

Emerald Hill Library & Heritage Centre Upgrade

Background

Council plans to expand and refurbish the current Emerald Hill Library to become the Emerald Hill Library & Heritage Centre. This project will provide:

- more space for library services
- more books, DVDs and CDs
- a new focus for local history and cultural heritage services
- better access for community groups
- improved disability access.

Building heritage

The 1912 and 1918 buildings on the Emerald Hill Library site are an important part of the Emerald Hill precinct. Council intends to safeguard and celebrate the heritage of the buildings. This project has been designed to meet Heritage Victoria requirements. The 1912 building was formerly a post office, an important example of a public building in the Beaux-Arts style. There is an adjoining building, the annexe, which was built in 1918 and originally used as a pension office. A modern addition was added to the building complex in the 1970s, including toilets and a staff room.

As part of this project, the City of Port Phillip is taking the opportunity to reinstate two original features of the buildings. On the front portico entrance, a blank window on the left side of the front portico façade will be restored to match the blank window on the right side. In the annexe building, a doorway will be reinstated as the original shaped window.

Expanded library services

The proposed redevelopment provides more space for library services including:

- new children's area
- more books, DVDs and CDs
- more space for casual seating with wireless access, including a new courtyard
- six more PCs for public access, including four public access PCs in the heritage services area
- more space for programs and workshops – a new program space is included, plus most library shelves will be on wheels to allow easier use of the library area when needed for larger events.

Focus for cultural heritage and local history services

It is proposed that Council's Local History Librarian and the Cultural Heritage Officer will be principally based at Emerald Hill Library & Heritage Centre, although they will still have meetings and other duties elsewhere. The local history and cultural heritage services at Emerald Hill will include:

- research areas for public use, including PCs, and access to microfiche and microfilm
- meeting space for heritage and history related groups, eg. Middle Park Historical Society
- lockable desk & cabinet for use by local historical society
- drop in service (limited hours per day) including:
 - ♦ photo reproduction service
 - ♦ guided walks bookings and self-guided walks information
 - ♦ assistance with research
 - ♦ schedule appointments with Cultural Heritage Officer and Local History librarian
 - ♦ access point for Local History Collection items.
 - ♦ possible expanded volunteer program.

Meeting and program space

A new program space with access to kitchenette and toilets will be available for library and heritage programs and workshops run by the City of Port Phillip, and for community-run programs and meetings.

There will also be a meeting room in the heritage area for about 10-12 people. This will be available for history and heritage related groups and meetings.

Technology

The project will include:

- a total of 10 public access PCs (six PCs in the library spaces, plus four new PCs in the local history and cultural heritage area). This is an increase of six PCs from the current four. There will also be IT capacity to add additional PCs in the future if required.
- wireless access throughout the building and in the immediate outside area, with additional casual seating inside and out
- access to microfiche and microfilm readers
- self service options.

Sustainability

Sustainability measures will include the collection of stormwater from the roof, stored in rainwater tanks. This will irrigate the 'green walls', the two vertical garden walls in the front courtyard adjoining Bank Street.

Improved disability access

The existing building has a ramp into the library portico, which does not meet current accessibility standards. Existing access between the library and the annexe is via a stairway. The new design has proper ramp access into the building as the main entrance, along with ramp access between the annexe and the rest of the building. Public toilets will also be built to meet accessibility standards.