ITEM: ITEMS OF INTEREST TO THE COMMISSION AND ANNOUNCEMENTS

Commissioners or Library staff may make announcements regarding the Library Commission and Library or Friends group activities of interest to other Library Commission members.

RECOMMENDED ACTION:

- None
Scholarly feel, visual appeal

Art at new library in Walnut Creek part of growing trend in Bay Area

By Jennifer Modenassi
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When the new Walnut Creek library opens its doors Saturday, visitors will encounter more than a cutting-edge building brimming with books.

At one entrance, they'll be greeted by internationally recognized artist Christian Moeller's 24-foot-tall portrait of a chiseled librarian holding a finger to her lips. At another, they'll walk under a stream of colorful glass bottles riding a metal tidal wave. And in the children's area they won't be able to help but notice the playful sculptures of bees, dragonflies and flowers flitting across the walls.

In the past decade, a number of Bay Area cities have built new libraries usually financed by a combination of state bonds, voter-approved measures, grants and private donations. Equipped with meeting and conference rooms, computers, fireplaces and even cafes, this new crop of public libraries have been designed to serve as "community living rooms" that buzz with energy. And because many cities have public art ordinances, which typically set aside 1 to 2 percent of funds toward the purchase of art for major building projects and developments, art is becoming an increasingly visible part of these social hubs.

"I think art reflects some of the fundamental purposes of the library," said Anne Cain, director and county librarian of the Contra

See ART, Page 7

Christian Moeller's work, above, titled "Shhh...A Portrait in 12 Volumes of Gray," is the centerpiece of the art at Walnut Creek's new public library, which opens Saturday. "58 Miles Quintet," far left, by Len Johnson, and "Journey of a Bottle," left, by Martha Thoma, also will be on display.

MARK DUFFENDER/STAFF PHOTOS
PARKING AT SATURDAY'S CELEBRATION:
The library's new 12-space underground parking garage is designated for vehicles with handicapped parking placards. Special permit holders, shuttle buses and passenger drop-off only. There will be free valet parking for bicycles and strollers at the Lincoln Street entrance, and the free Downtown Trolley which has been rerouted Saturday to stop at the front door. Besides metered parking and public parking garages, Broadway Place at 1453 Duncan St., First Bank at 1700 B. Broadway, and First Republic Bank at 1400 Civic Drive have all agreed to allow public parking Saturday from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m.

SLIDE SHOW: See more photos of art works on display at the Walnut Creek public library. ContraCostaTimes.com.

From Page 1:
Costa County Library. "(Libraries are) more than repositories of books. They are community gathering places around reading and culture. Art provides an opportunity and a way to transfer knowledge."

Walnut Creek spent nearly $800,000, or about 1 percent of the library's $39.9 million cost, on Moesker's place and San Jose artist Marta Thoma's "Journey of a Bottle," and an additional 15 works by Bay Area artists. The Lafayette Library and Learning Center bought nearly $400,000 worth of paintings, photographs, sculptures, and paintings, and commissioned a pair of site-specific outdoor art works for their sprawling complex which opened in 2009. Many libraries also have community art galleries, where exhibits rotate frequently and the public can display their creativity.

The art is typically selected by a panel of artists, arts professionals, city leaders and residents, to reflect the culture of the community, Cain said.

Perhaps that's why some residents are sensitive about what they wind up with. In 2004, the city of Livermore commissioned a $40,000 mosaic for the plaza in front of their new library. But the widespread attention the mosaic received was directed toward artist Maria Alquir's spelling errors rather than her whimsical depictions of historical figures that included Albert Einstein and Shakespeare. The controversy surrounding the mosaic was so intense that the Miami-based artist had to slip quietly back into town to fix her mistakes — at the city's expense.

Today, the mural is no longer a source of civic embarrassment. "Kids love it because it's so colorful," said Susan Gallinger, Livermore's director of library services.

The idea of public art in libraries is such a trend that even communities like Orinda and Martinez, which do not have public art funds, have found alternate ways of placing art in them or nearby. Orinda City Parks and Recreation has instituted a rotating loan program where artists display fabricated metal, wood and clay sculptures near the library and the adjacent community center and city hall. Todd Skinner, Parks and Recreation Director, said that the department is trying to raise $20,000 — which the city will match — to begin purchasing art.

A group effort brought art to the Martinez library. When former children's librarian Sandy Skilker proposed a reading garden a few years ago, the community leapt into action. The Friends of the Library raised about $3,000 to fund an outdoor mural and mosaic, and sculptor Paul Craig donated the metal storyboard characters decorating the library's outside walls.

Gifts also played an important role in bringing art to the Walnut Creek Library. When the selection panel found it didn't have enough funds to cover the cost of all the work it wanted, donors stepped in. Additionally, Arizona sculptor Peter Golub's zany installation of biomorphic creatures, which adorns the wall across from the Young Adults Zone, was funded by Rossmoor resident Stella Liu. Benicia artist Jung-Moo Ahn gave the library a pair of Chinese brush-inspired paintings. Alamo residents Jan and Mary Ann Beakhus chipped in more than a hundred pieces from their collection of 19th-century Dutch paintings. San Francisco sculptor Amy Blackstone donated several of the fanciful steel pieces depicting Mt. Diablo wildlife in the Children's Library Garden.

Spread throughout the library, the works complement the building's architecture and sleek interior. But will such a bounty of art overwhelm patrons?

Richard DuBay doesn't think so. The Walnut Creek resident got a sneak peak at the library during a recent private reception.

"Everywhere I turned, I found fascinating things," DuBay said. "The art wasn't distracting. It created an illusion, a certain mood. The word I would use is 'ambience.' (The library) doesn't have an institutional feel. It's artful."
Walnut Creek Library comes in under budget
By Elisabeth Nardi, Walnut Creek Journal
Posted: 06/16/2010

The new Walnut Creek Library set to open July 17 will do so $1.6 million under budget.

The news that the cost of the library project, at 1644 N. Broadway, now stands at $39 million was announced at Tuesday’s City Council meeting to a round of applause.

In total, the price has dropped $6.1 million after construction bids were lower than expected in 2008 and the council slashed $500,000 from the budget last year. This means city leaders will not have to borrow money from certain funding sources, such as parking meter revenue, to fund a $1.6 million "internal loan" planned as part of the original financing for the library and the 150-parking space surface lot and underground garage.

Walnut Creek aimed for the "basic" level of Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design certification — an official stamp of green approval by the U.S. Green Building Council. Instead, the city was able to achieve LEED "silver" status, a level higher than basic, without spending extra money. "We spent $6.1 million less for effectively a better building and better project," said Councilwoman Cindy Silva on Tuesday.

The budget to pay for the library and parking garage now breaks down like this:

- Library Reserve — $28.8 million
- Private Contributions — $5 million
- Parking Funds — $5.6 million
- County

Operation Savings — $500,000

Last year, when the council decided to cut the library budget by half a million dollars, the Walnut Creek Library Foundation stepped in, helping raise the money above and beyond its $5 million pledge. The foundation found donors so library rooms like the business center and technology center — which now has 20 computers — could be outfitted.

The foundation, to date, has donated $3.5 million and is scheduled to give another $500,000 on July 17, with a final payment of $1 million by January of next year. That means all the money will be recovered in time to cover costs, said Lorie Tinfow, assistant city manager.

"The cash flow issues we thought might exist won't exist," she said, because everything will be paid for and collected in the same fiscal year.

Also stepping in to raise $100,000 for opening day collection was the Friends of the Walnut Creek Library.

Even though the library is on time and under budget, there are still some thorns on the city’s newest rose. Several residents were opposed to the size and cost of the library, and feel that after the worst economic slowdown since the Great Depression, that city leaders made a 42,000-square-foot mistake.

Nevertheless, it is built and the new challenge becomes how to pay for operations and maintenance of the new library at a level meeting community expectations.

Both Walnut Creek libraries are staffed and operated by the Contra Costa County Library, but because of budget cuts over the past few years cities have stepped up to pay for more library hours and build new facilities. The county pays for the libraries to be open 35 hours a week; Walnut Creek's libraries are open 56 hours a week, paid for through Measure Q, the $22-per-parcel tax passed in 2002 which generates more than $900,000 for the city's two libraries. But Measure Q expires July 1.

The city saved $4.3 million to pay for the 56 hours of operation and maintenance at both libraries. After that, the community and City Council will ultimately decide how, or if, it wants to keep paying for 56 hours of operation. Any new parcel tax would need two-thirds voter approval to pass. Tinfow expects discussions about how to pay for operations to begin next fall.
Grand Opening July 17, 2010

The new Walnut Creek Library is a place for the community to:
- Wonder - browse, explore, and reflect
- Connect - engage, share, and collaborate
- Learn - read, research, and study

The design of the library embraces the community's values for a warm and inviting landmark that enhances Civic Park, supports efficient operations, and reflects the community's commitment to sustainability.

120,000 item collection capacity (65,000 item opening day collection)
800 seats
90 computers

Learning & Conference Center
- 2 Meeting rooms
- Technology room
- Conference room

Business & Career Center
- Special connections

Market Place / Coffee Bar
- New books
- Media
- Friends Bookstore
- Coffee Bar

Children
- Storybook area
- Children's garden

Teen Zone
- Study & gather
- Multimedia area

Reading & Study Areas
- Fireside room
- Group study rooms
- Birds on a wire

Public parking
- Surface parking - 30 spaces
- Under building garage - 118 spaces
- Bicycle parking - 36 spaces

Technology
- WI-FI
- Automated materials handling
- Digital signage
- RFID

Facts and Figures

Spaces
- 42,000 Square Feet Library
- 51,000 Square Feet Garage
- 18.3 Acres
- 148 Parking Spaces

Cost
- Total Project Cost under $41.5 M
- Funding through City and Foundation

Sustainability
- Pending LEED Certification, targeting LEED Silver
- Energy efficient
  - 25% better than code
- Raised access floors
- Daylight harvesting
- Storm water management
- Flexible & efficient operations
- Low flow water fixtures
- Reduction of heat islands
- Regional materials
- Recyclable materials
- Water efficient landscaping
- Low VOC materials

TEAM
- City of Walnut Creek
- Walnut Creek Library Foundation
- Friends of the Walnut Creek Library
- Contra Costa County Library
- Group 4 Architecture Research + Planning
- Gilbane Building Company
- West Bay Builders