welcoming, clean, and free of clutter. They provide plenty of space for patrons to sit, work, read, collaborate, and use technology — their own or the library’s. They also provide places for programs, meetings, and group gatherings.
- **Well-equipped staff.** Library staff in all parts of the SDPL organization should have the tools and resources to be collaborative, innovative, and effective. Public service staff in high performing libraries should have the training and support to assist with a broad range of patron and community needs. They should have the time and capacity to be out on the public floor, providing proactive service at the point of need.
- **Robust funding.** Library revenue should be stable and reliable over time to support continuity and consistency of service from year to year, and to enable long-term planning for service evolution and operational innovation. All library locations must be well-resourced to provide access to core library services — including up-to-date-technology and robust collections — of ample quality and quantity to meet community expectations and priorities. Resources to support specialized, enhanced, and tailored services that respond to local community needs must be distributed equitably.



"The Central Library is what other cities dream of having with all its amenities, services, and exhibits."

— community survey respondent

"[Central Library] is a beautiful building that provides access to not only materials and computers but to unique programs and activities for the community."

— SDPL staff survey respondent

CENTRAL LIBRARY IS A CITYWIDE DESTINATION AND RESOURCE

San Diego's Central Library @ Joan A Irwin Jacobs Common truly represents the community's own vision of modern library service — not least of all because it was realized through a great deal of community support. The dream of a new downtown library took shape in the early 1990s, when a study found that San Diego's existing post-war main library could neither meet the needs for direct public service nor adequately support SDPL's growing branch library network.

In 2002, San Diego's mayor announced a "21st Century Library Building Plan" that proposed more than \$315 million in library improvements over the next decade — including construction of a new landmark Central Library more than double the size of its predecessor. Funding for the \$185 million project included \$65 million in donor and community contributions to a campaign led by the San Diego Public Library Foundation (with an additional \$10 million from private donors to defray five years of operating costs); a \$20 million California State Library grant; \$20 million from the San Diego Unified School District; and \$80 million from the City redevelopment tax revenues and other special funds.

The new Central Library opened in 2013 to enthusiastic praise for its distinctive design as well as for its modern, technology-forward services, and people-oriented spaces. Among the accolades was the Urban Libraries Council's recognition of SDPL's innovative new service model that enabled the new building to be operated with the same number of staff as the previous, much smaller library.

By 2019, an average of nearly 300 people were walking into the Central Library every hour — drawn by the breadth, depth, and diversity of programs, collections, and technology. More than 25% of all SDPL public computer sessions were logged at the Central Library, where one in four patrons used a public computer during their visit. Materials circulation was higher than any other SDPL location except for the Carmel Valley branch. Central Library also offered the most programs and hosted the highest program attendance in the SDPL network.

In addition to the programs and services, Central Library visitors are also drawn by the richness of experiences — of learning, discovery, creativity, inspiration, and social connection. More than a third of community survey respondents listed the Central Library as one of their favorite SDPL locations to visit pre-COVID, for reasons including:

- *"The Central Library is a favorite due to its extensive print collections, maker spaces, and meeting spaces."*
- *"The Central Library has a wonderful Genealogy Center."*
- *"I visited Central Library because of the Silhouette machine, sewing machine, and 3D printer."*
- *"I attended a wedding at the Central Library which was an awesome idea!"*
- *"The Central Library has fantastic programming. Getting to see/hear Ransom Riggs with my teen was fun for both of us."*
- *"The Central Library has a wonderful music collection."*
- *"I appreciate the Central Library as a monument to learning and the greater San Diego community."*



"At Central we have a high school — we have a job search center — we have a literacy hub — we offer an art gallery as well as public exhibit space — we have a vets center — we have mental health office in the building — we offer online high school program for adults seeking their HS diploma ... we offer a lot."

— SDPL staff survey respondent



BRANCH LIBRARY USE VARIES BY COMMUNITY

San Diego's 2002 *Library Building Plan* proposed to significantly expand branch library space citywide by more than 70%. It proposed a new basic branch size of 15,000 square feet to be implemented through expansion, replacement, or new construction at 14 locations. It also proposed that each council district should have at least one branch larger than 20,000 square feet, and identified six libraries for expansion or new construction at about 25,000 square feet.

To date, the City has implemented many — but not all — of these projects. Although many of SDPL's branches are now the same size, analysis of service statistics shows that they are used very differently:

- In 2019, Oak Park Library patrons logged the most public computer sessions of any library branch — despite being one of SDPL's smallest branches. Other top technology branches that year included City Heights/Weingart, Logan Heights, Mission Valley, and Skyline Hills. Together, these five branches accounted for nearly one-fourth of all branch library computer sessions in San Diego.
- That year, Rancho Peñasquitos had the highest program attendance of any SDPL branch, with La Jolla/Riford as a close second. Together, just these two branches had nearly the same total annual program attendance as the Central Library.
- Rancho Peñasquitos was also near the top of the list for materials circulation in 2019 — second only to Carmel Valley. Rounding out the top five were Rancho Bernardo, Mira Mesa, and La Jolla/Riford. Together, these five branches accounted for 30% of all branch circulation — and out-circulated the Central Library nearly four to one.

The library staff working group for this Master Plan Framework was clear that while service metrics reflect levels of use, they are not enough to gauge overall performance. How a branch ranks on any service measure is not, on its own, a valid proxy for how well a branch is performing. It is critical to look at every measure and ranking within the context of the needs and priorities of the communities each branch serves. It is also essential to consider the condition, capacity, and suitability of the library building for providing service.

The Clairemont Library, for example, was in the middle to low end of the rankings on programs, circulation, and computer use in 2019. This does not mean that Clairemont is a low-performing library. Given that Clairemont is one of the tiniest branches in San Diego, it's actually no small wonder that it provided as much service as it did. In fact, Clairemont out-circulated much larger branches that year — including Valencia Park/Malcolm X and Logan Heights, both of which are more than four times Clairemont's size.

On the flip side, a high ranking on any metric does not necessarily mean that the branch is fully optimized for that service or does not warrant improvements. For example, the Oak Park Library had by far the highest number of public computer sessions in 2019 — despite its small, aging, and constrained facility. SDPL staff reported that southeast San Diego communities have distinct and significant needs for technology access and services. This was echoed by community survey respondents living in southeast San Diego, who rated technology as being one of SDPL's most important services for their communities. It is highly likely that the Oak Park Library could further increase its service and impact in an improved facility.

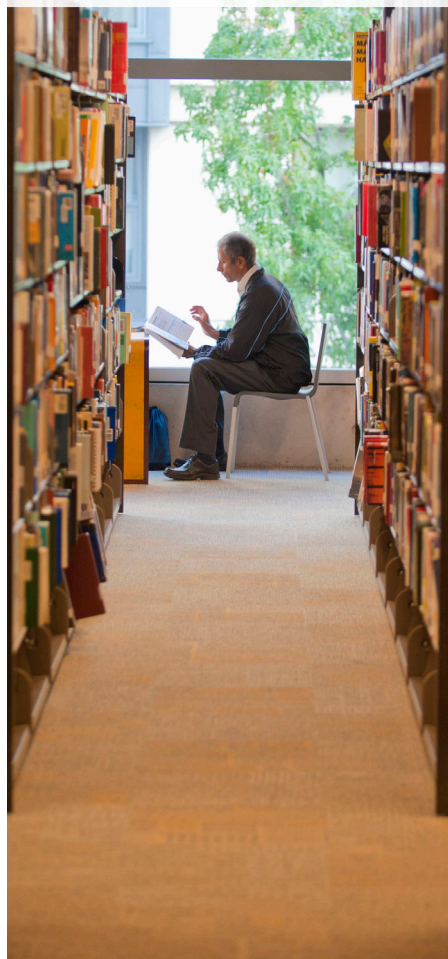
GET BOOKS + MATERIALS



PARTICIPATE IN PROGRAMS + EVENTS



PLACE TO READ OR WORK



REASONS FOR VISITING THE LIBRARY ALSO VARY BY COMMUNITY

The community survey conducted for this master planning process asked respondents to consider the reasons why, pre-COVID, they would visit a library. Overall, the top five answers were the same throughout San Diego:

- To get books and other materials
- To participate in programs and events
- To read or work alone
- To get information and/or other resources
- To get help from library staff

That said, there was some regional and demographic variation in how respondents in different communities answered the question — some of which are discussed below. It should be noted that none of these variations or differences inherently suggests a greater or lesser need for library space. It does, however, suggest that different types of space may be appropriate in order to support responsive service in different communities.



"I would like us to have more facilities that are full service — with meeting rooms, appropriate electrical and internet connections, and spaces that can be modified."

— SDPL staff survey respondent

Place

Respondents who said they visited the library for reasons of "place" — to read or work alone, to meet and collaborate with others, or even just to hang out — were more likely to live south and east of downtown San Diego, including the far South Bay communities.

Visiting the library for these types of "place" reasons was also particularly popular among BIPOC respondents, nearly half of whom said they came to the library to read or work alone. About two-thirds of respondents under the age of 30 also said that they visited the library to read or work alone, compared to less than one-third of respondents over 50. Youth were far more likely to report that they came to the library to hang out than any of the older cohorts.

"I feel that libraries in general will be needed more to provide study or small group conferencing space. With many people working remotely and I see that continuing in the future, there will be a desire for a safe clean work environment with healthy wireless which isn't your house or home office."

Also the need for the technology to accompany those spaces. Things like green screens, ring lights, microphones will be in demand for public use to create virtual presentations.

Many patrons who do not have the technology or the knowledge will need the Library more than ever just to keep up with everyone else. Tech classes I foresee will be in high demand especially by seniors or low income students. Streaming and digital services will also be in demand."

— SDPL staff survey respondent



Technology

In addition to asking technology-related questions via the community survey, the planning team worked with SDPL staff to explore and understand the technology needs of different San Diego communities. Staff were clear that libraries in all areas of San Diego see patron demand for a full range of digital inclusion services — from basic access to the internet and devices, to learning how to use those devices and online access to improve their lives through participating in government, finding jobs, learning new skills, and more.

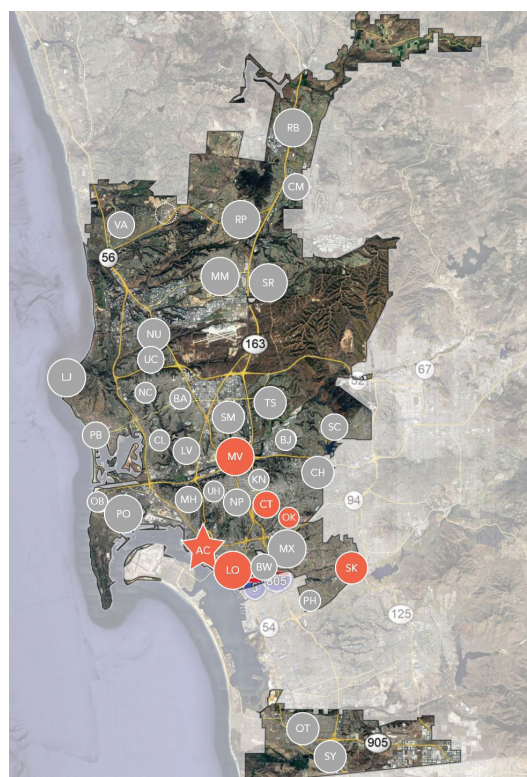
Staff also are enthusiastic about the potential for SDPL's IDEA Labs to help patrons citywide not only learn important skills, but also build strong community bonds. In branches without dedicated IDEA Lab space, staff see opportunities to provide access to these lab activities in other ways such as maker kits.

Staff did report some regional variation in technology needs:

- In northern areas of San Diego, where many residents have their own devices (e.g., laptops, smartwatches etc.), SDPL tends to see more needs and patron interest in opportunities to learn how to use technology.
- Communities with military families tend to need more access to communication technologies in order to stay connected with loved ones.
- In southeast and far south San Diego, library patrons and communities tend to have higher needs and demand for access to basic technology: computers, Wi-Fi, copiers, and even fax machines.

This last point is consistent with the community survey, where residents of areas south and east of downtown were more likely to say that they visited the library in order to access Wi-Fi and/or use library-provided technology. In fact, residents of the South Bay communities were more than twice as likely to say they visited a library for technology and Wi-Fi access as residents of northern areas of San Diego.

Visiting the library in order to access Wi-Fi and/or use library-provided technology was also selected particularly often by younger survey respondents, BIPOC respondents, and residents of near and far south communities. Black/African-American and Hispanic/Latino respondents were more than twice as likely as white respondents to say that they visited the library to access technology or Wi-Fi.



SDPL locations with the most computer sessions in 2019

"There is a large disparity between the demand for print/AV materials in different neighborhoods."

— SDPL staff survey respondent



SDPL locations with the highest materials circulation in 2019

Materials and Information

More than 90% of community survey respondents over the age of 30 reported that pre-COVID, they visited the library to get books and materials.

About 90% of respondents living in northern San Diego areas also said that the collection was one of their reasons for visiting the library. In contrast, a little over 60% of South Bay community residents said that books and materials were what brought them into the library.

Although BIPOC respondents were slightly less likely than white respondents to report coming to the library for books and materials, they were more likely to report that they came to get information and other resources. More than half of Black/African-American respondents also said that they went to the library to get help from library staff.

Key Takeaways

- Equitable library services and spaces are tailored to local community needs and interests.
- Lower service metrics suggest misalignment of space, services, and/or resources with community expectations and priorities.
- The community should be engaged in the planning and design process for library services and facilities to ensure alignment with needs and priorities.



MANY SAN DIEGANS USE MULTIPLE BRANCHES

The community survey conducted for this Master Plan Framework asked people which library was their favorite to visit pre-COVID — and why. More than two-thirds of respondents listed more than one SDPL library; more than 1,000 people listed four or more libraries! Proximity to home, work, and other daily destinations was cited frequently as the reason they visited those libraries — but not exclusively. Other reasons included access to different library services, the opportunity to connect with particular library staff, the beauty and experience of the building and site, and even nostalgia for a favorite childhood branch.

A few examples from community survey respondents:

- *“North University I like because it is close to my house; La Jolla because it is right in the middle of the village so it’s convenient; and Point Loma because it is so beautiful.”*
- *“I grew up in the Benjamin Library. Linda Vista and Mission Valley are near my home. La Jolla is beautiful. And there are no words to describe how great the Central Library is.”*
- *“Valencia Park/Malcolm X is near where I live. Mountain View/Beckwourth is near where I work. That would be my lunchtime hangout some days. Central has most of the books I am looking for plus they have the study rooms, the children’s library and lots of space. City Heights and Mission Valley would often have books I was looking for if I didn’t want to wait for a hold.”*

That said, people’s mobility in San Diego is influenced by geography — including natural and built environmental features such as valleys and freeways as well as the sheer distance between different parts of the city. The walkability of San Diego’s neighborhoods and proximity to amenities were among the most mentioned things that community survey respondents said that they love about where they live. However, they also included traffic, transportation, and parking issues among the things that they would change if they could.

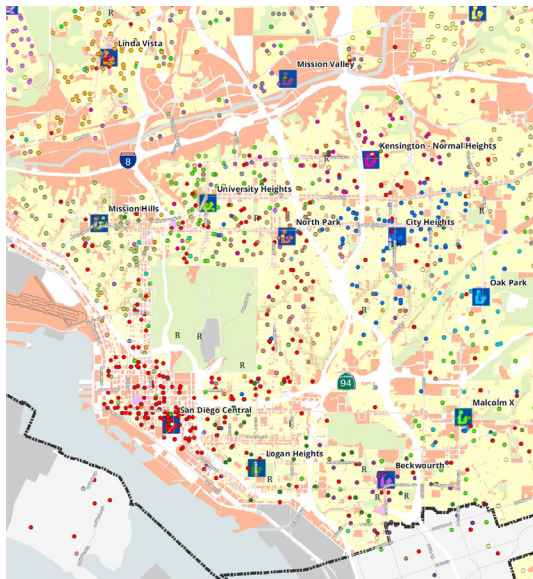
The new Master Plan Framework process set out to establish service and facility planning zones that:

- are based in how SDPL patrons actually use libraries;
- acknowledge and account for natural and built features that shape community mobility; and
- offer opportunities for smart and innovative solutions to improve service, space, and customer experience.



“All libraries are worthy of love, but the libraries you frequent are yours in a unique way, you know?”

— community survey respondent



Library data from early 2020 were analyzed to understand which libraries San Diegans choose to visit. This analysis showed that San Diegans don't only visit the branch closest to home.

The City of San Diego's Planning Department plotted two weeks' worth of anonymized library check-out data from early 2020 (pre-COVID) onto a map of the city. This time period was selected intentionally to be a more or less "typical" pre-COVID two weeks without holidays, unexpected branch closures, or other interruptions to day-to-day library use patterns. Each data point was a dot on the map, showing each cardholder's registered mailing address relative to the specific SDPL facility where they visited and checked out physical materials.

As expected, the maps of each branch showed more visits by residents living closer to that library, and fewer visits by residents of other areas of the city. And there were some geographic factors that appeared to influence library choice, such as the Miramar Air Station and some stretches of I-5.

Consistent with the community survey, the maps showed that SDPL patrons didn't exclusively visit the library closest to their home. Some branches — often the larger ones — had a larger "catchment area" than some of the other, smaller branches. The Central Library saw visitors from throughout the city, including the far north and far South Bay areas (albeit less frequently than for communities closer to central San Diego).

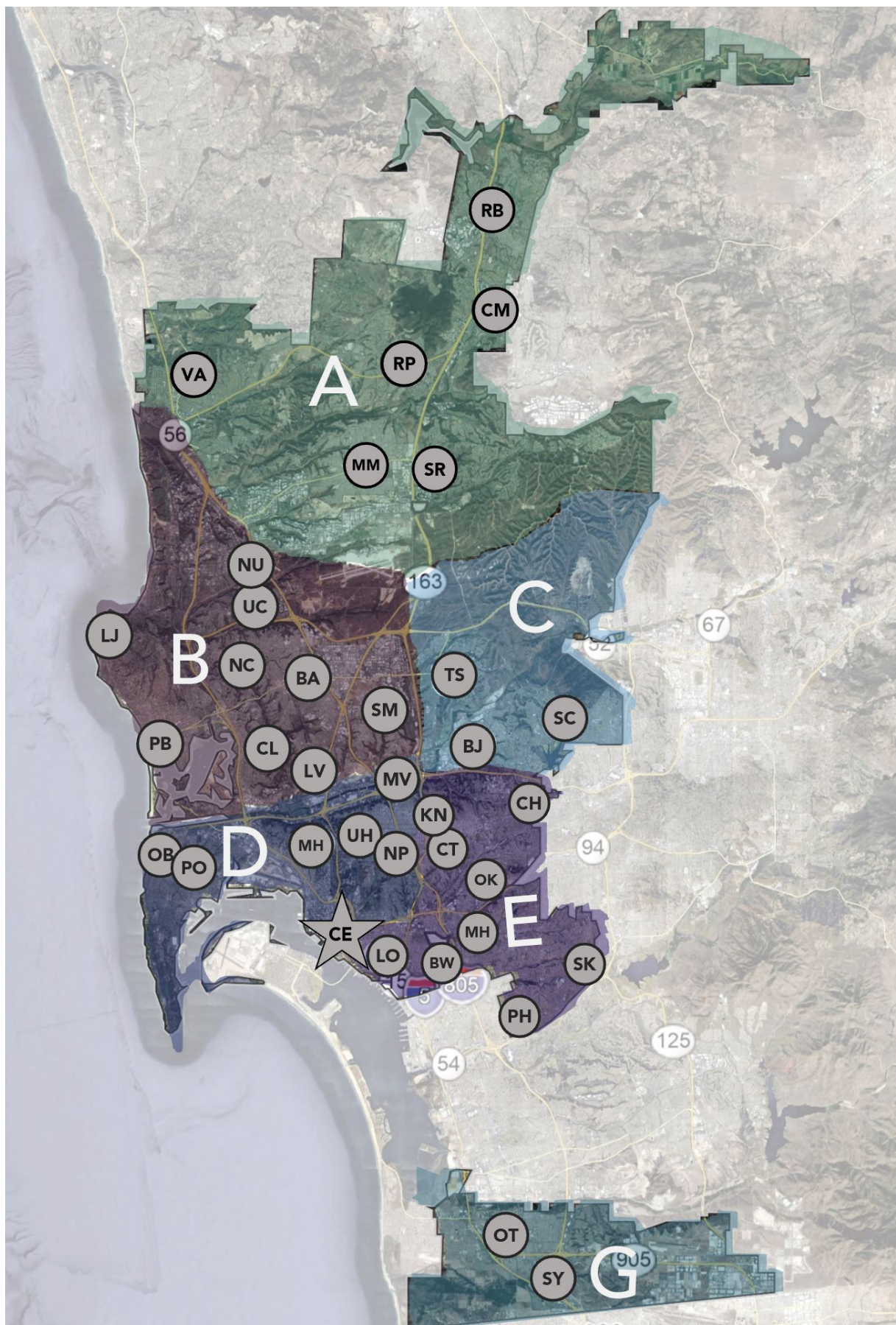
This mapping analysis was used to establish the six planning zones proposed in this Master Plan Framework, each of which has multiple branches serving diverse communities. In some zones, there are notable patterns of cross-use among two, three, or even more branches; examples include Ocean Beach and Point Loma, as well as a Clairemont-North Clairemont-Balboa library triad.

The master planning process did not strive to achieve any particular population size target or to balance populations evenly among the zones. Neither did it strive for any particular demographic profile or community characteristics. City council district, neighborhood, and/or Community Planning Area (CPA) boundaries did not factor in. The primary driver was the observed library visit pattern of SDPL patrons checking out materials during a two week period pre-COVID.

Key Takeaways

- Branches that experience cross-use by residents of different neighborhoods can develop special and complementary services, as well as economies of scale that improve quality and efficiency.
- Not every branch needs to be expanded, if it is not practical or cost-effective to do so; capacity can be built where cost-effective opportunities for expansion (or replacement) arise.

PROPOSED BRANCH LIBRARY PLANNING ZONES



See page 28 and page 30 for more information about the proposed planning zones.

ZONES! WHAT ARE THEY GOOD FOR?

SDPL is responsible for providing library service throughout San Diego — a city with more than 100 recognized neighborhoods and 52 Community Planning Areas in an area of more than 325 square miles. Subdividing this huge geographic area into regions or zones helps SDPL focus on the unique needs and priorities of different communities within the city, and respond with services tailored to where they are most likely to be used and have impact. A zone approach can be used to plan where to provide specialty services, resources, and spaces that are not practical or affordable to provide at every branch (SDPL's IDEA Lab is one example). And it helps make SDPL's library service and facility planning framework more manageable.

The zones proposed for this Master Plan Framework are different from those used in the past. San Diego's 2002 Library Building Plan used city council districts for its library planning zones, which made a certain kind of sense because San Diego's city council districts historically have been drawn to all have about the same population size. The City's council district boundaries were redrawn after the 2010 census — and a new ninth district was added — to account for higher growth in some districts than others. This threw the implementation of the last master plan a major curve ball as it headed into the past decade. In the wake of the 2020 census, the City's council district boundaries may yet be changed again.

For these reasons, the six zones for this Master Plan Framework have been established based on an analysis of SDPL patron check-out data mapped over natural and built geographic elements such as freeways and rivers. Of course, all of the proposed zone boundaries are permeable. Libraries in every zone are visited by residents of every other zone (as well as by residents of other San Diego County communities). They are not meant to suggest that patrons do not — or should not — venture outside for library services.

These zones are also not set in stone. It is very possible (and even likely) that over time, mobility and travel patterns in San Diego will evolve in response to changing transportation options, community development and redevelopment, and other factors. And as SDPL's libraries are improved, people may find themselves visiting more and different libraries than they did before. The ability for SDPL to review, confirm, and adjust the zones periodically is part of what will make this Master Plan Framework flexible and adaptable over time.

During this master planning process, the six zones were named with letters in alphabetical order from north to south. The letter F was skipped as a zone name to try to avoid conjuring the image of a grading scale. Each zone is described in more detail in Section IV, Zone Profiles.



LARGER BRANCHES PROVIDE MORE DIVERSE, RESILIENT AND SUSTAINABLE SERVICE

During the early and mid-20th century, SDPL's basic network model included a large downtown main library and small neighborhood-scale branches. Beginning in the 1980s, SDPL started building bigger branch libraries that could provide more — and more diverse — programs, services, and spaces.

In the new millennium, San Diego's 2002 *Library Building Plan* (LBP) recommended a minimum size of 15,000 SF for branches. The LBP also recommended a new layer of larger 25,000 SF branches to provide additional service and capacity in each city council district. All SDPL branches built or expanded since 2002 followed these size recommendations, and today almost half of San Diego's branch libraries are 15,000 SF or larger. In keeping with the LBP recommendations, newer library branches also were built to meet or exceed the sustainable design requirements of the US Green Building Council's LEED program.

Larger branches have proved to be an excellent strategy for expanding SDPL's capacity for service effectively — and efficiently. Before COVID, SDPL's nine largest branches accounted for more than one-third of all branch library visits. Dedicated program space in these big libraries enabled them to accommodate more than 40% of all SDPL branch program attendance in 2019. Visits to these larger libraries were also driven by their special destination services (such as the multimedia

"New and improved facilities and the ability to provide outreach and services to the community is hindered by not having enough money."

— SDPL staff survey respondent

"I value the library for the facility as well as for the wealth of resources like books and music, in addition to the great staff.

The library also offers space to hold a meeting, a class, a study group, a puppet show or a movie viewing. It's a community resource that gives a gathering place and a sense of belonging. It is endlessly adaptive for different ages, different activities and meets needs for leading or attending these activities. I love the library as it has something for everyone, and is especially valuable for our community members that do not have other resources for information, computers, internet, and the chance to learn free of charge. When times get tough, the library is more important and necessary than ever. The library can be the hub of a community and strong communities work together for a healthy neighborhood with strong futures."

— community survey respondent

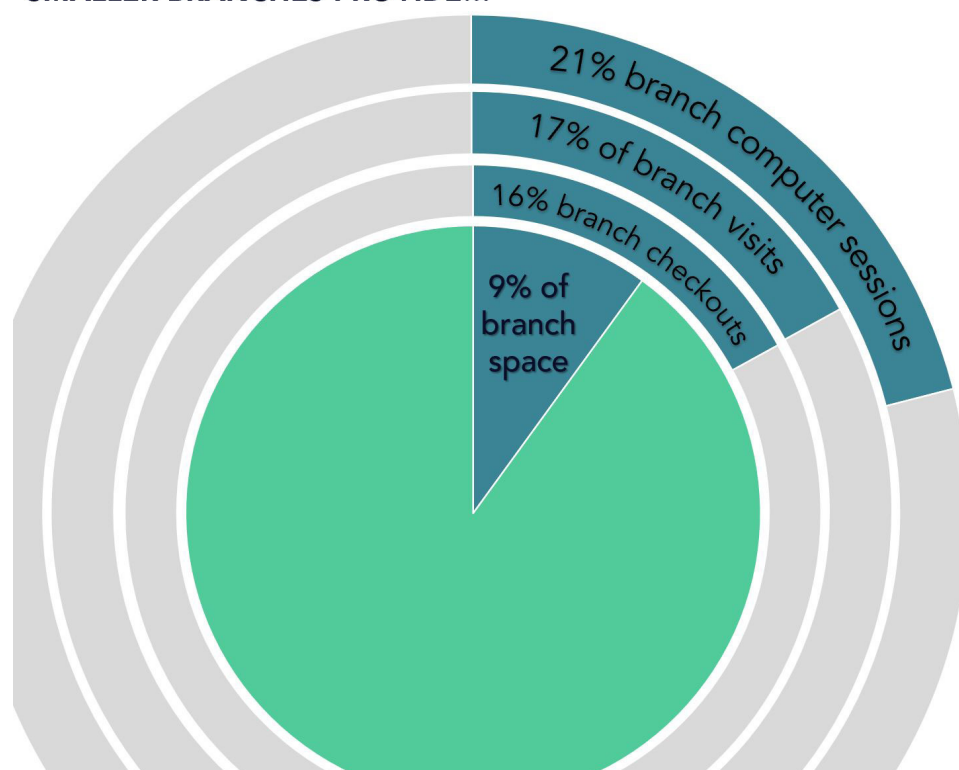
IDEA Labs), as well as by larger collections, more technology, and more seating. Large branches were included more often than smaller branches in community survey respondents' lists of their favorite libraries to visit pre-COVID.

In many cases, the number of staff needed to operate SDPL's larger branches is not significantly more than what is required at its smaller libraries. On average, SDPL's largest branches are staffed at a cost-per-square-foot that is about one-third of its smallest branches. In 2019, the Point Loma/Hervey Library actually operated with the same number of staff as the University Community Library — even though it's more than twice the size. This suggests that SDPL may be able to expand or replace some of its smaller branches with more efficient, larger facilities without a significant (if any) increase in staffing.

SDPL's larger and newer libraries also expand its ability to help communities weather disruption and build resilience. For example, they have more capacity to serve as cooling centers during hot weather, and to charge devices during neighborhood power brownouts and rolling blackouts. They are also important for maintaining social connections during challenging times; one community survey respondent wrote: "The Valencia Park/Malcolm X Library has been my bright spot during the [COVID-19] pandemic. I visit every single week.... I am a people person and it has been a real blow to be so alone all the time. The library cheers me up and has given me something to look forward to." As of this writing in fall 2021, most of SDPL's larger branches are partially or fully reopened.

Key Takeaways

SDPL's larger branches have proved a good model for providing a diverse range of modern library service efficiently and sustainably. SDPL should continue to build larger branches where possible in order to expand access to service, increase operating efficiency, and enhance community resilience.

SMALLER BRANCHES PROVIDE...**SMALLER BRANCHES ARE OVERWORKED**

The library building boom in San Diego over the past 20 years expanded or replaced many small branches with newer, larger facilities. However, more than half of SDPL's branches are still smaller than the minimum size recommended by the last master plan.

The list of SDPL's smallest libraries also includes its oldest. Most of its small branches predate the popular adoption of computers, the internet, and other technologies that are integral for modern life — and therefore did not anticipate or design for these essential modern library services. The Kensington-Normal Heights, Ocean Beach, and University Heights branches were all built before World War II — a time when the latest innovation in information and entertainment technology was commercial radio.

Small branches account for less than one-third of all library branch space in San Diego — and yet, they house nearly half of SDPL's branch collection. Pre-COVID, they accounted for nearly half of all branch library computer sessions and materials circulation. Although many of the small branches do not have dedicated program or meeting space, they accounted for nearly 40% of all branch program attendance and 15% of meetings in 2019. One community survey respondent described the situation at one of their favorite libraries: "North Park... is small. It lacks a meeting room, so all programs must take place where they disturb patrons who want or require quiet. A meeting room or other similar space would make the library even more of a community hub than it currently is."

"I think SDPL can do a lot more...to make all locations more inviting and welcoming to everyone in the community."

— SDPL staff survey respondent

"[What holds SDPL back are] aging buildings (and spaces) that are not able to meet the needs of patrons today (not enough bandwidth or electrical outlets) and don't have enough spaces suitable for small group study/discussion collaboration on projects. Spaces that are unpleasant because of leaks, worn and dirty furniture and carpeting."

— SDPL staff survey respondent

"There are too many branches, not enough staff to cover a good shift and most of the branches are in poor condition. Poor conditions are described as old furnishings, old equipment, old buildings that need a lot of maintenance that do not have the capacity to house state of the art Wi-Fi."

— SDPL staff survey respondent

Although San Diego's older library branches have had at least basic maintenance, for many it has been a long time since the last major renovation. One objective measure of their current state of maintenance is the Facility Condition Index (FCI), which suggests that many of the smaller, older branches are candidates for more significant reinvestment or even replacement. One community survey respondent described San Carlos Library in more evocative terms: "Beautiful new libraries have been built all around the city while San Carlos has been left as a local shack rather than a community cultural center.... [It is] tiny and old. A disgrace." Another community member wrote, "The older, small, local libraries need improvements and upgrades. The bathrooms are not ADA compliant and the buildings are inefficient and tired."

Although SDPL is a vital partner in community sustainability and resilience, its smaller branches are more limited in how they can serve. For example, its smallest libraries have been among the most challenging for SDPL to reopen safely, as they provide less space for safe social distancing. In fact, as of this writing in the fall of 2021, most of SDPL's nine smallest branches have not yet reopened.

More detailed study of each library building, the age and condition of its systems (e.g., mechanical, electrical), its compliance with modern codes, etc. is recommended for the next planning phase in order to identify specific challenges and opportunities.

None of this should be taken to mean that SDPL's smaller — and in many cases most beloved — branch libraries shouldn't be improved. Rather, SDPL should evaluate opportunities to modernize and revitalize them for enhanced library service, increased operational efficiency, and improved building performance and sustainability. As it has already been doing, SDPL also should continue to look for opportunities to expand or replace small libraries with larger branches that can provide more service more cost-effectively.

Key Takeaways

- SDPL should not add any new branches smaller than 20,000 square feet to its network.
- SDPL should evaluate opportunities to expand or replace small branches with libraries of at least 20,000 square feet — and larger where possible.
- In small buildings that will continue to be part of SDPL's branch network, programming and space should be evaluated and updated as needed to optimize library service and operations.

"More staffing at busier branches is needed."

— SDPL staff survey respondent



BRANCH LIBRARY SPACE IS INADEQUATE — AND INEQUITABLE

LACK OF SPACE FOR PROGRAMS

In the community survey, respondents citywide agreed that library programs are important for their communities. However, appropriate program space is not universally available at all of San Diego's branch libraries.

SDPL's biggest branches are able to offer a significant amount of programming — and accommodate high attendance — because they have dedicated program rooms. Data analysis by the City's Planning Department found that the availability of program space in branch libraries is positively correlated with the number of branch library visits.

Many of SDPL's smaller branches, meanwhile, have modestly-sized meeting rooms at best — and some lack any dedicated meeting space at all. In these cases, programs must be offered out in the open, potentially disrupting or even displacing other library activities.

All branch libraries in San Diego should have appropriately-sized program space that can be separated from other activities in the library. Each zone should have at least one branch library that can accommodate larger group sizes, so that high-profile, high-interest programs can be offered without requiring people to go all the way downtown to the Central Library.

Although none of the proposed zones fully meet the above goal of providing sufficient space for day-to-day and high-profile programming, Zones A and G are relatively close. The program space deficit is most deeply felt in the zones with smaller and older branches.

"[It] is important to be aware of the fact that some branches (particularly those located in underserved and underprivileged communities) have a difficult time providing resources and services for the communities that they are in."

— SDPL staff survey respondent

"At our location, we are frequently asked if we have more rooms, more tables, more amenities of all sorts (our building is older...) so we know there is a need that we are not always able to provide."

— SDPL staff survey respondent

"Aging buildings... are not able to meet the needs of patrons today (not enough bandwidth or electrical outlets) and don't have enough spaces suitable for small group study/discussion and collaboration on projects."

— SDPL staff survey respondent

LACK OF SPACE FOR SEATING AND TECHNOLOGY

Providing access to technology and the internet is, by all accounts, one of the most important services that SDPL provides. The number of public computers in branch libraries is positively correlated with library visits, according to analysis of pre-COVID SDPL statistics by the City's Planning Department.

However, as discussed before, the use of public computers differs from branch to branch. For example, 10% of visitors to the North Park and Mira Mesa branches in 2019 logged onto a library computer — while three out of four visitors logged on at the Oak Park Library. Use of library computers was particularly high in Zone E branches, which logged nearly 40% of all branch computer sessions that year.

As discussed earlier in this report, community survey respondents also reported different reasons for visiting SDPL branches pre-COVID. Younger and BIPOC respondents were more likely to say that they came to the library for "place" reasons — to work or read alone, to collaborate with others, or simply to hang out. Respondents from Zones D, E, and G were also particularly likely to visit libraries for "place" reasons.

All branch libraries should provide space to meet their communities' needs for seating and technology. In branches where browsing and circulation of physical materials aren't the highest community need or priority, SDPL can consider relocating some of the collection to other branches in order to free up space for seating and technology. However, in SDPL's smaller branches, even moving the entire collection out may not be enough.



Lack of technology space at the Oak Park Library

LACK OF SPACE FOR THE COLLECTION

Despite predictions that digital materials and the internet would make print materials obsolete, SDPL has continued to see high demand for books, DVDs, and other physical items. Many community members shifted to digital formats while branches were closed due to COVID, but circulation of physical items rebounded once the doors were back open. A common theme in the community focus groups facilitated for this master planning process was that a “limited book collection” was a barrier to visiting the library.

Among SDPL’s goals for collection development is to build the breadth and depth of materials available in other languages in order to better serve San Diego’s diverse communities and non-native English speakers. The need for more diverse, multilingual materials was also one of the themes in the focus groups conducted as part of this master planning process. However, at the network level, SDPL cannot comfortably grow the collection in its branches without either adding more space or displacing other services — including seating, technology, and program space.

At the community level, not every branch necessarily needs or wants a larger collection. And yet, most SDPL branches have a moderate to major amount of space dedicated to shelving. Particularly in the smallest branches, even a relatively small collection can have a big impact on the functionality, flexibility, and customer experience of the space. Kensington-Normal Heights Library has the second smallest collection of any branch, but its ratio of physical materials to branch size is 8.5 items per square foot — the highest in the SDPL network. Close behind are University Heights, Clairemont, and Balboa at 7.8-8.0 items per square foot. By comparison, SDPL’s largest branches hold much larger collections — and still are mostly below 3.5 items per square foot, reflecting the greater capacity and diversity of space these larger facilities provide.

“Invest in more space at the branches.”

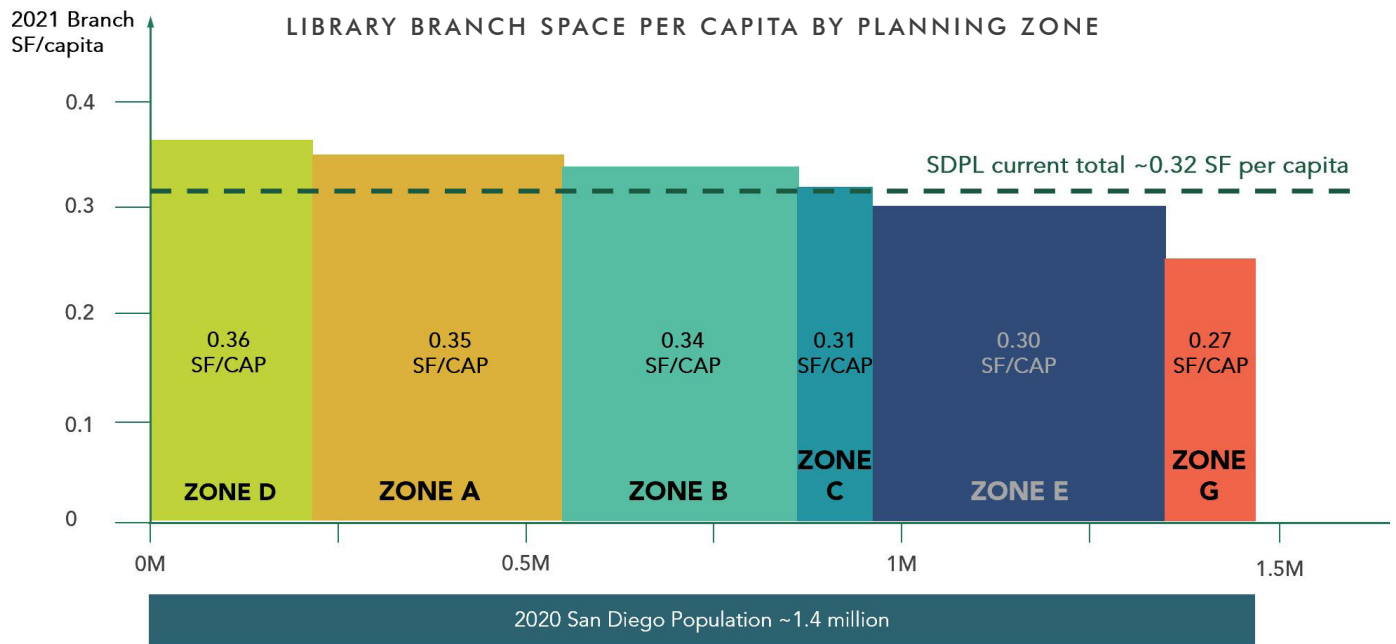
— SDPL staff survey response to the question “What one thing would you change to make SDPL a better system?”

“Small libraries... don’t always provide the space that can accommodate the needs of the public best.”

— SDPL staff survey respondent



Stacks at the University Community Library



INEQUITABLE DISTRIBUTION OF SPACE

Today, SDPL facilities provide an average of about 0.58 square feet of space per capita citywide. Of this total, the branches make up a little more than half of available library space at 0.32 square feet per capita, while the Central Library accounts for the balance.

Breaking the citywide total down by zone, however, reveals that not all areas of San Diego have equitable access to branch library space. Zones D and A each have a bit more branch library space per capita than the city average overall, while Zones E and G have a little less. More detail about the population and branch space in each zone is included in Section IV: Zone Profiles.

LIBRARY SPACE NEEDS

A branch library space planning target of 0.35 to 0.45 square feet per capita would provide expanded capacity for people, programs, technology, and collections in San Diego. The lower end of this range would be most successful if developed in a network of large library branches (at least 25,000 square feet), which tend to be more space-efficient. The upper end of this range would be needed if SDPL were to maintain and grow a network of smaller branches (e.g., less than 15,000 square feet), which tend to have a larger proportion of space allocated for non-public and support functions (e.g., staff work areas, bathrooms, mechanical rooms, etc.).

The City's current DIF planning process has recommended using approximately 0.6 library square feet per capita, including Central Library, as the basis for calculating developer impact fees (this has not yet been fully adopted as of this writing). For branches, this is roughly equivalent to the low end of the branch library space planning target above, and should be considered a minimum threshold. To support maximum service and operational efficiency, DIF funds earmarked for libraries should be invested in larger branches that can provide innovative, robust, and high quality service.

The amount of space needed in each zone to accommodate future population growth would be calculated by multiplying the branch library space planning target range by each zone's projected population.

Key Takeaways

- In some parts of San Diego, there is a deficit of branch library space to meet current community needs.
- More branch library space will be needed throughout San Diego to accommodate future population growth.
- Using a population-based metric will help the City plan and provide fair and equitable access to library space throughout San Diego.

SQUARE FEET PER CAPITA: THE NON-STANDARD STANDARD

The ratio of building size to population size is a time-tested metric for library planning. Commonly expressed as square feet per capita (or SF/capita), this metric is typically used to quantify:

- *the amount of library space provided today relative to current population size;*
- *any gap or deficit of space relative to community needs and priorities; and*
- *additional library space needed to serve anticipated future population growth.*

This metric uses the gross area of the building, including everything within the outer face of the exterior walls. Staff work areas, support spaces, closets, bathrooms, storage and everything else — even the thicknesses of the walls themselves — are included in the calculation along with space for public service. This is because these non-public spaces tend to be sized in proportion to the space for the public, and therefore can be measured and projected at the same rate.

Although the square foot per capita metric makes it very easy to compare the amount of library space between one library system and another, there is no absolute scale or universal SF/capita target that is right for all libraries or communities. A library SF/capita target that is too low for one community might be perfectly appropriate or even aspirational for another community. The amount of space each library system needs is unique based on factors such as community interests and priorities, the library system's operating capacity and capabilities, and available resources for building and maintaining library facilities.

WHAT'S THE DIF?

The City of San Diego's development impact fee (DIF) program is a mechanism for mitigating the impacts of new development on public facilities and infrastructure. The City was updating its DIF plans at the same time that SDPL was undergoing this master planning process. Although the planning efforts were in parallel, each with its own methodology and timeframe, the planning teams met several times to share findings and insights.

The City's Planning Department used its own methodology for assessing fees for library facilities, based in part on analysis of pre-COVID SDPL service statistics. That analysis revealed a number of findings consistent with the findings of this master planning process, including a positive correlation between the number of library visits and:

- the availability of suitable program space;
- the number of public computers; and
- the size of the physical collection.

Of course, one limitation of historical library use data is that it reflects only what was provided in current facilities, given their characteristics and constraints (e.g., sizes, locations, mix of spaces, age and condition, etc.). The data sets lack information or insight into how patrons might use services and spaces that may not be widely provided in sufficient quantities and/or locations, such as group study and collaboration spaces.



San Carlos Library

LIBRARY FUNDING HAS NOT KEPT UP WITH NEEDS

LIBRARY OPERATIONS

Recognizing that the significant expansion of library facilities proposed in the 2002 *Library Building Plan* would require additional operating funds, in 2002 the City adopted an ordinance that 6% of San Diego's General Fund would be earmarked annually for SDPL operations. Full funding at this level would put San Diego shoulder-to-shoulder with how other major California and US cities fund their libraries.

However, the City has overridden this ordinance every single year — even the very first year it was enacted — and has funded the Library at an average of 3.5% of the General Fund for the last 15 years. On a per-capita basis, SDPL's annual operating budget has been less than 70% of the California state average (and some years, it got down to nearly 50%). Since 2002, SDPL's facilities have grown by 84%, while its annual operating budget has grown by less than 60%. (The City's General Fund has more than doubled over the same timeframe.)

"These libraries are the community center, the focal point of our community. Without them, without upgrades, how can they continue to nurture and guide people? An informed, knowledgeable populace is part of our democracy. It's a bit ridiculous to increase housing density and not update sewers and electrical, isn't it? It is equally ridiculous, or more so, not to upgrade our libraries."

— community survey respondent

“Our budget is going to continue holding us back as long as we don’t have the funds to make some of our bigger goals a reality — new and improved facilities and the ability to provide outreach and services to the community is hindered by not having enough money.”
— SDPL staff survey respondent

“Budgetary restrictions [hold SDPL back]. With budget cuts almost every year, it makes it difficult to provide the materials and services we want to provide. Also, there is very little budget from the City allocated to providing much needed repairs on existing library buildings and parking lots.”
— SDPL staff survey respondent

The lack of sufficient operating funds has significantly constrained SDPL’s ability to deliver service at the levels needed to keep up with community demand and growth:

- Staff report that the shortage of collection development funding has resulted in long wait times for materials — particularly new and high demand titles — since it cannot purchase enough copies to meet demand. SDPL also has not been able to invest in its foreign language materials, despite San Diego’s growing diversity and high number of foreign-born residents.
- SDPL has not been able to provide the quantity or quality of technology devices to meet demand citywide — but impacts are particularly felt in branches serving communities with the highest technology needs.
- SDPL staff are stretched thin, and time available to learn and practice new skills has been at a premium. Building staff knowledge and adapting to change in an ongoing fashion is essential for a high-performing library.

The San Diego Public Library Foundation and the Friends of the San Diego Public Library have been incredibly effective in raising funds, but not nearly enough to fill the gap between the General Fund allocation for library operations and the breadth and depth of the community’s needs.

“Budget issues have historically been a challenge for our system. For instance, as far back as I can remember the book budget has been cut in response to City fiscal issues. Our Department is always the first on the chopping block when it comes to staff cuts.”
— SDPL staff survey respondent

“Our older branches are needing some deferred maintenance taken care of (as well as some of the newer ones as well). I think the work of the SD Library Foundation has helped greatly in this area, in making Council aware of the services that we provide and the needs that we have to meet community demands.”
— SDPL staff survey respondent

LIBRARY MAINTENANCE

In 2016, a citywide FY2014-2016 Facilities Condition Assessment¹ (FCA) study estimated more than \$50 million in capital and maintenance backlog needs in San Diego's libraries (not including the old Main Library). Library branch buildings assessed to be in poor condition at that time based on backlog included Kensington-Normal Heights, Linda Vista, Logan Heights, Ocean Beach, Paradise Hills, Rancho Bernardo, San Carlos, Serra Mesa, Skyline Hills, and University Heights.

It is important to note that the FY2014-2016 FCA only looked at maintenance. It did not look at factors related to how well the buildings serve as libraries — including functionality, operations, location, and customer experience. Therefore, the estimated \$50 million backlog did not include costs for bringing older facilities into full compliance with current codes (e.g., seismic, accessibility, sustainability), modernizing power and data infrastructure, or updating and expanding space to support the community's library service needs.



The City's 2016 FCA study found the University Heights Library to be in poor condition, with more than \$2.7 million in maintenance backlog needs at that time.

"I would like SDPL to have new buildings with modern infrastructure, and enough community and meeting rooms to meet community need. I would like there to be enough infrastructure to add solar panels and solar batteries at every library. Energy is expensive, and we have a lot of sun. I would like for SDPL to have a giant book budget, not the smallest per capita expenditure of comparable library systems. I would like to see our Library have enough money to buy all the books and ebooks we need. I would like to see SDPL to have a fixed programming and book budget that is not susceptible to the annual budget process. Likewise, it would be nice to try and win back the 6% as a line item in the City budget. I would like to use matching funds for happy things for patrons, not for book trucks and chairs and other necessities."

— SDPL staff survey respondent

"We have issues at my branch that have been reported for over 10 years and nothing has been done about it! Our walls are dirty and damaged, the baseboard molding is coming off, the tile in the restrooms is so stained our patrons think it is dirty and unsanitary even after it has been professionally cleaned, the striping in our parking lot is all but invisible, the roof still leaks, the carpet has holes in it, the furniture is original from nearly 30 years ago. We should be able to have every dent, ding and broken thing fixed ASAP so our buildings always look in excellent condition. It's embarrassing when our patrons ask if we have money problems or offer to fix stuff for us. As society evolves and our programming evolves to meet those needs, we must adapt and modify our buildings to keep up with the changes — it's not sufficient to build a library and expect it to still be in satisfactory condition or configured adequately for current needs thirty years down the road."

— SDPL staff survey respondent

¹ Facilities Condition Assessment: Comprehensive Report for City Occupied General Fund Facilities FY14 -16:

<https://cipapp.sandiego.gov/CIPDetail.aspx?ID=S14023>

"I would like SDPL to have new buildings with modern infrastructure, and enough community and meeting rooms to meet community needs."

— SDPL staff survey respondent

LIBRARY IMPROVEMENTS

City-provided funding for library improvement projects comes from a combination of sources, but mostly from the General Fund and developer impact fees. The City uses a process in which public projects compete for available funding. Library projects compete with parks, recreation and community centers, arts and cultural facilities, and other projects in the Neighborhood Asset category. As a category, Neighborhood Asset projects automatically receive the lowest weighting — below others such as Public Safety. The lowest of all scored projects are automatically deferred until the following year, when they start the scoring process over from scratch.

Library building projects are managed by the City's Public Works Department through the Capital Improvement Program. As of this writing, two library projects are included in the City's CIP projects list — one for the expansion of the Ocean Beach Library and another for a new San Carlos Library.



TECHNOLOGY IS A CORNERSTONE LIBRARY SERVICE

TECHNOLOGY ASPIRATIONS

To supplement the findings from the community and staff engagement and learn about the successes and challenges of library technology from multiple perspectives, this master planning process engaged library managers whose job involves the application of technology to serve the community, including the library director, members of the Library's IT Department and Public Services Technology Services, and librarians working with children, youth, families, and adult patrons.

Technology aspirations for library patrons were largely focused on delivering the highest possible quality of library services for patrons; increasing technology confidence and mastery; and applying technology to improve quality of life for all patrons, especially for those needing assistance with basic access and technical skills.

One library manager expressed the Library's vision for patron service in this way:

"Our aspiration for patrons is for people to be comfortable using technology skills essential to everyday life, as well as have access to emerging technologies in order to better themselves and the community [and to] access technology and training they could not otherwise afford and to discover/learn/create something new, including new, cutting edge technology."

Equity of access was also emphasized. Staff expressed the wish for patrons "to have the latest equipment and software to meet the needs of the communities we serve so they have equal (equity) access to information and resources at no or little cost [and] the opportunity to be exposed to new technology that they may not otherwise be exposed to; to empower them to learn and experiment."

Library staff also shared ideas for new technology items and services that the library should consider offering to patrons in the future, with more in-library technology, mobile technology, equitable access to technology across the SDPL system, and streaming services topping the list.

LIBRARY STAFF IDEAS FOR MEETING COMMUNITY TECHNOLOGY NEEDS

In-Library Technology	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● SDPL should offer computer classes and classes on how to download books on different devices. Patrons frequently ask for help in these areas. ● At branches that show that patrons have a high interest in art could offer them the opportunities to work with digital art tablets, or with art related computer programs.
Mobile Technology	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● It'd be nice if laptops and tablets were available for checkout, or at least for use inside (or in front of) of the library. ● We will need more Chromebooks for work that takes more than an hour. ● Expanded access to wifi hotspots and portable devices. Wifi printing from devices.
Equity of Access	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● The request I get most frequently from patrons is access to creative software like Illustrator and Photoshop. ● User-friendly wireless printing from patrons' own devices and the ability to use credit/debit cards to pay for printing/copying. ● Online course for patrons to learn how to use computers for beginners
Streaming Services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Kanopy, Hoopla, Lynda. ● A music service would be great. ● Streaming video. We're well into the 21st century and we still only offer DVDs, a 20th century technology.
Wireless	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Wireless printing and/or simpler printing procedures; Laptop checkout at each branch and iPad checkout at each branch; wifi hotspot checkout. ● Wireless/cloud printing. Real time translation devices. Device charging stations/lockers. Accessibility services/tech at each branch.
Software	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Creative software, photo and video editing. ● Editing and other production software and equipment.
Learning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Also the Idea Lab may need to offer more classes. ● Increased Employment Assistance & Computer Classes ● Very basic online digital literacy classes.
Maker	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Mini-Maker labs at all branches (or at least a 3D printer at all branches to match SDCL) with trained staff and how-to programs or a training guide to educate the community on the equipment. ● 3D printing and laser cutter at all branches. They should be for all patrons, not just teens. ● robotics, video and sound editing software, laser cutter, more STEAM



Technology aspirations for library staff were largely focused on shoring up staff technology skills to help patrons and maintain robust, up-to-date devices and connectivity for all library locations. One manager expressed the goals this way:

"We want staff to have the opportunity to explore/discover various technologies to incorporate into 21st century library services and to be inspired to adapt these technologies to improve services.... [And] to be comfortable using and providing instruction in everyday technologies, as well as seeking out skills and library applications for emerging technologies to educate and better the community."

Maintaining the quality of library technology investments was a common theme in staff discussions, as expressed in the following staff comment:

"We need more user-friendly, updated technology that keeps up with the changes and is efficient and practical.... [And] technology that is current, at speeds that allow efficiency and effectiveness and allows them to provide service to patrons existing in a quickly changing technology environment with higher expectations and needs."

Improvements to the Library's broadband infrastructure were also desired "to enhance the Library's Information Infrastructure by incorporating fiber optics" at more library locations.

As an area of continued growth, library managers would like more technology support. According to them, "There are not enough staff for the technology needs of a library system of this size." Currently, technology staffing for the Library comes in several functional forms. The Library has a dedicated IT team that works on data infrastructure, the Library's Integrated Library System (ILS — essentially the electronic card catalog), web services, and desktop support, with some work in conjunction with the City of San Diego. The Library also has a team focused on Public Technology Services including emerging technology, and staff for the Library's IDEA Lab maker spaces.



TECHNOLOGY ACCOMPLISHMENTS + CHALLENGES

SDPL's technology accomplishments can be considered during two distinct time periods: pre-COVID, when improvement projects were planned ahead of time, and COVID-era, when staff responded to needs on the fly in an ever-changing environment.

Pre-COVID technology accomplishments include:

- A successful 2020 conversion to the Polaris Integrated Library System (arguably the Library's most important central technology system; as well as serving as the electronic card catalog, the ILS also is the registration system for library borrowers and enables circulation of physical and digital materials throughout the SDPL system). Many staff noted that the transition was smooth, thanks to the good work of the Library's ILS team.
- The opening of six IDEA Labs throughout the system.
- The conversion of all library materials to use Radio Frequency Identification (RFID) technology. RFID allows touchless circulation of physical library materials and enhances the ease of material check-outs (including patron self-service) and check-ins (enabling fewer physical moves for library staff).
- The addition of self-checkout machines throughout the SDPL system, supporting patrons who prefer self-service opportunities with 75 points of service throughout SDPL locations.

Technology accomplishments during COVID include:

- Expansion of Wi-Fi coverage outside of buildings and increased access hours.
- Optimization of the Library's digital services (including downloadable library materials, subscription electronic resources like language lessons, the Library's unique cultural heritage/local history offerings, and others) to support overall increased use.
- Remote access support for library staff.
- Increase in programming provided via video (e.g., SDPL's YouTube channel).

Technology Challenges:

Technology represents a key resource for library patrons and staff; most library operations are dependent on efficient and functional technology platforms. Some key challenges include:

- Funding, including costs for maintaining current technologies and exploring new, innovative technology.
- Staffing limitations.
- Geographic distance between facilities (making deployment of technology and technology support difficult) and lack of "after-hours" technical support (evenings and weekends).
- Technology learning and practice opportunities for library staff.



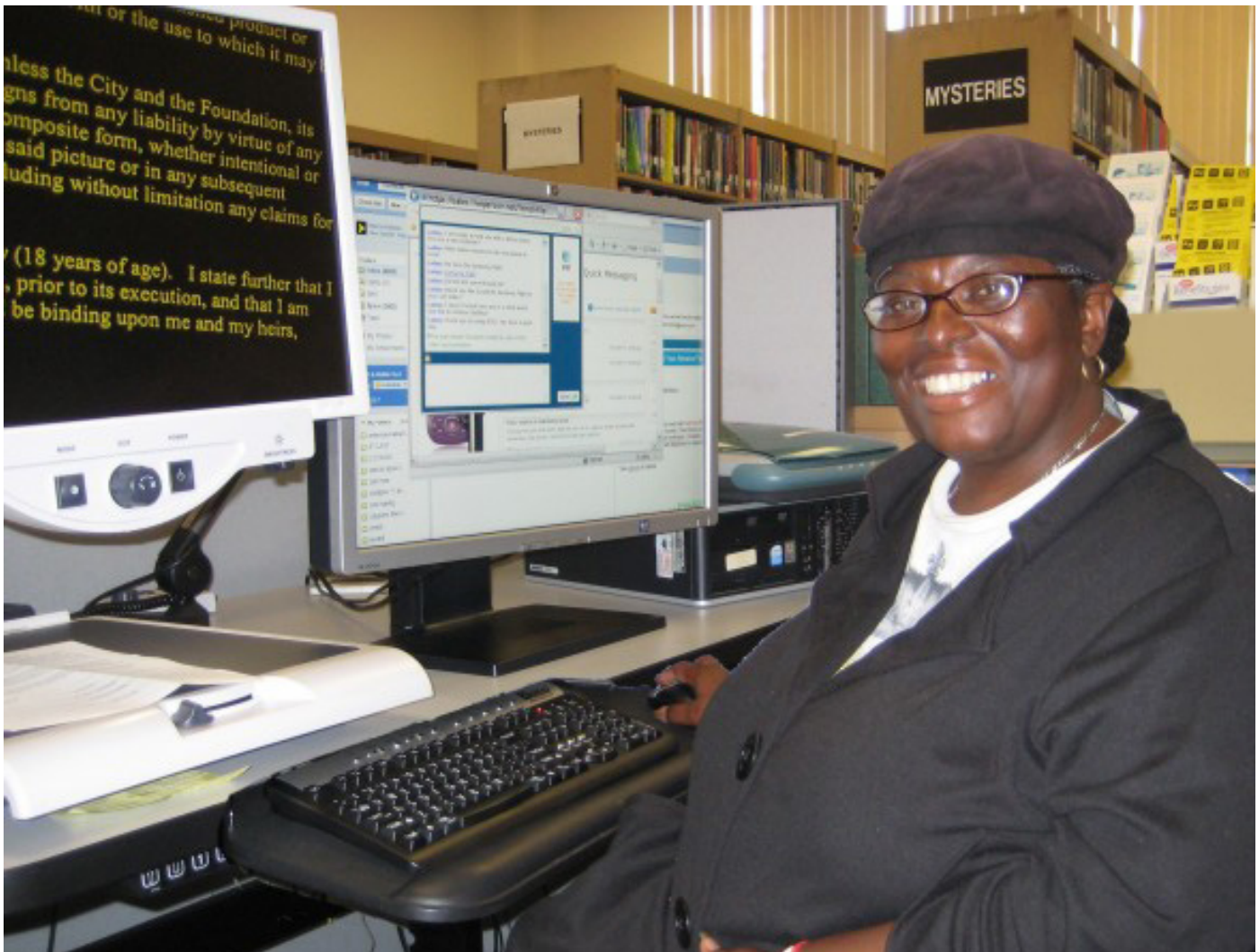
DIVERSE TECHNOLOGY ENVIRONMENT

The Library has a diverse technology environment, reflective of the size of the library locations — from the immense space of the Central Library downtown to the varying sizes of the branch libraries. Addressing equity of technology access across the libraries remains a key objective. IT Program Manager Curtis Williams describes the situation thus: “In terms of technology, there is a major disparity between the main and the (35) branch libraries. We are working towards addressing the technology gap through capital improvement projects as well as on smaller renovation projects when funds are available but we have a lot of work still to do.”

Technology Devices

There are approximately 1,200 patron technology devices and 600 staff devices supported by the Library. WiFi is an essential service for SDPL users. In the summer of 2021, the library saw an average of 2,700 WiFi users per day. In some cases, WiFi use topped 3,000 users per day.

- The Library provides technology devices, including desktop computers, for patrons at all locations. There tends to be higher demand for computer access in the southern part of the library system. Many locations have limited space for computer workstations, and do not have room for the collaboration of several people using the same library computer.



- The Library supports ADA compliant patron workstations and computer stations with assistive technology support for visual, auditory, or physical impairments. The library system has 32 ADA designated workstations at 15 library locations (including the Central Library which has 18 of the ADA compliant workstations). These workstations have specialty-use software (e.g., TRACE, ZoomText and JAWS) and have an adjustable table. The Library also has BrowseAloud on all patron computers, and the library website has the BrowseAloud plug-in, which is an assistive technology software that adds text-to-speech functionality to websites.
- The Library lends laptops and other devices to patrons, including Chromebooks and tablet computers, for some in-library use (e.g., supporting the homework help program).
- The Library has specially designated computer stations for children. Most locations do not provide space in the children's areas for collaborative computing for caregivers and children. Additionally, most libraries do not have space for adult caregivers to work while supervising children in their care, and the children's areas do not provide supervised access to new technologies.
- In most libraries, there are adequate computers or devices for all staff members, and they are typically reliable. Most staff also report that the existing printers, scanners, and photocopiers are adequate, as are the phones. At some smaller and older branches, technology can be challenging, as reported in the staff survey.

Data Network

To best meet needs, the Library's IT department navigates, manages, or co-manages four different Internet Service Providers (ISPs) to offer patron and staff internet access, as well as support library operations at each location. The IT Department does not always have access to the detailed network information necessary for agile network management.

- The Library's IT Program Manager reports that the public internet connection currently performs well overall, but staff connections are slow throughout the SDPL system and could use improvement.
- The Central Library has the most robust connection, with a one Gigabit per second download and 35 Megabit per second upload connection for patron internet access only. This connection is from California's CENIC network. CENIC operates the statewide California Research and Education Network that aims to connect all California libraries, K-12 schools, and higher education facilities to the same high-speed broadband (this initiative was launched in 2013 in partnership with the California State Library and the non-profit Califa library consortium).
- Staff internet access at the Central Library is only 100 Megabits per second, compared to 200 Megabits per second for staff connections at branch libraries. The ISP for library staff is the City of San Diego's provider, AT&T. The Library and City IT Departments have worked diligently to provide broadband service for staff access, yet service remains challenged in some locations. Bandwidth upgrades have been planned, but lack of funding has prevented progress in needed areas.
- The Library purchases connections from Cox and/or TWC-Spectrum for public internet access at branch libraries. This public access includes Wi-Fi for patrons. The Library has been able to increase bandwidth at affordable costs as demands in branches increase over time.
- As with many libraries, the existing wireless Wi-Fi network coverage is adequate in some areas, but challenged in others. Fortunately, the Library has the capability to perform "heat mapping" (showing where Wi-Fi signals are strong versus weak or non-existent) and the Library's core Wi-Fi system is capable of expansion to provide additional coverage. Barriers to expanding the Library's Wi-Fi network include budget constraints and physical difficulties (including the need for suitable wiring and locations to install additional Wi-Fi access points).

SDPL's branches have space dedicated to back-end IT functions, such as "network closets" and/or equipment racks that are crucial to distributing the data network throughout the SDPL library system. Most spaces have adequate temperature, static, and power controls. Currently, expanding IT spaces is either challenging or impossible.

Other Library Technology

As mentioned previously, the Library uses Radio Frequency Identification (RFID) for staff and patron material handling, and preventing the loss of library materials that haven't been checked out before they leave the building. SDPL also has automated people counters to measure the use of each library location as people enter and exit the building.

Access to adequate power for patrons to recharge mobile devices is a critical modern library service. While newer SDPL branches have improved access to power for patrons, most of the library branches struggle to provide adequate power access. In addition, most branches (including new branches) cannot easily add power access for patrons due to limited space, awkward power source locations that cannot be reached with extension cords, safety concerns, and capacity issues. The Kensington branch received some power upgrades in 2019, but others (notably the Oak Park Library) need attention.

Given the importance of meeting rooms across the library system, another key need is audio-visual systems for spaces of all sizes. For instance, large meeting rooms require video screens or projectors for visuals, video switching systems, audio systems adequate for the space, and other equipment like podiums that allow easy access to A/V connections for presenters, wired and wireless microphones for speaking and performing, and power access. Even small rooms benefit from some level of A/V support, especially a large screen to support collaboration. And, of course, all rooms require robust Wi-Fi. The Library has benefited from public educational grant funding that has resulted in A/V improvements in some libraries. However, all of the Library's current and future meeting spaces could benefit from improved A/V installations, as well as ongoing training support for staff to operate and help patrons operate the A/V systems.



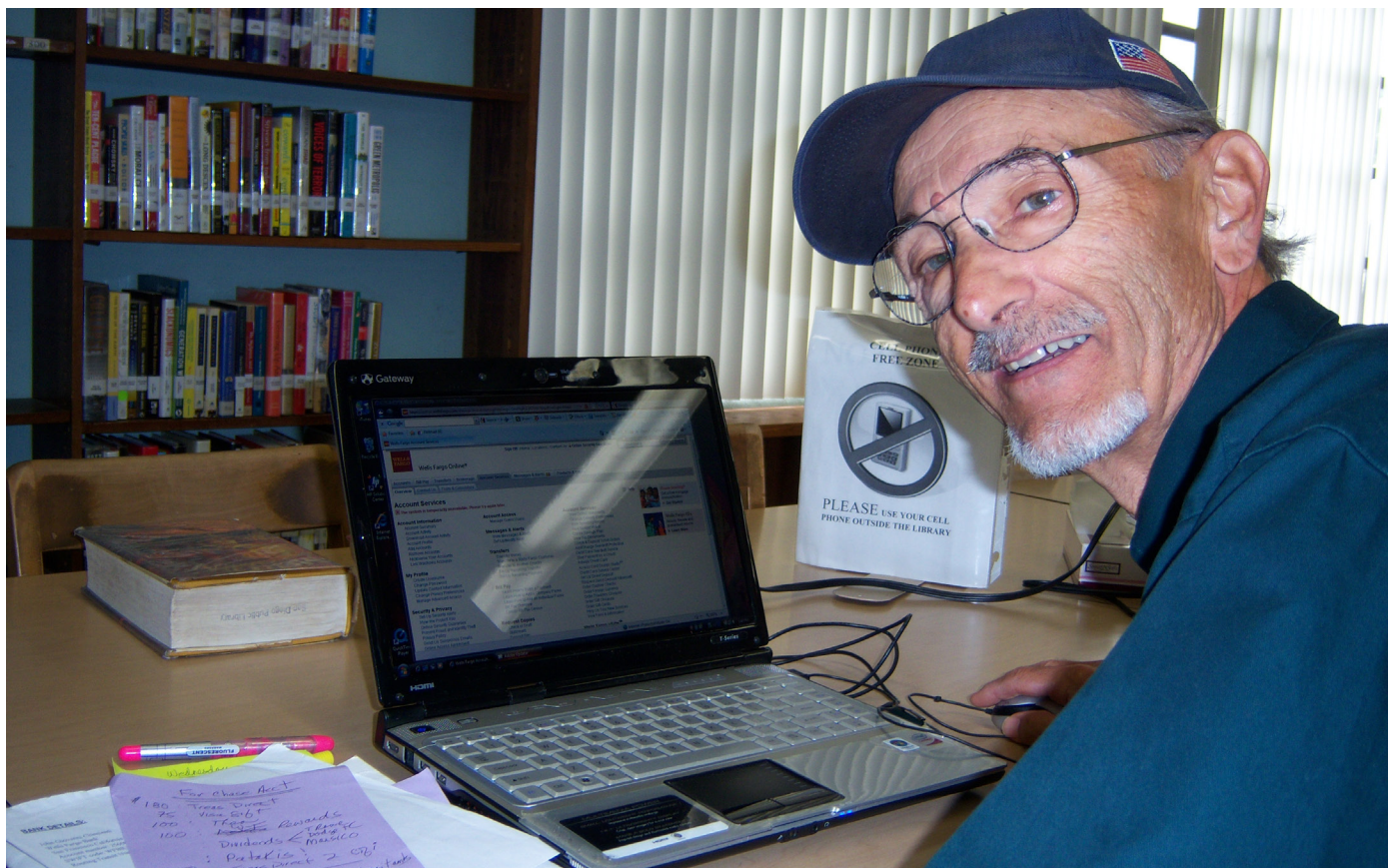
KEY TECHNOLOGY RECOMMENDATIONS

A high-performing library can only be as good as its weakest support links. Technology is mission-critical for library services. It's remarkable to see the progress that SDPL has made in the application of technology, but also important to note areas of improvements to ensure that the community of San Diego continues to thrive via equitable access to library technology. In many cases, suggestions included here may have been previously considered by the Library but were not feasible due to budget constraints.

Near-Term Recommendations

In the near term (1-2 years), the Library may consider the following technology improvements:

- Since Wi-Fi remains an essential service, perform heat mapping of the Wi-Fi signals at all branches and increase coverage and capacity as needed when affordable, including for external access where it is supported.
- Expand in-house circulation of laptops/mobile devices (e.g., tablet computers) as possible, especially in smaller branches and branches where demand for technology access outpaces available workstations, such as in the southern parts of San Diego.
- Continue to provide staff with mobile access options, perhaps increasing these options as library service models have evolved during COVID. Possibilities include additional mobile telephones for in-library use; mobile device access (including remote staff access to the ILS and other staff resources) and mobile presentation options (such as small projectors or portable display devices) for outreach staff; more City-issued mobile phones; more hands-free technology to promote good health and ergonomics for staff; and workstations with larger screens and screen sizes to allow for more "real estate" for remote interactions (such as video conferencing) and accessing multiple resources during computer use.
- Where and when possible, provide additional ad-hoc access to power for patrons to recharge devices in comfortably furnished seating and study areas. Due to aging buildings and challenging physical layouts, this effort will likely require equal parts creativity, elbow grease, and some expense. Please see long-term suggestions below for additional recommendations for power access.
- Consider expanding the successful IDEA Lab maker space program in an equitable manner to include additional locations where space allows, as well as to create smaller-scale "modules of making." These modules could be self-contained activities/kits that can be shared and practiced in smaller branches using whatever space might be available (even temporarily) or kits that are small enough to be circulated like other physical library materials.
- Desired maker items include cutting machines, recording equipment, sewing machines, milling machines, 3D Printers, and other items. The "modules of making" for distribution to branches of all sizes and patron checkout could include SnapDragon boards, Raspberry Pi's, robotics kits, programming kits, and other items.
- Continue improving A/V installations in meeting rooms.



Longer-Term Recommendations

In the longer term (2-5 years), the Library may consider the following technology improvements:

Data Network

Next to the Integrated Library System (successfully upgraded at SDPL), the Library's data network is arguably the next most important resource. The current network is composed of four different providers of network services including the City of San Diego (with connectivity provided by AT&T for staff computing), CENIC for public computing at Central, and two other commercial providers for public access at branch libraries.

To simplify network management, improve network speed, increase performance, and enhance scalability, it is recommended that the Library consider transitioning all of the public connections to the CENIC network. The value of joining CENIC goes beyond raw management and performance improvements; it offers a strategic advantage of native connectivity to potentially all libraries throughout the state of California (as well as K-12 and higher education institutions) on a dedicated, public, high-speed backbone. Although CENIC has not been fully leveraged in this manner, the connection anticipates the possibility of even stronger collaboration and new approaches to resource sharing in the state, including the sharing of inter-library expertise between regions for the benefit of all California library users.

Connecting the staff network to CENIC may face complications (especially for employee access to City resources), but it should also be considered as part of an exploration into increasing the Library's public network connections to CENIC.

Data and Power Technology Standards

As the Library works through any next phases of facility improvements or construction, it should create and share technology standards for IT spaces, low voltage wiring, Wi-Fi coverage, patron and staff computing devices, A/V systems, and more. These specifications should include power requirements for the building, in particular for patron use. This plan recommends that ergonomic access to standard and USB power should be provided anywhere a patron has an option to sit. The technology standards should be flexible enough to include both new construction and remodel projects.

Patron Computing

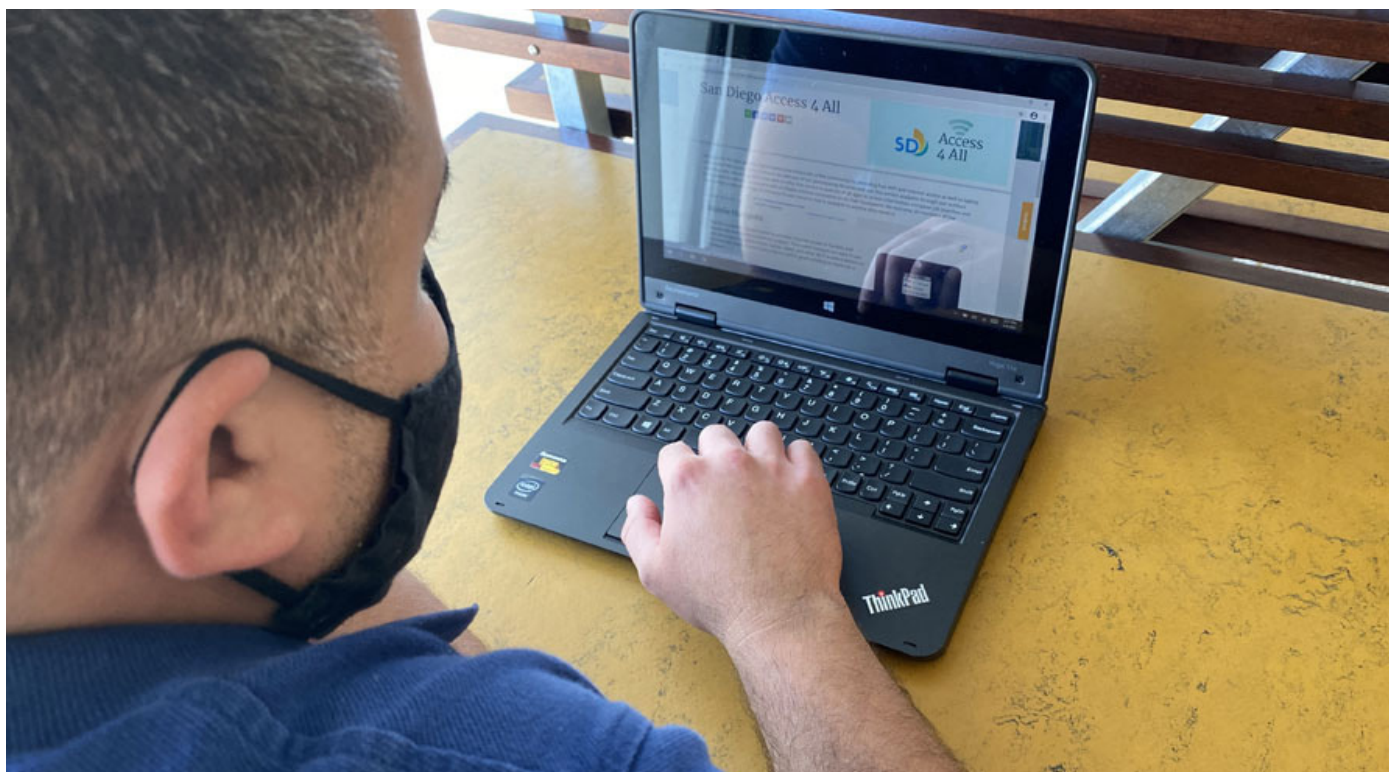
For all public computing options, including fixed workstations, mobile technology, special technology installations, and others, it is recommended that the Library go beyond simply determining the number and types of devices needed to serve patrons throughout the SDPL system in an equitable manner. The Library should also prioritize physical User Experience (UX) design and draw on customer journey mapping concepts. An important part of this approach is digital inclusion — teaching users how to apply internet and technology device access to improve their lives. Library resources should also be convenient and intuitive to use. Additionally, to provide a good patron computing experience, physical/environmental needs should also be considered, including sound control, adequate spaces for technology-related activities and collaboration, and other aspects.

Further Web Development

The Library experienced a dramatic increase in use during COVID, and projections across many segments of society indicate that many users have become accustomed to digital options for all kinds of services. It is recommended that the Library continue to track use and needs and invest further into its digital services infrastructure.

Strategic Technology Planning

To coordinate these master plan technology recommendations and align them with emerging needs and other library planning efforts, the Library may wish to create a strategic technology plan.



THE LIBRARY VALUES COLLABORATION

As a high-performance library, SDPL has staff dedicated to serving patrons with care, efficiency, and speed. But there are some mission-critical functions where the Library relies on others for assistance. Some of these collaborations result in excellent results while others are more challenging. The collaborations that should be considered with the most care are those that result in better performance for library patrons.

SUCCESSFUL COLLABORATIONS

The Library's relationship with City of San Diego IT partners has resulted in more options for bandwidth throughout the San Diego community and demonstrates an efficient use of publicly-funded technology infrastructure. Meanwhile, the Library's connection to the CENIC backbone strategically positions the Library for further collaboration with other California libraries.

The Library and City also collaborate on the library website and other areas as outlined in the City Charter. In many cases, the collaboration has resulted in a strong partnership and excellent teamwork, even when demand for website changes outpaced the capacity of both Library and City web staff.

During COVID, many SDPL website updates were urgently needed. Some of the updates required the specialized skills of City web staff, who worked together with the Library to meet the needs as quickly as possible, despite many competing demands for their attention during a very volatile time.

"I am so proud that our communities trust the Library, they believe in us, and they know they can count on us. Working with external partners such as KPBS, Veterans Resources, San Diego Unified School District, Mental Health Speakers Project, READ San Diego, and so many more on programming to create bonds with partners and develop stronger programs that benefit all institutions and all communities throughout San Diego."

— SDPL staff survey respondent

In 2021, the Library also started collaborating closely with the City's newly formed Office of Child and Youth Success to better serve young San Diegans.

A CHALLENGING COLLABORATION

Despite the successes, the approach to shared Library/City responsibility for technology support has also resulted in some significant challenges impacting the Library's ability to serve patrons.

One challenge facing SDPL is the partnership it has with the City of San Diego to provide courier services between each library location. The courier moves books and other physical library materials between library locations where they are needed. For instance, if a book is returned at a library branch in northern San Diego, but is next requested by a patron in southern San Diego, it's the courier's job to deliver that book (along with many others) as part of a logistical delivery system. The courier also provides delivery services for other City departments, so it is tasked with moving multiple items and forms from one City location to another.

The courier system for any multi-branch library is considered mission-critical for high performance. If the courier is not efficient in operational design and performance, the end result is poor-performance for library services and unhappy library patrons. In a multi-branch system, any other improvements or efficiencies in the logistics chain, including getting new materials into patrons' hands, the work performed by the circulation departments at each library location, and technologies such as Automated Materials Handling systems can encounter a frustrating bottleneck if the courier is not matching the performance of the rest of the system.

Furthermore, efficient logistics result in equity of access to physical materials for library patrons. While commercial providers of logistics take pride in speedy deliveries (the company Old Dominion Freight rallies around the tagline of "Helping the world keep promises"), for libraries, efficient and speedy distribution of materials is about equity of access, a principle that is highly valued in San Diego, particularly by the Library.

A measure of the time it takes for a returned item to become available to another library patron is called "time to shelf." High-performing libraries boast a time-to-shelf of 24-48 hours. At the San Diego Public Library, the time-to-shelf is at least a week, and sometimes longer. When delivery speeds are at their slowest, the courier has worked to catch up as best as it can.

Simply put, library returns can only be as fast as their slowest link, and currently SDPL's slowest link for materials is the courier system. It is recommended that the Library's courier aim for a time-to-shelf metric of 24-48 hours.

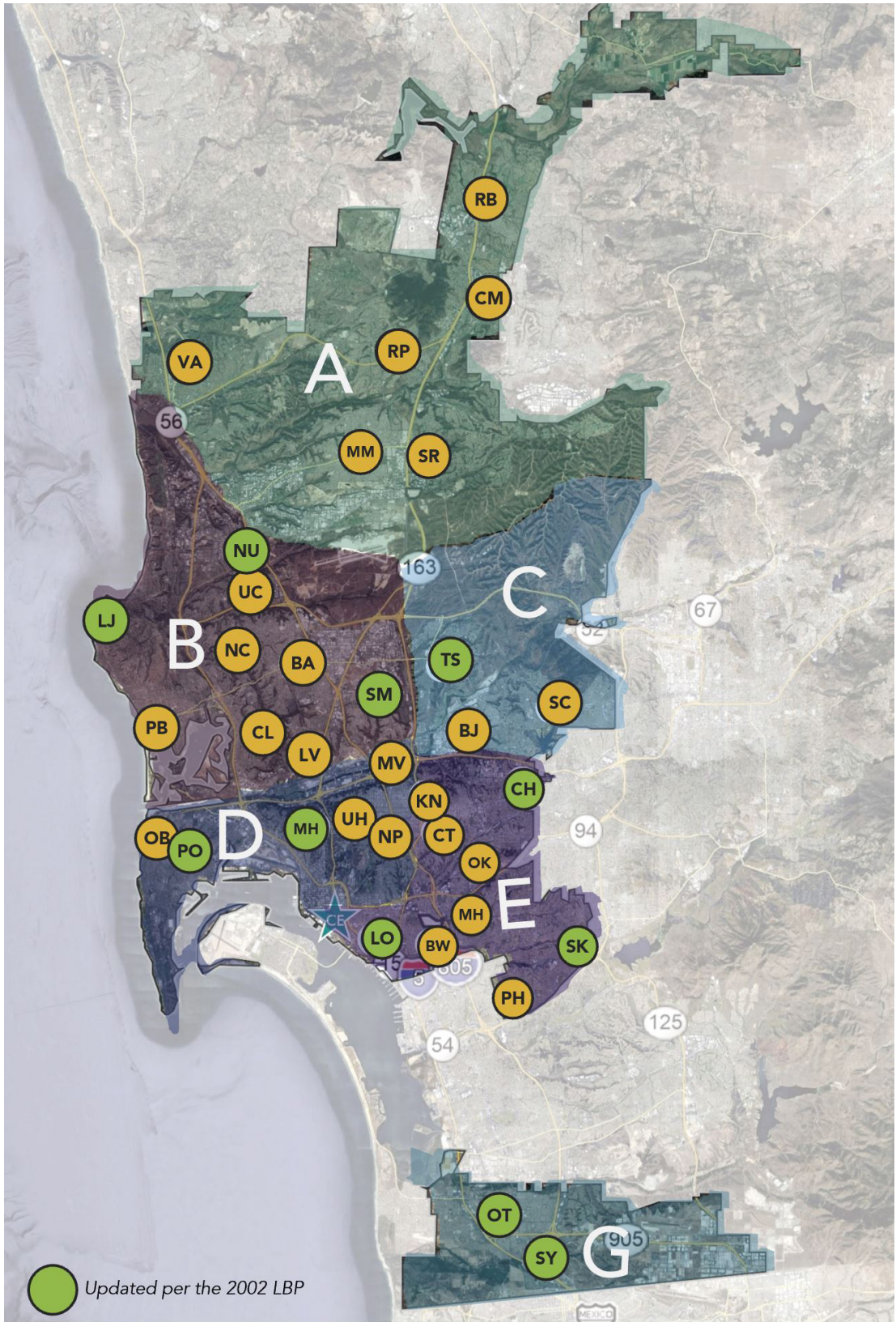
ADDITIONAL CHALLENGES

Another challenge faced by the Library is the divergence between the speed of evolving library technology needs and how the City of San Diego Charter outlines terms of service, boundaries, and collaboration. Although the City has standards for essential technology functionality (including refreshment cycles for devices that are at the end of their useful life), the Library's budget has not been sufficient to meet computing needs.

One library manager characterized the situation thus: "The IT Department's issue is trying to support a mix of old and new technology, which makes troubleshooting and compatibility very difficult. [SDPL has] technology that is no longer supported (7 years old) and the Library doesn't have the funding to replace the tech, having to use refurbished computers to help bridge gaps."

IV. ZONE PROFILES

This section describes the six branch library planning zones proposed in this Master Plan Framework for the San Diego Public Library. While this is not a comprehensive portrait of each zone, it provides the general geographic extents and key demographic characteristics, and highlights the important findings for each zone and the libraries located within. More information about the methodology behind the creation of zones and their role in this visioning framework can be found in Section III.



ZONE A — NORTHERN SAN DIEGO

ZONE A — NORTHERN SAN DIEGO

Zone A contains the northernmost areas of San Diego. It is bounded by the City of San Diego's limits on the north, east and west side and the Marine Corps Air Station Miramar to the south. It contains some of the newly developed neighborhoods of the city. Largely residential and low-density, it includes the neighborhoods of Black Mountain Ranch, Carmel Valley, Mira Mesa, North City, Rancho Bernardo, Rancho Peñasquitos, and Sorrento Valley.

Zone A is the second-largest zone by population, with approximately 323,000 residents. It has the highest percentage of Asian or Pacific Islander populations residing within its limits and is relatively affluent compared to the other zones. SANDAG¹ projects slower growth in Zone A than other areas of San Diego, adding about 8% to its population by 2040.

Zone A libraries are very well used. In 2019, Zone A branches accounted for more than 20% of all SDPL branch visits, one-third of branch circulation, and nearly 30% of branch program attendance. On the community survey, nine of 10 Zone A residents said they visited the library to get books and materials — more than any other zone.

Zone A did not have any branches expanded through the 2002 *Library Building Plan*. Even so, its libraries currently provide 0.35 square feet of library space per capita — more than the citywide average, and the second highest amount for a zone. Four of its six libraries are larger than 20,000 square feet. A seventh branch library for Zone A in Pacific Highlands Ranch has been designed and construction is planned.²

All of the libraries in the zone are between 20 and 30 years old, and none have undergone meaningful renovation since they opened. The City's 2016 FCA study³ found a maintenance backlog of more than \$19 million at that time for Zone A libraries, and projected additional needs in the coming years.

ZONE A BRANCHES

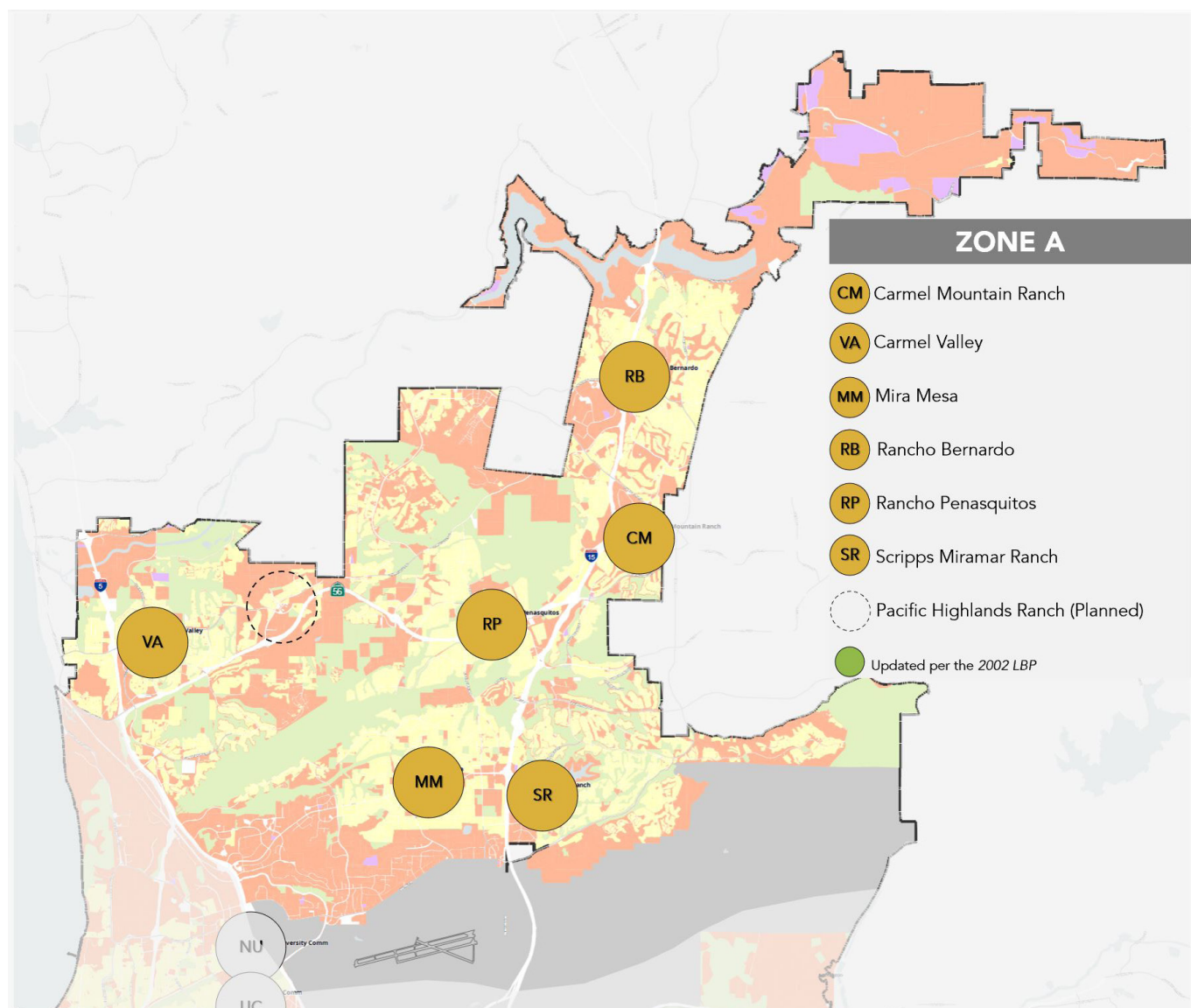
Carmel Mountain Ranch Library. The 13,000 square foot Carmel Mountain Ranch Library was built in 1997. Filled with natural light, the building features a large community room. SDPL staff report that use patterns at this branch have changed in recent years — for example, more patrons now bring their own devices than use library-provided technology — and that there are opportunities to realign space with new needs and priorities. Expansion to 15,000 square feet was proposed in the 2002 LBP but was not implemented. The City's 2016 FCA study rated the facility's condition as fair based on the maintenance backlog at that time, and projected additional maintenance needs in the coming years.

Carmel Valley Library. Built in 1993, this library features large entrances and windows and incorporates public art throughout. The 13,100 square foot library is a circulation powerhouse, offering the largest collection of any SDPL branch and ranking at the top for circulation in 2019. It also ranked among the top five branches for programs hosted and attended that year. The City's 2016 FCA study rated the facility's condition as fair based on the maintenance backlog at that time, estimating more than \$2.2 million in deferred maintenance needs.

¹San Diego Association of Governments <https://www.sandag.org/index.asp?classid=26&fuseaction=home.classhome>

² Pacific Highlands Ranch Library: Project Information Details <https://cipapp.sandiego.gov/CIPDetail.aspx?ID=S14023>

³ Facilities Condition Assessment: Comprehensive Report for City Occupied General Fund Facilities FY14 -16: <https://cipapp.sandiego.gov/CIPDetail.aspx?ID=S14023>



Mira Mesa Library. Built in 1994, the 21,000 square foot Mira Mesa Library features a community room, a teen center, and themed public art throughout the building. It offers a large collection of language materials, including titles in Tagalog, Chinese, Hindi, Korean, Vietnamese, and Spanish. Mira Mesa had the fourth-highest circulation of any SDPL branch in 2019, as well as the highest levels of computer use (by far) of any Zone A branch. One SDPL staffer mentioned that Mira Mesa's computer lab is poorly ventilated and has its computers spaced too closely together. The City's 2016 FCA study found more than \$1.4 million in maintenance backlog at that time, and projected additional needs in the coming years.

"I like Mira Mesa because it's a great community center. I see lots of school kids there doing their homework and staying out of trouble, and its layout is conducive to that. I used to work next door to it and it was nicely kept and had everything I needed when I had five minutes to pop in and grab books."

— community survey respondent

"Mira Mesa Library could really use refurbishing. The carpets, furniture, bathroom fixtures, and furniture are quite worn."

— community survey respondent

"Rancho Peñasquitos Branch Library will be 30 years old next year and it shows. The list of deferred maintenance issues is long and depressing."

— community survey respondent

"Pre-COVID, the Rancho Peñasquitos library was very popular with families of small children and students doing homework or meeting with tutors. There were many great programs available and the branch was always busy. We can't wait to get back to it!"

— community survey respondent

"I enjoy the Scripps Ranch Library location. It offers nice areas to relax and browse books and magazines. I also like the proximity to nice walks around the adjacent pond and Lake Miramar. I also have taken adult piano classes there and attended events in their large multipurpose room. That room has been put to very good use over the years."

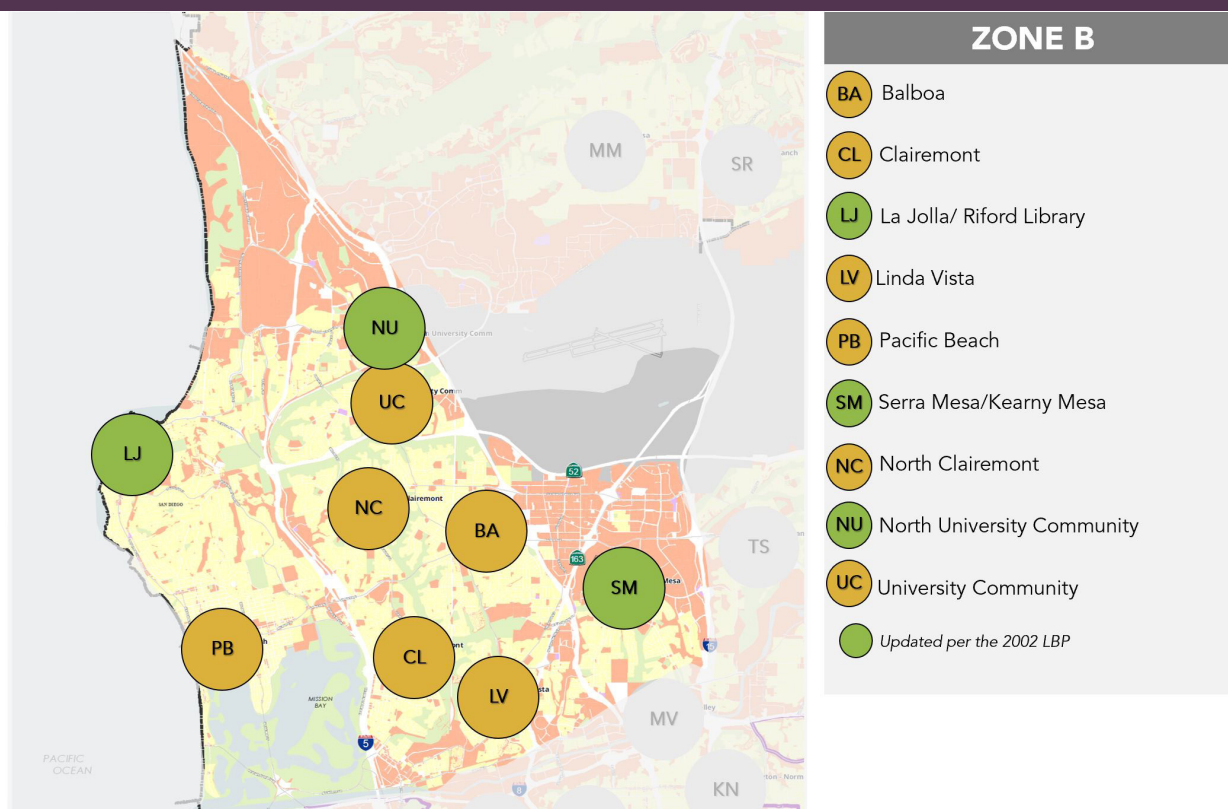
— community survey respondent

Rancho Bernardo Library. At 23,000 square feet, the Rancho Bernardo Library is the biggest branch in Zone A and also one of the biggest branches in the SDPL system. Following a grass-roots funding campaign, the current building replaced a much smaller building in 1996 to meet growing demand. A popular spot for meetings, concerts and performances, the library attracted approximately 340,000 visitors in 2019, ranking third among SDPL branches. It also ranks among the top for material circulation. Its high FCI suggests that the building is in poor condition and will require moderate to major maintenance. While the 2002 LBP did not include a recommendation, the Rancho Bernardo Public Facilities Financing Plan (2013) proposed a 2,500 square foot expansion. The City's 2016 FCA study rated the facility's condition as poor based on the maintenance backlog, estimating more than \$5.5 million in deferred maintenance needs at that time.

Rancho Peñasquitos Library. Built in 1991, Rancho Peñasquitos is the oldest library in Zone A. It was built after the community advocated for a larger library to meet growing demand. The 20,700 square foot building includes meeting rooms, study rooms, and plenty of desks, making it popular among students and teens. It was the most visited branch in 2019 with the highest attendance per program. It also ranked second for material circulation. The City's 2016 FCA study estimated about \$3.8 million in deferred maintenance needs at that time, and projected additional needs in subsequent years.

Scripps Miramar Ranch Library. Built in 1993, this 21,700 square foot branch is designed in the Mission architectural style and features vaulted ceilings, large windows, and a children's amphitheater. Its location next to a lake makes it a popular destination for families with children. In 2019, it ranked among the top 10 branches in San Diego for materials circulation and program attendance. The 2002 LBP recommended parking lot improvements but no expansion of the building. As of this writing in fall 2021, the parking lot improvements are in progress. The City's 2016 FCA study estimated more than \$4 million in deferred maintenance needs at that time, and projected the need for additional investments in subsequent years.

ZONE B — BEACH/NORTH DOWNTOWN



ZONE B — BEACH/ NORTH DOWNTOWN

Zone B encompasses the area north of downtown San Diego and is bounded by the coastline on the west and I-15 to the east. Well-known landmarks within the zone include the University of California San Diego campus, the Mission Bay park, and the La Jolla village coastline.

Interstate 5 runs north-south through Zone B. Mapping of pre-COVID library use patterns showed cross-use of Zone B branches by residents on both sides of I-5, which is why this Master Plan Framework proposes this area as a single zone rather than two. That said, I-5 does influence mobility patterns and library visits to some extent, and needs to be considered in planning libraries in this zone.

Zone B has a current population of approximately 307,000 people — about 70% of whom live east of I-5. SANDAG projects that the population of Zone B will grow by approximately 12% by 2040.

Zone B branches do a lot of business. In 2019 they offered the most programs and hosted the most program attendees of any zone. They also accounted for nearly 30% of all SDPL branch circulation that year. More than one-fourth of SDPL's branch collection is housed in Zone B, which has the highest ratio of collection materials to branch space in San Diego — particularly east of I-5.

Branches in Zone B currently provide approximately 0.34 square feet per capita of library space overall. This is higher on the west side of I-5, where the La Jolla and Pacific Beach branches provide about 0.4 square feet of library space per capita. The seven branches on the east side of I-5, by contrast, provide just over 0.3 square feet per capita. Although both sides of I-5 will need additional branch space by 2040 to accommodate population growth, the current deficit of space to the east of I-5 suggests a priority for near-term capacity building in these communities.

Zone B had two branches expanded and one new branch built through the 2002 *Library Building Plan*. The City's 2016 FCA study found a maintenance backlog of nearly \$9 million at that time for Zone B libraries, and projected additional needs in the coming years.

"I loved tutoring at Balboa because it was such a vibrant place — kids, adults, different races/ethnicities — it really represents the community."

— community survey respondent

"Balboa Library is WAY OVERDUE for REHABILITATION. It is inadequate to serve the community it is a resource to... and has been for MANY YEARS!"

— community survey respondent

"The community of Clairemont has three libraries. They are small. Our libraries do not have performing areas, outdoor spaces or meeting rooms. North Clairemont is listed as having a community room, but it is so small and in need of renovation that it is not adequate for most needs." — Edem Yaege, President, Clairemont Town Council

"It would be lovely if our local branch (Clairemont) could get a facelift but its funky old self has its charm too. My family and I use the library constantly and value it always!"

— community survey respondent

"Although La Jolla Library is outside of my zip code, it is the most stimulating and safe environment for me. I enjoy their organization and well maintained interior. I enjoy participating in their programs throughout the year as well as their art exhibits."

— community survey respondent

ZONE B BRANCHES

Balboa Library. This approximately 5,100 square foot, 50-year-old library is one of three very small branches in the Clairemont community. Despite its small size, in 2019 it had more visitors, circulated more materials, and hosted more program attendees than many of SDPL's larger branches. The Balboa Library was proposed for expansion in the 2002 LBP, but to date the project has not been realized. The City's 2016 FCA study rated this branch's condition as fair based on its maintenance backlog at that time, and projected additional moderate to major maintenance needs over the next 10 years.

Clairemont Library. This approximately 4,400 square foot mid-century building is one of the tiniest branches in the SDPL network – and yet, in 2019 it circulated more materials than some of SDPL's largest branches. The ratio of its collection size to building size is one of the highest in SDPL's fleet. The City's 2016 FCA study rated this branch's condition as good based on its maintenance backlog at that time; however, additional moderate to major maintenance needs are projected in the coming years. Although expansion of the Clairemont Library was not proposed in the 2002 LBP, there has been a significant amount of community interest in improving the library.

La Jolla/Riford Library. At nearly 25,000 square feet, this is one of SDPL's largest branches. It was expanded in 2004 as part of the 2002 *Library Building Plan*. Destination amenities at the La Jolla/Riford Library include the Bio Lab innovation space and classroom, as well as the La Jolla History Room with historical documents and archives. In 2019 the La Jolla/Riford Library was among the top five SDPL branches for program attendance and materials circulation.



La Jolla/ Riford Library

Linda Vista Library. Built in 1987, the Linda Vista Library is a 10,000 square foot building that serves a diverse community with a large population of first generation immigrants. The library's collection reflects the community's diversity, featuring titles in Spanish, Vietnamese, Chinese, and Japanese among other languages. It ranks among the top 10 SDPL branch libraries for the number of visits and the number of computer sessions per visit. The branch has not had any significant renovation to modernize library services and operations since it opened nearly 35 years ago. The City's 2016 FCA study found this branch to be in poor condition, with a maintenance backlog of more than \$2.1 million.

North Clairemont Library. Originally built in 1962, and rebuilt after being destroyed by a fire in 1980, the North Clairemont Library branch is a mid-century modern landmark, recognized as an example of the "Googie" style of architecture. Even though it is only 4,600 square feet with a small community room, the library hosted 640 programs in 2019 — more than most other branches. The City's 2016 FCA study rated this branch's condition as good based on its maintenance backlog at that time, but projected additional upcoming maintenance needs. A number of community survey respondents noted the building's tired condition inside and out.

North University Community Library. In 2007, the 16,000 square foot North University Community Library was built as recommended by the 2002 LBP. Co-located with a park and recreation center, the building features several community rooms as well as a large children's area and public art. The branch hosts concerts, performances, and cultural events. In 2019, the North University Community Library was third among SDPL branches for total program attendance. It was among the top 10 for attendance per program and total materials circulation.

Pacific Beach/Taylor Library. The 12,500 square foot Pacific Beach/Taylor Library was built in 1997 with community-provided funds. Located close to the beach, the building is shaped to resemble a nautilus shell and has an open and well-lit interior. It is a high-program branch, offering a mix of adult, teen, and children's programs that attract strong attendance. A 2,500 square foot expansion was proposed in the 2002 LBP but was not implemented. The City's 2016 FCA study found only a small amount of maintenance backlog. As it approaches 25 years of age, the Pacific Beach/Taylor branch may be due for updates to modernize library services and operations.

"Though there are many middle-to upper-middle-class residents of Clairemont, there are also many lower-income residents, as well as recent immigrants. The libraries have the potential to be a standout resource for these residents, as well as other members of the community. But currently the libraries' potential is limited by their size and lack of upgrades over many decades."

— community survey respondent

"Our older libraries need updating and they need to be expanded. The Clairemont community is becoming more and more dense and we need expanded services to fulfill these needs."

— community survey respondent

"North Clairemont Library is a convenient location, but the building looks old on both the exterior and interior and is not very appealing. This makes the library very unattractive for newcomers and young adults. The carpet, shelves, lights and other structural features all look like they could be renovated. When the AC is on, it is very loud. All these things could be improved to make the North Clairemont Library better."

— community survey respondent

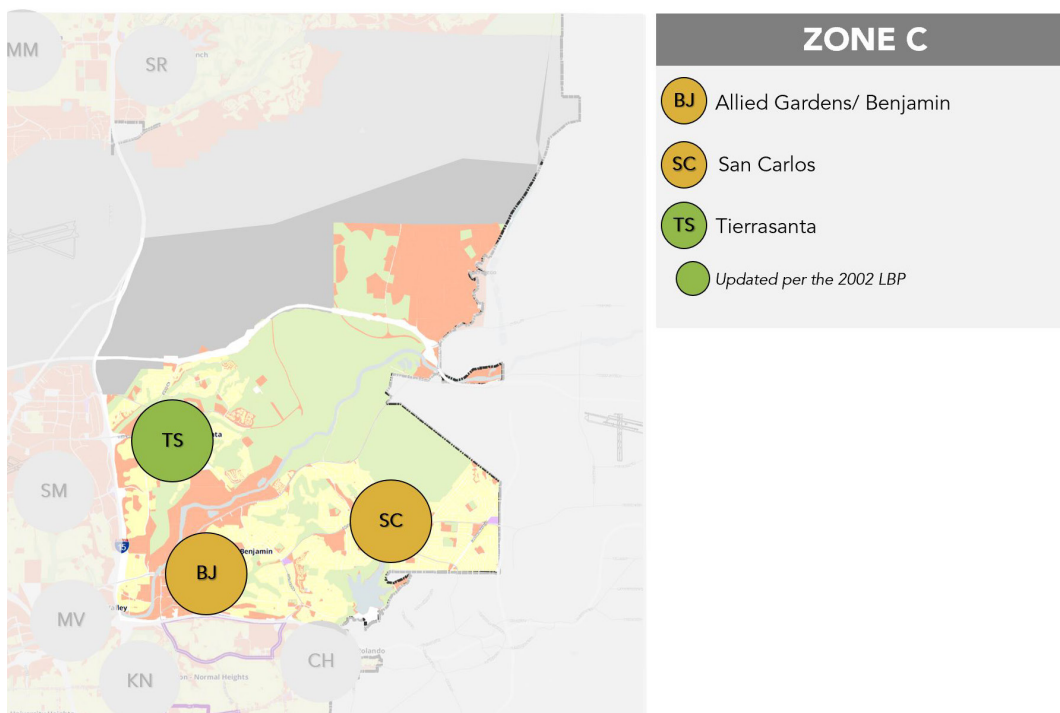


Serra Mesa/Kearny Mesa Library

Serra Mesa-Kearny Mesa Library. The Serra Mesa-Kearny Mesa Library was expanded in 2006 as recommended in the 2002 *Library Building Plan*. The 15,000 square foot Mission-style building was built with a focus on sustainability, using recycled materials and surrounded by native landscaping. It is a high-circulating branch, with the highest collection turnover of any SDPL branch in 2019. It also offers a significant amount of programming — particularly for children and teens.

University Community Library. The University Community Library branch moved from a small storefront location into its current 10,000 square foot building in 1978. The library is popular for its program offerings, including a monthly concert featuring local music performers and a weekly video game club for youth. It ranks high among SDPL branches for the number of attendees it attracts per program, especially for children's and teen programs. The City's 2016 FCA study rated this branch's condition as fair based on its maintenance backlog at that time, and projected additional moderate to major maintenance needs over the next 10 years. Expansion to 15,000 square feet was proposed in the 2002 LBP but was not implemented.

ZONE C — EASTERN/ SUBURBAN



ZONE C — EASTERN/ SUBURBAN

Located immediately south of the Marine Corps Air Station Miramar and east of I-15, Zone C encompasses the eastern suburban region of San Diego. To the south, it is bounded by I-8. It is home to landmarks such as the Mission San Diego de Alcalá and the Mission Trails Regional Park. Neighborhoods in Zone C include Tierrasanta, San Carlos, Allied Gardens, Lake Murray, Del Cerro, and Grantville.

Zone C has a current population of about 96,000, which SANDAG projects will grow by almost 13% by 2040. The demographic makeup includes a mix of White/Caucasian and Asian/Pacific Islander population, with a smaller percentage of Hispanic/Latino and Black/African American communities.

Library programs are a priority for Zone C communities. Nearly half of community respondents living in Zone C said they visited the library to participate in programs and events. In 2019, Zone C libraries combined hosted the second highest number of program attendees per resident.

Zone C's three libraries together provide 0.31 square feet of library space per capita — just under the citywide average. Two of its branches were recommended for expansion in the 2002 *Library Building Plan*; one of the expansions opened in 2019 and the other is in design.

"For the last 30 years, there have been plans to build a new San Carlos Library. This is a heavily used library and an important community resource. I hope that our community will get a new library in my lifetime."

— community survey respondent

"Tierrasanta is a great place for families, and the library is an asset to our community."

— community survey respondent

ZONE C BRANCHES

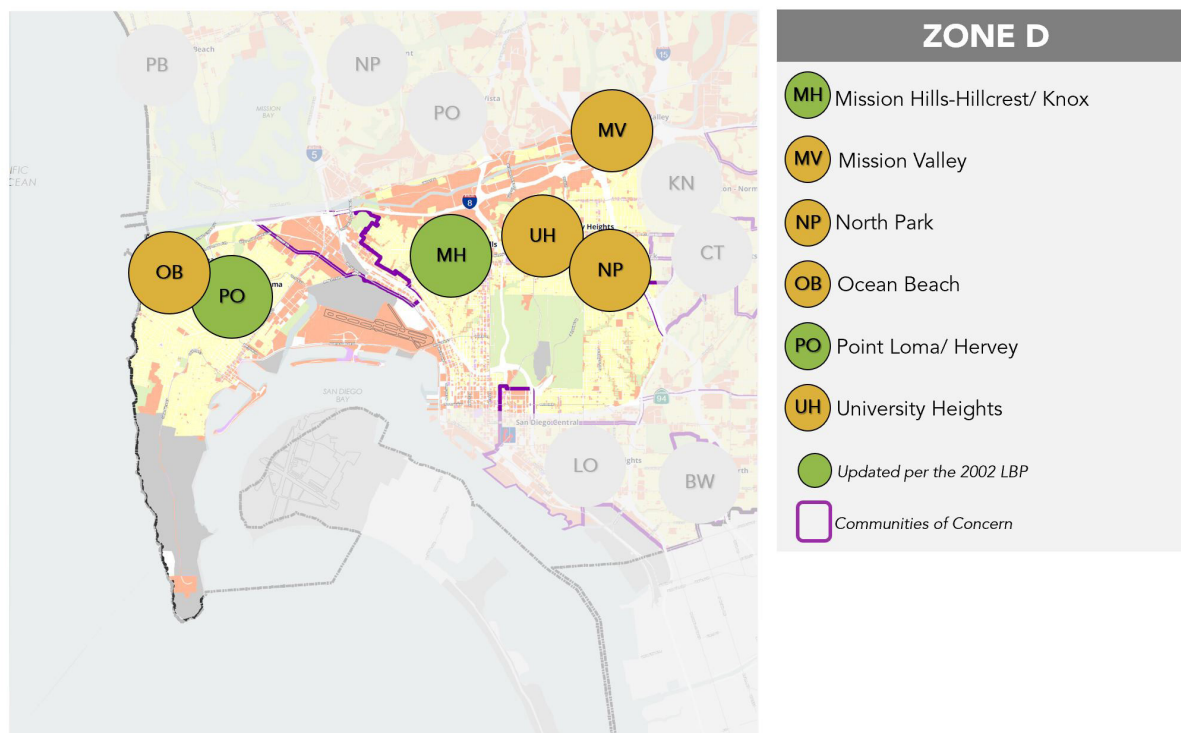
Allied Gardens/ Benjamin Library. Allied Gardens/Benjamin Library was built in 1965 and expanded in 1986 to include a community room and reading room. The smallest of the Zone C libraries, it is 6,900 square feet in size. It was in the middle of the SDPL branch pack for circulation in 2019, but punched well above its weight on programs offered and attended — particularly children's programming. The Allied Gardens/Benjamin Library has not had any renovation to modernize services and operations since it opened 35 years ago. Its condition was rated as fair by the City's 2016 FCA study based on the maintenance backlog, with additional maintenance needs projected in subsequent years.

San Carlos Library. Built in 1974, the 8,200 square foot San Carlos Library is situated in one of the older neighborhoods of San Diego. In 2019, it was among the top 10 branches for materials circulation. In the City's 2016 FCA study, the San Carlos branch was one of the worst-rated libraries for condition and maintenance backlog. Fortunately, the 2002 *Library Building Plan* recommended replacing it with a new library of 25,000 square feet⁴; that project is in design as of this writing. There has been overwhelming community interest in the process; many community survey respondents expressed eagerness for the project to move forward.

Tierrasanta Library. The Tierrasanta Library originally opened in 1971 in a 1,200 square foot facility. In 1984 it was expanded to 8,800 square feet, and in 2019 it was expanded again to 15,000 square feet as recommended in the 2002 LBP. Because this library was under construction during part of 2019, its service data for that year were incomplete and were not compared with other branches in this master planning analysis. With several schools in the area, a large percentage of Tierrasanta's circulation consists of children and teen materials.

⁴ San Carlos Branch Library: Project Information Details
<https://cipapp.sandiego.gov/CIPDetail.aspx?ID=S00800>

ZONE D — DOWNTOWN/ SOUTH



ZONE D — DOWNTOWN/ SOUTH

Encompassing downtown San Diego, Zone D is bounded by the Mission Valley neighborhood to the north and extends south to CA-94. On the east, it is bounded by I-15 and 35th Street. Some of San Diego's most popular landmarks are located within Zone D, including Balboa Park and Old Town, as well as the San Diego International Airport. Neighborhoods within Zone D include Point Loma, Ocean Beach, University Heights, Mission Valley, Mission Hills, Burlingame, North Park, and South Park.

Zone D's current population is approximately 213,000 and a significant percentage is Hispanic/Latino. Parts of the Zone, including areas of Old Town and the Midway District, are designated as "Communities of Concern"⁵ by the City of San Diego. Based on SANDAG data, the population of Zone D is projected to increase 21% by 2040.

At 0.36 SF/capita, Zone D currently provides the most branch library space per zone resident among all zones; however, given its strong projected population growth, it will not hold this top spot without additional space. The zone is served by a variety of library buildings, from the tiny Ocean Beach library built in 1928, to the larger Mission Hills-Hillcrest Knox Library that was built in 2019.

Two of the six libraries in Zone D were built as a result of the recommendations in the 2002 *Library Building Plan*. The City's 2016 FCA study found a maintenance backlog of more than \$5 million for Zone D libraries (not including Mission Hills-Hillcrest/Knox), and projected additional needs in the coming years.

⁵ San Diego's Climate Equity INDEX REPORT

https://www.sandiego.gov/sites/default/files/2019_climate_equity_index_report.pdf

"I love the new Mission Hills library facility! It is open and beautiful and the parking structure makes it so easy."

— community survey respondent

"I am delighted that we have a state of the art library in Mission Hills Library."

— community survey respondent

ZONE D BRANCHES

Mission Hills-Hillcrest/Knox Library. Built in 2019, based on recommendations in the *Library Building Plan*, Mission Hills-Hillcrest/ Knox library is the newest library in Zone D. The 14,000 square foot building houses designated areas for teens and young children, a community room, study rooms, computer labs, and an IDEA Lab. The facility's recent construction and low FCI suggest the need for minimal maintenance work.



Mission Hills-Hillcrest/ Knox Library

"It would be nice if [group study rooms] were accessible closer to home in the North Park Library. I grew up going to the North Park Library but do not take my kids there since it is very outdated and has limited services compared to the [Central Library]. I'd like to see the North Park Library expanded and updated."

— community survey respondent

"North Park is small. It lacks a meeting room (so all programs must take place where they disturb patrons who want or require quiet). A meeting room or other similar space would make the library even more of a community hub than it currently is. The North Park Library lacks any quiet rooms. The exterior of the building is unattractive and the grounds even more so."

— community survey respondent

Mission Valley Library. Built in 2002, the 19,800 square foot Mission Valley Library is one of the most popular libraries in the SDPL system. An average of 50 people attended its children's programs in 2019, and it was the fourth-busiest SDPL branch for computer use. Based on community survey responses, the Mission Valley Library was a favorite destination of residents in Zones C and E as well as D.

North Park Library. The North Park Library was first built in 1959 and expanded to its current 8,000 square foot size in 1987. Located in one of San Diego's oldest neighborhoods, this branch is a program powerhouse. In 2019, it hosted on average more than 40 participants at its children's programs, and was one of SDPL's most popular branches for school visits. One SDPL staffer reported that this branch is in "desperate need" of more community room/classroom space. North Park Library has not been renovated for library services and operations in more than 30 years, and its condition was found to be approaching the "poor" rating in the City's FCA study in 2016. The 2002 *Library Building Plan* recommended expanding the North Park Library to 25,000 square feet, but this recommendation was not implemented.

Ocean Beach Library. Built in 1928, the Ocean Beach Library is the oldest library building in San Diego. Although it was eventually expanded in 1962 to its current 4,600 square feet, it is also still one of the smallest branches in the SDPL fleet. Ocean Beach has an active and dedicated group of supporters that help promote library services and programs — contributing to surprisingly high levels of use. In 2019, visitor counts at the Ocean Beach Library were higher than some of SDPL's largest and newest branches — on average, nearly 80 patrons visited per hour that the library was open. The branch received some updates in 2012, including a new roof and new carpet, but its condition was still rated as poor by the City's 2016 FCA study. The 2002 *Library Building Plan* recommended expanding Ocean Beach Library to 15,000 square feet, which is in the planning stage as of this writing.

Point Loma/Hervey Library. At 25,900 square feet, Point Loma/Hervey Library is the second biggest branch library in the SDPL system. It was built in 2003, consistent with the recommendations of the 2002 LBP. It features several conference rooms, a computer lab, a media room, and a veterans resource center. Celebrating Point Loma's history as a fishing village, the library's design incorporates themes of marine life and nautical history. In 2019, the Point Loma/Hervey Library was among the top 10 SPDL branches for materials circulation, programs hosted and attended, and computer sessions. On average, adult programs at the library drew close to 40 attendees per program. The City's 2016 FCA study found a low level of maintenance backlog, although additional needs were projected in the coming years.

"I believe that the OB Library desperately needs to be remodeled and updated. It's been a long time coming."

— community survey respondent

"Please, please, please remodel our little OB library. I have lived here for 50 years and the OB Library has changed a bit. It hasn't been upgraded. It hasn't been expanded. Nothing. In general, Ocean Beach as a community is neglected, but none more so than in our local library. Please make our little library a space that is safe, clean, and useful."

— community survey respondent

"I love my community and the Point Loma Hervey Library. It has been absolutely wonderful, a true community asset with so many activities and resources."

— community survey respondent



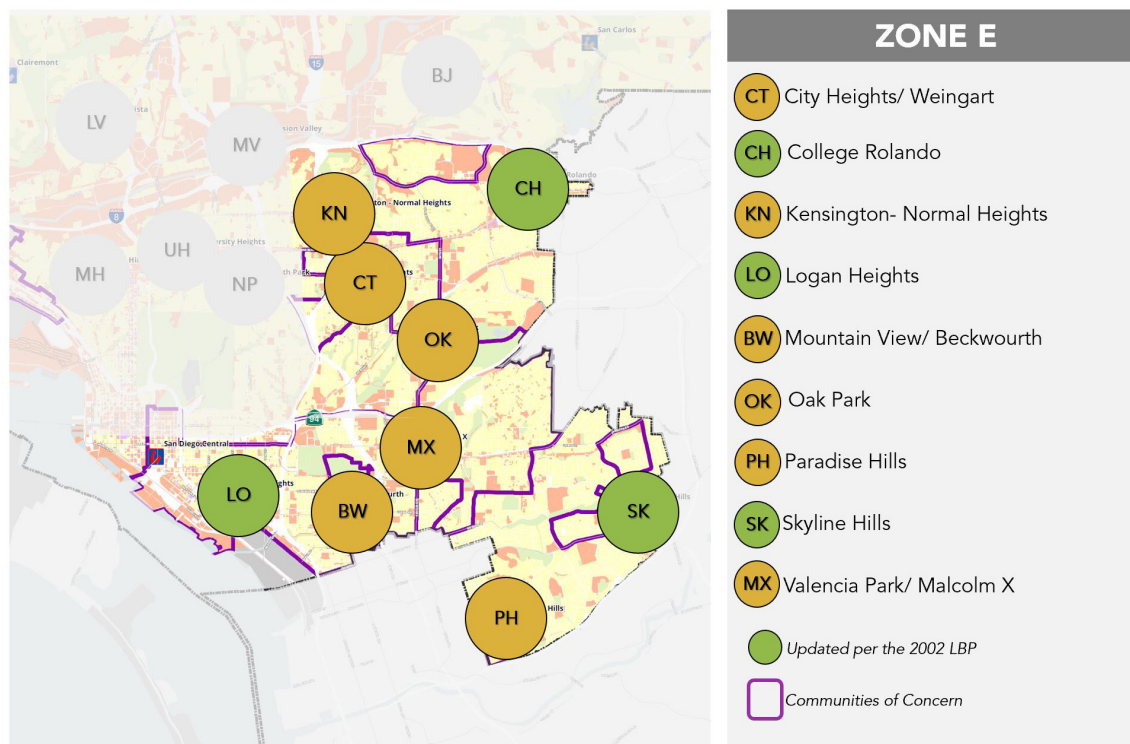
Point Loma/Hervey Library

"Our small neighborhood University Heights Library has immense potential. When I frequent it, it always feels as if it is the step-child of the library system. It seems dated and worn. It is in need of renovations to improve its ability to serve our neighborhood... We seem to always get lost in the shuffle for funds. Our community has grown incredibly since I moved here years ago. Our library should keep up with its residents and be better able to serve us"

— community survey respondent

University Heights Library. The University Heights Library first opened in 1914, and was replaced twice before the current 3,700 square foot mid-century modern building opened in 1966. It is the smallest library in Zone D and the second smallest in the SDPL system. Although the University Heights Library is not a high-circulating branch, it has one of the most disproportionately large collections for its size of any library in San Diego. The branch has not been renovated to modernize library services and operations since it opened more than 50 years ago, and it received one of the worst condition scores of any library in the City's 2016 FCA study.

ZONE E — SOUTHEASTERN



ZONE E — SOUTHEASTERN SAN DIEGO

Zone E encompasses the area east and south of downtown San Diego, south of Interstate 8. It is bounded by 35th Street and CA-94 to the west. It is characterized by dense and urban neighborhoods south of downtown San Diego and more rural and low-density neighborhoods to the east and southeast. It is home to some of the most diverse San Diego neighborhoods, such as Barrio Logan, Skyline-Paradise Hills, Valencia Park, Oak Park, Logan Heights, Grant Hill, Mountain View, Encanto, O'Farrell, and Sherman Heights. Rich in history, landmarks in Zone E include Chicano Park, Villa Montezuma, and Coronado Bridge.

Zone E is the largest zone by population, at approximately 380,000 residents. It has the largest percentages of San Diego's Black/ African American and Hispanic/Latino population within its boundaries, as well as a significant Asian population. Zone E households are relatively less affluent than zones to the north, and large sections are designated as Communities of Concern⁶. SANDAG projects that the population of Zone E will grow by 20% by 2040 — that is more than 70,000 new residents.

Zone E communities have particularly high needs and priorities for technology access in their libraries. The nine branches in Zone E accounted for nearly 40% of all SDPL branch library computer sessions in 2019. Compared to zones to the north and west, a significantly higher percentage of community survey respondents living in Zone E said they visited the library to use a library computer or other technology device and to access the internet (Wi-Fi).

Three of Zone E's libraries were built or expanded based on the recommendations of the 2002 *Library Building Plan*, including Logan Heights at 25,000 square feet. At the other end of the spectrum, Zone E also includes some of the oldest and smallest branches in San Diego. All together, Zone E branches currently provide about 0.30 square feet per capita of library space — less than all but one other zone.

The City's 2016 FCA study found a maintenance backlog of nearly \$5 million for Zone E libraries (not including Valencia Park/Malcolm X), and projected additional needs in the coming years.

⁶ San Diego's Climate Equity Index Report
https://www.sandiego.gov/sites/default/files/2019_climate_equity_index_report.pdf

"The College Rolando Library is a helpful, comforting place... This library offers a place to relax, meet up with friends, and offers a wealth of knowledge for those of us more confined due to public or personal transportation. Socialization is important and the library offers a safe place to reconnect with a new book, friend or a learning experience."

— community survey respondent



Logan Heights Library

ZONE E BRANCHES

City Heights/Weingart Library. The 12,600 square foot City Heights/Weingart Library was built in 1998 as part of a public-private partnership between the City and a non-profit organization. It is co-located with a performance venue that offers dance and musical performances. In 2019, City Heights/Weingart accounted for nearly 6% of all branch library computer sessions — second only to the Oak Park Library. The facility received some maintenance updates in 2016 but has not been renovated to modernize library services and operations.

College-Rolando Library. The College-Rolando Library was expanded to 15,500 square feet in 2005 as recommended in the 2002 LBP. It was designed to meet neighborhood needs including an expanded children's area, enhanced computer space, and a community room with kitchen facilities — all of which are well used by the community. There are two driveways into the College-Rolando Library site: one from Montezuma Road and the other from the north. The Montezuma Road driveway crosses private property; there is some community concern that development may permanently block this driveway and result in reduced community access to library services. (A temporary closure of this driveway in 2017 is reported to have caused a significant drop in visits to the College-Rolando Library.)

Kensington-Normal Heights Library. Built in 1937, the Kensington-Normal Heights Library is the oldest building in Zone E. After being remodeled and expanded in 1962, the 2,300 square foot library remains the smallest branch in the SDPL system. For its size, it receives a remarkably high number of visitors and circulates a high number of materials. Located adjacent to a park, the library utilizes the outdoor space for storytimes and musical events. According to the City's 2016 FCA study, the Kensington-Normal Heights Library was in the second-worst condition of any of San Diego's library buildings.

Logan Heights Library. The first Logan Heights Library opened more than a century ago, and was relocated and replaced twice before the current library was built in 2009. The new 25,000 square foot branch was recommended by the 2002 LBP and built in partnership with the San Diego Unified School District. The building features a large community room, a computer lab, and a cultural center for events and exhibits. The library is popular for its programs and computers.

Mountain View/Beckwourth Library. The 8,000 square foot Mountain View/ Beckwourth Library was constructed in 1976 as part of the Educational Cultural Complex, a joint community effort to bring adult education to the southeastern area of San Diego. The library serves a large student population from the many schools located in its vicinity. It features a large meeting room, outdoor reading area, a quiet study space, and many computers. Patrons like to browse the shelves at Mountain View/Beckwourth Library, with holds accounting for only 15% of its circulation in 2019. The City's 2016 FCA study rated the building as being in fair condition based on its maintenance backlog at that time.

Oak Park Library. The 5,200 square foot Oak Park Library was built in 1968 in response to growing demand from the community to replace a popular bookmobile stop. It is one of SDPL's busiest branches for technology use. Despite the limited available space, the library accounted for the highest number of total computer sessions in 2019. Three in four patrons used a computer during their visit — more than twice as many as any other branch. With grant funds, SDPL was recently able to purchase additional public computers for the Oak Park Library to help meet community demand. The small branch has no dedicated program space; meetings and events must happen in the main space. Although the Oak Park Library is a low-circulating branch, shelving takes up a significant amount of space. The City's 2016 FCA study found that the building had a low maintenance backlog at that time but that moderate to significant improvements would be coming due in the next five to 10 years.

"Kensington is a particularly small branch.... It might not make sense to have this branch try to completely re-open and function as a library with full services available. Instead, Kensington might work better as a hold pick-up location only."

— staff survey respondent

"There's always a large group of people wanting to use the computers and internet access at the Oak Park Library because there is a very large need for it."

— community survey respondent

"The Oak Park Library is very important... and is an integral part of this community. It is the only opportunity that many kids have to use computers or internet access to assist them with their school work when not at school. Additionally, there is a large group of individuals who are considered disabled who utilize the computers as well. This community very much needs to have this library available to them."

— community survey respondent

"Oak Park is an example of a community supported facility that is struggling to provide much needed services and programs in inadequate space with decrepit equipment."

— community survey respondent



Oak Park Library

"I grew up in my neighborhood and the Paradise Hills Library is the same one I used as a child. In our neighborhood there are many poor people and it is very important that they have library resources within walking distance. Our community is very dedicated to our library and even if it needed substantial repairs we would band together to try to raise the money."

— community survey respondent

"As a youth I lived in Paradise Hills. I was in that library practically every day during the school week. I love the resources that the library is known for and the community connections it provides for — many different cultures allowing us to share the differences that bring us together as a community. Many times these gatherings lead to a better understanding of the make-up of our communities."

— community survey respondent

"I hope the Skyline Hills Library opens up to 100% capacity soon. It is a great resource for the neighborhood."

— community survey respondent

"Discovered Malcolm X within the last 4-5 years. It's large, has more books, more space indoors to sit, chill, read, write, think."

— community survey respondent

"I think having the computers for public use is really important. Every time I went to the Malcolm X Library they all were always being used."

— community survey respondent

Paradise Hills Library. One of the smallest and oldest branches in the SDPL system, Paradise Hills Library originally opened as a single-room space at the Paradise Hills elementary school. The current 3,900 square foot library was built in 1964 with the help of private donations and community fundraising. The library lacks a community room or gathering space, and utilizes its outdoor patio for programs and performances. The building's condition was rated as poor by the City's 2016 FCA study — one of the worst of any San Diego library facility. The 2002 LBP recommended replacing the Paradise Hills Library with a new 15,000 square foot facility, but this project was not implemented.

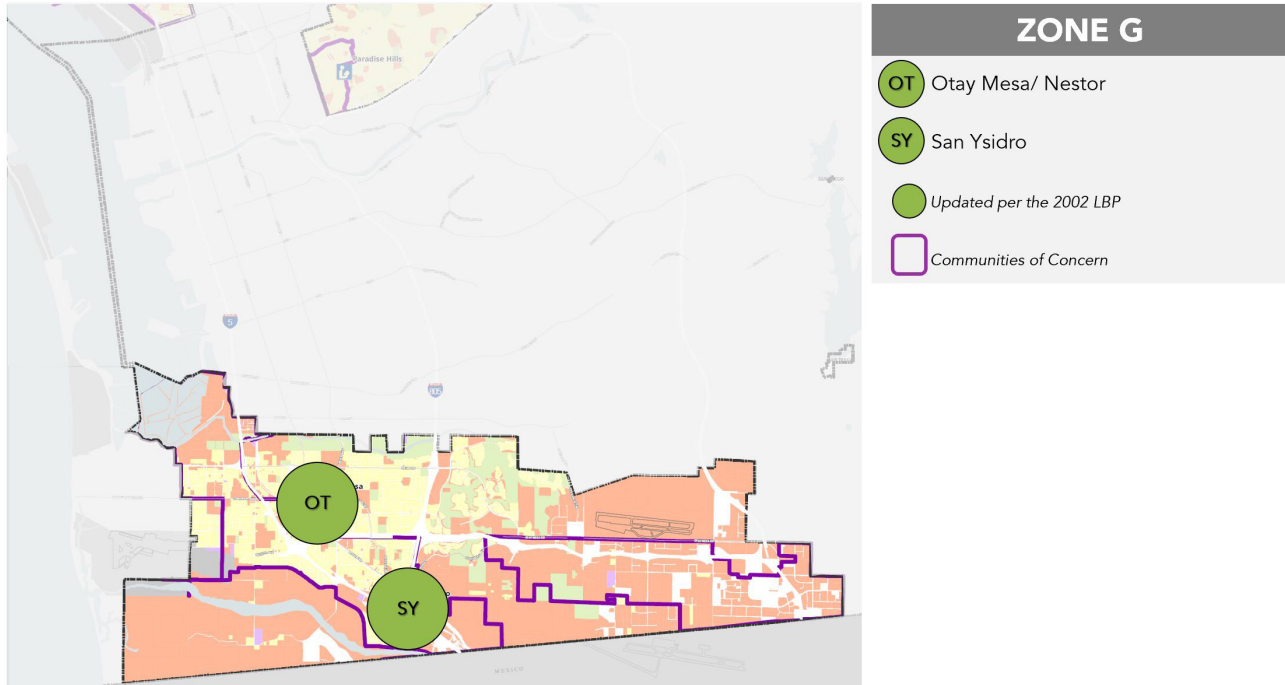
Skyline Hills Library. Replaced in 2016 based on the 2002 LBP recommendations, Skyline Hills is the newest library in Zone E. The 15,000 square foot library features an IDEA Lab, a computer lab, a large community room, and homework space for students. It is one of SDPL's most popular branches for computer use.



Skyline Hills Library

Valencia Park/Malcolm X Library. At 26,000 square feet, the Valencia Park/Malcolm X Library is the largest branch in the SDPL system. With its large performing arts center, community rooms, and public art throughout the space, the library serves as a cultural institution and is a community landmark. In 2016 it was renovated to include a teen IDEA Lab, which offers training programs and classes for youth. Computers are a popular service at this branch; in 2019, the Valencia Park/ Malcolm X Library ranked among SDPL's top 10 branches for total number of computer sessions and computer sessions per visit.

ZONE G — SOUTH BAY/ BORDER



ZONE G — SOUTH BAY / BORDER

Zone G comprises the City's South Bay district. Bordering Mexico to the south, and the cities of Imperial Beach, Chula Vista, and Otay Lakes to the north and east, Zone G is geographically separated from the rest of the City. It includes the planning areas of Otay Mesa, Otay Mesa-Nestor, San Ysidro, and the Tijuana River Valley.

SANDAG projects that Zone G — which currently has approximately 113,000 residents — will be the fastest growing zone, increasing by 25% by 2040. More than 70% of Zone G's population identifies as Hispanic or Latino. Approximately two-thirds of the households within Zone G have an income of under \$75,000 per year. Large areas of Zone G are designated by the City as Communities of Concern⁷, and both of its libraries are located within these communities.

Compared to respondents from other zones, community survey respondents living in Zone G were more likely to report that they visited the library to use a library computer or other technology device and/or to access the internet (Wi-Fi).

Zone G's two libraries provide 0.27 square feet of library space per capita. They were both expanded or replaced as a result of the 2002 LBP, which also recommended building a third Otay Mesa/East Library; that project was not implemented.

⁷ San Diego's Climate Equity INDEX REPORT
https://www.sandiego.gov/sites/default/files/2019_climate_equity_index_report.pdf

"Otay Nestor Library needs more charging stations, and new computers. It would be nice to have an IDEA Lab."

— community survey respondent

"La biblioteca Otay Nestor es una magnífica opción para personas de todas las edades. Los felicito por su excelente servicio."

— community survey respondent

"At libraries like Otay Mesa, the space feels like it belongs to the people..."

— community survey respondent

"The new library in San Ysidro is a great and beautiful improvement from the old one!"

— community survey respondent

ZONE G BRANCHES

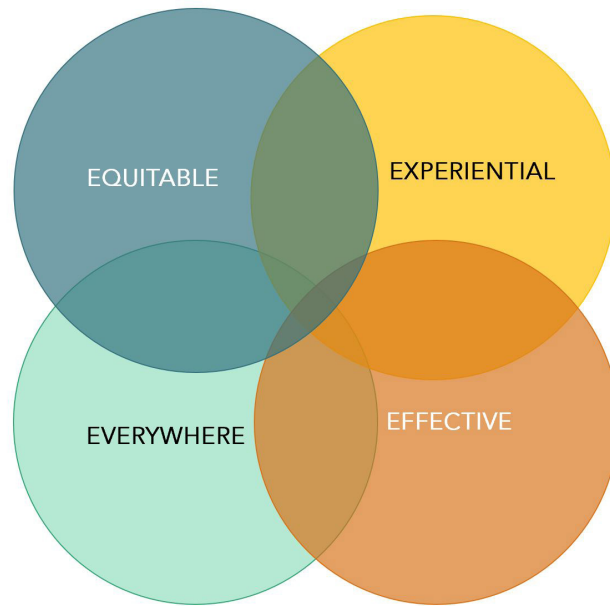
Otay Mesa/Nestor Library. The Otay Mesa Library originally opened in 1986, and was renovated and expanded to 15,000 square feet in 2006 as recommended in the 2002 *Library Building Plan*. The library features a large community room, a conference room, and computer lab.

San Ysidro Library. Replacing an older and smaller library, the new 15,000 square foot San Ysidro Library was designed with input from the community and opened in 2019. The architecture of the library reflects the community's culture and diversity while incorporating destination amenities such as an IDEA Lab, multipurpose gathering space, and an outdoor movie screening area. During the less than six months between its opening in 2019 and its closure due to COVID, San Ysidro was the most popular by attendance of any SDPL branch.



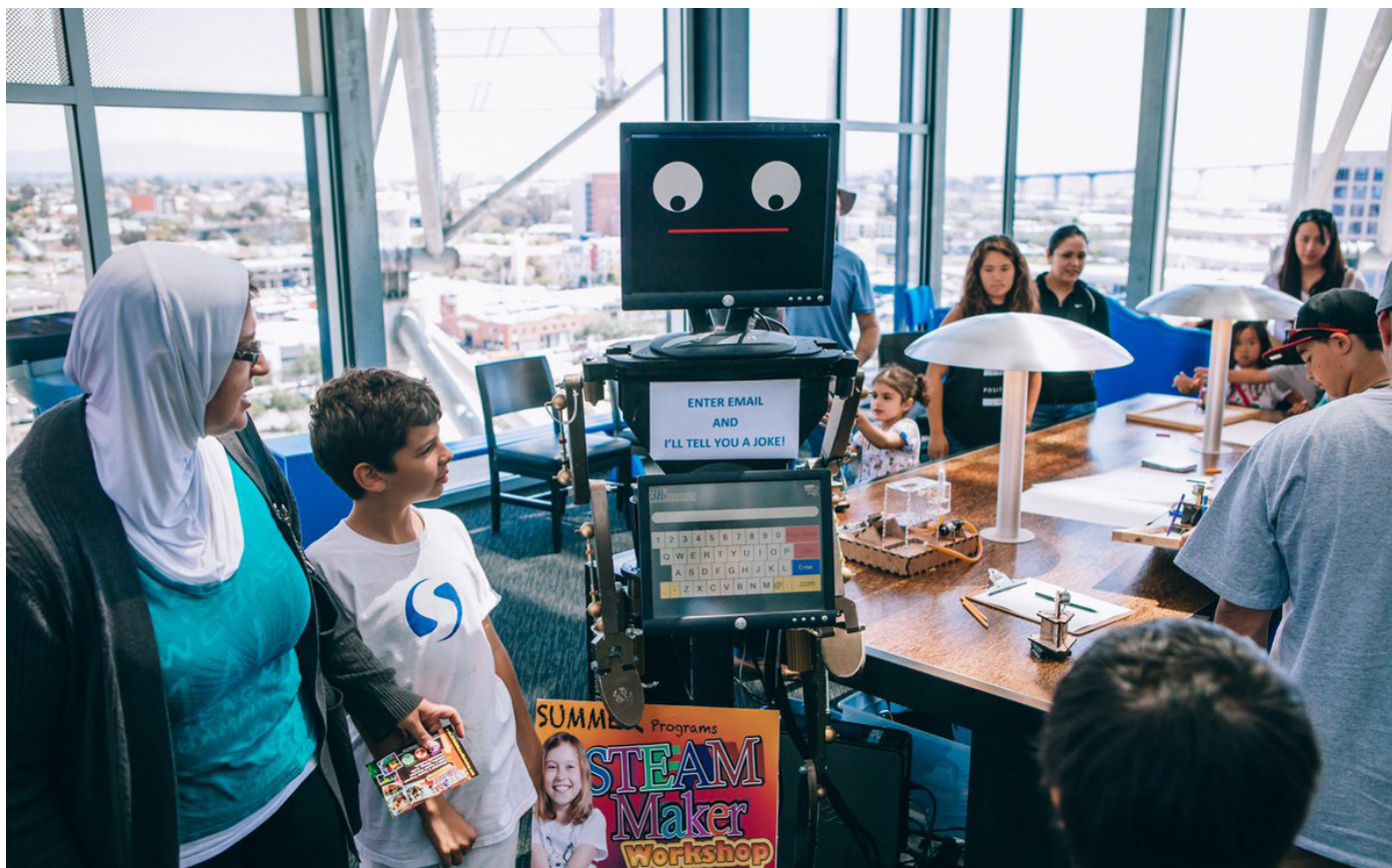
San Ysidro Library

Vision for SDPL



V. MASTER PLAN FRAMEWORK AND GUIDING PRINCIPLES

This San Diego Public Library Master Plan Framework and guiding principles were derived from the findings, successes, and lessons learned from San Diego’s current network as well as input from community members, stakeholders, and City and Library staff throughout San Diego. These principles propose a range of concepts and considerations for SDPL’s facilities at all levels, from individual library locations to the citywide network. As the City prioritizes maintenance and explores opportunities for new and improved library facilities, this framework provides a set of lenses for evaluating which options and strategies will best support an equitable, resilient, and high-performing library network.



EQUITY

Communities throughout San Diego — from the far south to the very farthest north, and from the eastern hills to the ocean — all have diverse needs and interests in high quality library programs, technology, and collections. Although the priorities for library service vary by location, all parts of the city require accessible, well-designed library space with enough capacity to meet community needs and demands.

Equitable capacity. A population-based metric is a widely used method for planning and providing library space equitably. For San Diego, at least 0.35 to 0.45 square feet of branch library space per city resident (SF/capita) should be provided. Achieving a higher level will enable SDPL to provide more depth and breadth of service to San Diego’s growing and diversifying communities, including capacity for collection growth.

For 0.35 branch SF/capita to serve adequately, SDPL will need to grow by expanding or replacing small branches with larger buildings — not by adding more small branches. A network of larger library branches will also be the most efficient and cost-effective to operate. Conversely, if the City cannot grow except by adding more small branches, then a higher SF/capita target will be needed.

Equitable access. To plan for equitable distribution of and access to libraries, this Master Plan Framework recommends breaking San Diego’s very large geographic area down into a manageable number of zones. It proposes a set of zones for San Diego based on analysis of library patrons’ recent travel patterns within communities and between different areas of the city. These zones are not intended to limit or exclude any resident of San Diego from visiting any library of their choice. They also are not set in stone; the City can (and should) revisit and adjust them over the life of this Master Plan Framework as needed in light of community development and growth, changes in transit and travel patterns, and other factors affecting San Diegans’ access to libraries.



The estimated amount of space needed in any zone would be calculated as the SF/capita space planning target multiplied by the population of that zone. Within the context and guidance of the other principles in this Framework, the zone approach should offer more flexibility and options for building capacity than a neighborhood-by-neighborhood approach.

Equitable service. As revealed in this master planning process, different communities in San Diego have different library needs and priorities. Tailoring each branch to serve the needs and interests of its community is a way to build service equity. Branch spaces and services that are abundant and aligned with local interests and priorities have the highest potential for positive community impact. High-circulating communities should rightly have access to branches with excellent, high quality collections. Communities with high interest and need for technology should have access to branches with plenty of devices and connectivity.

That said, all branches should have appropriate space for meetings and programs. They should have the reasonable capacity to welcome more attendees than they must turn away for lack of space. They will reduce and avoid conflicts with and displacement of other day-to-day activities in the library. Each zone must have at least one large capacity program/event space so that very high-interest programs can be accommodated locally rather than only at the Central Library.

To ensure that San Diego's libraries are fully aligned with the needs and priorities of its diverse communities, the community must be engaged in the planning and design of their library improvement and expansion projects.



San Ysidro Branch Library

EXPERIENCE

The SDPL network has many libraries that are inviting, attractive, and appealing. These libraries often have a high number of visits and use of services, which makes sense: people arriving at a library that is comfortable, bright, and inspiring are more likely to come in — and to come back. This is the kind of experience that patrons should have at all of San Diego’s libraries.

Branch size. Large branches are the best model for the future of SDPL’s network in many respects: greater depth and diversity of service; more space and choices for people to read, work, and connect; more efficient and sustainable operations; and more opportunities for the excellent experiences that keep patrons coming back. They have demonstrated more capacity to function as cooling centers during very hot weather, to charge people’s devices during power outages, and during other disruptive events. And they have proved to be more equipped and resilient in the face of COVID, which has delayed the reopening of SDPL’s smaller facilities longer than many of its larger branches.

Right-sizing programs. SDPL’s network includes facilities that would be difficult or cost-prohibitive to expand, but will be kept in the fleet because they are greatly beloved by the community (for example). In these cases, SDPL should consider opportunities to tailor branch programs, services, and collections to reduce crowding and provide a more comfortable experience for patrons. Other branches within the zone or otherwise nearby should be planned and designed with the capacity to provide any displaced programs and services that are still aligned with community needs and interests.

Condition and maintenance. How facilities are maintained also have a significant impact on patrons’ experience and use of SDPL’s libraries. No matter how clean libraries are kept, conditions such as insufficient lighting, inconsistent heating and cooling, accessibility barriers, and even worn finishes and furniture can all make patrons think twice about whether to return.

All of San Diego’s libraries should be maintained to comply with the City’s adopted Facility Condition Index target. Even SDPL’s newer facilities will require proactive maintenance and updates over time in order to keep them comfortable, welcoming, and high performing.

EVERYWHERE

SDPL's service delivery network is not limited to its facilities. Digital and outreach strategies all enhance community access to SDPL's services and expand its reach. Why are these important to consider when planning facilities? Many of these "outside the library" service strategies actually have implications for space inside SDPL's facilities that will need to be considered.

Digital services. Available to anyone at any time through a variety of devices, SDPL's digital channel greatly extends the community's access to library services and resources. Digital collections, information, and even programs have long been available through SDPL's website — and demand has greatly increased while library facilities (and schools, workplaces, and recreation and entertainment venues, and...) have been restricted or closed due to COVID.

Some digital services can provide opportunities to improve and reallocate library space. Migrating lower-demand collections (such as reference materials and government documents) to digital formats, for example, can free up some space in SDPL facilities for other uses. One such use might be specialized recording and production space to support expanded remote and virtual library programming (such as pre-recorded storytimes). Another would be allocating more space for using technology inside library buildings — even to access SDPL's digital resources.

SDPL should continue growing its robust "digital branch" with programs and resources that can be accessed from anywhere. Expectations of digital services have become common among most users, and are expected to continue into the future. The Library adapted to meet a dramatic increase in use of electronic resources during COVID and further development of digital services is a good bet to serve users.

Outreach. Library outreach services are delivered out in the community. Members of the SDPL staff working group for this master planning process spoke of the importance of outreach in strengthening the Library's connection and responsiveness to the communities it serves. Delivering programs and services in partner and community spaces increases service and impact at the point of community need, while extending the capacity and utility of SDPL's own facilities. As outreach programming leads to increased community awareness of everything the Library has to offer, it can also increase foot traffic into SDPL's libraries and demand for the services and resources they provide.

All of that said, SDPL's facilities are still where the majority of library services are typically delivered, and will continue to be essential for library program quality and growth in the future. The zone approach proposed in this Master Plan Framework for planning and managing library space helps ensure that all library services are accessible "everywhere" in San Diego — even if they cannot be provided at every SDPL location for reasons of space, cost, or local community interests and priorities:

- Not every branch in SDPL's network will be able to provide a large-capacity program room or a fully-equipped and dedicated IDEA Lab space (to name a couple of examples) — but providing each of these in every zone will keep these services accessible closer to home.
- In small branches that cannot be expanded or relocated, SDPL can explore opportunities to align services and space with the local community's highest priorities — knowing that other programs and services can be accessed at other nearby branches in the zone (one SDPL staff member termed this concept "buddy branches").



EFFECTIVE

The San Diego Public Library's operating resources are stretched thin — and future population growth will only increase the strain. More — and more stable — funding will enable SDPL to better address current community needs, plan for program growth, and maintain and build its talented workforce.

Even with additional operating income, it will be essential to maximize the operational efficiency of San Diego's new and expanded libraries. As it adds space to the branch library network to accommodate population growth, the City should build large branches that can provide more service more cost-effectively to more patrons. SDPL should not build more small libraries — which can cost just as much to operate as branches three and four times the size. This Master Plan Framework recommends that the City build branches that are at least 20,000-25,000 square feet.

Where smaller branches cannot be expanded or replaced with larger facilities, the City should evaluate opportunities to improve them for enhanced service and efficiency. In particular, design and technology improvements that enable staff to be on the public floor — delivering service at the point of need rather than behind a desk — will help maximize value for each operating dollar. Empowering staff with resources and training to meet patrons' diverse needs will be important as well.

Decentralization and outsourcing of library collection management services has proved inefficient, ineffective, and costly. These functions should be brought back into SDPL's control to improve operations and customer service. The City should evaluate the costs, benefits, and feasibility of a collection management center, which could provide additional collection capacity as well as supporting efficient sorting and courier operations. Such a facility could potentially occupy lower-cost, warehouse-type space in a location outside of downtown — and keep space at Central Library available for the public.

APPENDIX: ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Thousands of people provided insight and input into the development of this Master Plan Framework — far more than can be recognized by name here. Below is a partial list of the City and Library staff, stakeholders, and community members who participated in the development of this plan.

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- Todd Gloria, Mayor
- Kevin Faulconer, Former Mayor (2014 - 2020)
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