

# New Piedmont Avenue library to open in September

By Linda Davis Correspondent

Posted: 07/26/2012 11:31:17 AM PDT

OAKLAND -- It won't be fancy, but the new location for the Piedmont Avenue branch library will be cozy, handicap-accessible and welcoming.

A 1,600-square-foot modular building on the site of Piedmont Avenue Elementary School at 4314 Piedmont Ave. is being remodeled and is planned to open in mid- to late September. It will have public restrooms and air conditioning, which the old library did not have.

"Having the library on a school site brings the world of literacy to children." said Oakland Library Director Carmen Martinez. "The Oakland school district was very wise to see the advantage -- to tailor the collection to supplement the curriculum and to welcome the community.

"We hope to have a big celebration for the opening, with an 'assembly line' of kids passing books from the old library to the new one," Martinez added.

In early July, the Oakland City Council approved a five-year lease with the Oakland Unified School District for a rate of \$2,500 per month, considerably less than the city was paying for its old site at 160 41st St. since November 2010. The branch was housed in a vintage building, its only tenant since the building opened in 1932.

Oakland had been paying \$1 per month to lease the old site. The property was sold in 2009, and in November 2010, the new owner raised the rent to \$4,250 per month. Oakland then moved to a month-to-month rental of \$4,900 per month after the lease expired Oct. 31.

The Oakland City Council also allocated no more than \$200,000 to pay for the move. Custodial services, plumbing, electrical and heating system maintenance will be provided by the Oakland school district. All utilities will be paid by Oakland, according to the agreement.

Lease payments will come from the Measure Q Oakland Library parcel tax approved by voters in 2004. Moving costs will come from the Library Trust Fund.

The original Piedmont Avenue branch was established in 1912 at 3975 Piedmont Ave., near the present Wells Fargo Bank. In 1931, the city's library board entered into an agreement with architects Miller and Warnecke to design the "new" library on 41st Street.

The current Piedmont Avenue branch is the fourth-busiest branch in the Oakland library system, with patrons checking out more than 150,000 materials per year. Close to 5,000 Piedmonters are Oakland library cardholders.

In April 2011, the Piedmont City Council voted to pay \$350,471 in back user fees to Oakland for library services and subsequently renegotiated future fees to remain in good standing. Piedmont does not have its own library.

Former Piedmont League of Women Voters president Tam Hege said she's been following the progress of the Piedmont Avenue library.

"The new facility will have air conditioning and restrooms, which is an improvement," Hege said.

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