
Friends of the Los Altos Library

Request for Support of Los Altos Library Commission

April 10 2019 (version 5)

Purpose : This document briefly summarizes the contribution of the Friends of the Los Altos Library to our community, the assistance that we have received from the City of Los Altos in the past and what we propose for the near-term future, and providing the rationale for our request to this Commission for support.

About Friends of the Los Altos Library

Friends of the Los Altos Library (FoL) is a very long standing institution in the Los Altos community, having been formed more than 60 years ago to support the Los Altos Library.

- We believe that doing all we can to support and improve our Library for the benefit of everyone in our community is worthwhile - for reading, education, programs, safe spaces, information access - and that the City is a better place for all of us as a consequence.
- This past year we had over 150 regular volunteers, who worked more than 16,900 volunteer hours, and we had more than 600 contributing members.
- The City has provided us space, without cost, to support our efforts for the past 44 years.

Thousands of residents enjoy our quarterly book Sales, the daily Ongoing Sale in the Library and the Cafe in the Library, all sponsored by FoL. By sorting, pricing and selling donated books we are able to donate approximately \$165,000 to the Library each year, supplementing the Santa Clara County district funding, to pay for: a dedicated collection of best seller and new books for our Library users; most children's and teen's programs; adult lectures; extra furniture; events and prizes for the summer reading program; and the Senior Book Club, enabling many more opportunities than would be possible from County funds. Also, residents appreciate having a convenient way to recycle their used books for a good cause.

City support request

- Hillview Community Center is scheduled to be demolished this summer - there is no allocation for space for FoL in the new community center.
- We would like to find a way to continue operations in temporary space until the existing Library can be redeveloped.
- At this time, we have an offer from the City of approximately 489 square feet of space, for two storage sheds located between the Police Station and History Museum.
- We have requested approval to install, near the site of the sheds, a 800 - 1000 square foot portable building, similar to the existing units next to the Police building, to house book donation processing. We have offered to pay for all three of the structures, as well as some of the costs to prepare the site.

Will you help us by supporting our request to City Council on April 23, 2019, either in person or by written submission?

For additional information please contact Mary Jo Kelly, President, FoL at maryjokelly2007@gmail.com

Background

Our operations and space requirements are completely dominated by the logistics of moving books and storing them for sale. Several times each week books are cleared from the donations room in the Library. The weekly volume is normally around 160 book boxes (5000 books). There are often additional donations which are collected, by arrangement with the donor, so the weekly volume to be sorted ranges from 150-180 boxes. Books go 5 different ways - to ongoing sales in the Library, to online sales, to storage for quarterly sales, to donations, and to recycling. We have a small number of skilled volunteers who are able and willing to move this volume of books, without whom the operation would not happen. This operation currently uses approximately 1200 sq. ft. in Hillview (a classroom, storage closet, and shed).

Ever since 1975 when the elementary school at Hillview closed, the City has provided space for FoL to operate, as the other cities in the County do for their Friends of the Library organizations. This arrangement, along with the efforts of our volunteers, enables us to contribute the vast majority of our annual revenues directly to benefit the Library.

Since we learned that Hillview was closing, FoL has studied various alternatives to our Hillview location that we are leaving. We discovered that the best way to continue contributing at the same level of funding to our Library and provide a meaningful and enjoyable volunteer experience for hundreds of local volunteers each year is to continue to operate from the Civic Center campus. We want to keep the donation room in the Library, since that is where everyone has been used to bringing books; we want to minimize book movements, which implies working space in or near the Library.

Over the last two years, we have worked with city staff to review potential space. At this time, we have an offer from the City of approximately 489 square feet of space, for two storage sheds located between the Police Station and History Museum. While we welcome and need this space, we also need additional work space to sort, price and prepare books for our sales. We have proposed locating an additional 800 - 1000 square foot portable building near these sheds to house this work. As part of our offer, we stated that we would pay for all of the buildings, as well as some of the site development work, such as replacing three apricot trees.

We recently learned that City staff has indicated the possibility of a smaller structure placed across from the front of the Library and near the parking lot instead of the site that we identified for the portable building. We are told that this location would provide a maximum of 600 square feet, although we do not yet know the details of this alternative (exact placement, site preparation requirements, etc.). Although it would be more visible to the public, we would be willing to consider it if our preferred location near the Police Station does not work.

FoL has also been working with the Library and the Library District to find possible space in which to work. While we appreciate their efforts to accommodate our operation, the only possible area identified in the Library is not only too small but would take away highly utilized public space from an already overcrowded Library.

We believe we are in partnership with the City to provide public services to our community in the form of support for our Library. We believe being on the Civic Center campus aids in our efforts to accomplish this goal. We hope that we can continue our efforts in the future.

References :

FoL online <https://losaltoslibraryfriends.org/> <https://www.facebook.com/friendsoflosaltoslibrary/>

Neil Gaiman on libraries

<https://www.theguardian.com/books/2013/oct/15/neil-gaiman-future-libraries-reading-daydreaming>
