City & County of San Francisco
Branch Library Improvement Program

Bernal Heights Branch Library Renovation
Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ)

What are the plans for the branch?
As part of the bond measure overwhelmingly passed in November 2000, the Library plans to make the building accessible and reduce the seismic risk, while preserving the historic character of the existing building. Plans include a designated Teen Area, an elevator and staircase added, new restrooms, and the Children's Area will be moved downstairs and expanded.

What will be some of the benefits of the renovated branch?
- Seismic strengthening
- New expanded Children's Area downstairs
- Access from playground to Children's Area
- Increased book and materials collection
- Interactive learning environment space for young children
- A designated Teen Area
- New restrooms
- An accessible elevator and new staircase
- Accessible after hours book drop from Cortland
- Restored historic features such as lights, ceiling stencils, and woodwork
- More functional and ergonomic staff work areas
- Wireless (Wi-Fi) access to the internet
- Improved lighting, heating and ventilation
- New and restored furniture
- New computers and self-check machines
- Comfortable seating and a variety of seating choices
- Infrastructure to provide modern technologies and flexibility for the future

When will the branch close?
The branch will close on February 9, 2008. During the renovation, library services will be provided by holding weekly programs at Red Hill Books, 401 Cortland, and by bookmobile service on Holly Park Circle in front of Junipero Serra Elementary School.

Will the playground behind the branch close during construction?
No, except for a few days it may be necessary for outside work on the branch.

What happens to Bernal Preschool run by City College?
The Bernal Preschool has relocated to their own space in Paul Revere Elementary School (Tompkins at Folsom). A community group is studying the feasibility of building a stand alone preschool next to the library.

Who are the architects and contractors?
The renovation is designed by the Library Design Studio of the Bureau of Architecture, City and County of San Francisco and the contractors are CDX Builders, a San Francisco company.

What happens to the mural on the front of the library?
Some members of the community want to preserve and restore the mural. Others want it removed and the building restored to its original architectural style. The Library is conducting a community process to discuss these issues and will make a decision about the mural before the branch reopens. During the renovation, the mural will be minimally impacted by the new ramp and wall openings.

Is the community involved in the design process?
Yes. A survey in English and Spanish was conducted in summer 2004, where community members gave their opinion about library materials, facilities, and services. In June 2004, the Library met with City College administrators who oversee the Bernal Preschool. In June/July 2004, Library representatives met with Supervisor Tom Ammiano, Bernal Heights Neighborhood Center (BHNC) staff and board members and other neighborhood leaders to discuss the project. After distributing fliers in English and Spanish, and mailing to interested residents including the BHNC membership list, the Library held the first community meeting on August 4, 2004. On August 30, 2004, at the request of the Library, a City Child Care Interagency Meeting addressed the need to relocate the preschool. On October 6, 2004, a second community meeting was held in the branch to discuss the plans. During January, February, and March 2005, the Library Commission heard testimony and discussed the renovation plans and the relocation of the preschool. In March 2006, the Library Commission held a public Peer Review of the plans. For the past 3 years, the Library showed drawings at the popular Fiesta on the Hill and at the branch.

How much will it cost to renovate the Bernal Heights Branch Library?
The project has a budget of $5.7 million to renovate the existing building, not including furniture and equipment. All designs are subject to change in order to meet this fixed budget limit.

Can Library bond funds be used to build space for the Preschool?
No. Library bond and Proposition E funds (library set aside) can only be used for Library purposes.

Where does the money come from to renovate the branch?
In November 2000, the voters overwhelmingly passed a bond measure for $106 million to upgrade San Francisco's branch library system. The bond's priorities are to reduce seismic risk, meet modern technological needs and current code requirements, comply with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), and provide spaces that are responsive to current services, yet flexible enough to meet future needs. While the bond pays for a significant portion of the costs, it does not pay for furniture, fixtures, and equipment. The Friends of the San Francisco Public Library will raise $16 million from private donations to pay for these costs. Call 626-7512 x101 to help with the Friends campaign.

How do I find out more information about my branch renovation?
Contact the Branch Library Improvement Program at (415) 557-4354, check www.sfpl.org, email BLIP@sfpl.org, or stop in the branch to review the latest plans.

We voted to renovate and build new branch libraries across the city. It's happening!