



Gleaming blue and green and 50% bigger, new Aptos library opens Sunday



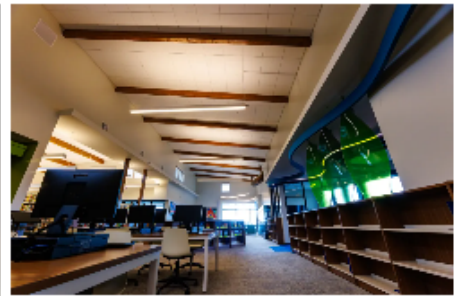
BY WALLACE BAINE February 2, 2024



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You can already identify the primo spot to sit and read at the spanking new Aptos branch of the Santa Cruz Public Libraries. Walk into the front entrance by the parking lot and keep straight, past the children's section and the teens section, until you can't go any farther. Take a seat in one of the new plush chairs and gaze out the large corner window overlooking Soquel Drive in the direction of the Rancho Del Mar shopping center. Look up just beyond the intersection of Soquel and State Park Drive, and you'll see it — the Pacific Ocean gleaming in the distance.



After more than two and a half years without an open library, the people of Aptos and surrounding communities now have a new gathering place. On Sunday, the Aptos branch will officially open with [a grand opening and community celebration](#), including a ribbon-cutting, live music and storytime for the kids.

The new \$14 million building was opened Thursday for a preview event, unveiling the library for local media. On hand were many of those involved in the design and construction of the project, from representatives of the SCPL, the Friends of the Santa Cruz Public Libraries support group, the architectural and construction firms and County Supervisor Zach Friend, who represents the area.

The new library in Aptos is about 50% bigger than the former library, which was closed to the public in the summer of 2021. It includes many of the features that are popular in the design of contemporary libraries including an ample children's section, community meeting rooms, a dedicated teens space with an adjoining gaming/media room, a local history display and an architectural theme appropriate for a community that contains both the seashore and the redwood forest.

Ashly Vineyard of the San Jose-based Anderson Brulé Architects pointed out the colors in the library that ranged from a deep marine blue on the sea-facing side of the building and the rich greens of the children's section, oriented in the general direction of Aptos Creek and the Forest of Nisene Marks State Park.

"This project is very special to me, because I grew up in Aptos," said Vineyard, part of the design team assigned to the project. "I used to come to this library all the time with my mom, and I loved it. As soon as we knew that we had this project, I was like, 'Oh, that'll be mine.' It's a thrill to be able to create something for my community."

Santa Cruz's Bogard Construction was the general contractor for the project.



The Aptos Library is only the latest in a series of new libraries to open in recent years in Santa Cruz County, thanks primarily to Measure S, a \$67 million bond measure passed by public referendum in 2016 with a 70% vote. Measure S funds have been used to open new libraries or to renovate and repair existing ones in Capitola, Garfield Park, Branciforte, Boulder Creek, Scotts Valley and Felton. Next up is a library annex to the Live Oak branch and then, the glaring exception to all this new library renovation: the downtown Santa Cruz main branch, to be located on Cedar Street between Lincoln and Cathcart streets.

The downtown branch is to be a much more complicated project, a multiuse facility featuring a 35,000-square-foot main branch library, with 124 affordable housing units and a three-deck parking garage. The project is currently in the design-and-development stage and is expected to be ready to apply for building permits in April. The city estimates that construction could begin by the end of 2024, with an [opening](#) slated for 2027.



Janis O'Driscoll, the president of the Friends of the Santa Cruz Public Libraries, said that her organization is now in the planning stages to launch a capital campaign to raise up to \$2 million needed for the downtown branch. "I do think we can do this," she said. "We'll spend a lot of time planning in 2024, going into 2025. But it will happen."

The [grand opening](#) of the Aptos Library takes place Sunday, Feb. 4, from 1 to 5 p.m. It's free.