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Published November 12th, 2008

New Library Nearing Completion

By Cathy Tyson



Lafayette City Manager Steve Falk leading a hard hat tour of the new library Photo provided

Everything is basically on schedule for the Lafayette Library and Learning Center (LLLC) to open its doors in approximately a year, in late fall of 2009. The project is the first of its kind to include a unique collaboration of a dozen arts, education and cultural organizations - The Glenn Seaborg Consortium. The over 30,000 square feet structure is more than four times larger than the current library, giving the collection of 110,000 books and audiovisual materials, 42 computers, 186 reader seats, homework center and more - room to breathe.

There was just one interesting delay, having to do with the granite. The master plan of finishes, paint colors and landscaping goes through the design review process just like every other project in Lafayette. However, it took about a year from the time the granite - 80,000 square feet, the equivalent of two acres - was identified until the recent delivery of a current sample.

Unfortunately, during that time, the quarry had dug progressively further into the mountain and the delivered product had large pink blotches throughout the stone. According to Ann Merideth, Community Development Director, "a new granite has been selected, and it is on order."

Kathy Merchant, President of the Lafayette Library and Learning Center Foundation, says the Board of Trustees and dozens of volunteers have been hard at work on the \$4 million Open Doors, Open Minds initiative with the goal of raising

money to increase open hours, expand programming, and enrich the collection. They are working hard to reach the half-way milestone by the end of this year. Picking just a few words to describe the new library, Merchant said, "innovation, community building, and transparency." She reflects on these trying economic times, "now more than ever, it's important to have a free resource for the whole community to use."

Although quite a bit has been accomplished, obviously there is more construction work to be completed. According to Merideth, the two buildings - the Library and Community Hall - are framed and the roof structures and utilities are in place. Also the interior walls creating the different rooms are framed and the structure for the solar panels is in place. The windows and metal roof panels come next. With the recent rain, crews have been working hard to water proof the structure.

Public art has been approved by the Redevelopment agency. Brian Goggin and Kana Tanaka are the lucky winners for the Outdoor Plaza Corridor and the Children's Activity Deck.

On the financial front, the Lafayette Community Foundation has raised and donated a staggering \$12.5 million towards construction of the project. Back in November of 2004, an \$11.9 million grant was awarded to LLLC by the California Public Library Construction and Renovation Bond Board. Finally, the Lafayette Redevelopment Agency just issued "A" rated, double tax free bonds on October 29, 2008. They are available in \$5,000. increments through Piper Jaffray.

Killefer Flammang Architects of Santa Monica worked diligently incorporating new and old into the cutting edge structure. The building features: recycled teak, low-e windows, a separate teen area, three group study rooms, a community meeting room, large adult area with quiet zone, storytelling and class visit space for thirty children, an Art and Science Discovery Center, a space for "Old Betsy," and a used book store. Other highlights include windows in the shape of the big dipper, a very unique artistic solar fireplace with prisms, and what will surely be the best looking public restrooms in town.

Glenn Seaborg Consortium Partners:

California Shakespeare Theater
 Chabot Space & Science Center
 Commonwealth Club of California
 Greenbelt Alliance
 John F. Kennedy University
 John Muir Health System
 Lindsay Wildlife Museum
 Oakland Museum
 Oakland Zoo
 Saint Mary's College of California
 University of California Institute of Governmental Studies
 Lawrence Hall of Science

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