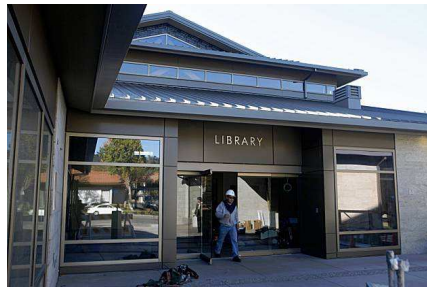


## New Lafayette library ready for grand opening

Jonathan Morales | Contra Costa Times

THE finishing touches are still being put on the signature bronze sculpture, books are still being labeled and some of the furniture is still being loaded, but the new Lafayette library is finally ready for its first chapter.

The building, officially the Lafayette Library and Learning Center, makes its debut to the community with a grand opening ceremony that will last all day Saturday.



Mt. Diablo Blvd. Entrance

The event marks the culmination of a decades-long effort to replace the city's old library and create a new center downtown for activity and learning.

**"This is clearly, far and away, the largest, most expensive, most spectacular, most important public improvement not only in the 40-year incorporated history of Lafayette but in the 160-year period since the first Yankee settlers arrived in Lafayette," said City Manager Steven Falk.**

The \$42.5 million spent on the new building — the inside of which somewhat-intentionally resembles the Ahwahnee Hotel at Yosemite — shows nearly everywhere you look. In addition to books, computer terminals and study spaces, the facility boasts an array of features geared for making a trip to the library a special experience.

Outside, a sculpture of pages being blown by the wind will guide visitors from the outdoor amphitheater below to the plaza above. Inside, library patrons can read next to a Zen garden or under a "solar fireplace."



Children's Activity Deck

Children can play on the activity deck underneath a color glass rendition of the periodic table of the elements.

Other features include a cafe, a community hall for City Council and other meetings, and a corner store for the Friends of the Lafayette Library, which donated more than \$1 million in used book sale proceeds to the library.

**"There's nothing ordinary about this building,"** said Kathy Merchant, president of the Lafayette Library and Learning Center Foundation. **Perhaps the most extraordinary aspect of the new library is the Glenn Seaborg Learning Consortium, a partnership of 12 arts, cultural and educational organizations from around the Bay Area.**

They include the Oakland Zoo, the Lawrence Hall of Science and the Chabot Space and Science Center. The consortium is named after Nobel Prize-winning chemist and Lafayette resident Glenn Seaborg, who died in 1991.

All of the organizations have pledged to provide a variety of activities for all ages, said Susan Weaver, senior community library manager. "With the consortium partners, we will be able to provide the kinds of programming that I think will be the envy of the nation," she said.

That puts Lafayette on the "leading edge" when it comes to libraries, said Ron Olowin, a physics and astronomy professor at Saint Mary's College and a Lafayette resident. He'll be on hand Saturday to give a preview of the college's new art exhibit on the solar system.

"I don't think there are many of these models available," he said. **"Lafayette is now in the forefront of communities that do more than just have libraries with books in them. They become learning centers."**

Though much of the library's cost was paid for by the city's redevelopment agency and state grants, the library foundation raised \$12.5 million to get the project off the ground, and they are more than halfway through a second, \$4 million fundraising effort.

In addition, the foundation is gearing up to secure \$140,000 in annual funding to pay for day-to-day operations.

**More than 25 percent of Lafayette residents contributed in some way to the new library,** Merchant said.

*If you go*

- What: Grand opening of the Lafayette Library and Learning Center
- When: 9 am to 5 pm Saturday
- Where: 3491 Mt. Diablo Blvd., Lafayette

Details: [www.lafayettelib.com](http://www.lafayettelib.com)

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