

# Library Study Session FAQ

## 1. Why a study session?

We, as a subcommittee, are presenting the reader with information towards the use of the North County Library Authority (NCLA) funds to improve the Main Los Altos library.

## 2. Who operates the Los Altos libraries?

Beyond being made up of two libraries, Woodland and Los Altos Main Library, and serving two communities, Los Altos and Los Altos Hills, the Los Altos library ecosystem is complex. These are some of the groups with interest in the future of our libraries:

- The Santa Clara County Library District (**District**) serves residents of the District through seven community libraries. The District manages the “software” of the library – the books, the collections, all of the services, and the human resources and management.
- The City of Los Altos (**Los Altos**) manages the buildings, the “hardware” of the library – specifically Woodland Library and Los Altos Main Library.
- The Library Commission (**Commission**) serves as the principal liaison between the City Council and these groups.
- The North County Library Authority (**NCLA**) collects funding meant to maintain library hours, purchase books and materials, support library programs, and for other general library purposes.
- The Friends of the Library (**FoL**) is a non-profit, all-volunteer organization that raises funds in support of the Library.
- The Los Altos Library Endowment (**LALE**) actively supports library-related programs and projects.

## 3. What is the NCLA?

As an entity, the NCLA has the fiduciary responsibility for overseeing a parcel tax authorized by voters, commonly known as Measure L. The NCLA was created by a Joint Powers Agreement (Agreement) between the cities of Los Altos and Los Altos Hills in 1985.

## 4. What powers does NCLA possess?

As stated in the JPA, the NCLA “shall have the power and authority to plan, support, acquire, construct, maintain and operate programs and facilities for the augmentation of public library services for the benefit of the inhabitants of the Member Entities.” [The JPA can be found here.](#)

**5. What is Measure L?**

In 2010, voters in the City of Los Altos, the Town of Los Altos Hills, and citizens in unincorporated Santa Clara County approved Measure L to levy a \$76 special parcel tax for twenty (20) consecutive fiscal years (**Parcel Tax**). Overwhelmingly passing with a 77.62% YES vote ([see Ballotpedia, Measure L Results](#)), the measure sets forth specific purposes for which the funds are to be spent. The special tax will be levied through the fiscal year beginning July 1, 2029.

Measure L reads as follows:

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*TO MAINTAIN LOS ALTOS AND WOODLAND LIBRARY HOURS, PURCHASE BOOKS AND MATERIALS, SUPPORT LIBRARY PROGRAMS, AND FOR GENERAL PURPOSES, SHALL THE NORTH COUNTY LIBRARY AUTHORITY, A JOINT POWERS AUTHORITY BETWEEN LOS ALTOS AND LOS ALTOS HILLS, CONTINUE A TAX FOR 20 YEARS, WITH ANNUAL OVERSIGHT, AT THE FIXED RATE OF \$76 PER YEAR ON EACH DEVELOPED PARCEL OF LAND WITHIN LOS ALTOS AND LOS ALTOS HILLS AND ALLOWING AN EXEMPTION FOR LOW-INCOME SENIOR HOUSEHOLDS, AND ESTABLISH AN APPROPRIATIONS LIMIT?*

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**6. What are the specific purposes for which funds are to be spent?**

Measure L outlines the specific purposes for which the funds are to be spent as follows:

- **Maintain library hours.** Funds may be spent on maintaining specified number of hours at Los Altos and Woodland library locations.
- **Purchase books and materials.** Funds may be used to supplement the Santa Clara County Library system to purchase books and materials tailored to specific community needs and interests.
- **Support library programs.** Money may also be used to support and maintain the level of programs that is currently provided for all age groups.
- **General purposes.** Funds may be used for any other expenditure necessary to uphold the level of service, including expenses related to a future election when the parcel tax expires.

**7. How much money is available for a potential remodel?**

In total, there is \$13M available for a remodel.

- The NCLA projects to have approximately \$13M by the end of FY 2029-2030.
- The Friends of the Library agreed to commit up to \$1.0M to fund any cost of construction and/or remodeling of the Los Altos Library main branch, once plans are accepted by the City of Los Altos.
- As of April 2023, LALE had \$2.1M in its building fund.

**8. How many Needs Assessments have been done?**

There have been two assessments, the first in 2008; and the second in 2018. In addition, there was an Architectural Feasibility Study completed in 2018.

## **9. What did the 2008 Needs Assessment find?**

The first Needs Assessment, completed in 2008, outlined the needs of the two Los Altos Libraries, including service and space needs. [The full assessment can be found here.](#) The 2018 Assessment and the 2018 Architectural Feasibility Study built on some of the details found in 2008.

## **10. What did the 2018 Needs Assessment find?**

On December 19, 2017, NCLA initiated a Task Force to explore the redevelopment of the Main Library. The Task Force recommended updating the 2008 Library Services and Space Needs Assessment and conducting an architectural feasibility study to determine the advantages/disadvantages (including cost) of a remodel/expansion of the existing facility compared to building a new library.

Group 4 Architecture, Research + Planning, Inc. was contracted to update the *Needs Assessment* and Strata Architectural to conduct the *Feasibility Study*. [Group 4's report can be found here.](#)

The Needs Assessment Update reaffirmed the need for an expanded Main Library. The Update posited that a minimum of 12,000 additional square feet of space was needed beyond the current library space of 28,000 square feet.

The Needs Assessment Update, with the input of Library staff, identified the following challenges:

- **Congested public circulation and holds areas.** Lobby area can be more open to the public. Check out and Holds area can be crowded.
- **Inadequate restroom facilities.** No family/all-gender restroom or children's library restroom.
- **Inadequate space for library programs.** Many programs overflow the 100-person capacity Orchard Room, the largest room in the library. There's no dedicated children's story time space. The staff conference room is shared with the public for programs, staff meetings, Friends of the Library book sorting, lactation space, 3D printing, and random storage as the need arises.
- **Inadequate space to introduce new services.** Little flexibility in providing space which can be used to deploy new services, like the popular Passport Services displacing the Holds area.
- **Lack of collaborative space.** Small and medium sized meeting rooms for group study, tutors and students, and book discussion groups are lacking.
- **Better dedicated space for teens.** Current teen space is often used by tutors and as an overflow space during school hours.
- **Lack of electrical outlets.** Electric conduit has reached capacity. Patrons still must search for outlets to recharge devices or use extension cords.
- **Crowded shelving.** Shelving and accessibility for all collections (Children's, Reference, Fiction, and Nonfiction) need to be continuously reevaluated based on current needs and use.
- **Accessible shelving.** Current shelves are 7.5 feet high.
- **Employee Work Area.** Reevaluate librarian staff layout, making work environment better. Configure the workroom for efficiency and better collaboration.
- **Inadequate space for Friends of the Library.** Give the FoL dedicated space to process donations, sell books and operate the Main Library Café.

While the Needs Assessment Update did not specify how space should be used, it did indicate that additional space is needed for larger program space, expanded children's library space, dedicated teen space, collaboration space, more and different seating choices, more space for personal technology, more

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accessible physical collection, and space for the Friends of the Library. The Needs Assessment Update does indicate that while 40,000 square feet is the minimum needed, additional square footage may help to better serve the needs of the community within the Library.

**11. What did the 2018 Architectural Feasibility Study find?**

In 2018, the Architectural Feasibility Study was commissioned. [The full study can be found here.](#)

The Study looked at whether it was possible to expand the library by 9,000 or 11,000 square feet, depending on the plan. The study also looked at the costs of building a new, 40,000 square foot library on the present Main Library footprint.

These estimates were based on numbers included in the 2008 Needs Assessment.

The Feasibility Study found that the original building’s construction made expansion by “building up,” (adding a second story) cost-prohibitive. They found that an upward expansion would require significant upgrades to the building structure to meet contemporary building code.

The Study also looked at expanding the library out. This was also discounted because:

- Expanding toward the soccer field or toward the History Museum requires eliminating parking and roadway access.
- Expanding into the Historic Orchard toward City Hall requires relocating a major utility trench running parallel to the Main Library building.
- Expansion toward San Antonio Road requires a 40-foot setback - there is not sufficient space to expand in that direction and gain significant amounts of square footage.

The Architectural Feasibility Study determined that expansion was possible by demolishing the 1990s addition and rebuilding a two-story building in its place. This building would be tied into the remaining library as it is today. This construction would consist of 18,000 square feet for a gain of 9,000 square feet. The Architectural Feasibility Study also proposed adding a second-story overhang to the parking and delivery area immediately adjacent to the Library. This would allow for continued parking and access while adding approximately 2,000 square feet to the Main Library.

**12. How does our library compare to other libraries in the District?**

<b>Los Altos Main Library Key Stats</b>							
	Los Altos	Campbell	Cupertino	Gilroy	Milpitas	Morgan Hill	Saratoga
Last Major Remodel	1990	2023	2021	2012	2009	2021	2003
Sq. Ft.	28,050	26,420	56,250	53,000	60,000	30,500	48,500
Circulation (FY 2022-23)	1,368,546	708,252	2,995,573	561,850	2,291,184	662,455	1,399,081
Gate Count (FY 2022-23)	289,254	91,702	607,403	159,902	428,854	162,717	291,359

Los Altos has the oldest library facilities despite having the 4th highest circulation and annual gate count.

**13. Is there the possibility of attracting additional funding for a library renovation?**

We believe that there might be. The design for the renovation of the Campbell Library incorporated new features with \$4,718,450 in additional funding provided by the California State Library's Building Forward Grant Program. This new program provided a unique opportunity for the city to add sustainability features to the library enhancement project, as well as address escalated construction costs following the pandemic. The Building Forward Grant Program supports capital projects for public library buildings that address critical maintenance needs, improve energy efficiency and sustainability, and expand access physically and digitally.

**14. Which projects have been tackled by the library community?**

Over the many years, there have been many improvements to services, as well as reactions to events, especially Covid, which have tested the mettle of the entire community.

We've highlighted some of these. They include:

- The **Passport Office**
- The first **Open Access** installation in Santa Clara County
- **Dropboxes** at both Woodland and Main Library
- Reports on Library **Parking**
- **Woodland Patio Proposal**
- Reviews of services (list of services available, **BookDash**)

**15. List of source documents consulted. It is not all inclusive.**

- [Page+Morris Library Services and Space Needs Assessment \(May 2008\)](#)
- [Group 4 Los Altos Main Library Needs Assessment Update – Summary of Findings and Recommendation \(April 10, 2018\)](#)
- [Strata Architects 2018 Architectural Feasibility Study](#)
- [Santa Clara County Library Strategic Plan 2023-2028](#)
- [Measure L](#)
- [North County Library Authority Joint Exercise of Powers Agreement](#)
- [Comparison data for Santa Clara County libraries.](#)
- Key Findings from the 2019 Patron Satisfaction Survey
- Santa Clara County Library District 2019 Patron Satisfaction Survey Databook
- E-Resource Statistics 2019-20
- [Futures Subcommittee Report September 2021](#)
- [History of the Los Altos Library by Marion Abel](#)
- [Sample library RFPs](#)
- [Noise cancelling headset proposal](#)

16. Summary of recommended actions addressed in Proposals 1, 2, and 3

<b>Recommendation</b>	<b>Need(s)</b>	<b>Proposal</b>
<b>Reconfigure and enlarge the lobby</b>	(2008 #31), Strategic Plan	Proposal 1
<b>Install family bathrooms</b>	(2008 #28)	Proposal 1
<b>Address circulation and reference desk service</b>	(2008 #32)	Proposal 1
<b>Move children’s area entrance to enable direct access</b>	(2008 #36)	Proposal 1
<b>Find suitable alternative for holds</b>	(2008 #34)	Proposal 1
<b>Improve Friends’ sales space</b>	(2008 #46-#47)	Proposal 1
<b>Remediate inadequate wiring</b>	(2008 #25)	Proposal 1
<b>Address any accessibility concerns</b>	as discovered	Proposal 1
<b>Remodel to support limited Extended Hours space</b>	Strategic Plan	Proposal 2
<b>Evaluate and consolidate staff areas and Friends’ space to improve efficiency</b>	(2008 #42)	Proposal 2
<b>Create acoustic quiet zone</b>	(2008 #29)	Proposal 2
<b>Evaluate and redeploy library digital needs in computing, printing, and scanning</b>	(2008 #22)	Proposal 2
<b>Remodel to support full Extended Hours space</b>	Strategic Plan	Proposal 3
<b>Create opening between children’s space and Orchard Room to expand useable space</b>	(2008 #29)	Proposal 3