



## Officials break ground on new East Oakland library

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OAKLAND — Residents, city and school officials shared in the excitement Friday at the groundbreaking ceremony for the new East Oakland Community Public Library.

The first joint public library-school facility in the city, it will be adjacent to the Acorn Woodland Elementary School and Encompass Academy campuses on 81st Avenue. The library will feature state-of-the-art computer labs, a literacy center and multimedia classrooms for students and meeting rooms for the community. It will be constructed with environmentally friendly building materials and have solar panels.

With 21,000 square feet, it will also be the largest branch in the Oakland Public Library system. It is due to open late next year.

"This library is special because it goes into part of the city where there is no library," said Carmen Martinez, director of library services for the Oakland Public Library. "It's going to be beautiful, and I'm so excited."

Donning hard hats and holding golden shovels, Mayor Ron Dellums and other public officials shared those sentiments as they celebrated the groundbreaking.

"This is a part of the change that's occurring in East Oakland," Councilmember Larry Reid (Elmhurst-East Oakland) said. "This library completes the

community and provides an incredible facility."

The \$14.3 million project is funded by a voter-approved state library construction bond, the Oakland Redevelopment Agency and the Oakland Unified School District. The school district also donated the land for the library site at 1021 81st Ave. The Oakland Public Library is raising additional money from private donors to purchase new furniture, fixtures and equipment.

"The project is a labor of love with lots of people supporting it," Martinez said.

Juanita Joseph, a teacher's aide for a kindergarten class at Acorn Woodland, said she is glad students will have a library near campus.

"I'm delighted, although it's sad that it's so late coming," she said.

Joseph said the students have made do for quite some time by creating their own library in their classroom.

Reid represents District 7, the city's largest district, with about 100,000 residents. The district faces challenges of economic development, including a lack of basic services and grocery stores. Brookfield and Elmhurst are the area's two small branch libraries. However, residents who don't live near those libraries are often forced to travel outside their neighborhoods to use the San Leandro Public Library, which charges nonresidents \$50 for a library card.

The new library in East Oakland will be the latest addition to the branch system since the Rockridge library was built more than 10 years ago. The library will feature areas for children and teens, an Internet cafe, a copy center and reading rooms stocked with magazines and newspapers. There will also be

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meeting rooms with a small kitchen and media capabilities that can be used for neighborhood and school meetings.

Dellums said the library helps address some of the issues of poverty. He said he remembers how going to the small library in his West Oakland neighborhood opened a world of new possibilities.

"In my mind's eye, the library was a giant place," he said, "with an endless supply of books, journeys, adventures and ideas."

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