



March 11, 2019

Misty Jones
San Diego Public Library
330 Park Blvd.,
San Diego, CA 92101-7416

Dear Misty –

You already know the State Library was asked to assess the viability of using the Teachers Training Annex on the grounds of the San Diego Unified School District's headquarters as a site for a community library.

I understand that subsequent to my visit to the site a local bond measure has been approved providing a revenue stream to renovate the teachers annex, built in 1910, as well as other buildings at the school district's headquarters. The district has said that a potential use of the renovated building could be a "joint-use library" or "community education center."

Historic preservation considerations aside – the building's façade is very cool by any objective standard – the interior of the teachers annex does not meet the demands communities now place on their libraries.

Your library system expends a lot of energy listening to San Diego's communities and working to create libraries that address their needs, which constantly evolve. As recently as 10 years ago, was wiring to facilitate high-speed broadband a necessity?

Libraries now are community hubs where the central design feature is flexibility. More and more, bookshelves and workstations are on wheels, laptops are replacing fixed terminals and carrels are giving way to open spaces for collaboration and congregating.

I'm telling you what you already know since all the recently renovated libraries in San Diego are great examples of creating that kind of openness and flexibility.

In my judgment, it will be very difficult and very expensive to attempt to convert the teachers annex into the kind of modern library a community would use.

Among other issues, the building is not ADA compliant. Compliance is an expensive process even for more modern structures. The building is configured for classrooms, not open space, and it's unclear how many of the interior walls provide structural support and how many could be removed to allow for a more open floorplan.

The structure was completed at a time when asbestos was considered a desirable building material. The basement has been used for storage for a number of years. Modern building safety standards are significantly tougher than those of 1910. If there aren't significant dry rot issues, I would be surprised.

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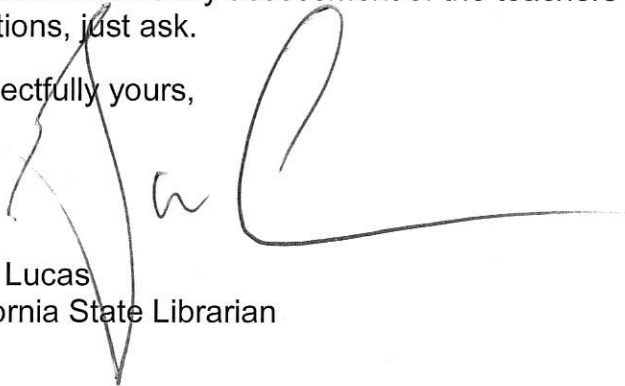
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Could the building be transformed into an appealing and functional 21st Century library? Of course but at what cost to taxpayers and the University Heights neighborhood? A teaching training facility, as the district suggests, or a literacy or technology center, are easier and less costly adaptations of the building, I would think.

I'm nowhere near as knowledgeable about the specific needs of San Diegans as you but it seems to me that razing and rebuilding the current University Heights library would improve service to that neighborhood and offer a more spacious place to gather at dramatically less cost.

This summarizes my assessment of the teachers annex site. If you have additional questions, just ask.

Respectfully yours,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Greg Lucas", with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Greg Lucas
California State Librarian