

Downtown Library future debated

Santa Cruz Public Library

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Santa Cruz community groups, citizen's panel discuss options

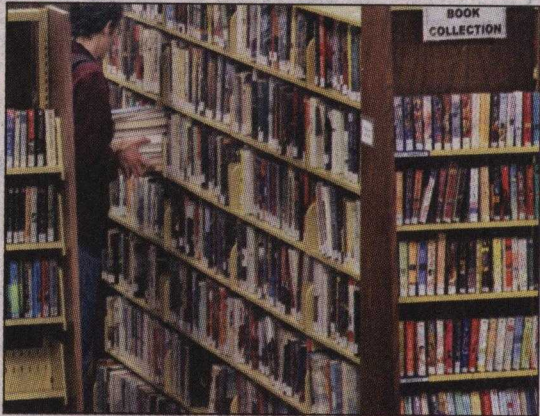
By Jessica A. York
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SANTACRUZ » A citizens panel will meet as often as twice a month through November in order to figure out the potential where's, how's and why's of the downtown Santa Cruz library branch's future.
On Wednesday evening, the 10-member Downtown Library

Advisory Committee will take a trip to Los Gatos to see and discuss what makes a "21st century library" after having taken a similar tour downtown in Santa Cruz in recent weeks. The group next returns to Santa Cruz to meet at 6 p.m. July 27 at 224 Church St.
The committee is at the information collecting stage, initially focusing on what priorities a library should incorporate and later looking at whether the

city should renovate the existing Church Street facility, rebuild it completely, or take part in a joint project with a new city garage, Santa Cruz Public Libraries Director Susan Nemitz said. The library has hired Noll & Tam Architects as consultants on the project, Nemitz said.
As that effort has progressed, at least two grassroots groups are challenging early concepts

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Library officials are hoping the downtown Santa Cruz branch will be remodeled, rebuilt or relocated.

SHMUEL THALER
— SANTA CRUZ
SENTINEL FILE

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Library

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for the June 2016 Measure S bond-funded project. The Campaign for Sensible Transportation's primary focus in on deterring downtown vehicle trips, rather than increasing the city's parking capacity. The Reduce Santa Cruz County Government Waste and Reduce Our Taxes group is looking to find the most cost-effective way to build a new library.

Though funded by a portion of a \$67 million regional library facilities bond, the city of Santa Cruz has the final say in how it builds its library with about \$25 million in funding. Nemitz said a joint garage-library is one possibility among several to be assessed by the Santa Cruz citizen committee.

"One of the things I've struggled with is the feasibility study that was done last fall was really attempting to answer the question of, is this possible," Nemitz said. "Now, we're really stepping back and doing the detailed work of, well, what really should we be doing."

In December, the Santa Cruz City Council heard details of a library-parking garage project feasibility study during a special meeting on the topic. The concept focused on potentially building a five-story structure, the first floor a library, some shared office spaces and the rest parking. The site identified for such a project was on a city-owned parking lot at Cedar, Cathcart and Lincoln streets, where a weekly farmers market and other events are staged.

In November, library officials and city officials are due to return to the City Council with options for a permanent Farmers Market relocation, recommendations for a new garage's parking rates and ideas for a

library concept and overall project plan.

Michael "Terry" Maxwell, a leader with the tax-focused group, said he voted last year for the library bond measure. It was only later, however, that he and others who had worked together to oppose Cabrillo College's ultimately unsuccessful Measure Q, a \$310 million facilities bond on the June 2016 ballot, grew concerned about the library plans, Maxwell said.

"We took the tour of the old library and what they needed on facilities. Interestingly enough, I've have some experience with the Library of Congress, so I kind of know how libraries function," Maxwell said. "They don't need more space. Why are you proposing to tear down, destroy, the Farmers Market and put up five floors of parking and only two floors of library."

The Campaign for Sensible Transportation has recommended that the city spend its funds to create alternative transportation incentives, and will meet at 5:30 p.m. on July 25 at the Santa Cruz Police Department's community room, 155 Center St. to look at what other communities have done to solve their parking problems without adding capacity. Some ideas include offering free bus passes, cash rewards for not parking, credit for bikes and repair or rental cars and discounted carpool parking.

IF YOU GO

What: Downtown Library Advisory Committee meeting

When: 6 p.m., July 12.

Where: Front desk, Los Gatos Public Library, 100 Villa Ave., Los Gatos.

Why: Tour and discussion of a "21st century library."

Input: Public comments accepted at meeting's end.

Information: santacruzpl.org/measure_s.