



TO: Mayor and Councilmembers
FROM: Jaime A. Valdez, Neighborhood Services Director
CONTACT: Allison Gray, Library Director
SUBJECT: Goleta Valley Library – From COVID to Recovery

RECOMMENDATION:

Receive and file a report on the progress made by the Goleta Valley Library in recovering from the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic; the continuing successes of the GVL made possible by its staff and partnerships; and challenges posed by major changes to the Black Gold Cooperative Library System, available funding for libraries regionally, and the small and aging library facility that will need to be addressed in the future.

BACKGROUND:

The City strives to provide a high-quality library system and has made customer service its mission and a core value. The Goleta Valley Library (GVL) is known throughout Santa Barbara County to have friendly staff and to provide a high level of quality customer service, which is supported by testimony from library users throughout the library service area. In addition to providing the services that a library typically provides, the GVL also provides a place for learning, socializing, and making and building relationships. The library is proud to represent the City of Goleta in all that it does.

DISCUSSION:

This report will review the Goleta Valley Library's successes during and in the aftermath of the COVID-19 pandemic, community support that the library has received, and future challenges posed by the Black Gold Cooperative Library System changes, anemic regional funding for libraries, the Isla Vista Book Van, and the aging facility and its maintenance needs.

COVID-19 Response and Recovery

Throughout the COVID-19 pandemic GVL staff worked diligently to respond quickly to the changing public health guidelines and to provide a high level of quality service, despite the challenges. After being closed for only 11 weeks, staff were ready to provide Sidewalk

Service to patrons, who greatly appreciated being able to begin borrowing library materials again. After GVL reopened the building, use was initially sluggish, but numbers are now increasing each month. GVL is on track to double the number of visitors it had in Fiscal Year (FY) 2021/22. GVL is also projecting that it will increase circulation in FY 2022/23 by 33%. This paints an overall picture of a patron base that is losing their fear of COVID and returning to normal activities, which include visiting the library on a regular basis. Included with this staff report is Attachment 1 which captures images of GVL and quotes from patrons.

During FY 2021/22, Goleta Valley Library circulated 317,752 physical items. GVL patrons downloaded 131,966 e-books, e-audiobooks, e-films, e-magazines, and e-music. There were nearly 71,000 visits to the library website. GVL held 748 virtual and in-person programs altogether with a total attendance of 30,677. In total, 83,029 people visited the library. Because GVL changed its automated library system, it had to issue new library cards to everyone in FY 2021/22, requiring GVL to make 120,793 cards.

In the first six months of FY 2022/23, GVL has already circulated 234,918 physical items. Staff do not yet have the figure for number of downloads or visits to the website. GVL held 203 programs with 10,948 attendees. GVL has already welcomed 76,293 visitors to the library. GVL has started tracking how many new library cards it makes and in the first six months of FY 2022/23, it made 2,546, which is an indicator of growth.

GVL Partners, Supporters, and Volunteers

GVL is indeed fortunate to have wonderful community partners. One major partner is UCSB's Arts & Lectures program. Each month they generously give GVL 100 copies of a book by their featured speaker; many of these are given away to our patrons who love this perk. GVL also partners with UCSB Reads an award-winning campus-wide and community-wide "one book" program to select an intellectually stimulating, interdisciplinary book by a living author that appeals to a wide range of readers and can be incorporated into UCSB curriculum.

Las Aletas, a Santa Barbara women's charitable organization, not only donates \$5,000 each year for the purchase of Large Print books, but also runs Operation Bookshelf. This service visits homebound people who cannot get to the library but would like to borrow materials. Las Aletas members get the materials for them and deliver them along with some pleasant company.

The number of local businesses that support the library are too numerous to mention here but GVL and its patrons are eternally grateful to all of them. Their names can be found on various promotional posters for different library programs.

Of course, GVL's closest partner is the Friends of the Goleta Valley Library organization. They not only make a large annual contribution to the library budget but also pay for many children's programs, such as the Summer Reading Club. The Friends are library advocates that support GVL with physical materials and its programming.

Finally, GVL has over 100 adult volunteers who help run the library on a daily basis, doing the necessary tasks that library staff simply do not have the time to accomplish. These volunteers check in shipment items and returns, pull holds in the morning and afternoon, repair items, process materials, and so much more. In addition, about 70 teen volunteers help with programming while earning community service credits.

Changes in Black Gold Cooperative

In 2022, the members of the Black Gold Cooperative Library System, a joint powers authority (JPA), had to react to the surprising withdrawal of the two largest entities – the City of Santa Barbara and San Luis Obispo County Library Systems. First in an attempt to forestall their withdrawal, and later as a financial measure, Black Gold and the GVL reluctantly changed automated library systems from Polaris to Koha, with a new discovery layer called Aspen. While providing some benefits to user experience, Koha has created many difficulties for library staff, especially in terms of ordering new books and audiovisual materials for the libraries.

Black Gold now has six jurisdictions, with the addition of Carpinteria, which left the City of Santa Barbara's management, like Goleta. All of the Black Gold jurisdictions are still evaluating the effect of the withdrawal of the City of Santa Barbara and County of San Luis Obispo from the system on the future viability of the JPA. In withdrawing, these agencies have thus far declined to accept a share of responsibility for the JPA's liabilities. The remaining libraries are still evaluating necessary actions to protect the interests of their sponsoring agencies and patrons.

Funding Challenges

Funding continues to be a major challenge for the Goleta Valley Library. While now managed by the City of Goleta, the Goleta Valley Library has for decades served as the regional free main library for the City of Goleta, Isla Vista, the Gaviota coast, Hope Ranch, the "Noleta" area, and the other unincorporated areas of south Santa Barbara County that lie north of the City of Santa Barbara. GVL receives revenue from the County ("per capita funding") from this service area, Parcel Tax ("Measure L" in County Service Area 3) from most of the service area except Isla Vista and the Gaviota Coast, and Development Impact Funds (DIF) from the service area, if any are collected. Because the City of Goleta General Fund also makes a significant supplemental contribution to the Goleta Valley Library budget, City of Goleta residents effectively contribute more to the operation of the regional main library than other residents of the Goleta Valley Library service area.

However, the library is still understaffed and underfunded. Our patrons are highly engaged and can be quite vocal in terms of the materials they want. Despite staff's best efforts at collection development, GVL continues to be the highest net borrower of materials from other Black Gold libraries. It is important that the library be appropriately funded so it can remain relevant in relation to the shifting national trends and services in the area of public libraries, patron needs, and building maintenance.

This is not a problem unique to GVL, as all of our county main libraries, and most of the branches, struggle to meet demand with the funding provided. The County of Santa Barbara has been studying the funding issue via an Ad Hoc Committee which included the library directors. The Ad Hoc Committee ultimately settled on investigating the viability of a County-managed library system with a director and branches. It remains to be seen exactly how this would work in practice and whether it would result in a benefit to GVL patrons.

Book Van Program

GVL has been operating a pilot project for providing library services in Isla Vista, funded by a one-time grant of \$200,000 received from the State through the efforts of Senator Monique Limón. The Book Van has been in operation in Isla Vista since October 2021, stopping at 11 different sites in Isla Vista. It follows a two-week rotating schedule of stops so that each site receives a visit lasting a minimum of 90 minutes. The van attracts an average of 331 people each month. Staff keeps statistics tracking age groups using the service as well as circulation, giveaways, and honor system borrows. The grant period ends June 30, 2023, but funding from the grant has already expired. With the last budget process, Council elected to allot \$45,000 from the main library budget to be able to continue the Isla Vista Book Van through this fiscal year. This temporarily reduced funding available for the main library, which was backfilled from accrued one-time funds in library accounts.

The Bookvan has received a lot of positive feedback. The County and the Isla Vista Community Services District representatives have expressed an expectation to Library staff that this service will continue. However, a long-term source of funding has not been identified for next year and beyond, and neither the County nor the IVCSD has yet offered additional funding for this additional service. Staff will be bringing options to Council with the new budget cycle.

Future Building Needs


The library building is showing its age. Aside from some improvements to the roof, no significant repairs have been made to the building in quite some time. Lighting is dim and, in some cases, (such as the Multipurpose Room) not replaceable with currently available bulbs. The restroom equipment is no longer up to current codes and the building is of insufficient size for the population served. According to the American Planning Association, a library should be around 50,000 square feet in order to serve our assigned population; GVL is slightly more than 15,000 square feet. GVL would like to offer an Adult Literacy program but currently does not have the space required by California State Library. GVL needs also include more program space and more shelf space due to the high appetite for physical materials (except for DVD's) from its patrons and the likelihood for this demand to grow over time. Library staff and General Services staff will work together for opportunities to improve the functionality of Library space over the coming years, including pursuing available grant funding.

Regardless of the challenges expressed in this report, the dedicated GVL staff are committed to providing the highest level of customer service possible. Staff helps to create the atmosphere of community partnership and belonging that is vital for a healthy library. Staff regularly receives comments from the public about the high-quality offerings at GVL and receive feedback about the environment created by our staff that brings them back to the GVL.

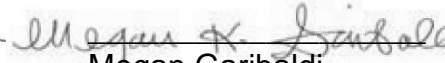
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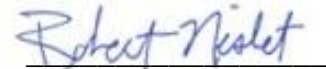
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ATTACHMENT:

1. Goleta Valley Library, From COVID to Recovery PowerPoint Presentation

Attachment 1

Goleta Valley Library, From COVID to Recovery PowerPoint Presentation

GOLETA VALLEY LIBRARY

From COVID to Recovery

Presentation to City Council
March 7, 2023

Jaime A. Valdez, Neighborhood Services Director
Allison Gray, Library Director





“We truly appreciate this kind
of support during the
pandemic! Thank you so
much!”



March 7, 2023 City Council Meeting

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“Thank you so much for offering this service! This is wonderful!”



March 7, 2023 City Council Meeting

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“Just want to compliment you
on your innovative ideas &
programs. Very impressive!”



March 7, 2023 City Council Meeting

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“Thank you and hugs to all the exceptional staff of the Goleta Library. You make our lives complete & rich with learning, information, wonderful movies and the joy of books.”



“Dearest library staff, Thank you so very much for serving our community. Your knowledge and expertise is endless. Your patience and kindness are a blessing to all.”



March 7, 2023 City Council Meeting

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“Your branch is wonderful, particularly the employees. They do an amazing job and are so friendly. Thank you for being a valuable resource & venue for the community.”



March 7, 2023 City Council Meeting

“Thank you so much for ALL you are doing especially behind the scenes to make Goleta Library the most amazing library on the Central Coast (in our opinion)!”

Questions?