Mayor
Gabe Quinto
Mayor Pro Tem
Rebecca Saltzman

THE CITY OF
EL CERRITO

AGENDA

Councilmembers
William Ktsanes
Lisa Motoyama
Carolyn Wysinger

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THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 19, 2026

SPECIAL CITY COUNCIL MEETING (9:00 AM)
Hana Gardens - 10870 San Pablo Ave, El Cerrito

Join Via Zoom:
https://us06web.zoom.us/j/88669243269?pwd=WlfhYd2QnzlIpjKy8vT4rijEKZ7taF.1
Meeting ID: 886 6924 3269 **Passcode:** 811316 **Dial in:** 1-408-638-0968

Please note that due to the temporary meeting location, this meeting will not be broadcast or livestreamed online.

Public Comments:

1. In-person, by submitting a request to speak to the City Clerk.
2. Via Zoom, using the "Raise Hand" feature to request to speak.
3. By phone, dialing ***9** to "raise your hand", and ***6** to unmute.
4. Online, using the "Submit Comments" feature on the meeting event.
5. Via email to cityclerk@elcerrito.gov indicating **Public Comments – Agenda Item #.**

Written comments received by **2:00 PM Wednesday, February 18, 2026** will be provided to the City Council and posted online in advance of the meeting. Comments received after the deadline will be provided to the City Council and posted after the meeting.

Accommodations: In compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act, if you need special assistance to participate in this meeting, please contact the City Clerk at 510-215-4305. Notification 48 hours prior to the meeting will enable the City to make reasonable accommodations. Closed Captions are available via zoom.

Conduct: This meeting is held pursuant to City Council Rules of Order and Procedure.

9:00 AM ROLL CALL - CONVENE SPECIAL CITY COUNCIL MEETING

1. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE TO THE FLAG OR OBSERVATION OF A MOMENT OF SILENCE

2. TELECONFERENCE AND PUBLIC COMMENT INSTRUCTIONS

3. POLICY MATTERS

A. Receive a Report and Call an Election for the Citizen Initiative Petition titled "The El Cerrito Library Initiative"

Action Proposed: Receive and file a report prepared pursuant to Election Code Section 9212 on the Citizen Initiative Petition titled "The El Cerrito Library Initiative" and adopt a Resolution to place the proposed measure on the ballot.
Contact: Karen Pinkos, City Manager; Holly M. Charléty, City Clerk, City Management

4. ADJOURN SPECIAL CITY COUNCIL MEETING

The City of El Cerrito serves our diverse community by providing exceptional services that create a safe and resilient future for all.

AGENDA BILL

Agenda Item No. 3.A.

Date: February 19, 2026
To: El Cerrito City Council
From: Karen Pinkos, City Manager; Holly M. Charléty, City Clerk, City Management
Subject: Receive a Report and Call an Election for the Citizen Initiative Petition titled "The El Cerrito Library Initiative"

ACTION PROPOSED

Receive and file a report prepared pursuant to Election Code Section 9212 on the Citizen Initiative Petition titled "The El Cerrito Library Initiative" and adopt a Resolution to place the proposed measure on the ballot.

BACKGROUND

On January 20, 2026 the City Council adopted Resolution 2026-04 accepting the Certificate of Sufficiency for a Citizen Initiative Petition titled "The El Cerrito Library Initiative." At the same meeting, the City Council ordered an impact report pursuant to California Election Code §9212. When such a report is requested, it is required to be received by the Legislative body within 30 days.

The §9212 Impact Report, "The El Cerrito Library Initiative, A Citizens Initiative Measure for a New El Cerrito Library and Library Services Parcel Tax" is attached. The report describes the initiative measure and various impacts of the measure including legal, fiscal, land use, business, and other impacts that would result from passage of the measure. The report also includes information on the background of the City's library planning efforts and options, including a discussion of the opportunity to include the library in the El Cerrito Plaza BART Transit Oriented Development, providing context for what the revenues from the measure could be used for. The report was prepared by City staff and the City Attorney with assistance from Griffin Structures and NHA Advisors.

ANALYSIS

At the time a 9212 report is received, the legislative body is also required to take action to call an election to submit the proposed ordinance to the voters pursuant to Elections Code §1405. The City Council has two options for the timing of the election.

1. *Regular Election*: This option allows for the placement of the proposed ordinance on the City's next regular election occurring not less than 88 days after the date of the order of election. The next regular election in El Cerrito will be held **Tuesday, November 3, 2026.**

Should the City Council take this action, the cost of the election would be inclusive of the estimated cost for a regular election at the range of $3-$4.50 per registered voter. Based on current registration, the estimated cost for the regular election is $53,442 - $80,163.

2. *Special Election*: This option allows for the placement of the proposed ordinance on the ballot by calling a special election. If a special election is called, the election must take place not less than 88 days and not more than 103 days from the order of election. In addition, Elections Code § 1100 requires the election be held on a Tuesday.

   A Special Election called on February 19, 2026 must be held between **May 18, 2026 – June 2, 2026**. The estimated cost for a special election ranges between $12-15 per registered voter. During this window of time, there is the option to consolidate the special election with the Statewide Primary Election to be held on **June 2, 2026.** Consolidation of a special election on this date would be at the estimated cost of a regular municipal election of $3-4.50 per registered voter.

The following represents a summary of eligible election dates for an election ordered on February 19, 2026:

Election Order	Type of Election	Election Date	Estimated Cost
2/19/2026	Special	Tuesday, May 19, 2026	$267,210
	Special	Tuesday, June 2, 2026	$80,163
	Regular	Tuesday, November 3, 2026	$80,163

Depending on the election date selected, the highlighted information in the proposed resolution would be updated to reflect the applicable dates indicated for that election on Attachment 4, Election Dates and Deadlines.

STRATEGIC PLAN CONSIDERATIONS
This action supports the City's Strategic Plan Goal(s) of:

- *High Performing Organization*

ENVIRONMENTAL CONSIDERATIONS
This section is not applicable to this agenda item.

FINANCIAL CONSIDERATIONS
The Contra Costa Elections division estimates the cost of $3.00 – $4.50 per registered voter for a regular election, or a special election that is consolidated with a Statewide General Election. For a special election on any other date, the estimated cost is $12-$15 per registered voter. As of January 12, 2026 the current number of registered voters in El Cerrito is 17,814.

The date of the election will determine the cost of the election. Based on the available options for the election date, the anticipated costs are as follows:

Election Date	Estimated Cost	Fiscal Year	Additional Budget Appropriation (Y/N)
Tuesday, May 19, 2026	$267,210	2025/2026	Y
Tuesday, June 2, 2026	$80,163	2025/2026	Y
Tuesday, November 3, 2026	$80,163	2026/2027	N

The cost of a special election is not included in the Fiscal Year 2025-26 budget. If the City Council elects to call a special election that will take place prior to June 30, 2026, a budget appropriation from the City's General Fund is required to cover the cost. If the ballot measure is approved by voters, the cost of the special election would be eligible for reimbursement from the proceeds of the measure.

If the City Council elects to place the proposed measure on the next regular municipal election on November 3, 2026, no appropriation is required. The regular election costs will be included in the budget presented to City Council for Fiscal Year 2026-27 prior to June 30, 2026.

LEGAL CONSIDERATIONS

The City Attorney has reviewed and determined the proposed actions are in compliance with all applicable regulations.

Reviewed by:

Karen Pinkos, City Manager

Attachments:

1. Impact Report
2. Resolution
3. Exhibit A to Resolution
4. Election Dates and Deadlines

California Elections Code §9212 Impact Report

The El Cerrito Library Initiative

A Citizens Initiative Measure for a New El Cerrito Library and Library Services Parcel Tax

Presented to the El Cerrito City Council

February 19, 2026

City of El Cerrito
10890 San Pablo Avenue El Cerrito, CA 94530

INTRODUCTION

On January 20, 2026, the El Cerrito City Council adopted Resolution 2026-04, formally accepting the Certificate of Petition confirming sufficiency for a citizens initiative petition titled "The El Cerrito Library Initiative" (Initiative). This Initiative would levy an annual parcel tax to "fund the planning, construction, and furnishing of a modern library in El Cerrito and to fund the City's library operating costs of the new library for up to ten years." Under current case law, the proposed Initiative requires an affirmative vote of a simple majority of city voters who vote on the question to pass.

California Elections Code Division 9, Chapter 3 governs the process for Measures Submitted to the Voters for local elections, including the citizens' initiative process. Part of this process authorizes the City Council to order a report on the effects of a proposed initiative before taking any action to submit the proposed ordinance to the voters. The content of the report may include a range of topics and must be presented to the City Council no later than 30 days after the elections official certifies to the legislative body the sufficiency of qualified initiative. At the January 20, 2026 meeting, the City Council requested an impact report be prepared and presented to the City Council at a Special City Council meeting on Thursday, February 19, 2026. At the same meeting that the impact report is received, the City Council is required to place the proposed measure on the ballot for consideration by City voters.

The purpose of this report is to explain the Initiative and its potential effects in the relevant areas authorized in Section 9212(a), including:

- Fiscal impacts;
- Impact on internal consistency with the City's plans and policies, including the General Plan, Specific Plans, and the Housing Element;
- Effect on the use of land, the impact on the availability and location of housing, and the ability of the city to meet its regional housing needs;
- Impact on funding for infrastructure of all types;
- Impact on the community's ability to attract and retain business and employment
- Impact on the uses of vacant parcels of land;
- Impact on open space, traffic congestion and developed areas designated for revitalization; and
- Other matters the City Council has requested to be in the report.

BACKGROUND ON THE EL CERRITO LIBRARY

The current El Cerrito Library, located at 6510 Stockton Avenue, was originally constructed in 1948 and expanded in 1960 to approximately 6,500 square feet. Based on independent facility assessments prepared by library experts, the size of the building is below what is typically considered adequate for the size of El Cerrito's population under standard library planning practices. The facility's outdated physical structure has limited capacity to support current service models, including technology access, programming, seating and collection growth. The building does not fully meet current seismic, health, safety or Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) accessibility standards, and has identified structural and building system limitations that affect operations and long-term maintenance. Within these limitations, library staff continue to provide programming for toddlers, children, teens, and adults and have adapted services over time to maximize use of the limited existing space.

Since 2002, community input and City efforts have identified the need to address the limitations of the existing library facility. In 2006, independent experts retained by the City completed the first comprehensive Library Needs Assessment and a Building Program in preparation of applying for a State construction bond grant that would have been available if approved by voters that same year. The Assessment documented these facility constraints and identified the need for a larger library with expanded technology infrastructure, collection capacity, seating, and flexible space to support group activities and study. At that time, the assessment identified an estimated facility size of approximately 21,000 square feet as appropriate under applicable industry standards to accommodate these functions. California voters did not approve the statewide bond measure that would have funded the grant program. Following the 2006 election, the City continued to explore external funding opportunities for Library renovation, replacement and/or expansion. These efforts were affected by broader economic conditions, the dissolution of redevelopment agencies statewide, and limited availability of grant funding.

With the adoption of the City's Strategic Plan in 2013, subsequently updated in 2015 and 2023, the City Council continued to identify needed investment in a library facility as a priority. In 2014, the City retained Kathryn Page Associates to update the 2006 Needs Assessment. The updated Assessment was presented to the City Council in March 2014 and concluded that a facility of approximately 20,845 square feet would be recommended to meet current and projected service demands. Both Assessments accounted for changes in patterns of use of libraries, changes in technology, population changes, and other factors that could increase or decrease the amount of space needed to deliver library services to El Cerrito residents over the life a new facility.

Evaluated sites for a new library have included the former Portola Middle School site, the Contra Costa Civic Theater site, the Community Center, the El Cerrito Plaza Bay Area Rapid Transit (BART) Transit-Oriented Development (TOD), purchasing a to-be-determined site along San Pablo Avenue, as well as the current El Cerrito Library location. In 2016, the City Council authorized the City to enter into a MOU with BART to study the feasibility of constructing a new library as part of the El Cerrito BART TOD at the Plaza Station. That same year, the City placed a measure before voters to authorize $30 million in bonds to upgrade the El Cerrito Library. The measure required a two-thirds vote majority (66.67%) and received 63% voter support, falling short of the required threshold by approximately 500 votes.

With no funding available from outside sources, the City evaluated several funding options, including grants, using existing reserves, General Fund financing, the formation of an Enhanced Infrastructure Financing District (EIFD), and a bond measure. Based on this analysis, a parcel tax was identified as a potential funding mechanism due to its ability to support both capital costs and ongoing operations at the Library facility. From 2021 through 2026, the City conducted additional community engagement activities to gather more feedback on library needs and priorities. Outreach included in-person and virtual meetings, a community survey, and engagement with thousands of community members. Godbe Research conducted polling in 2023 and 2025 for a potential ballot measure, however ultimately no measure was advanced.

To address the identified needs, the City has continued to explore options to construct a 20,000 square foot library. As shown in the following table, a facility of this size would be comparable to the midpoint of nearby and similar libraries.

Library Size Comparison

CITY	FACILITY SIZE	POPULATION (2020 CENSUS)	SF / CAPITA	YEAR BUILT
Lafayette	35,000	25,391	1.38	2009
Millbrae	26,200	23,216	1.13	2004
Los Gatos	30,250	33,529	0.90	2012
Bay Point (in development)	21,000	23,896	0.88	2027*
Hercules	21,500	26,016	0.83	2006
El Cerrito	**~20,000**	**25,962**	**0.77**	**Proposed**
Belmont	20,000	28,335	0.70	2006
Pleasant Hill	24,000	34,613	0.69	2022
San Pablo	22,000	32,127	0.68	2017
El Cerrito	**6,500**	**25,962**	**0.25**	**1949**

On January 20, 2026, a City Council Study Session was held to provide the City Council and the public an update on the library facility. A presentation was made on the status and limitations of the current facility, as well as an overview of five conceptual scenarios and associated cost ranges for a renovated or new library. The study session included a summary of the findings of the two prior assessments regarding the limitations of the current library and discussed the needs of a larger facility to address the demands of El Cerrito residents over the life of the facility, even as use of the library has changed and will continue to change in the future. In addition to the technical conclusions of the Assessment, the Contra Costa County Librarian provided a presentation regarding the ways that the current library building limit the County's ability to deliver services to the community and how those services are expanded and enhanced in larger facilities in other cities in Contra Costa County. For example, she noted multiple times that the current library facility is essentially one room with limited ability to separate the spaces for simultaneous program offerings. In larger facilities with physically separated spaces, library staff are able to run multiple programs at the same time without interfering with other library patrons' use of the facility.

The scenarios for different library facilities discussed during the study session included:

1) Renovate Existing 6,500 Square Foot (SF) Library
2) Rebuild and Expand Existing Library to 13,000 SF
3) Build 20,000 SF Library in the El Cerrito Plaza Transit-Oriented Development
4) Build Standalone 20,000 SF Library on New Site
5) Renovate an Existing 20,000 SF Building into Library

Information on the background and history of the City's efforts to build a new library facility can be found on the Library page on the City's website, including needs assessments, site feasibility information, public workshop and presentation materials, and frequently asked questions. The January 20 study session video and related materials can be viewed here.

DESCRIPTION OF THE CITIZENS INITIATIVE

The full text of the proposed measure is available on the City's website.

Overview of the Tax

The Initiative proposes to adopt an ordinance that would amend the El Cerrito Municipal Code to add Chapter 4.58. (References below to Sections that begin with 4.58 are to provisions of the ordinance that would be added to the Municipal Code. References to Sections 1 through 11 are to sections of the proposed ordinance that would not be added to the Municipal Code but that would be part of the operative law.) The Initiative would authorize the City Council to levy an annual tax on all real property within El Cerrito, unless an exemption applies. The Initiative limits the City's use of revenue from the tax to construction of a new library, the City's library operating costs, and related expenses, as explained below. The structure of the tax has multiple elements, each of which must be considered to understand the tax rate that will be levied in any particular year and the resulting amount of tax that each property owner will have to pay. Additionally, a number of relevant provisions can be interpreted in multiple ways. Where relevant, this section provides the City's interpretation of those provisions.

Maximum Tax Rates and Adjustments for Inflation

First, the maximum tax rates that can be levied initially are 17¢ ($0.17) per square foot of improvements on a property and $100 per vacant parcel. (Section 4.58.040(A).) Each year, the City Council is authorized—but not required—to increase the maximum rates for inflation. (" . . . up to the greater of either the cost of living in the immediate San Francisco Bay Area or the per capita personal income growth in the state, as verified by official United States Bureau of Labor statistics." (Section 45.58.040(B).) The maximum rates could therefore increase over the life of the tax.

Additional Limits on the Tax Rates Actually Levied

Second, although the maximum rates described in the preceding paragraph will always be the upper limit on the taxes levied in any year, the Initiative contains a second limit on the tax rates the City Council may approve. The City Council may not set the rates "at a level higher than 115% of the rate needed (1) to extinguish any indebtedness and (2) to pay for the City's library operating costs during the first ten full years following the completion of library construction." (Section 4.58.040(C).) Because of this second limit, in any year that the City

Council levies the tax, it will have to determine the City's costs to "extinguish any indebtedness" and, once the construction of a new library is completed, the City's "library operating costs." The City Council will only be able to set tax rates to pay its "library operating costs" during the first 10 years after the construction of a new library is completed. The tax rates in any year would be capped at amounts that would generate 115% of the revenue needed to fund those two categories of library expenses. If the rates that would generate 115% of the revenue needed to fund those two categories of library expenses would exceed the maximum rates described in the preceding paragraph, then the maximum rates would be the rates for that year.

Allowable Uses of Tax Revenue

Third, the Initiative defines the allowable uses of revenue from the tax, including but not limited to "extinguish[ing] any indebtedness" and "library operating costs." Revenue from the tax may be used for "the planning, permitting, environmental review, construction, and furnishing of a new modern library, including a new building, and for the City's library operating costs for the first ten years." (Section 4.58.060(A.) Authorized expenditures include:

> costs of bond issuance; architectural, design, engineering, legal, and similar planning and permitting costs; litigation costs; construction management; library bond consultants; staff development and training expenses associated with learning construction techniques and approaches and new equipment and systems; the furnishing and equipping of the library, including equipment to maintain facilities in a safe and clean condition; and a customary contingency for unforeseen design and construction costs. Payment of the costs of preparation of facilities planning and library implementation studies, feasibility and assessment reviews, master planning, environmental studies, permit and inspection fees, studies and assessments, including ADA and seismic, and temporary housing and relocation costs for dislocated assets, programs or activities caused or necessitated by library construction are permissible expenditures.

(Section 4.58.060(B).) Authorized expenditures of tax revenue also include "The City's library operating costs for the first ten years after the completion of the construction of the library are authorized expenditures, including increased operating hours resulting in additional County librarian staff costs, utilities, and maintenance." (Section 4.58.060(B).)

Without limiting the complete text of the Initiative quoted in the preceding paragraph, the following are examples of authorized expenditures of revenue from the tax:

- Architectural, design, engineering, and planning and permitting costs for a new library.
- Facilities planning and implementation studies, feasibility and assessment reviews, master planning, and environmental studies for a new library.
- Permit and inspection fees for a new library.
- Construction management for a new library.
- Furnishing and equipping a new library.
- Construction contingencies for a new library.
- Costs of bond issuance and bond consultants.
- As part of City's library operating costs, increased library hours, additional County librarian staff costs from increased hours, utilities, and maintenance.
- Litigation costs.

Additionally, the Initiative authorizes the City Council "to incur indebtedness in the form of bonds, notes, contractual obligations, or other evidence of indebtedness authorized by law to finance or refinance the costs of library construction; to pay any and all costs of issuing or incurring such indebtedness; and to fund reserve funds, capitalized interest, costs of credit enhancement, costs of interest rate hedging arrangements, or any other financing costs associated with such indebtedness." (Section 4.58.060(C).) The City Council may therefore incur "indebtedness" as defined in the Initiative, including debt to construct a new library, and may finance the "indebtedness" with revenue from the tax.

Finally, revenue from the tax "may be used to reimburse the City for the costs of holding an election to seek voter approval of this Chapter and to pay for the costs of administering the Special Tax and for the costs of defending the Special Tax and this Chapter, including attorneys' fees and operating costs, should its validity be challenged." (Section 4.58.060(D).)

The Initiative contains other authorized uses of the tax not described here.

Term of the Tax

The Initiative authorizes the City Council to levy the tax until "thirty (30) years after the initial issuance of bonds for the planning and construction of a new library." (Section 4.58.110.) As discussed below, the City Council may begin levying the tax prior to the issuance of bonds to finance the construction of a new library. However, once the City has issued bonds for the construction of a new library, the term for the automatic sunset of the tax begins. The City

Council may "continue" to levy the tax only for 30 years from the "initial" issuance of bonds to construct a new library. Subsequent refinancing of the debt, as authorized by Section 4.58.060(C), cannot extend the term of the tax. Unless voters authorize an extension of the tax, the authority to levy it will terminate automatically 30 years after the initial issuance of bonds to construct a new library. However, the tax might be in place for longer than 30 years if the City Council initially levies the tax prior to the issuance of bonds for construction of a new library, as authorized by the Initiative. For the purpose of the sunset of the tax, the City interprets bonds to mean "bonds, notes, contractual obligations, or other evidence of indebtedness authorized by law to finance or refinance the costs of library construction." (Section 4.59.060(C).)

Exemptions from the Tax

The Initiative includes several exemptions, including for property that is exempt under the United States Constitution or California Constitution and for private property designated as open space in the El Cerrito General Plan, unless it is used primarily for residential uses. (Section 4.58.030(C)(1) and (C)(2).)

Additionally, single-family residential parcels and units under private ownership on multi-family residential parcels—e.g. condominiums—will be exempt if one of the owners of the property qualifies for participation in either or both the Gonzales-Deukmejian-Petris Senior Citizen Property Tax Assistance Law (also known as the Senior Citizens Homeowners and Renters Property Tax Assistance Law and the Homeowners and Renters Property Tax Assistance Law ("HRA")) or the Senior Citizen Property Tax Postponement Law. (Section 4.58.030(C)(3).) The HRA program provided a direct grant to individuals over the age of 62 or who are blind or disabled and whose income is below specified levels. The program is not currently funded by the State.

The Senior Citizen Property Tax Postponement Law allows qualifying individuals to postpone payment of current year property taxes on their primary residence. According to the State Controller's Office, for the 2025-26 tax year, to qualify for the program, an owner must meet all of the following requirements:

- Be at least 62 years of age, or blind, or disabled;
- Own and occupy the property as his or her principal place of residence (floating homes, and house boats are not eligible);
- Have a total household income of $55,181 or less;
- Have at least 40 percent equity in the property; and

- Not have a reverse mortgage on the property.

To qualify for exemption from the tax, an owner must occupy the property and be at least partially legally responsible for payment of *ad valorem* tax for the property. An owner must apply for exemption from the tax. The Initiative states that "proof that the State Controller's Office or Franchise Tax Board has approved the applicant's participation in either of the programs" described above. (Section 4.58.030(C)(3)(b).) Because the Initiative uses "may" rather than "shall," the City Attorney's interpretation is that the City has discretion to decide whether to limit the tax exemption to individuals who actually participate in either program, or whether to use those programs' eligibility requirements regardless of whether an applicant participates in those State programs.

Audits and Citizen Oversight

The Initiative requires that each year "as part of the audit of the City's financial statements, the City's independent auditors shall complete a report reviewing the collection, management, and expenditure of revenue from the Special Tax. The report shall be reviewed by a new or existing citizen oversight board designated by the City Council as part of its review of the annual audit." (Section 4.58.080.) The Initiative provides the City Council with discretion to decide whether to create a new citizen oversight committee or add review of the auditor's report for the tax to an existing committee. For some other tax measures that require citizen oversight, the City has assigned review to the Financial Advisory Board.

Additional Accountability Provisions of the Initiative

The Initiative includes additional accountability measures, as required by State law. The California Constitution contains applicable restrictions on the use of proceeds of the tax to ensure they are expended consistent with the Initiative. As required by the Initiative and the California Government Code, the City would create the Library Special Tax Fund and all proceeds of the tax, including penalties and interest, would be deposited into the fund. The City would be legally restricted to spend money in the Library Special Tax Fund only for the purposes described in Section 4.58.060. Annually, the Tax Administrator, who is defined as the Finance Director or other designee of the City Manager, is required to prepare and submit to the City Council and to the citizens oversight board a report regarding the collection and expenditure of funds from the tax and other information required by Government Code sections 50075.1 and 50075.3. (Section 4.58.070.) Because the tax is a special tax, as defined in Section 1(d) of Article XIIIC of the California Constitution, the City is required to expend the proceeds of the tax may only for the purposes described in the Initiative.

When the City Council May Begin Collecting the Tax

Several sections of the Initiative and California law also must be considered to understand when collection of the tax would begin. According to the proposed ordinance, collection of the tax "shall commence on July 1st after the Effective Date and continue for thirty (30) years after the initial issuance of bonds for the planning and construction of a new library." (Section 4.58.110.) The Effective Date is defined as "the earliest date legally possible after the elections official certifies the vote on the Initiative by the voters of the City of El Cerrito, pursuant to the Elections Code." (Section 6.) Under Section 9217 of the California Elections Code, an initiative ordinance is considered adopted on the date the City Council declares the results of the election and goes into effect 10 days after that date.

Taking each of those together, the Effective Date cannot be known in advance because it depends on multiple variables. Generally, however, whatever the date of the election on the Initiative, once the Contra Costa County elections official provides the City Clerk with the results of the election, the City Clerk will certify the results to the City Council no later than its next regular meeting, and the City Council will declare the results at that meeting. The proposed ordinance will go into effect 10 days after the City Council declares the results of the election. (Elections Code Section 9217.)

If the City Council places the Initiative on June 2026 ballot, and voters approve it, the City could begin collecting the tax in the 2026-27 tax year. As discussed above, the Initiative states that collection of the tax "shall commence on July 1st after the Effective Date" (Section 4.58.100), and the Effective Date is tied to when the City Council declares the results of the election. For the June 2026 election scenario, it is possible that the County elections official will complete vote counting and provide the City with notice of the results prior to the July 21, 2026, regular City Council election. In that event, the City Council would declare the results on July 21, 2026. The Initiative ordinance would go into effect on July 31, 2026. Information necessary to place the tax on the tax roll needs to be transmitted to Contra Costa County by approximately August 10 each year. Therefore, it would be possible for the City to begin collecting the tax in the 2026-27 tax year.

The Initiative contains text related to the initial levy of the tax that is not implementable. It states that collection "shall commence on July 1st" (Section 45.58.110), which is inconsistent with how taxes like the one proposed by the Initiative are actually collected.

Other provisions of the Initiative accurately reflect how the tax would be collected. The Initiative states that the tax "shall be collected in the same manner as ordinary *ad valorem* property taxes." (Section 4.58.050(A).) *Ad valorem* property taxes are collected by the County under a system established in the California Constitution and Revenue and Taxation Code. For a local parcel tax to be collected by the County, the City must inform the County—usually by approximately August 10 each year—of the amount of tax to be levied on each parcel subject to the tax. Actual collection occurs later, with tax bills being delivered in the fall of each year and payments being required by December 10 and April 10.

In light of the conflicting text within the Initiative and the realities of the collection of the tax, the City Attorney's interpretation is that the City could begin collecting the tax during the 2026-27 tax year, if approved by voters at the June 2026 election. In that scenario, the Effective Date, as defined in the Initiative, could be July 31, 2026. Although that date is after July 1, the collection of the tax would occur after the July 1 that follows the date of the election at which voters approved the Initiative. That interpretation is also consistent with the authority provided in the initiative to use revenue from the tax to pay for "architectural, design, engineering, legal, and similar planning and permitting costs." (Section 4.58.0060(B).) If the City proceeds with planning for the library in fiscal year 2026-27, revenue from the tax should be available to the City to fund those expenses. If voters approve the Initiative in time to collect the tax in 2026-27, beginning collection in that tax year is consistent with the Initiative's purpose of providing funding for library-related planning expenses.

Initial Tax Rates

The City Council may set initial tax rates to pay for anticipated costs of library construction prior to the issuance of bonds for construction or to pay for costs of planning for a new library, or both. Although the Initiative is ambiguous regarding this issue, standard practices for debt financing public facilities and the wording of the Initiative provide a reasonable basis for concluding that the City Council could—but is not required to—collect the tax authorized starting in the first year that the City is authorized to collect the tax.

The costs of the library building improvements would most likely be funded by the issuance of some form of bonds, which the Initiative authorizes. Revenue from the tax would be used to finance the debt. As discussed in other parts of this report, it is a standard practice with a tax authorized to be used to fund debt-financed public facilities for the public agency to begin collecting the full amount of the tax in advance of the issuance of debt. The accumulation of funds allows the public agency to reduce the amount of borrowing, to shorten the repayment period, to obtain a more favorable interest rate, or a combination of those benefits.

The Initiative states that the City Council "is authorized to incur indebtedness in the form of bonds, notes, contractual obligations, or other evidence of indebtedness authorized by law to finance or refinance the costs of library construction; to pay any and all costs of issuing or incurring such indebtedness; . . . or any other financing costs associated with such indebtedness." (Section 4.58.060(C).) It additionally states, as discussed above regarding the annual amount of the tax, that the City Council may not set tax rates at levels that would produce revenue that exceeds 115% of the amount needed "to extinguish any indebtedness." (Section 4.58.040(C).) Importantly, in neither place does the Initiative limit the use of tax proceeds to existing indebtedness. Instead, it authorizes the City to incur debt to pay for a new library, to pay for the costs associated with incurring the debt and financing costs, and states that tax rates may be set at levels sufficient to extinguish "any indebtedness." In light of the standard approaches to levying taxes in anticipation of debt issuance described above and the benefits to taxpayers from accumulating funds in advance of debt issuance, it is reasonable to interpret "any indebted" to include future indebtedness. So interpreted, the Initiative would allow the City Council to authorize collection of the tax authorized in the first year that the City may collect the tax.

The foregoing interpretation is particularly appropriate for a new library as part of the Plaza BART TOD project. As discussed in other parts of this report, the City, BART, and the development team for the Plaza TOD project have agreed upon the structure of a financing and real estate agreement to allow for the City to build a new library in one of the affordable housing buildings approved for development as part of the project. That agreement is being advanced into a set of written contracts. Pursuant to those contracts, if the City Council decides to include a new library in one of the buildings at the TOD project, the City will be obligated to pay for the costs of the library building improvements, which the City will own. Once those contracts are approved by all parties, the City's obligation to pay for the library building improvements—if the City Council opts to put a new library at the Plaza BART TOD—will be a form of "indebtedness." Since the City Council is authorized to set tax rates at levels needed "to extinguish any indebtedness," it is authorized to collect the tax in anticipation of paying for the City's costs of the library building improvements.

Under this interpretation, tax rates would be based, in part, on generating sufficient revenue for a financing plan for a new library that includes building up funds in advance of debt issuance to obtain the benefits described above. The rates would be limited by the maximum tax rates in Section 4.58.040(A) and the limit in Section 4.58.040(C) that caps annual rates at levels that would produce revenue at 115% of funding needed "to extinguish any indebtedness" and for the City's library operating costs during the first ten full years following completion of library construction. Taking this approach, it is possible that the City Council would opt to set rates at the maximums because those rates would generate enough revenue to fund library planning efforts and to deliver the benefits described above relative to ultimate debt issuance. In that scenario, the maximum rates would represent 100% of the costs of extinguishing indebtedness.

An extension of this interpretation also addresses the City's ability to levy the tax and use funds for library planning efforts. As previously noted, revenue from the tax may be used for "the planning, permitting, environmental review . . . of a new modern library . . ." (Section 4.58.060(A.) A list of examples of eligible expenses has been quoted above. The City would incur those categories of expenses prior to the construction of a new library. The Initiative proponents have stated in open and public City Council meetings, particularly its meeting on January 20, 2026, that they intended for the City to be able to use revenue from the tax to fund those expenses. It would be contrary to their stated intent and the structure of the ordinance if the City were not able to fund those expenses prior to the issuance of bonds. The City would not be able to advance a new library to the point of being able to issue bonds to construct it unless those categories of planning work were completed. Additionally, the Initiative states that the City Council "is authorized to incur indebtedness in the form of . . . contractual obligations . . . ." (Section 4.58.060(C).) The categories of planning work for which the City would need funding would be performed by consultants pursuant to contracts. It is reasonable to interpret those contracts as "indebtedness" within the meaning of the Initiative. The City Council is authorized to levy the tax to extinguish indebtedness, which is consistent with that interpretation, would include payment to consultants for services provided pursuant to those contracts.

City Library Operating Costs Eligible for Funding with Revenue from the Tax

It is helpful to review several parts of the Initiative and current library operations to understand what constitute "the City's library operating costs," which may be funded by the tax for ten full years after completion of construction of a new library. The City and County are parties to a Lease and Services Agreement ("Library Agreement") for the current library. Pursuant to the Library Agreement and County policy, the County provides 40 hours per week of staffing at the County's expense. The City pays for an additional 16 hours per week. The number of staff provided by the County is based on the size of the library. If the City Council opts to create a new, larger library, the County's policy would be the same. It would provide 40 hours of staffing at its expense, but it would increase the number of staff to operate the larger library. If the City Council chose to continue to fund an additional 16 hours per week, the City's costs for the same additional hours would increase because of the additional staffing for those 16 hours in the larger library.

Also pursuant to the Library Agreement, the City is responsible for costs of exterior and interior building maintenance, maintenance of fixtures and furnishings, equipment and custodial services. The City anticipates it would continue to be responsible for those same costs under a lease and service agreement for a new library. As detailed in other parts of this report, those costs are anticipated to increase for a new, larger library. Standard budgeting for those services includes reasonable reserves for the maintenance, repair, and replacement of building elements, fixtures and furnishings, and equipment for which the City is responsible. Funds sufficient for those reserves would be part of the City's library operating costs.

The Initiative states that the City's library operating costs that can be funded by the tax for ten full years after completion of a new library include "increased operating hours resulting in additional County librarian staff costs, utilities, and maintenance." (Section 4.58.060(B).) If the City Council opts to continue to pay for additional library hours above the base hours funded by the County, the City could use revenue from the tax to pay for those hours.

Under the terms of a new agreement with the County related to a new library building, the City would be able to negotiate terms to effectuate the full intent of the Initiative. Among the intent statements in the recitals of the Initiative ordinance is the following:

> A new library could provide space, furnishings, and equipment for library and community services and amenities such as after-school homework assistance, tutoring and summer reading programs for school-age children; a dedicated children's area for story time and other programs; art and literacy programs for all ages; programs and space for older adults and seniors; expanded book collections and other media; improved access for older adults and residents with disabilities; and public meeting and community gathering spaces. It could also provide shelter in case of fires, unclean air, excessive heat or cold, earthquakes, floods, or other emergencies.

(Section 2(E).) As the City designs a new library, it would take the intent of the Initiative into account to attempt to provide the dedicated spaces described as well as the related furnishing and equipment. It would also consider the inclusion of design, equipment, and furniture elements to make all or a portion of the library building functional as a temporary shelter in case of fires, unclean air, excessive heat or cold, earthquakes, floods, or other emergencies.

Because the Initiative states that the library space, furnishings, and equipment could support those library services, it is reasonable to infer that those services constitute part of "the City's library operating costs" that could be funded by the tax. The County provides or could provide some of the services as part of their base hours and expanded hours funded by the City, once the library is enlarged to provide space, furnishing, and equipment to support the services. If the County does not provide those services, the City could do so directly, funded by revenue from the tax.

Uses of the Library by the City to Provide Services Described in the Initiative

The current Library Agreement specifies the respective uses of the existing library building by the County and the City. The City has informed the County Librarian of the expanded uses of a new library building that the Initiative contemplates. The County Librarian has expressed willingness to incorporate terms into a new library lease and services agreement to make the library or space within the building available to the City to provide the services described, if those services are not provided by the County as part of their services. For example, the County Librarian has informed the City that, in the event of a large emergency like the ones described in the portion of the Initiative quoted above ("fires, unclean air, excessive heat or cold, earthquakes, floods"), the City would be allowed to use the entire library as a resiliency center; if the emergency were a smaller event, and the new library were designed with a large community room that was available for City use or under the City's control (which is typical), the City could use that room as a resiliency center. Those joint use scenarios would be incorporated into a new library lease and services agreement.

IMPACT ANALYSIS OF THE INITIATIVE

The City provides the following assessment of impacts of the Initiative, acknowledging that there is a level of speculation required for some of the analysis.

Fiscal Impacts

The Initiative authorizes a special tax on property (non-*ad valorem*) to fund the planning, construction, and furnishing of a new library and fund library operating costs for the first ten years after construction. Some homeowners may apply for an exemption, as described in the discussion of the legal aspects of the Initiative in this report.

The tax will start at a maximum rate of up to seventeen cents ($0.17) per square foot of improved building area per year and one hundred dollars ($100.00) per vacant parcel per year on real property within the City of El Cerrito. The Initiative includes an additional limit on the amount of tax the City may levy in any year, as described in the discussion of the legal aspect of the Initiative in this report.

Each year, the maximum tax rate may increase by up to the greater of either the cost of living in the immediate San Francisco Bay Area or the per capita personal income growth in the state, as verified by official United States Bureau of Labor statistics. If either index is discontinued, the City shall use any successor index specified by the applicable agency, or if there is none, the most similar existing index then in existence. Based on the City's 2025/26 property profile, the universe of available parcels subject to the tax are as follows:

Property Type	Building Sq. Ft.	Parcel Count
Commercial	1,930,170	223
Dry Farm	-	1
Govt. Owned	32,549	130
Industrial	126,584	5
Institutional	356,821	54
Miscellaneous	10,875	58
Recreational	53,259	13
Residential	15,957,643	8,202
Vacant	23,585	180
TOTAL	**18,491,486**	**9,293**
Taxable Sq. Ft./Parcels	**18,458,937**	**9,163**

The gross projected initial tax revenue = $3,156,019, if the maximum rates were imposed.

[(18,458,937 building sq. ft. * $0.17) + (180 vacant parcels * $100)]

Estimated Average Residential Home Calculation

	Parcels	Building Sq. Ft.
Total Residential	8,202	15,957,643
Average Residential Home		1,946
Projected Initial Special Tax		$331

Project Financing Estimate

As noted above and discussed in more detail below, the City has examined five scenarios for library options. The table below shows the Griffin Structures estimates of costs for each scenario. Using the estimated annual revenue from the tax using initial maximum tax rates, the table below also shows the estimated annual debt service requirement for each scenario and the residual tax that would be available for the City's library operating costs.

Library Project Scenario	Project Cost	Annual Debt Service Requirement	Residual Special Tax for Library Operations (1)
Scenario 1 (Renovate)	$10,346,000	$673,022	$2,449,922
Scenario 2 (Renovate-Expand)	$35,785,000	$2,327,866	$795,079
Scenario 3 (TOD)	$37,224,000	$2,421,475	$701,470
Scenario 4 (New Site)	$47,900,000	$3,115,964	$6,981
Scenario 5 (New Location/Purchase Building)	$40,604,000	$2,641,348	$481,596

Note: (1) Residual Special Tax for Library Operations levied for 10 years only. (2) Assumes the maximum tax rates are levied.

The image below illustrates a simplified scenario in which, in Year 1, the City has completed construction of the library, begins making payments on bonds, and also pays for library operating costs. The projected tax rates and revenues show that for the first 10 years, the City levies the maximum rates to cover bond payments maximum rates to cover and operating costs. After the first 10 years of paying for library operating costs, rates drop to levels necessary to make bond payments only:

Note: Special Tax rate estimated annual increase of 2.00% for demonstration purposes. Actual increase will be based on parameters outlined in the Initiative.

Depending on the selected project scenario (as described above) and the total project cost, the bond financing will determine the annual bond debt service payment (as shown in green in the chart). Based on the initial tax rate and the projected taxable parcels, the tax revenues available to fund library operating costs will be limited to the difference between the total tax revenue minus the bond debt service and other applicable provisions of the Initiative as described in the legal considerations section of this report.

It is anticipated that the selected project scenario will require the City to finance the construction of the library project. For purposes of this analysis, Scenario 3 assumes the issuance of a bond financing for approximately $37M which will be paid back over 30 years at an assumed interest rate of 5.00% (level debt service estimated to be $2,421,475 per year).

As shown in the table above, depending on the project scenario selected, the annual tax in excess of the bond debt service could be as low as $6,981 (under Scenario 4) and $2,449,922 (Scenario 1).

The overall fiscal impact on the City's General Fund will ultimately depend on the scenario selected. The library's current annual operating and maintenance costs total $157,615, which are presently funded by the General Fund. Under the initiative proposal, these operating and maintenance costs would instead be funded by the proposed tax for the first ten years following construction. This shift would reduce the General Fund burden annually during that initial ten-year period.

Beginning in year eleven, the proposed tax would no longer cover these expenses. At that point, the General Fund would assume responsibility not only for ongoing operating and maintenance costs but also for additional projected expenses associated with the selected scenario. The estimated impact to the General Fund at that time could be between approximately $187,755 to $797,000 annually (again depending upon the scenario selected), with costs expected to escalate each year thereafter due to inflation and other operational factors. Accordingly, while the proposal provides short-term General Fund relief, it creates a significant long-term financial obligation that will need to be planned for in future budgeting cycles.

Planning Impacts

All identified library scenarios are consistent with the City's General Plan.

The existing El Cerrito library is within the PS-Public and Semi Public zoning district. Libraries are a permitted land use in this district.

Development of a library at the El Cerrito Plaza BART TOD site (Scenario 3) would enhance the "mixed-use center along…Fairmount Avenue…and the Ohlone Greenway" as encouraged in Policy LU5.3 of the City's General Plan. It would also incorporate a "community-serving facility" into new development, consistent with Policy LU4.4. Further, this site lies within the San Pablo Avenue Specific Plan area where the library would contribute to a walkable downtown district envisioned for the area containing the El Cerrito Plaza BART station.

Development of a library at an undetermined site, would likely occur within the San Pablo Avenue Specific Plan, due to the size of existing commercial spaces and the availability of land. Land use impacts of the site would need to be considered at the time of development. However, it is expected that a library within the San Pablo Avenue Specific Plan Area would be consistent with both the General Plan and the San Pablo Avenue Specific Plan.

Housing Impacts

Development of a library as part of the El Cerrito Plaza TOD project (Scenario 3) would occur within a mixed-use development that includes the development of 743 new housing units, including 351 below-market-rate units. The inclusion of a library within the project will not alter the approved residential unit count.

Renovation or reconstruction of a library on the existing library site would not impact the availability of housing as the site is not identified for residential development and the existing zoning district (PS-Public and Semi Public) does not permit residential land uses.

Development of a library at an undetermined alternate site could impact the availability or future development potential of housing if the selected site could otherwise be suitable for residential development.

Business Impacts

Libraries play a role in supporting workforce development and economic mobility by providing access to employment resources, job training, digital literacy tools, and educational programming, including services that support entrepreneurship and career advancement. According to a 2024 article published in the *American Economic Journal*, titled "*The Returns to Public Library Investment,"* research examining large-scale public library capital investments found that such investments are associated with sustained increases in library utilization, expanded program offerings, and improved educational outcomes for children, particularly in reading. The article notes that these outcomes may contribute to strengthening a community's human capital by supporting literacy and educational attainment, which are commonly linked factors in workforce development and business attraction. In this context, modern library facilities also serve as quality-of-life amenities that support a community's long-term ability to attract and retain employers and workers. These community and economic outcomes may also be complemented by localized economic activity and increased synergy among surrounding civic, retail, and transit uses when a library facility is sited within a transit-oriented or mixed-use development.

In the El Cerrito Plaza TOD location, a library facility could serve as an anchor generating consistent daytime and evening foot traffic. Visitors utilizing the library's programs, services and community events may also patronize nearby local retail and dining establishments before or after their visits, creating potential positive economic activity. Over time, this type of destination can contribute to increased visibility and utilization of surrounding commercial spaces, supporting local businesses and reinforcing the area's role as an active transit-oriented mixed-use environment. The presence of a library could help advance the vision for a downtown hub, as identified in the San Pablo Avenue Specific Plan and reflected the City's Strategic Plan.

Vacant Land Impacts

The tax sets an initial maximum rate of up to $100 per year on each vacant parcel in the City. A vacant parcel is defined in the proposed initiative as a parcel with no structure or with structures totaling less than 200 square feet. The proposed initiative allows the City Council to increase the maximum rate for vacant parcels annually based on inflation, using the greater of either the cost of living in the immediate San Francisco Bay Area or the statewide per-capita personal income growth, as measured by the official United States Bureau of Labor Statistics. In the event that either index is discontinued, the proposed initiative dictates the City would use a successor index "specified by the applicable agency, or if there is none, the most similar existing index in existence."

If a future library facility were to be constructed on a property that is not currently a City-owned site or publicly owned, the conversion of that parcel to a public use would likely result in the property no longer generating property tax revenues. Additionally, depending on the existing or planned use of the site, this could also result in the loss of associated sales tax revenues. Library site selection may have fiscal implications beyond development, construction, operating and maintenance costs, including potential impacts to the City's General Fund revenues tied to the potential displacement of property tax and/or sales tax-generating revenues. As noted in later in this report, a 20,000 square foot mid-box retailer could generate approximately $220,000 annually in General Fund revenues primarily from sales and transactions taxes.

Racial and Economic Equity Impacts

Investments in modern library facilities can expand access to educational resources, technology, workforce development services, and community programming, which would provide expanded access to lower-income households and historically underserved populations. Libraries often function as no-cost access points for resources that may otherwise be financially or geographically inaccessible. This includes reading collections, broadband, computers, job search assistance, tutoring, and language services. In addition, a library facility's size can influence the scale and outcomes of these equity-related service impacts. The City's existing approximately 6,500-square-foot library has limited capacity to accommodate dedicated program space, technology labs, meeting rooms, and expanded service delivery. By comparison, modern facilities in the range of approximately 18,000 – 25,000 square feet are typically designed to support a broader range of programming, partnerships, and technology access. The additional space can enable increased program availability, expanded workforce and educational services, and greater overall utilization.

Expanded library facilities and service capacity may improve access to learning, digital resources, and career development opportunities for populations that face barriers to accessing such services elsewhere. If located within a transit-oriented development (TOD) setting (Scenario 3), a library facility may further increase accessibility by improving physical proximity to transit. Access to regional transit can reduce transportation barriers for lower-income households, youth, seniors, disabled and residents without access to private vehicles, potentially increasing utilization of educational and workforce resources. A library within a mixed-use, walkable environment may also create access to other complementary services, community amenities, and employment opportunities concentrated in transit corridors.

DISCUSSION OF LIBRARY FACILITY OPTIONS

Should the initiative be approved by voters, the City would have available funding to build a new or updated library facility. Dating back to 2002, the City has actively evaluated potential sites that could offer a 20,000 SF library based on the Needs Assessment. These sites have included the former Portola Middle School site, the Contra Costa Civic Theater site, the Community Center, purchasing a to-be-determined site along San Pablo Avenue, the El Cerrito BART Stations, schools, and at the current El Cerrito library location.

According to an analysis completed in 2016, situating a new library inside of a larger housing project was identified as the lowest cost opportunity for the City to construct a new library. Notably, the current opportunity to construct a new library as part of the El Cerrito Plaza TOD was first initiated in 2016, with the City Council and BART's authorization of entering into an MOU to study its feasibility and in 2019 to continue this evaluation through the current project. City staff have pursued this opportunity at the direction of the City Council as affirmed in 2023 in the City's updated Strategic Plan. The City engaged an Owner's Representative that specializes in the development of public library facilities, Griffin Structures, to support the City in evaluating this opportunity and identifying next steps. Staff requested that Griffin Structures provide updated cost information for the El Cerrito Plaza TOD opportunity as well as cost information regarding the existing facility and other options for comparison.

At the January 20, 2026 City Council meeting, staff continued its past practice of providing the Council and the public with information about potential options for a new library facility to better understand the order-of-magnitude capital costs associated with each approach. Following the January 20, 2026 City Council meeting, Griffin Structures provided the City with finalized conceptual costs for each scenario through a Rough Order of Magnitude (ROM) Report, which vary slightly from the costs provided at the meeting. The table below presents the updated numbers.

CONSTRUCTION COST SUMMARY			
Scope Elements	**Area**	**Cost / SF**	**Total**
SCENARIO 1: 6,500SF LIBRARY RENOVATION			
RENOVATE EXISTING LIBRARY (FULL GUT AND REPLACE INCLUDING SEISMIC RETROFIT)	6,500 SF	$750.00	$4,875,000
SITEWORK (MINIMAL), P.O.T. UPGRADES, ALLOWANCE	14,571 SF	$25.00	$364,275
ESCALATION TO MOC, 06/13/28			$1,051,743
TOTAL ESTIMATED CONSTRUCTION COST - SCENARIO 1			$6,291,018
SCENARIO 2: 13,000SF LIBRARY - REBUILD/EXPANSION ON EXISTING SITE			
NEW LIBRARY BUILDING, 2-STORY STEEL STRUCTURE INCLUDING PV/BESS, ALLOWANCE	13,000 SF	$1,000.00	$13,000,000
EXISTING BUILDING DEMOLITION	6,500 SF	$20.00	$130,000
SITE DEVELOPMENT (DEMO OF EXISTING CONDITIONS, SURFACE PARKING ON TOP OF PARKING STRUCTURE, NEW UTILITIES, ETC.), ALLOWANCE	36,000 SF	$85.00	$3,060,000
ESCALATION TO MOC, 10/11/28			$3,623,423
TOTAL ESTIMATED CONSTRUCTION COST - SCENARIO 2			$19,813,423
ADD ALTERNATE: 30,000SF SUBTERRANEAN PARKING STRUCTURE	86 STALLS	$59,800.66	$5,142,857
SCENARIO 3: 20,000SF LIBRARY - TRANSIT-ORIENTED DEVELOPMENT (TOD)			
NEW LIBRARY FIT-OUT IN COLD SHELL OF HOUSING BUILDING, MULTI-STORY CONCRETE AND STEEL STRUCTURE, ALLOWANCE	20,000 SF	$524.25	$10,485,000
SITE IMPROVEMENT			$100,000
CONTRACTOR MARKUPS			$3,175,500
ESCALATION TO MOC, 10/11/28			$3,079,686
TOTAL ESTIMATED CONSTRUCTION COST - SCENARIO 3			$16,840,186
SCENARIO 4: 20,000SF LIBRARY - NEW STAND-ALONE SITE			
NEW LIBRARY BUILDING, 1-STORY STEEL STRUCTURE INCLUDING PV/BESS, ALLOWANCE	20,000 SF	$900.00	$18,000,000
SITE DEVELOPMENT (CLEAN SITE, NO DEMO, NO UTILITIES ON SITE)	65,340 SF	$85.00	$5,553,900
BUILDING DEMOLITION	9,500 SF	$20.00	$190,000
ESCALATION TO MOC, 10/11/28			$5,314,033
TOTAL ESTIMATED CONSTRUCTION COST - SCENARIO 4			$29,057,933
ADD ALTERNATE: 22,000SF SUBTERRANEAN PARKING STRUCTURE	63 STALLS	$59,863.95	$3,771,429
SCENARIO 5: 20,000SF LIBRARY - ADAPTIVE REUSE / BUILDING RENOVATION			
RENOVATE EXISTING LIBRARY (FULL GUT AND REPLACE INCLUDING SEISMIC RETROFIT)	20,000 SF	$700.00	$14,000,000
SITEWORK (MINIMAL), P.O.T. UPGRADES, ALLOWANCE	65,340 SF	$30.00	$1,960,200
ESCALATION TO MOC, 07/13/28			$3,295,912
TOTAL ESTIMATED CONSTRUCTION COST - SCENARIO 5			$19,256,112

The cost analysis is intended to inform consideration of potential options and does not recommend a preferred scenario. Nonetheless, it provides a framework for understanding the potential costs of the options for a new library facility when evaluating the relative merits of each option and the value that the El Cerrito community and the City would receive from each. If the initiative is not approved by voters, it would not be feasible for the City to move forward on any of these options as there is currently no funding available to do so.

The five scenarios presented range from renovating the existing 6,500 square-foot library to construction of a new or adaptive reuse of an existing 20,000 square-foot facility at various locations to the inclusion of a new library in a new mixed-use building at the El Cerrito Plaza BART TOD project. The ROM report provides estimated total project costs ranging from approximately $10.3 million to $41.1 million, depending on scope and site conditions, with potential additional costs for site acquisition or structured parking.

Conceptual Statement of Probable Development Cost of Five Library Facility Scenarios

Cost Category	SCENARIO 1 RENOVATE EXISTING LIBRARY 6,500 SF	SCENARIO 2 REBUILD + EXPAND EXISTING LIBRARY 13,000 SF	SCENARIO 3 BUILD LIBRARY IN EL CERRITO PLAZA TOD 20,000 SF	SCENARIO 4 BUILD STANDALONE LIBRARY ON NEW SITE 20,000 SF	SCENARIO 5 RENOVATE AN EXISTING BUILDING INTO LIBRARY 20,000 SF
Construction Costs (Bldg + Site)	$5,239,000	$16,190,000	$24,244,000	$23,744,000	$15,960,000
Escalation (Midpoint of Construction)	$1,052,000	$3,623,000	$3,080,000	$5,314,000	$3,296,000
Soft Costs	$2,963,000	$6,275,000	$7,664,000	$8,732,000	$6,582,000
Contingencies	$1,092,000	$2,295,000	$2,236,000	$3,339,000	$3,217,000
Total Project Budget	**$10,346,000**	**$28,383,000**	**$37,224,000**	**$41,142,000**	**$29,055,000**
Parking Structure	N/A	$6,429,000	N/A	$4,714,000	N/A
Property Acquisition Costs	N/A	N/A	N/A	$2,100,000	$11,549,000
Total Project Budget w/ Adds	**$10,346,000**	**$34,812,000**	**$37,224,000**	**$47,956,000**	**$40,604,000**
	$1,592/SF	$2,,678/SF	$1,861/SF	$2,395/SF	$2,030/SF

Figures shown above in red are based on assumptions related to site conditions and market factors and are subject to change as final project specifics are defined.
Note: Cost estimates for Scenarios 4 and 5 exclude potential loss of tax revenue. A 20,000 SF mid-box retailer could generate approximately $220,000 annually in General Fund revenue, primarily from sales and transactions taxes. Revenue impacts would also apply to new site acquisition and would vary by property.

The ROM report reflects that Scenario 1, which involves renovating the existing 6,500-square-foot library, is the lowest-cost option at approximately $10.3 million. Work would include a limited scope focused on basic code compliance and accessibility improvements. Griffin Structures anticipates that after accessibility improvements, the usable space will decrease by 10-15%.

Scenario 2, rebuilding and expanding the existing library to approximately 13,000 square feet, is estimated at approximately $34.8 million, driven primarily by construction scope and the assumption of structured parking due to site constraints. Please note this estimate slightly differs from the $35.8 million estimate that was presented at the January 20, 2026

City Council meeting. Structured parking would produce 86 parking stalls at a cost of $59,800.66 per stall.

Scenario 3 contemplates construction of a new 20,000-square-foot library within the El Cerrito Plaza BART Transit-Oriented Development and is estimated at approximately $37.2 million, reflecting the scale and complexity of a new civic facility in a transit-oriented context. More detailed information about Scenario 3 is provided below in "Library Opportunity at El Cerrito Plaza Transit Oriented Development."

Scenario 4, construction of a standalone 20,000-square-foot library on a newly acquired site, is the highest-cost option at approximately $47.9 million and assumes both property acquisition and structured parking. As noted during the January 20 study session, Griffin Structures assumes—based on a review of available property in El Cerrito—that property acquired would not be large enough to accommodate both a new library building and surface parking. Structured parking would produce 63 parking stalls at a cost of $59,863.95 per stall. Additional parking studies based on location would be completed if this option is pursued and a property identified.

Scenario 5, which involves renovating an existing 20,000-square-foot building for library use, is estimated at approximately $40.6 million, reflecting lower construction costs than new construction and higher acquisition costs and contingency allowances associated with an adaptive reuse project. This scenario does not include parking as it is assumed for this exercise it would be an existing commercial property that contains parking.

As discussed in the section of this report summarizing the opportunity to include a new library in the El Cerrito Plaza BART TOD project, the City has undertaken studies that demonstrate the availability of street parking in the vicinity of the site sufficient to meet the needs of library patrons, BART patrons, residents, and others visiting the area. The City is also in preliminary stages of developing a parking management plan for street parking in the vicinity. Structured parking is included in the potential costs for Scenarios 2 and 4 because the City has not undertaken similar analyses since the City Council has not directed staff to conduct a detailed investigation, unlike Scenario 3. Based on their experience and expertise, Griffin Structures believes that the need for structured parking under Scenarios 2 and 4 is likely and the associated costs should be considered.

It should be noted that the ROM report is subject to changes as project details are further refined and market conditions evolve.

Complementary to the ROM report, Griffin Structures also developed a set of conceptual operations and maintenance (O&M) costs based on 6,500, 13,000 and 20,000 square foot facility scenarios across broad categories, such as technology, utilities, furniture, equipment, building maintenance, insurance, administrative overhead, additional staffing beyond the base hours provided by the County. O&M costs represent the ongoing, day-to-day expenses required to keep a facility open and able to provide services.

O&M Projected Costs

EXISTING LIBRARY - 6,500 SF	RENOVATE EXISTING LIBRARY – 6,500 SF (Scenario 1)		REBUILD + EXPAND EXISTING LIBRARY - 13,000 SF (Scenario 2)		BUILD LIBRARY IN EL CERRITO PLAZA TOD, BUILD STANDALONE LIBRARY ON NEW SITE OR RENOVATE AN EXISTING BUILDING INTO LIBRARY - 20,000 SF (Scenarios 3, 4, 5)	
Actual Current Cost	Low	High	Low	High	Low	High
$157,615	**$187,755**	**$265,880**	**$290,100**	**$596,750**	**$396,301**	**$797,000**
$24.15/SF	$28.89/SF	$40.90/SF	$22.32/SF	$45.90/SF	$19.82/SF	$39.85/SF

Based on these assumptions, the total estimated annual O&M costs range from approximately $158,000 for the existing 6,500 square foot library (represents current expenditures), between $188,000 to $266,000 for a renovated 6,500 square feet library, $290,000 to $597,000 for a 13,000 square foot expanded library, and $396,000 to $797,000 for a 20,000 square foot library, depending on service levels (such as optional extra library hours at-cost to the City) and operating assumptions. Similar to the ROM report, these projected estimates are intended to inform and would be further defined if the project is advanced.

Library Opportunity at the El Cerrito Plaza BART Transit Oriented Development (TOD)

Although Griffin Structures has provided estimated costs for construction and operation of five scenarios, as previously stated, the City Council has provided direction to advance and develop a plan only for Scenario 3: the inclusion of a new library at the El Cerrito Plaza BART TOD project. Based on this direction, staff has spent years engaging with BART and the TOD Development Team to create a plan for a new library at the El Cerrito Plaza BART TOD, including negotiating deal points and outlining necessary real estate transactions to allow the City Council to confirm its intent to include a library in one of the buildings in the TOD project provided funding is committed..

After being authorized to enter into an agreement by City Council in 2016, the City of El Cerrito (City) and the San Francisco Bay Area Rapid Transit District (BART) entered into a

Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) in 2018 to cooperatively pursue study of the feasibility of transit-oriented development and a potential new library at the El Cerrito Plaza BART station. In 2018 and 2019, several reports were prepared to inform this work, including the *El Cerrito Plaza Existing Conditions Report, El Cerrito Plaza BART Access Survey* and *Parking Management Case Studies*. In addition, a series of Goals and Objectives were established by BART and reviewed and approved by the City Council on November 19, 2019. The Goals and Objectives included "exploring options for integrating a public library into the TOD in partnership with the City". To further explore feasibility, BART initiated a Request for Qualifications process in July 2020, inviting qualified applicants to submit qualifications and preliminary development concepts including two conceptual site plan alternatives, one with a library and one without. In November 2020, a developer team comprised of Related California, Holliday Development, and Satellite Affordable Housing Associates (SAHA) was selected. Since that time, numerous additional parking and access studies, public meetings in various formats, including pop-up meetings at the El Cerrito Plaza BART station, joint City Planning Commission and Design Review Board meetings, community workshops, access related and library specific meetings have been held. (See www.elcerrito.gov/tod for a list of all meetings held to date.)

In exploring site design options that include the library, various meetings were held with the TOD design team, Contra Costa County Library staff, the City's Design Review Board and Planning Commission, and the general public. This process resulted in a final development application with a site plan that located the library on the ground floor of a future affordable housing building at the corner of Fairmount Avenue and Liberty Street, referred to as "Parcel C West". This site was selected to optimize library operations, including book drop offs along library frontages, short-term street parking, and back of house library operations.

The approved TOD Master Plan includes commercial space for a potential cafe near the BART station and an approximately half-acre public plaza fronting Fairmount Ave spanning Liberty Street to the BART station. These amenities are intended to create opportunities for indoor-outdoor library programming and to position the new library as an anchor for this new downtown destination consisting of the TOD, the El Cerrito Plaza shopping center, and nearby residential and commercial neighborhood. This vision is consistent with the City's Strategic Plan goal to "create a downtown community hub anchored by the Plaza Transit Oriented Development and a new library." Within the master plan entitlement approval, the conceptual library design includes ground floor ceilings up to 20-feet tall, potential skylights from a 2nd floor resident podium to allow natural light, and glazing and transparency along both street frontages.

The El Cerrito Plaza BART TOD master plan was ministerially approved pursuant to State streamlining laws on July 3, 2024. Construction of the TOD master plan is expected to occur across multiple separate phases, and each housing phase building will be subject to a detailed design and building permit review prior to permit issuance. The Master Plan was approved with two ground floor options for Parcel C West. The primary plan includes the approximately 20,000 square-foot space for the library, if funded. The alternative plan includes a 2,000 square-foot commercial space and up to 38 parking spaces for residents of the building in the event that library funding is not secured. As discussed below, the City would pay one dollar ($1) per year to BART in rent for the library, and contribute to shared building costs with the developer.

BART and the development team are committed to the inclusion of a library in Parcel C West, provided that the City can fund the necessary library improvements, as discussed below in the Development Framework section. A decision regarding which first floor plan to move forward with must be made prior to the development team commencing detailed design coordination to proceed with final funding applications. This specific date to confirm the inclusion of the library within Parcel C West is subject to the timing of available affordable housing financing and grants.

Development Framework for a New Library at the El Cerrito Plaza TOD

As the application for the El Cerrito Plaza BART TOD project advanced, on a parallel track the City, BART, and Related negotiated the terms for inclusion of a library in the building on Parcel C West. Those negotiations produced a framework agreement that BART and Related have committed to, pending confirmation and a funding commitment from the City that it has made a final decision to include a new library in the building on Parcel C West.

These are the key elements of the framework the parties have agreed to:

1. The City and BART will enter into a disposition agreement that will provide the City with the right to ground lease the airspace rights necessary to locate the library within the ground floor of Parcel C West.
    a. The City will pay $1 per year in rent to BART.
    b. The term of the lease will be coterminous with the term of Related's ground lease with BART. The term of BART ground leases for TOD is typically 99 years, inclusive of extensions.

(For the sake of clarity, Related has entered into a similar agreement with BART for the Parcel C West project. There will be two separate "sub-parcels" created—one for the housing development, the other for the library. The City will lease the library air rights "sub-parcel" from BART. The library improvements will be constructed within the library air rights "sub-parcel." The developer will lease the other "sub-parcel" for the housing project.)

2. The City will not pay rent to the developer for occupancy of the library.
3. The City and developer will enter into an agreement for the construction of the library shell as part of the construction of the building. The City will pay the developer for its share of construction costs. Related has estimated that amount at $8 million, as reflected in the Griffin Structures cost estimate, but the amount is subject to final project costs and negotiations.
4. The City will own the building improvements for which it pays, similar to ownership of a condominium in a larger building.
5. The City will retain its own architect to design tenant improvements to integrate with the library shell.
6. The City will fund tenant improvements for the library and could contract with the developer or its own contractor to construct the tenant improvements as part of constructing the building.
7. The City and developer will agree to Covenants, Conditions, and Restrictions that would be recorded against their respective leasehold estates to govern shared use of and expenses for the building, subject to BART's review and approval.

(Additional terms include conveyance to BART of a small City-owned property to support affordable housing development at the Plaza BART TOD and City maintenance of the public plaza on Fairmount Ave.)

Parking and Access

Options for library parking were considered early in the process of planning for a new library in the Plaza BART TOD project. Among the considerations were (1) availability of on-street parking in the vicinity, which the City already owns, makes available for public parking, maintains, and manages; (2) ease of access for library patrons to reach the library, taking into account accessibility and different abilities; and (3) the availability of land for and costs and benefits of dedicated off-street parking for the library.

In light of those considerations, the City engaged independent experts to study the availability of on-street parking to meet the needs of library patrons, BART patrons, patrons of businesses, and residents in the area of the TOD. Those studies concluded that there would be adequate parking for all needs within one-half mile of the TOD, including short-term parking immediately adjacent to the library, and parking availability could be ensured through a managed parking plan.

Non-Automobile Access

In addition to providing free on-street parking for library patrons, the site is well situated to facilitate access by other modes of travel. The proposed TOD library site is located at the BART station and served by various AC Transit bus lines, and is adjacent to the Ohlone Greenway with a well-established pedestrian and bicycle circulation system. Further bicycle and pedestrian improvements are being planned, funded, and constructed as a component of the TOD project.

Library at TOD Timeline

The development framework provides that the City and BART will enter into a disposition agreement that will provide the City with the right to ground lease the air right necessary to locate the library in the ground floor of a future mixed-use building on Parcel C West. Based upon the development schedule of the multiphase project, this disposition agreement would be a product of a Multi-Party Agreement and would take place prior to issuance of a building permit for the first building included in the Master Plan entitlement, exclusive of Parcel A South which is currently under construction, but no later than the City's election to proceed with the Library and the execution of the Development Agreement with the TOD Developer.

Each building will be able to move forward when it has secured sufficient public and private funds to cover construction and other development costs. The public sources, primarily the Affordable Housing and Sustainable Communities program (AHSC) and Low Income Housing Tax Credit program (LIHTC), are highly competitive and require projects to have the funding and design framework in place to demonstrate readiness to proceed upon funding award. As such, the City must enter into a development agreement by March 2027 (as outlined in the development framework) prior to the application to these funding sources, which is anticipated in mid-2027. From the time a building is fully funded through final design and building permit to completion of construction is approximately 2-3 years and the process to fully fund the project is subject to highly competitive applications and funding timelines that may vary.

If the Initiative passes and the City opts to proceed with the El Cerrito Plaza TOD library location, a public engagement process would commence with an architect selected by the City to design a library that reflects the community's current and future needs and priorities. The City's architect and Developer's architect would collaborate as the building proceeds through the design and construction process.

CONCLUSION

If voters approve the Initiative, the City would have available funding to build a new or updated library building. The City has been working to plan for a new library for decades and would be able to implement the process to move forward in building a facility. The current direction of the City Council is to pursue the El Cerrito Plaza BART TOD location, though the Council may wish to consider additional scenarios in comparison to determine and confirm the most feasible option.

If voters do not approve the Initiative, the City would not have available funding to pursue any current library options, including renovating the existing facility. The existing facility is outdated, undersized for the City's population, and not up to current codes or industry standards, and library services or hours of operation would not be able to be extended beyond the current status. The state of the existing facility will continue to deteriorate requiring further maintenance which will eventually need to be addressed so that the facility can continue to be used for library services.

RESOLUTION 2026–XX

A RESOLUTION OF THE CITY COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF EL CERRITO CALLING AND GIVING NOTICE OF THE HOLDING OF A SPECIAL/REGULAR MUNICIPAL ELECTION ON DATE; ORDERING THE SUBMISSION OF AN EL CERRITO LIBRARY INITIATIVE MEASURE TO QUALIFIED VOTERS OF THE CITY AT SAID ELECTION; DIRECTING THE FILING OF AN IMPARTIAL ANALYSIS AND AUTHORIZING WRITTEN ARGUMENTS CONCERNING THE BALLOT MEASURE; AND REQUESTING CONTRA COSTA COUNTY BOARD OF SUPERVISORS CONSENT TO THE CONSOLIDATION OF SAID ELECTION WITH OTHER ELECTIONS TO BE HELD ON THE SAME DATE, AND DIRECT THE REGISTRAR OF VOTERS TO CONDUCT THE ELECTION

WHEREAS, on May 6, 2025 proponents of an initiative measure entitled “The El Cerrito Library Initiative” (Initiative) submitted a Notice of Intention and written text of the measure and requested that a title and summary be prepared by the City Attorney for the measure in order to circulate the petition: and

WHEREAS, on May 21, 2025 the City Attorney prepared and provided an official ballot title and summary for the proposed Initiative for use by the proponents for publication and circulation of the petition; and

WHEREAS, on June 13, 2025 the proponents submitted a revised version of the Initiative measure text, and requested an updated title and summary be prepared by the City Attorney; and

WHEREAS, on June 16, 2025 the City Attorney prepared and provided an updated ballot title and summary for the proposed Initiative for use by the proponents for publication and circulation of the petition; and

WHEREAS, on November 20, 2025 signed petitions were submitted to the City Clerk and was considered filed on December 1, 2025 after completion of the Prima Facie review; and

WHEREAS, on December 1, 2025 the petition was delivered to the Contra Costa County Registrar of Voters to conduct a full signature verification and on January 9, 2026 the Registrar provided a Certificate of Sufficiency; and

WHEREAS, at its January 20, 2026 meeting, the City Council adopted a Resolution to accept the Certificate of Sufficiency for the Initiative petition as required by Elections Code § 9114 and requested an impact report pursuant to Elections Code § 9212; and

WHEREAS, Elections Code Section § 9215 requires the City Council to call and hold an election for the purposes of submitting the proposed ordinance to the voters; and

WHEREAS, other elections may be held in whole or part of Contra Costa County on the same date, and it is to the advantage of the City to consolidate its municipal election pursuant to Elections Code Sections 10002 and 10400; and

WHEREAS, California Elections Code Sections 10002 and 10400 provide that a City Council may request that the Contra Costa County (‘County”) Board of Supervisors consolidate a general municipal election with the statewide general election; and

WHEREAS, California Elections Code Section 10242 provides that the City Council shall determine the hours of opening and closing the polls; and

WHEREAS, California Elections Code Section 10002 requires the City to reimburse the County in full for the services performed upon presentation of a bill to the City by the County Elections Official; and

WHEREAS, California Elections Code Section 12111 requires publication of notice of measure once in a newspaper of general circulation in the City; and

WHEREAS, the City's boundaries have not changed since the last municipal election.

NOW THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED by the City Council of the City of El Cerrito as follows:

Section 1. Declaration of Findings. The foregoing recitals are true and correct and incorporated by reference.

Section 2. Election Called. Pursuant to the requirements of the laws of the State of California, there is called and ordered to be held in the City of El Cerrito, California, on DATE, a special/regular municipal election for the purpose of submitting to the voters a DESCRIPTION measure.

Section 3. Ballot Question. The following question shall be submitted to the voters of the City of El Cerrito at a special/regular municipal election to be held on DATE:

CITY OF EL CERRITO	
Shall the measure to fund planning/construction/furnishing a new El Cerrito library, including a new building, and the City's library operating costs for ten years after completing construction, by authorizing an annual parcel tax of up to $0.17 per square foot of improvements ($100 per vacant parcel), subject to annual inflation adjustments, generating approximately $3,100,000 annually, expiring 30 years after the initial issuance of bonds, with independent audits/citizen oversight and senior exemptions, be adopted?	YES
	NO

Section 4. Printing of Ordinance; Approval of Ordinance; Codification of Ordinance If Approved.

(a) The full text of the ordinance, attached hereto as Exhibit A, shall be completely printed in the voter pamphlet.

(b) The Initiative proposes to impose a special tax, as defined in the California Constitution, Article XIIIC, section 1(d). The California Constitution, Article XIIIC, section 2(d) states, "No local government may impose, extend, or increase any special tax unless and until that tax is submitted to the electorate and approved by a two-thirds vote." The First Appellate District of the California Court of Appeals has issued multiple decisions holding that a simple majority vote is sufficient to pass a special tax submitted to voters pursuant to a voter-sponsored initiative. (*See Jobs & Housing Coalition v. City of Oakland* (2021) 73 Cal.App.5th 505; *City and County of San Francisco v. All Persons Interested in the Matter of Proposition G* (2021) 66 Cal.App.5th 1058; *Howard Jarvis Taxpayers Association v. City and County of San Francisco* (2021) 60 Cal.App.5th 227; *City and County of San Francisco v. All Persons Interested in Matter of Proposition C* (2020) 51 Cal.App.5th 703.) Under the currently applicable precedent of the First Appellate District, the Initiative requires only a simple majority of "yes" votes to pass. Notwithstanding the immediately preceding sentence, a two-thirds majority of "yes" votes will be required to pass the Initiative if the California Supreme Court overrules the First Appellate District, and the California Supreme Court's decision applies to the Initiative; or if a court of competent jurisdiction rules that a two-thirds majority of "yes" votes is required to pass the Initiative.

(c) If approved by voters, the ordinance amends El Cerrito Municipal Code to add Chapter 4.58.

Section 5. Ballot Format. The ballots to be used at the election shall be in the same form and content as required by law.

Section 6. Impartial Analysis. The City Attorney is hereby directed to prepare an impartial analysis of the measure pursuant to Elections Code Section 9280 which shall be filed no later than 4:00 PM on DATE.

Section 7. Ballot Arguments. Arguments in favor of or against the Initiative shall be submitted to the City Clerk no later than 4:00 PM on DATE. Arguments for and against the Initiative shall not exceed 300 words and shall be signed by not more than five people.

If more than one argument is submitted on the measure, the City Clerk shall select the argument and shall give preference to arguments pursuant to California Elections Code Section 9287.

Section 8. Provisions for Rebuttal Arguments. The provisions of Elections Code Section 9285 shall apply to this election. The last day for filing of rebuttal arguments is 4:00 PM on DATE.

Section 9. Consolidation of Elections. Pursuant to Elections Code Sections 10002 and 10400 *et seq.*, the City Council of the City of El Cerrito hereby requests that the Contra Costa County Board of Supervisors consent and agree to the consolidation of the municipal election with any other elections within Contra Costa County to be held on DATE and provide all services necessary to conduct the election and print a ballot question as described in Section 3 of this resolution. The county election department is authorized to canvass the returns of the municipal election in accordance with California Election Code Sections 15300 *et seq*. Within the City of El Cerrito, the election precincts, election officers, hours of voting, polling places and voting booths shall in every case be the same as those selected and designated by the Contra Costa County Registrar of Voters; provided that no person not a qualified elector of the City of El Cerrito shall be permitted to vote for the measure placed on the ballot by the City Council. The City Council recognizes that the County will incur additional costs in conducting the election called by this resolution, agrees to reimburse the County for those costs, and authorizes and directs the City Manager or their designee to expend the funds necessary to pay for the costs of conducting the election.

Section 10. Hours of Polling. The polls for the election shall be open at 7:00 a.m. of the day of the election and shall remain open continuously from that time until 8:00 p.m. of the same day when the polls shall be closed except as provided in Elections Code Section 14401.

Section 11. Other Procedures. In all particulars not recited in this resolution, the election shall be held and conducted as provided by law for holding municipal elections. The City Council acknowledges that the consolidated election will be conducted in the manner prescribed in Elections Code Section 10418.

Section 12. Notice. The City Clerk is authorized and directed to give notice of the election and notice of measure as required by law. The City Clerk shall file a copy of this resolution with the County Elections Official and the Clerk of the Board of Supervisors forthwith.

Section 13. Compliance with the California Environmental Quality Act. Approval of this resolution is exempt from review under the California Environmental Quality Act (Public Resources Code § 21000 *et seq.* ("CEQA") and 14 Cal. Code Reg. § 15000 *et seq.* ("CEQA Guidelines")). Approval of this resolution is a ministerial act and is therefore exempt from review under CEQA pursuant to CEQA Guidelines Section 15268.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the City Council hereby appropriates $XX,XXX from the unrestricted general fund balance to cover the cost of the election.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that this resolution shall become effective immediately upon passage and adoption.

I CERTIFY that at the regular meeting on February 19, 2026 the El Cerrito City Council passed this resolution by the following vote:

AYES: COUNCILMEMBERS:
NOES: COUNCILMEMBERS:
ABSENT: COUNCILMEMBERS:
ABSTAIN: COUNCILMEMBERS:

IN WITNESS of this action, I sign this document and affix the corporate seal of the City of El Cerrito on _____________.

____
Holly M. Charléty, City Clerk

APPROVED:

____
Gabe Quinto, Mayor

The people of the City of El Cerrito do ordain as follows:

SECTION 1 Title. This measure shall be known and may be cited as the El Cerrito Library Initiative (the "Initiative").

SECTION 2 Recitals. The people of the City of El Cerrito find and declare as true and correct the following:

A. El Cerrito's sole library opened in 1949, over 75 years ago, when El Cerrito's population was less than 18,000. El Cerrito's population now exceeds 26,000 and is growing. The existing library is far too small and outdated to serve Community needs.

B. Library use is on the rise while the 75-year-old facility is in poor condition with cramped, dilapidated space, and poor lighting. It lacks adequate seating, book collections, computer stations, quiet reading areas, and group study or meeting rooms. The building does not meet current safety and accessibility standards. Options for expansion are limited and expensive.

C. El Cerrito students of all ages and income levels rely on libraries for well equipped, quiet, and safe spaces to read, study, complete homework, and receive tutoring. Families with young children rely on literacy and reading programs. Older adults use the library for access to computers, technology, meeting rooms, and quiet reading spaces. All patrons of all ages need access in the library for age-appropriate programs. The current library does not provide the needed adequate and appropriate spaces.

D. The City of El Cerrito commissioned a study, completed in 2006 and updated in 2014, documenting El Cerrito's need for a larger library. Those studies show that El Cerrito deserves a modern library with 20,000 square feet of space for a wide variety of library uses.

E. A new library should be constructed to comply with current building and environmental codes and to support modern technologies essential to today's libraries. A new library could provide space, furnishings, and equipment for library and community services and amenities such as after-school homework assistance, tutoring and summer reading programs for school-age children; a dedicated children's area for story time and other programs; art and literacy programs for all ages; programs and space for older adults and seniors; expanded book collections and other media; improved access for older adults and residents with disabilities; and public meeting and community gathering spaces. It could also provide shelter in case of fires, unclean air, excessive heat or cold, earthquakes, floods, or other emergencies.

F. This Initiative authorizes and funds, via a non-ad valorem Special Tax on real property within the City, the planning, construction, and furnishing of a modern library to serve the needs of current and future residents at a new location or at the existing site in El Cerrito. Funds from the Initiative may also be used for the City's library operating costs of the library for the first ten years after construction.

G. Approving this initiative would authorize and fund the planning and construction of a modern library at a new location in El Cerrito or at the existing site and could fund the City's library operating costs for up to ten years.

H. This Initiative includes strict fiscal accountability protections to ensure all funds are used as promised, including: new revenues must stay in El Cerrito to fund the planning, construction, and furnishing of a new library and to fund the City's library operating costs for the first ten years; no funds can be taken away by the State or diverted for other purposes; no funds can be used for City administration salaries or benefits; and public disclosure of all spending and an annual fiscal review will be done by a new or existing citizen oversight board.

I. To ensure the cost of this measure is not a burden to residents on limited fixed incomes, homeowners aged 65 and over are eligible for an optional exemption.

J. This Initiative requires the City of El Cerrito to analyze library development options and the City Council to select, at its discretion, an option that best serves the people of El Cerrito.

K. Adoption of this Initiative will protect and serve the public health, safety, welfare, and quality of life for the people of El Cerrito.

SECTION 3 Purpose. The voters of the City of El Cerrito declare that our purpose and intent in enacting this Initiative is to authorize and adopt a special non-ad valorem special tax at a maximum rate of up to seventeen cents ($0.17) per square foot of improved building area per year and one hundred dollars ($100.00) per vacant parcel per year, as provided in section 4.58.040, on real property within the City of El Cerrito, the proceeds of which shall be specifically restricted and shall be used solely as set forth in this Initiative, to fund the planning, construction, and furnishing of a modern library in El Cerrito and to fund the City's library operating costs of the new library for up to ten years.

SECTION 4 Amendment of El Cerrito Municipal Code. Chapter 4.58 is hereby added to the El Cerrito Municipal Code to read as follows:

4.58 Library Special Tax

4.58.010 - Title

This Chapter shall be known as the "Library Special Tax."

4.58.020 – Definitions

A. "Building" means any structure having a roof supported by columns or by walls and designed for the shelter or housing of any person, chattel or property of any kind. The word "building" includes the word "structure."

B. "City" means the City of El Cerrito.

C. "Improvements" means all buildings or structures erected or affixed to the land.

D. "Owner" means the owner or owners of real property located within the City.

E. "Parcel" means any real property designated by an assessor's parcel map and parcel number and shown on the equalized property tax roll of the County of Contra Costa as of January 1 of each fiscal year.

F. "Special Tax" means the Special Tax imposed by this Chapter.

G. "Square footage" means the total gross horizontal areas of all floors, including usable basement and cellars, below the roof and within the outer surface of the main walls of buildings (or the center lines of party walls separating such buildings or portions thereof) or within lines drawn parallel to and two feet within the roof line of any building or portion thereof without walls, including pedestrian access walkways or corridors, and excluding the following:

1. Areas used for off-street parking spaces, garages, or loading berths and driveways and maneuvering aisles relating thereto.

2. Areas which are outdoor or semi-outdoor areas included as part of the building to provide a pleasant and healthful environment for the occupants thereof and the neighborhood in which the building is located. This exempted area is limited to stoops, balconies and to natural ground areas, terraces, pools, and patios which are landscaped and developed for active or passive recreational use, and which are accessible for use by occupants of the building.

3. Arcades, porticoes, and similar open areas which are located at or near street level, which are accessible to the general public, and which are not designed or used as sales, display, storage, service, or production areas.

H. "Structure" means anything constructed or erected, the use of which requires location on the ground or attachment to something having location on the ground.

I. “Tax Administrator” means the Finance Director or other City official designated by the City Manager to administer the tax.

J. “Vacant Parcel” means a parcel with no structure or with a structure or structures with less than a total of 200 square feet.

4.58.030 – Special Tax Imposed; Exemptions, Including for Low-Income and Seniors and Individuals with Disabilities

A. An annual Special Tax in the amounts set forth in Section 4.58.040 is hereby imposed on every taxable parcel of real property within the City.

B. The Special Tax constitutes a debt owed by the owner of each parcel of real property to the City.

C. The Special Tax imposed by this Chapter shall be subject to the exemptions set forth in this section.

1. The Special Tax shall not be imposed on real property that is exempt from the Special Tax under the constitutions or statutes of either the State of California or the United States.

2. The Special Tax shall not be imposed on real property under private ownership that is designated as open space in the El Cerrito General Plan, unless that property is used primarily for residential use.

3. Single-family residential parcels and units under separate ownership on multi-family residential parcels shall be exempt from the Special Tax if one of the owners qualifies for participation in either or both the Gonzales-Deukmejian-Petris Senior

Citizen Property Tax Assistance Law (also known as the Senior Citizens Homeowners and Renters Property Tax Assistance Law and the Homeowners and Renters Property Tax Assistance Law) or the Senior Citizen Property Tax Postponement Law.

a) Qualifying applicants must occupy the property and be at least partially legally responsible for payment of the *ad valorem* tax for the property.

b) Applications may require proof that the State Controller's Office or Franchise Tax Board has approved the applicant's participation in either of the programs named in this section. Applications for this exemption must be submitted to the Tax Administrator in the manner and at the time established by the Tax Administrator. Applications shall be on forms provided by the Tax Administrator and shall provide such information as the Tax Administrator may require. If the Tax Administrator determines the need to audit an application, the Tax Administrator may require additional information, including, but not limited to, federal income tax returns and W-2 forms of owner-occupants eligible for this exemption.

4.58.040 – Special Tax Rate

A. The City Council is hereby authorized to impose a Special Tax at a maximum rate of up to $0.17 per square foot of improvements in the City and a maximum rate of up to one hundred dollars ($100.00) per Vacant Parcel in the City per year.

B. Each year, the City Council may increase the maximum rates for improvements and rate for Vacant Parcels stated in Section 4.58.040.A by up to the greater of either the cost of living in the immediate San Francisco Bay Area or the per capita personal income growth in the state, as verified by official United States Bureau of Labor statistics. If either index is discontinued, the City shall use any successor index specified by the applicable agency, or if there is none, the most similar existing index then in existence.

C. The City Council may not set the tax rate at a level higher than 115% of the rate needed (1) to extinguish any indebtedness and (2) to pay for the City's library operating costs during the first ten full years following the completion of library construction.

D. The City Council may, by resolution, increase or decrease the rate of the Special Tax, as long as it does not set a rate that exceeds the maximum rate stated above. If for any fiscal year the City Council sets a lower tax rate, it may increase the tax rate in any subsequent year up to the maximum rate. No further voter approval shall be required for any adjustment of a tax rate under the authority granted by this section.

E. For parcels divided by Tax Rate Area lines, the amount of the Special Tax for the portion of the parcel within Contra Costa County shall be calculated at the same rates as set forth above. For properties wholly within Contra Costa County and divided by Tax Rate Area lines into multiple parcels, the property shall be taxed as a single parcel at the rates set forth above.

4.58.050 – Collection of Special Tax

A. The Special Tax shall be collected in the same manner as ordinary *ad valorem* property taxes are collected and shall have the same lien priority and be subject to the same penalties and interest and the same procedures for sale in cases of delinquency as provided for *ad valorem* property taxes collected by the County of Contra Costa. The City Council may provide for other alternative methods of collection of the Special Tax by resolution.

B. The amount of the Special Tax, any penalty, and any interest imposed under the provisions of this Chapter shall be deemed a debt to the City. Any person owing money under the provisions of this Chapter shall be personally liable in an action brought in the name of the City, at its option, for the recovery for such amount.

4.58.060 – Use of Tax Revenue

A. Revenue from the Special Tax, including penalties and interest thereon, shall be used for the planning, permitting, environmental review, construction, and furnishing of a new modern library, including a new building, and for the City's library operating costs for the first ten years. The City Council shall implement a process that will actively engage residents regarding (1) the design of a new library, (2) improvements to the library, (c) library services, and (d) any other matters regarding the expenditure of the Special Tax revenues received by the City under this Chapter in order to enable the Council to select a library that best serves the residents of El Cerrito.

B. Authorized expenditures may include costs of bond issuance; architectural, design, engineering, legal, and similar planning and permitting costs; litigation costs; construction management; library bond consultants; staff development and training expenses associated with learning construction techniques and approaches and new equipment and systems; the furnishing and equipping of the library, including equipment to maintain facilities in a safe and clean condition; and a customary contingency for unforeseen design and construction costs. Payment of the costs of preparation of facilities planning and library implementation studies, feasibility and assessment reviews, master planning, environmental studies, permit and inspection fees, studies and assessments, including ADA and seismic, and temporary housing and relocation costs for dislocated assets, programs or activities caused or necessitated by library construction are permissible expenditures. The City's library operating costs for the first ten years after the completion of the construction of the library are authorized expenditures, including increased operating hours resulting in additional County librarian staff costs, utilities, and maintenance. After the first ten years after the completion of the construction of the library, authorized expenditures may not include the City's library operating costs.

C. The City Council is authorized to incur indebtedness in the form of bonds, notes, contractual obligations, or other evidence of indebtedness authorized by law to finance or refinance the costs of library construction; to pay any and all costs of issuing or incurring such indebtedness; and to fund reserve funds, capitalized interest, costs of credit enhancement, costs of interest rate hedging arrangements, or any other financing costs associated with such indebtedness. Such indebtedness shall be solely payable from, and may be secured by a pledge and lien on, the proceeds of the Special Tax. The annual indebtedness, including principal and interest, shall not exceed the estimated annual proceeds of the Special Tax.

D. At the City Council’s discretion, revenue from the Special Tax, including penalties and interest thereon, may be used to reimburse the City for the costs of holding an election to seek voter approval of this Chapter and to pay for the costs of administering the Special Tax and for the costs of defending the Special Tax and this Chapter, including attorneys’ fees and operating costs, should its validity be challenged.

4.58.070 – Accountability

In accordance with the requirements of Government Code Sections 50075.1 and 50075.3, the following accountability measures shall apply to the Special Tax:

A. A separate, special account, referred to as the Library Special Tax Fund, shall be created, into which the proceeds of the Special Tax, including penalties and interest earned on such proceeds, must be deposited.

B. The specific purposes of the Special Tax are for the funding of a new library as set forth in Section 4.58.060. The proceeds of the Special Tax shall be applied only to those specific purposes.

C. The Tax Administrator shall annually prepare and submit to the City Council and to a new or existing citizen oversight board a report regarding the Special Tax funds collected and expended, as well as any other information required by Government Code sections 50075.1 and 50075.3.

4.58.080 – Oversight and Annual Audit

Each year, as part of the audit of the City’s financial statements, the City's independent auditors shall complete a report reviewing the collection, management, and expenditure of revenue from the Special Tax. The report shall be reviewed by a new or existing citizen oversight board designated by the City Council as part of its review of the annual audit.

4.58.090 – Interpretation, Administration, and Appeals of Special Tax

A. Any taxpayer who feels the amount of the Special Tax assigned to a parcel is in error may file a notice with the Tax Administrator appealing the levy of the Special Tax. The Administrator then will promptly review the appeal and, if necessary, meet with the applicant. If the Administrator verifies that the Special Tax levied on the applicant's parcel should be modified or changed, the Special Tax levy will be corrected and, if applicable in any case, a credit or refund will be granted. The appeal must be filed not later than one year after having paid the Special Tax that is disputed.

B. The City Council may by resolution interpret this Chapter for purposes of clarifying any vagueness or ambiguity as it relates to the Special Tax rate, the classification of properties, or any definition applicable to the Special Tax.

C. Without City Council approval, the Tax Administrator may make minor, non-substantive administrative and technical interpretations of the provisions of this Chapter for purposes of administrative efficiency or convenience or to comply with applicable federal, state, or local law, so long as any interpretation does not materially affect the rate paid by any person or the manner of collection of the Special Tax. The Tax

Administrator may also make determinations regarding whether property is subject to the Special Tax and the applicable tax rate based on the use of the property.

4.58.100 – Amendments

This Chapter may only be amended by a vote of the people of El Cerrito if the amendment would result in the Special Tax being imposed, extended, or increased in a manner that would require a vote of the people under Article XIII C, section 2, of the California Constitution or if the amendment would substantially alter the purpose of the Special Tax. The City Council may enact any other amendments, including but not limited to amendments necessary to implement or administer the Special Tax.

4.58.110 – Term of Special Tax

The collection of the Parcel Tax shall commence on July 1st after the Effective Date and continue for thirty (30) years after the initial issuance of bonds for the planning and construction of a new library.

SECTION 5. Municipal Affair. The voters of the City hereby declare that providing funding for the planning, construction, equipping, and furnishing of a library through a parcel tax for the purposes set forth in this Initiative constitutes a municipal affair. The voters of the City hereby further declare their desire for this Initiative to coexist with any similar tax measures adopted at the city, county, or state levels.

SECTION 6. Effective Date and Implementation.

A. This Initiative shall be effective upon the earliest date legally possible after the elections official certifies the vote on the Initiative by the voters of the City of El Cerrito, pursuant to the Elections Code (the “Effective Date”).

B. Upon the Effective Date of this Initiative, the City is directed to promptly take all appropriate actions needed to implement this Initiative, including and not limited to taking any administrative steps necessary to administer and collect the Special Tax authorized herein and to update any City codes or any other documents maintained by the City so they conform to the legislative policies set forth in this Initiative.

C. The City may reorganize, renumber, and/or reformat the Municipal Code provisions included in Section 4 of this Initiative, provided that the full text is inserted in the Code without alteration, unless amended by an ordinance passed by the City Council under section 4.58.100.

SECTION 7. Adjustment of Appropriations Limit. Pursuant to Article XIII B of the Constitution of the State of California and applicable laws, the appropriations limit for the City is hereby increased by an amount equal to the revenue derived from the Special Tax for the maximum period of time as allowed by law.

SECTION 8. Compliance with the California Environmental Quality Act. Approval of this ordinance is not a Project under the California Environmental Quality Act (“CEQA”) (Public Resources Code §§ 21000 et seq.) because it is a citizen initiative (14 Cal. Code Reg. § 15378(b)(3)) and because it creates a government funding mechanism that does not involve any commitment to any specific project that may result in a potentially significant physical impact on the environment (14 Cal. Code Reg. § 15378(b)(4)).

SECTION 9. Interpretation

A. This Initiative must be broadly construed to achieve the purpose stated above. It is the intent of the voters that the provisions of this Initiative be interpreted or implemented by the City and others in a manner that facilitates the purpose set forth in this Initiative.

B. This Initiative and the Special Tax authorized herein are adopted pursuant to the provisions and authority contained in the California Constitution, including Article II, § 11 and Article XI, § 5. The voters of the City declare their intent that this citizen Initiative, if approved by a simple majority of voters pursuant to controlling California law, shall be enacted, and the parcel tax be collected, for the entire uninterrupted period described herein. To the extent that the California Constitution or other applicable state law is amended, either at the same election or any time after this Initiative is adopted by El Cerrito's voters, to create additional or different voting requirements necessary to implement or to continue to implement this Initiative, the people of the City of El Cerrito declare their intent that any such amendments should, to the greatest extent allowed by law, be applied prospectively only and not apply to, or in any way affect, this Initiative.

SECTION 10. Severability.

A. If any section, subsection, sentence, clause, or phrase of this Initiative is for any reason held to be invalid or unconstitutional by a decision of any court of competent jurisdiction, such decision shall not affect the validity of the remaining portions of this Initiative. The people of El Cerrito declare that this Initiative, and each section, subsection, sentence, clause, phrase, part, or portion thereof, would have been adopted or passed irrespective of the fact that any one or more sections, subsections, sentences, clauses, phrases, part, or portion is found to be invalid. If any provision of this Initiative is held invalid as applied to any person or circumstance, such invalidity does not affect any application of this Initiative that can be given effect without the invalid application.

B. If any portion of this Initiative is held by a court of competent jurisdiction to be invalid, we the people of the City of El Cerrito indicate our strong desire that: (i) the El Cerrito City Council use its best efforts to sustain and re-enact that portion, and (ii) the City Council implement this Initiative by taking all steps possible to cure any inadequacies or deficiencies identified by the court in a manner consistent with the express and implied intent of this Initiative, including adopting or reenacting any such portion in a manner consistent with this Initiative.

SECTION 11. Conflicting Measures. To ensure that the intent of the voters is not frustrated, this Initiative is presented to the voters as an alternative to, and with the express intent that it will compete with or take precedence over, any and all voter initiatives or City-sponsored measures placed on the same ballot as this Initiative and which, if approved, would adopt a special tax to authorize and/or fund the planning and construction of a library which would frustrate the purpose and intent of this Initiative (each, a "Conflicting Measure"). In the event that this Initiative and one or more Conflicting Measures are adopted by the voters at the same election, then it is the voters' intent that only the measure which receives the greatest number of affirmative votes shall control in its entirety and said other measure or measures shall be rendered void and without any legal effect with respect to such matters. If this Initiative is prevented from going into effect by a Conflicting Measure approved by the voters at the same election, and such Conflicting Measure is later held invalid, this Initiative shall be self-executing and given full force of law. Notwithstanding the foregoing provisions of this Section, in the event that both this Initiative and another measure(s) are adopted by the voters at the same election, but the two measures can be harmonized in a manner that permits this Initiative to be implemented upon its adoption without imposing any inconsistent requirement(s), then it is the voters' intent that both the other measure and this Initiative shall be given full force and effect regardless of which measure receives the greatest number of affirmative votes.

Relevent Dates for Resolution to Call Election (Depending on Council Action)

Type of Election	Election Date	Impartial Analysis Due County Deadline (E-81)	Arguments Due County Deadline (E-76)	Rebuttals Due County Deadline (E-71)	Estimated Cost
Special	**Tuesday, May 19, 2026**	Friday, February 27, 2026	Wednesday, March 4, 2026	Monday, March 9, 2026	**$267,210**
Special	**Tuesday, June 2, 2026**	Friday, March 13, 2026	Wednesday, March 18, 2026	Monday, March 23, 2026	**$80,163**
Regular	**Tuesday, November 3, 2026**	Friday, August 14, 2026	Wednesday, August 19, 2026	Monday, August 24, 2026	**$80,163**

Election Code Section 1405(b) states that "The governing body of a county, city, or district may call a special election for the purpose of submitting an initiative measure to the voters before the date on which the initiative measure would appear on the ballot pursuant to subdivision (a). If the governing body calls a special election pursuant to this subdivision, the election shall be held not less than 88 days nor more than 103 days after the order of the election.
Election Code Section 1100 states that "No election shall be held on any day other than a Tuesday, nor shall any election be held on the day before, the day of, or the day after, a state holiday."

SUPPLEMENTAL AGENDA MATERIALS
CITY COUNCIL MEETING
February 19, 2026

SPECIAL CITY COUNCIL MEETING (9:00 AM)

Agenda Item No. 3.A. – Fiscal Year 2025-26 Mid-Year Budget Amendments

1. Presentation
2. Public Comments

CITY HALL 10890 San Pablo Avenue, El Cerrito, CA 94530
Telephone (510) 215-4305 Fax (510) 215-4379 http://www.elcerrito.gov

Agenda Item No. 3.A.

"The El Cerrito Library Initiative"
Citizen Initiative Petition Impact Report and Call for Election

City of El Cerrito

February 19, 2026

THE CITY OF EL CERRITO

Agenda

- Overview of 9212 Report
- City Council Action:
  Adopt a resolution to place the proposed measure on the ballot

THE CITY OF EL CERRITO

Introduction/Background

- Qualified Citizens Initiative Petition titled “The El Cerrito Library Initiative”
- Impact Report ordered by City Council per Election Code Section 9212 on January 20, 2026
- 9212 Report purpose is to explain the initiative and potential impacts of the initiative
- Per State Law, City Council is required to place the measure on the ballot.

THE CITY OF EL CERRITO

Overview of Initiative

- **Annual Parcel Tax:** Revenue legally restricted to funding a new library, bonds, library operations*, and related expenses
- **Term:** 30 years from the initial issuance of bonds
- **Maximum Initial Rate:** $0.17 per square foot of improvements on a property/$100 per vacant parcel. Inflation adjustments permitted.
- **Additional Rate Limit:** 115% of costs of indebtedness and library operating costs
- **Voter Approval:** Simple Majority

** Library operating costs limited to the first 10 years after construction*

THE CITY OF EL CERRITO

Overview of Initiative

- **Allowable Uses:** Planning, permitting, environmental review, construction, and furnishing of a new modern library, including a new building
- **Exemptions:**
  - Private property designated as open space in City's General Plan
  - Seniors and disabled individuals below State-defined income level
    - City Council could further specify qualifications of exemption by resolution or ordinance

THE CITY OF EL CERRITO

Overview of Initiative

- **Audit and Oversight:** Annually by independent auditors, reviewed by citizen oversight board
- **Timing of Tax Implementation:** Dependent on election certification and tax roll deadlines
- **Pre-Construction Uses:** May fund planning and project delivery costs prior to issuance of bonds for construction
- **Operating/Maintenance Costs:** Eligible for first 10 years following completion of construction

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Impact Analysis of the Initiative

- Fiscal
- Planning
- Housing
- Business
- Vacant Land
- Racial and Economic Equity

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Fiscal Impacts

- **Annual Revenue:** ~$3.16M (based on 17¢/square foot)
- **Average Annual Cost: ~**$331 per single-family home
- **Debt Service:** Paid from tax revenues
- **Bond Capacity:** All scenarios including TOD
- **Annual Library Operations Funding**
  - $6,981 - $2,449,922
  - TOD Scenario: $701,470

Fiscal Impacts

Library Scenarios, Debt Service, & Operations Funding

Library Project Scenario	Project Cost	Annual Debt Service Requirement	Residual Special Tax for Library Operations [1]
Scenario 1 (Renovate)	$10,346,000	$673,022	$2,449,922
Scenario 2 (Renovate-Expand)	$35,785,000	$2,327,866	$795,079
Scenario 3 (TOD)	$37,224,000	$2,421,475	$701,470
Scenario 4 (New Site)	$47,900,000	$3,115,964	$6,981
Scenario 5 (New Location/Purchase Building)	$40,604,000	$2,641,348	$481,596

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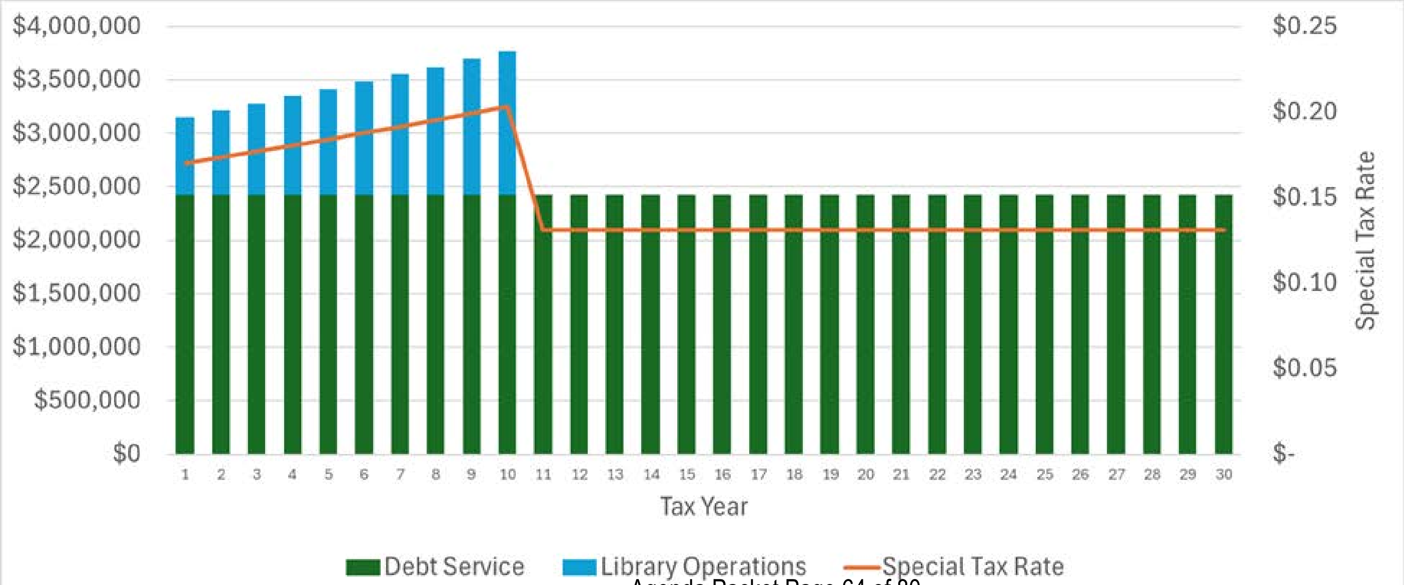
Fiscal Impacts

- Years 1 – 10: Parcel tax covers debt service and O&M costs
- Starting Year 11: General Fund assumes full O&M responsibility – rates drop to levels necessary to make bond payments only
  - Estimated annual operation costs: ~$188K - $797K annually (depending on scenario)
  - Current Library O&M: ~$158K annually



Planning/Housing Impacts

- All scenarios consistent with General Plan
- Current Library Site:
  - No impact to housing capacity or development potential
- TOD scenario:
  - Mixed-use development - 743 new housing units (351 below market)
  - Library inclusion– does not alter count of approved units
- New site scenario:
  - Potential impact if selected site is suitable for residential development

THE CITY OF EL CERRITO

Business Impacts

- Library services support workforce development by providing access to:
  - Employment Resources
  - Job Training
  - Digital literacy tools
  - Education programming
- Broader Economic Considerations
  - Libraries serve as a quality-of-life amenities
  - Modern facilities may support the community’s long-term ability to attract and retain employers and workforce talent

Pictured: Lafayette Library

THE CITY OF EL CERRITO

Vacant Lot Impacts

- **Initial Maximum Rate:** Up to $100 per vacant parcel annually, annual inflation adjustments permitted
- **Vacant Parcel:** No structure or structures less than 200 sq. ft
- **Development of non-public use site**: Potential loss of property tax, sales tax (if commercial property) – impact to General Fund

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Racial and Economic Equity Impacts

- Funding to expand library services can expand free access to:
  - Educational resources
  - Technology
  - Workforce Development Services
  - Community Programming
- Larger facilities can increase program availability and community access
- Locations near transit-oriented development could further increase accessibility

Pictured: San Pablo Library

Facility Scenarios Evaluated

- Five Conceptual Approaches:
  - Renovate Existing 6,500 SF Library ~$10M
  - Expand/Rebuild Existing Library to 13,000 SF ~$35M
  - Build 20,000 SF Library at Plaza TOD Site ~$37M
  - Build 20,000 SF Library on New Site ~$48M
  - Renovate Existing 20,000 SF Building into Library ~$41M
- Capital Cost Range: ~$10M - ~$48M

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Scenario Fiscal Impacts

- **Capital Estimates:** ~$10M - ~$40M depending on scenario

Cost Category	SCENARIO 1 RENOVATE EXISTING LIBRARY 6,500 SF	SCENARIO 2 REBUILD + EXPAND EXISTING LIBRARY 13,000 SF	SCENARIO 3 BUILD LIBRARY IN EL CERRITO PLAZA TOD 20,000 SF	SCENARIO 4 BUILD STANDALONE LIBRARY ON NEW SITE 20,000 SF	SCENARIO 5 RENOVATE AN EXISTING BUILDING INTO LIBRARY 20,000 SF
Construction Costs (Bldg + Site)	$5,239,000	$16,190,000	$24,244,000	$23,744,000	$15,960,000
Escalation (Midpoint of Construction)	$1,052,000	$3,623,000	$3,080,000	$5,314,000	$3,296,000
Soft Costs	$2,963,000	$6,275,000	$7,664,000	$8,732,000	$6,582,000
Contingencies	$1,092,000	$2,295,000	$2,236,000	$3,339,000	$3,217,000
Total Project Budget	**$10,346,000**	**$28,383,000**	**$37,224,000**	**$41,142,000**	**$29,055,000**
Parking Structure	N/A	$6,429,000	N/A	$4,714,000	N/A
Property Acquisition Costs	N/A	N/A	N/A	$2,100,000	$11,549,000
Total Project Budget w/ Adds	**$10,346,000**	**$34,812,000**	**$37,224,000**	**$47,956,000**	**$40,604,000**
	$1,592/SF	$2,,678/SF	$1,861/SF	$2,395/SF	$2,030/SF

THE CITY OF EL CERRITO

Scenario Fiscal Impacts

- **Operations & Maintenance Estimates:** ~$188K - ~$797K depending on scenario

EXISTING LIBRARY - 6,500 SF	RENOVATE EXISTING LIBRARY – 6,500 SF (Scenario 1)		REBUILD + EXPAND EXISTING LIBRARY - 13,000 SF (Scenario 2)		BUILD LIBRARY IN EL CERRITO PLAZA TOD, BUILD STANDALONE LIBRARY ON NEW SITE OR RENOVATE AN EXISTING BUILDING INTO LIBRARY - 20,000 SF (Scenarios 3, 4, 5)	
Actual Current Cost	Low	High	Low	High	Low	High
$157,615	**$187,755**	**$265,880**	**$290,100**	**$596,750**	**$396,301**	**$797,000**
$24.15/SF	$28.89/SF	$40.90/SF	$22.32/SF	$45.90/SF	$19.82/SF	$39.85/SF

El Cerrito Plaza TOD Scenario

- City Council Direction – MOU with BART in 2018
- Staff from City, BART, & Contra Costa Library partnered on various studies, public meetings, and workshops
- TOD Master Plan approved in July 2024
- Development framework agreed to (City, BART & Related) pending confirmation/funding commitment from City

Required Action: Call an Election

Election Date Options:

1. Next Regular Election
   - Tuesday, November 3, 2026
2. Special Election
   - Held not less than 88 days and not more than 103 days from the order of election (EC 1405)
   - Held on a Tuesday not the day of, day before, or day after a state holiday (EC 1100)

* EC = Elections Code

THE CITY OF EL CERRITO

Election Fiscal Impacts

- Estimates based on current voter registration **17,814 as of 1/12/2026**
- A Special Election consolidated with a Statewide Election or the Regular Election
  $3-$4.50 per registered voter
- A Special Election on any other eligible date
  $12-$15 per registered voter
- Special Election costs eligible for reimbursement from proceeds of measure if the measure is passed

Election Date	Estimated Cost	Fiscal Year	Additional Budget Appropriation (Y/N)
Tuesday, May 19, 2026	$267,210	2025/2026	Y
Tuesday, June 2, 2026	$80,163	2025/2026	Y
Tuesday, November 3, 2026	$80,163	2026/2027	N

THE CITY OF EL CERRITO

From:	Ira Sharenow
To:	City Clerk; Holly Charléty; Lisa Motoyama; Gabe Quinto; Rebecca Saltzman
Cc:	William Ktsanes
Subject:	Public Comment – Item 3A: Forever Parcel Tax
Date:	Wednesday, February 18, 2026 9:33:39 AM

I ask the people who wrote this ambiguous and ill-conceived petition to withdraw it. It will not lead to a new library. It is simply a tax supplement to the general fund

When I spoke to the petition gatherers, I was told the proposed library would be located in El Cerrito Plaza and would cost $21 million. Tax advocates also incorrectly stated that the tax would be limited to 30 years.

Given that signatures were gathered using demonstrably incorrect information, the proposal should be withdrawn.

What we now have is a proposal that would give the City Council the authority to raise taxes every year indefinitely. Yet the tax advocates have provided no clearly stated timeline explaining how a library would actually be built in Plaza Parcel C West. Instead, they speak in abstract terms about how wonderful libraries are.

But this ballot measure is not about abstract ideas. It is about spending money on a specific library in El Cerrito.

Since the advocates for higher taxes will not provide a detailed timeline, I will.

Assume the tax passes in June 2026.

- **May 2026** – Likely deadline to apply for Strategic Growth Council (SGC) funding. These grants are highly competitive, especially because El Cerrito is not a disadvantaged community. The application process is extremely complex, as City officials acknowledged in May 2025.
- **June 2026** – Tax passes.
- **July 2026** – Citizen committee forms.
- **November 2026** – Regional transportation tax is voted on, which will affect BART and potentially Parcel C West.
- **May 2027** – Next SGC grant deadline.
- **July 2027** – Citizen committee issues report.
- **May 2028** – Developer receives grant or loan from the City.
- **May 2028** – Developer applies for SGC grant.
- **December 2028** – Developer miraculously wins SGC grant on the first attempt (other El Cerrito projects did not).
- **January 2030** – City sells bonds.

The City's consultant estimated that the cost of a Plaza library in January 2027 would be approximately $37 million, assuming a 6% annual construction escalator. If the library instead opens in 2030, the cost would exceed $44 million using the City's own consultant assumptions.

For illustration:

January 2027

Principal: $37,224,000
Interest: 5%
Term: 30 years
Annual payment: $2,421,475

January 2030
Principal: $44,334,380
Interest: 5%
Term: 30 years
Annual payment: $2,884,015

Note that I am using an extremely optimistic 5% interest rate. That rate may not be attainable. There is significant interest rate risk.

Now consider operating costs. In November 2023, operating costs were estimated at $900,000 annually. For January 2027, the estimate was reduced to $700,000 — a difficult number to accept, but I will use it.

Applying a 6% annual escalator for three + two years results in approximately $936,000 for a January 2032 opening, assuming two years of construction.

That means the City would need roughly $3.8 million per year for bond payments plus operating costs — and that assumes the unrealistic 5% interest rate. A 17 cent per square foot tax is insufficient using the city's varying estimates of how much the tax would bring in.

To those promoting higher taxes: if you also genuinely support building a new library, please withdraw this proposal and return with something that can actually work. Perhaps start with a 40-cent-per-square-foot tax and build from there.

Ira Sharenow
El Cerrito, CA

Good morning Mayor Quinto, members of Council, and City staff. My name is Tom Panas and I have lived in El Cerrito since 1975. I'd like to thank the Council for the support it expressed at the January 20 meeting for a new library and I would urge the Council to pick the June election date. Because of grant deadlines, a June election date might save us a year of delay on the project.

I am hearing a lot of less-than-well-informed conversation about bonds the City would need to issue to finance a new library and I'd like to set the record straight about that. Bonds can be confusing to people who haven't worked with them. So it's not surprising that there's a lot of confusion about the various cash flows associated with bonds.

First of all, if the Citizens's Initiative passes then at an appropriate time the bonds to finance the construction of the library will be issued. The total dollar amount of the bond proceeds will be deposited in an account at a Trustee bank, not in a City of El Cerrito account. The money in that Trustee bank account will be specifically earmarked for construction and operation of a library in El Cerrito. Because of the way the Citizens's Initiative was written, the Trustee bank can only make payments from that account for two things:

1) to extinguish any indebtedness, and
2) to pay for the City's library operating costs during the first full ten years following the completion of library construction.

The money in the Trustee bank account cannot be used for anything else. I'll also note that there are very strict IRS rules that help ensure that the project moves forward expeditiously. A good rule of thumb is a bond issuer will run into trouble with the IRS if the money for any construction-related purpose stated for the bonds is not spent within three years. The restriction on how the money can be used, in combination with the IRS spend-down requirements, prevent the City from issuing the bonds before the project is ready to go or from using the bond proceeds for something other than the library.

I'd also like to speak briefly about the parcel tax payments. Taxpayers do not remit their parcel tax payments to the City of El Cerrito, they are sent to the County Tax Assessor. Once received, the funds necessary to make principal and interest payments on the bonds are set aside in a restricted account that can only be used when such payments are due.

I so appreciate your support for the Citizens's Initiative and I'm looking forward to a new Library here in El Cerrito.

Thank you again for your time this morning. Feb 19, 2026

RECEIVED
AT THE MEETING OF
FEB 19 2026
CITY OF EL CERRITO
CITY CLERK

From: Tim Sbranti [redacted]
Date: February 19, 2026 at 7:13:47 AM PST
To: Gabe Quinto <GQuinto@elcerrito.gov>, Gabe Quinto <GQuinto@elcerrito.gov>
Subject: Council Agenda Item #3a - February 19, 2026

Caution! This message was sent from outside your organization. Allow sender | Block sender

Dear Honorable Mayor Quinto:

On behalf of the 35,000 members and 20 affiliates of the Contra Costa Building and Construction Trades Council (CCBCTC), I respectfully request that the El Cerrito City Council adopts the Resolution at this morning's meeting to place the "El Cerrito Library Initiative" on the ballot for the upcoming Primary Election on June 2, 2026.

Over 2,000 residents of El Cerrito have demonstrated their support for this project as evidenced by their signatures to place the citizen-led initiative on the ballot. It would be unnecessary to delay a community-wide vote on this initiative until November when there is an upcoming election in June, especially when considering the fact that the costs to the City are identical regardless of whether you proceed with conducting the election in conjunction with the Primary as opposed to the General Election.

The Library itself will be a great addition to the city and a prominent anchor for the El Cerrito Plaza area. Our members are excited to have the opportunity to work on this project and create such a lasting community benefit for the City should the voters approve the measure.

Thank you in advance for your consideration and your continued support of working families in El Cerrito and throughout the region.

Best Wishes,

Tim Sbranti
Executive Director
Contra Costa Building and
Construction Trades Council
Office: [redacted]
Cell: [redacted]