

Council Backs Children's Wing at Central Library

By Melinda Keller

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A glowing report on the Huntington Beach Central Library stacked up in its favor Monday night when City Council members voted to approve its expansion, including the addition of a children's wing.

Councilman Jack Kelly told his colleagues that it was time for council to take action on the library.

"We need to design a campaign

to get money to demonstrate to the public that the city takes a strong position on this and it will help attract grants," Kelly said.

In the Central Library analysis, conducted by HBW Associates, consultants suggested that funding for the library expansion come from the city's general fund, obligation bonds or state and federal grants.

The city has already set aside more than \$1 million for the

children's wing, which the Dallas-based firm said is essential.

"The space in the Central Library devoted to children's services represents only 8 percent of the total building space. Yet children constitute 22 percent of the population living within a three-mile radius and circulate 33 percent of the books. At least a 20,000 square foot children's wing is recommended," the report suggested.

Consultants also rated the facility as "one of the most active, heavily used, vibrant public libraries that the consultant team has experienced in several years."

Because the library is popular with residents and non-residents alike, the space needed to house materials will nearly double by the year 2010, consultants estimated.

City staff is proposing to expand the main building, add a

children's wing and re-align Talbert Avenue to provide additional parking.

City Administrator Paul Cook told council that the Talbert Avenue re-alignment would have to take place regardless of the library expansion.

"Both Gothard and Golden West are on landfills and are unsuitable roads, so the re-alignment of Talbert needs to take place anyway," Cook said.

The analysis also praised the city's library system, citing a higher circulation of books than the average, with fewer dollars invested in overall support of the public library.

Library Director Ron Hayden said that Huntington Beach was able to cut down on operating costs because of heavy volunteer interest in the libraries.

"In 1975, we had 45 permanent
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staff members. In 1980, we had 39 full-time staff, and today we have 38, and our circulation of books has increased," Hayden said.

With the increase of patrons, the report estimated that expansion was necessary because there was little opportunity to gain more efficient usage of the existing Central library space.

