



CITY OF FORT BRAGG

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COUNCIL COMMITTEE ITEM SUMMARY REPORT

MEETING DATE: February 13, 2018
TO: Community Development Committee
FROM: Sarah McCormick
AGENDA ITEM TITLE: Receive Report and Provide Recommendation to Council Regarding 'Little Free Library For All' Project and Potentially Allowing the Use of Public Right-of-Way for Libraries

ISSUE:

On January 9, 2018 Joanna Wigginton and Linda Jupiter addressed the Community Development Committee to introduce the Little Free Library (LFL) movement, their vision of a LFL program in Fort Bragg known as, 'Little Libraries For All', and to inquire whether the City would be interested in participating in the project. Several local organizations have declared their support, including Flockworks, Safe Passage, Latino Coalition, and Rossi's Building Materials to name a few. The goal of the proposed program is to engage youth in the construction of LFL bookcases and to make them available for free to non-profits and for purchase to residents at a nominal cost and/or sliding scale. The guiding principles of the project are to help youth develop skills, to support community engagement, and to promote literacy.

SUMMARY:

According to the non-profit organization, Little Free Library (LFL), millions of books are exchanged each year from more than twenty-five thousand little, free libraries worldwide. Community members voluntarily set-up enclosed bookcases in places such as front yards, parks and waiting rooms for the neighborly exchange of books. Each LFL is unique in design and construction and they are independently curated and maintained by a designated steward. The primary benefits for creating a LFL are to:

- encourage community engagement and social connections within neighborhoods and to be part of a larger international network that communicates through social media via maps and apps (www.littlefreelibrary.org);
- offer an opportunity for self-expression as a public art installation (both in the physical shape of a library and also its contents); and
- promote an interest in books, reading and literacy in general.

Wigginton and Jupiter inquired whether City Council would support the installation of LFL in the Public Right-of-Way (i.e. sidewalks) and/or on City property (i.e. City Hall), or if Council would be interested in participating in the project by hosting a LFL. The Community Development Committee

could discuss the following special considerations while deciding whether to encourage LFL in the Public Right-of-Way or on City property:

- Who is responsible for the structure’s safety? If a library falls into neglect or becomes a safety concern, what steps are taken?
- There is the potential for these spaces to be used for illicit activities, such as stashing or dealing drugs. Public sites without direct supervision may exacerbate this issue.
- Who decides which books might be appropriate and/or inappropriate reading material? How is this managed?
- Hygiene: Books are an optimal place for mold to grow and our damp climate makes it challenging to keep books pristine. How is this managed?

If the CDC recommendation to Council is to encourage LFL on sidewalks, the Community Development Committee might want to consider developing design guidelines and either revising the Street Furniture Permit to include a LFL category or develop specific conditions for a LFL Encroachment Permit.

Here is a table regarding LFL locations and the potential pros and cons of each:

| | Private Property Individuals create and maintain LFL on private property | Public Property Public Right-of-Way Individuals apply for encroachment permit to host LFL on City property and within City Right-of-Way | City-Hosted LFL on City Property City Council, Staff, Advisory Committees and/or civic organizations host LFL on City property |
|-------------|--|---|---|
| PROS | <p>Book selection is curated by LFL steward</p> <p>Maintenance and safety are the responsibility of private property owner</p> <p>Creative license in construction of LFL (with limitations on height limit within traffic visibility areas)</p> <p>Nuisance conditions can be handled with code enforcement protocols</p> | <p>Multiple locations available, in high pedestrian traffic areas, keeping in mind ADA accessibility</p> | <p>City could select location(s), such as inside lobby of City Hall, which would allow more control and easier maintenance</p> <p>Opportunity for Council, Staff, Departments and Committees to curate a selection of books to exchange with the public</p> |
| CONS | <p>May require City Staff to determine size and location limits (setbacks) for traffic visibility.</p> | <p>ADA Accessibility: Staff would need to research ADA guidelines to better understand this component and City would likely need to impose these regulations to LFL citywide if acting as a partner.</p> <p>Liability: Maintenance and safety are the responsibility of LFL steward. However, Public Works would need to step in to remove nuisance conditions.</p> <p>Insurance: A Certificate of Insurance is required prior to obtaining an encroachment permit. Consider revising Street Furniture Permit to include LFL</p> | <p>Might be difficult to obtain volunteer support and commitment.</p> <p>The lobby already includes many items and something would need to be removed from the lobby to accommodate a LFL, probably the fake plant is a good candidate.</p> |

POSSIBLE ACTIONS:

Community Development Committee may want to take any of the following recommendations to Council:

- Limit LFL to locations on private property only
- Host LFL on City Property
- Permit LFL on City property
- Permit LFL in the City Right-of-Way
- A combination of the possible actions listed above
- Take no action

ATTACHMENTS:

1. Photos of Little Free Libraries
2. City of Fort Bragg Street Furniture Permit Application