



PAC* SJ

**PRESERVATION ACTION
COUNCIL OF SAN JOSE**

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42A South First Street
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June 8, 2026

San José City Council
200 E. Santa Clara Street
San José, CA 95113

VIA EMAIL (city.clerk@sanjoseca.gov)

**Re: Agenda Item 3.3: Mayor's June Budget Message for Fiscal Year 2026-2027
MBA #19, #28, and Kamei-Tordillos-Cohen Memo maintaining open public access
to the California Room**

Dear Mayor Mahan and Members of the San José City Council,

The Preservation Action Council of San Jose (PAC* SJ) strongly opposes the closure of the California Room at the Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Library currently proposed in the 2026-27 Budget. **Budget Addenda #19 and #28, drafted by City Librarian Jill Bourne at Council's direction, would restore partial funding for this irreplaceable community resource, retain dedicated staff positions, and preserve open public access to the California Room and its collections. PAC* SJ strongly supports this reasonable compromise and thanks Councilmembers Kamei, Tordillos, and Cohen for bringing forward a thoughtful memorandum supporting these Addenda.**

For more than a century, the California Room has served as the steward of San José's collective memory. Established in 1906, it houses an unparalleled collection of books, photographs, maps, newspapers, city directories, building records, and archival materials documenting the history of San José and Santa Clara County. These collections support students, educators, scholars, journalists, genealogists, preservationists, planners, neighborhood groups, property owners, and residents seeking to understand and connect with our community's past.

As California's first civilian settlement and one of the nation's most diverse cities, San José has a responsibility to preserve and share its history. The California Room helps tell the stories of the communities, cultures, neighborhoods, businesses, and institutions that have shaped our city. At a time of rapid growth and change, maintaining access to these stories is essential.

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The proposed closure would generate only limited budgetary savings while causing lasting harm to a resource that cannot easily be reopened once shuttered. Budget Addenda #19 and #28 offer a practical bridge towards a more sustainable long-term funding model, recognizing both the City's fiscal challenges and the importance of protecting a vital cultural and educational asset.

We respectfully ask you to support Budget Addenda #19 and #28 to maintain reduced open hours and dedicated staffing, ensuring that this invaluable resource remains accessible to all. Preserving San José's history is an investment in our community, our identity, and our future. It is also an acknowledgement that history is not a closed book and that much of our diverse community's stories and experiences have yet to be uncovered and shared—an ongoing effort in which the California Room and its collections are essential. PAC**SJ* is committed to working with the City Manager, Library Director, San José Public Library Foundation, and other stakeholders to develop a sustainable long-term funding model for the California Room beyond the 2026-2027 budget year.

Thank you for your consideration and for your service to the residents of San José.

Sincerely,

Ben T. Leech
Executive Director
Preservation Action Council of San José

Sally Zarnowitz, Architect, LEED AP
Vice President and Advocacy Chair
Preservation Action Council of San José

cc:

Jennifer Maguire, City Manager
Jill Bourne, City Librarian