

# Library Board OKs Second Site for Branch Amid Public Outcry

By JOHN D. WAGNER  
Staff Writer

Despite emotional public testimony, the city Board of Library Commissioners has decided to replace a Mid-City library that is also a local historical monument.

The decision to vacate the Washington Irving Library, a broad, spacious structure at 1806 S. Arlington Ave., came during a May 30 meeting attended by 200 people at Holman United Methodist Church in South-Central Los Angeles.

Construction for a \$3.4 million state-of-the-art facility at Washington Boulevard and Bronson Avenue, where a carwash now sits, will begin in early to mid-1992, according to city Library Department spokesman Robert Reagan.

## Alternative uses

The five-member board also approved motions to develop alternative uses, such as a community center, to preserve the Arlington Avenue building and halt library services there only after phasing in another usage.

The current structure, a brick building of Romanesque Revival architecture, was built in 1926 and named an historical monument in 1986.

"I was really disappointed," said Karen Haas, spokeswoman for the Friends of the Washington Irving Library, a group that has argued for renovation and expansion of the current building since early this year.

"It's ironic that the historic nature of the building signed its death warrant. We wanted it saved as a library, not as a multipurpose center, a sushi bar or anything else."

## Master plan

The proposal to relocate the library was part of a master plan that the city Library Department began developing in 1967.

Loretta Chiljian, another opponent, commented, "I think we've been had from the beginning. The plan was affirmed in 1985 and we were just a blip. Also, I don't think library funds should be used to grade a blighted strip (of land on Washington Boulevard)."

er, Jim Matsuo, a Bronson Watch captain, hailed "It's a win-win situation. They'll be

operating a \$3.4 million new library and we'll also have a community center. We're getting two things instead of one. Expansion (of the current building) would be like a tumor. It wouldn't look right."

The board decision was the culmination of a controversy that has lingered since February, when

city Library Department officials made public the proposal for a new library and some community residents circulated petitions against the idea.

## Earthquake standards

Library officials have argued that the current building does not meet earthquake standards, is in an in-

conspicuous residential area and provides no parking facilities.

Some community opponents have argued that the current facility should be expanded from 4,000 to 9,000 square feet and renovated to meet earthquake safety levels.

Meanwhile, nearly 60 people, mostly residents living either near

the current library or proposed site, addressed the board at the May 30 meeting, arguing for and against the proposal.

"The library is a marvelous building," said Carol Smith. "It should be preserved. But the year 2000 is 10 years away. Things are changing so fast. I support a modern

library. Children need (it) to utilize modern technology."

Theresa Beaudet, spokeswoman for the Country Club Park Neighborhood Association, which sponsors neighborhood-watch programs near the library, argued for keeping the current building because it is "a beautiful place for learning."



Juanita Dudley, commissioner of the Los Angeles Human Relations Commission, suggests converting the Washington Irving Library building into a children's museum at a recent meeting of the city Board of Library Commissioners. The board decided to relocate the library to a Washington Boulevard site and retain the current building for an undetermined use.

—Photo by Rodney Rasc