

East Village Residents' Group

Proposals for the Adaptive Reuse of the Old Downtown Library

Background

In September 2013, the City of San Diego will open a new \$184 million dollar central library in the Ballpark District. The City will close the existing central library. This creates the opportunity for community enhancing adaptive reuse.

A women's homeless shelter was one of the contemplated options initially suggested.

While the EVRG usually supports the development of homeless facilities in the East Village and elsewhere, we adamantly oppose the development of a homeless shelter on this site.

A homeless shelter is inappropriate because:

- Rachel's Women's Homeless Facility is located less than 2 blocks away. It is well under capacity. A redundant facility is not helpful.
- A "Skid Row-like" concentration of homeless and Ultra-Low Income Facilities is developing. In addition to Rachel's, the Salvation Army operates 3 large facilities within 5 blocks of the site. Additionally, over 70 SRO rooms are within 5 blocks. A new 250 bed low income and homeless transitional housing building broke ground directly across the street from the site at 9th & Broadway. Concentrating poverty creates safety and health risks, while negatively impacting the community and local businesses. For viable businesses to thrive, the area must develop and attract customers that have the economic means to support quality, community retail.
- In an era of constricting budgets opening a new facility will drain money from existing service providers.

The East Village Residents Group suggests the following alternatives:

- Innovation Educational Center
- Art Gallery and Exhibition Space
- Permanent (or Interim Home) for Downtown YMCA
- New Joint Campus for San Diego Colleges

Details are described below:

Innovation Education and Entrepreneurial Center

This site with its open layouts and underground spaces would make an excellent research and development center for budding science and technology entrepreneurs.

Irwin Jacobs, the genius behind Qualcomm's telecomm success, has long supported the development of innovators and technical entrepreneurs. His UCSD Entrepreneur Challenge has helped to recognize and bring forth novel technologies. See link <http://challenge.ucsd.edu/about/previous-winners>.

Creating an Entrepreneurial "Start Up" Innovation Center would provide research and development space to innovators. It could be provided to researchers at low cost by the city or with support from a donor be given out to the best of the best through application or competition, like the Entrepreneur Challenge.

Alternatively, the site could be used for special development projects by respected San Diego businesses. Perhaps, it could be offered to incentive San Diego firms and research institutions to work together on joint efforts. For example development synergies could be created by combining UCSD, GA, or Qualcomm research in the same building.

Developing a research center in downtown might create new enterprises and higher paying tech jobs in South and Central San Diego, which would create opportunities for those from varied socio-economic backgrounds. For downtown, it would mean a more diversified economy and more quality development. It would also mean higher taxes and "brain gain" for San Diego's knowledge economy.

The first step would be convincing civic leaders to focus on creating an innovation center in downtown San Diego. Next, we would need to find investors/supporters, such as Irwin Jacobs to support the idea.

Historically investments in developing university-level research centers has done wonders for the surrounding communities, e.g. UC Irvine or the Torrey Pines and Sorrento areas of San Diego. Partnerships could be established with San Diego City College to better prepare students from central San Diego to work in innovative fields.

Downtown YMCA

The YMCA would make an outstanding and healthy addition to downtown. It offers exceptional fitness facilities, life-enriching classes and activities for the whole family, and unique community building programming. The Y recently began looking for a home in Downtown's East Village. The Old Library would make a great permanent or interim home.



As a permanent home, the site along with the adjacent parking lot to the north could be turned into a full scale YMCA facility complete with gym, pool, and outdoor recreation spaces.

As a temporary home utilizing only existing spaces, the YMCA would have space for its gym, studio fitness, classroom, and administrative space. This would allow the YMCA to develop its downtown membership before building a new facility. This interim use would provide time for the City to develop future plans for the space.



Art Gallery and Exhibition Space

A fine art gallery and exhibition space for budding artists and independent art dealers could utilize the “Old Library” for this purpose.

The City could partner with an art dealer or consortium of artists to create a gallery and artistic institute that could be combined with conference, business, and social events. This venture could be combined with artistically-oriented restaurants and lounges. Such a space would be an asset to the community and

Architectural Notes: The building’s art deco façade represents an important civic-minded historical era. We believe this design should be preserved.



Developing College Campus

San Diego is home to several educational institutions that will be outgrowing their current spaces over the next two years. The Old Library could be adaptively reused, much like the Bullocks building at Southwest Law School in Los Angeles to house one or more of these colleges.

- Art Institute of California- San Diego. Currently located in Mission Valley provides training in Design, Media, Fashion, and Culinary realms. A downtown location would be more attractive to urban-minded, creative students. Quick access to San Diego's hospitality and culinary heartland would improve opportunities for student internships. Open houses and exhibitions would draw crowds from the East Village and Gaslamp.
- John Paul Catholic University. Rapidly growing school currently operating out of an office building in Scripps Ranch. 192 students. Would benefit from downtown location, access to employment and Balboa Park.
- New School of Architecture. New School has discussed moving to a larger unified space.

