

How San Carlos Got Its Library



What factors came together that spearheaded the building of our current San Carlos Branch Library? The answer: San Carlos Community activists and a non-fulfilled promise.

In the 1960s, the Tavares Development Company assured buyers that the new San Carlos area would quickly become a complete neighborhood, with retailers, eateries, churches, fire houses, parks & rec centers, schools, and a library. By 1970, this mission had been accomplished, **minus the library**. Here is the story of **“How San Carlos Got A Library,”** as told to us by an early San Carlos resident, parent, volunteer, author and SCFOL Life member, **Toni Noel**. Thank you Toni for your involvement and story.



Noel tells us, “Late in 1969 or early in 1970, I was appointed Library Chairman of the San Carlos Community Council, which was the predecessor to the current community planning group. A local mother of Patrick Henry students appeared at a SCCC Board meeting and demanded to know what was being done to get the promised library built in San Carlos.

“I was one of the many local residents who bought their homes on the assurance the growing community would have a library. We were even shown a map with the allotted space for it. The fire station was built on that site and bulldozers were continually flattening the most desirable spots for apartments. Soon there would be no suitable site left.

“I learned from City Librarian Clara Breed, that unless pressure was brought on the San Diego City Council to purchase property and build a library in San Carlos, that PHHS parents and other San Carlos residents would have to continue driving to other communities for library services.

“Breed told me how to get the Council’s attention and I applied for my name to be placed on the next week’s Council meeting docket. Council members listened attentively, admitted they were sorely uninformed about our community’s needs, and asked someone to investigate the matter and bring it to the attention of the City Planning Commission.

“When the subject was scheduled to be on the City’s Planning Commission docket, a **large group of San Carlos residents** caravanned to the meeting. Several of our group spoke before I made an impassioned plea for the Council to select a site for the proposed library before the best sites were all snapped up for service stations. **The interest of our residents turned Council heads.** A week later, Librarian Clara Breed asked if I would show her around this new part of San Diego.



SCBL groundbreaking: Alan Hitch & Toni Noel: circa early 1970s

The site I thought best, next to our new fire station, had just been sold for a service station, so I drove Breed around the neighborhood in my VW bus, pointing out other likely sites. She preferred the location near public transportation and a shopping center. The City soon purchased the present site on Jackson Drive. On January 9, 1974, the first San Carlos Branch Library (SCBL), opened its doors to the community.

“Because of my work to secure a library site, our District Councilperson Alan Hitch, invited me to turn the second shovel of dirt at the SCBL ground breaking ceremony. For a year prior to its opening, local residents donated their used books, which were stored in my garage. Before the Branch’s grand opening, the Librarian sent a truck to pick up the books which were then sold by the first Friends of the Library organization at the downtown library. The resulting funds were used to purchase new titles for the San Carlos Branch Library.”

Our Community spoke out, our ideas were heard! Stay tuned to hear the rest of the story about the growth and future of the San Carlos Branch.