

ALAMEDA FREE LIBRARY



Library

This doc lays the groundwork for a Tool Lending Library for the citizens of Alameda, California. This new library is initiated, funded, managed and maintained by the Alameda Free Library as a new branch. Built with shipping containers, it'll be located on an already allocated space on the west end of Jean Sweeney Open Space Park. We're targeting a mid-2020s opening, erected at the same time the City's Recreation and Parks Department builds a new aquatic center nearby.

What is a Tool Library?

An increasingly popular addition to the services public libraries offer, Tool Lending Libraries enable patrons to borrow tools and other equipment, just like books.

The tools offered range from home repair (hammers, saws, power tools), gardening (shovels, post diggers), cooking (bundt pans, fryers) and hobbies (sewing machines, 3d and craft printers).

There's a common pattern here between books, tools and libraries. Libraries open access to the wealth of the world's knowledge by sharing a resource across the community. Be it expense, lack of storage space, novelty of the item, or rarity of use – many people use libraries instead of purchasing books for themselves.

The same is true for tools. “That’s an expensive tool” or “Where am I going to store this?” to “Do I really need this?” to “I just need it for one weekend project” are questions that people likely ask themselves when deciding to purchase a tool.

Libraries are more than just books. Its *librarians* are guides for knowledge, curators of taste, and advisors in perspective. These same holes exist for home projects – from “What’s the right tool for the job?” or “How do I use this tool?” or “Where do I even begin?” are all questions many start with.

Current solutions for Alameda residents are to buy, borrow from a neighbor, or rent tools.

This project – the Alameda Free Library Tool Lending Library – delivers a new option for Alamedeans: build a shared resource, provided by the library, to solve this need, while empowering citizens to take on home projects cost effectively and backed with the support of knowledgeable, helpful “Tool Librarians”.

Tool Library Mission Statement

“To serve as a community resource to provide homeowners, tenants, long-time residents, and newcomers with tools and the knowledge to work with the tools they need to repair or beautify their own homes and to empower individuals to take greater responsibility towards enhancing their community and the environment.”

- Jane Chisaki , Alameda Free Library Director (2023)

Nearby Libraries

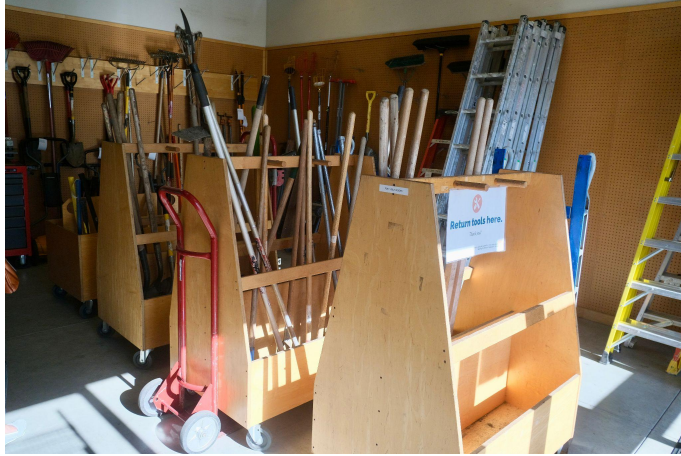
This is a concept that two major library systems close to Alameda have already implemented.

Berkeley Tool Lending Library

The Berkeley Tool Lending Library, established in 1979 through a \$30k grant is one of the oldest and most comprehensive of its kind in the U.S. Today it’s expanded significantly from the initial trailer to a beautiful space, purposefully built for it, as part of the Tarea Hall Pittman South Branch that opened in 2013.

1901 Russell St
Berkeley, CA 94703
[Website](#)





Oakland Tool Lending Library

The Oakland Tool Lending Library was established in 2000 is in the basement of Temescal Branch along with additional storage in a shipping container next to it. Oakland, Emeryville and Piedmont residents with a valid library card can borrow tools for free through funding of a parcel tax.

5205 Telegraph Ave
Oakland, CA 94609

[Website](#)





These two libraries also often host workshops and classes on various topics related to tool usage, home repairs, and gardening, further empowering community members with knowledge and skills to improve their homes and neighborhoods.

Tools, Equipment & “Things”

Berkeley and Oakland have practically the same list of tools – some 400 different types, many of which they hold multiple copies of. One of the most popular items at both sites in the spring are electric weed wackers.

Researching into other tool libraries, there’s an opportunity to be more expensive than just “tools”. For example Sacramento’s “Library of Things” includes sports, musical instruments, sports equipment, and electronics. There’s an opportunity to be equally expansive here that we should consider.

Categories

- Art & Crafting
- Bicycle
- Car Repair
- Carpentry and Woodworking
- Clamps
- Concrete and Masonry
- Cooking
- Drills & Bits
- Electrical
- Electronics
- Floor and Wall
- Gardening and Digging
- Ladders
- Material Handling
- Mechanical Tools
- Plumbing
- Recreation Equipment
- Router
- Sanders, Grinders & Polishers
- Saws

Tool List

A merged list of Berkeley + Oakland is copied into this spreadsheet and would be a good starting point for our library.

Catalog

Each tool is engraved with a “OPL” or “BPL” and then a 4 digit catalog code. Multipart tools have the engravings on all the parts (like carrying cases or attachments).

Next Steps

- **Spring 2023** - Get feedback from community about tools they wish to see
- **Summer 2023** - Create a prioritized list, number of copies desired, and price it out

Policies

Policies, Lending Period and Fines

A summation of how Berkely and Oakland manage their lending program:

- Tools are loaned out for seven days
- Some tools can be renewed
- Late fees are \$5 a day
- Most items can be reserved via an online portal
- Oakland limits 2 tools on first visit, 10 afterwards
- Max 3 power tools
- Only 18+ are allowed to borrow tools
- Residents have to show proof of residency (lease, tax bill, drivers license, voter registration, utility bill...)

Damage & Repairs

Managers at both libraries left the impression that breakage, wear and tear and lost items are not a major problem. Oakland’s library has a close relationship with a local hardware store that does repairs they can’t do on site and supply the tools (purchased).

Oakland’s policy is to charge a damage fee for things repairable, and a replacement fee for lost tools (or an exact replacement).

Waivers

Each patron signs a waiver and indemnification everytime they borrow. This was written by the City Attorney for Oakland.

Next Steps

- **Summer 2023** - Look into any additional insurance costs for the library

- **Future** - Policies, waivers and other documents will need to be shaped up (some with the City Attorney) closer to the opening of the library.

Project Committee

To move this project forward with a diverse range of perspectives and experience relevant to the scope, we will make a small Project Committee to take on this project while also representing stakeholder organizations.

Criteria

- Committee members must be Alamedan citizens or employees of the City
- The Committee Lead (a Free Library Board Member) will enlist and propose a list for approval by the Alameda Free Library Library Director
- The intent is that these members serve the 2-3 year timeline to get this project planned, fundraised, built and opened

Committee Makeup - Spring 2023

- **Library Director or Delegate – Alameda Free Library**
 - Representative of the library and librarians who will staff, fund and manage the library
- **Board Member (Committee Lead) – Alameda Free Library**
 - Existing representative of the community
- **Board Members – Alameda Free Library**
 - Existing representatives of the community
- **Member – Friends of the Alameda Free Library**
 - Non-profit organization supporting the library
- **Member – Construction Trade**
 - Experienced local craftsperson with broad knowledge across trades/projects that Alamedans may want to tackle

Next Steps

- **Spring 2023** - Get approval for plan from Library Director
- **Spring 2023** - Form Project Committee

Feedback Outreach

Community Survey

This project is *for* the community; getting their feedback is critical and vital to the project successfully being a useful resource for Alamedans. Through the process of building the Tool Library we'll get a broad understanding of their needs, desires and goals.

To kickstart the project we'll make an online survey for late spring 2023 to get community feedback from at least 200 survey respondents:

- Tools they've needed, wanted, or have already bought
- Projects they've tackled or want to tackle
- Areas of expertise that the Tool Librarians could help them with
- Ideal days and hours
- Excitement for the idea
- Contact info to keep up to date
- What neighborhood are you in?
- Are you a renter or homeowner?
- What should we name it?

This survey will be done online through the city's standard form system, as well as printouts or call to action at all the library branches, hardware stores, city park bulletin boards.

Our goal with the survey is to understand the communities needs and show to it, city managers and city council members that

1. The community wants it
2. That we're prepared to run it
3. How much it would cost to run
4. Overall benefits to the community in an equitable way
 - a. That its in the west end
 - b. Something that anyone in the community can participate and make living here more affordable
 - c. Investment in the community

Community Groups Feedback

There are a lot of existing community organizations with relevant backgrounds for this project that can both advise and help with outreach. We'll reach out to them for color on what tools their community members would be interested in, as well their ideas for classes and workshops (that they might want to put on) at the new library branch.

- [Alameda Backyard Growers](#)
 - Details on gardening tools needed for this climate and area
 - Potential for a significantly larger / more permanent Seed Library
- [Bike Walk Alameda](#)
 - Community group promoting bike usage, and advise us on what tools helpful for bike repair

- [Alameda Architectural Preservation Society](#)
 - Insight on restoration projects that homeowners can take on to maintain Alameda's wealth of historic homes and buildings
- Alameda's [Bay Area Maker Farm](#)
 - A community of makers / tinkerers / builders in Alameda
- [Alameda Mini Maker Faire](#)
 - An organization that put on a Maker Faire
- Others?
- PTAs / Highschools / Shop class?

Community Meeting

Soon after the survey and initial reach outs to community organizations we should put on two community meetings at the Main Library and another at the actual site to have an open forum / discussion of the Tool Library plans.

Next Steps

- **Spring 2023** - Send out a Community Survey (with the help of the Alameda City Public Information Officer) to get initial guidance and feedback from the community
- **Spring 2023** - Reach out to Community Groups for additional feedback and guidance
- **Summer/Fall 2023** - Run two community meetings to gather further feedback and share survey results and actions
- **Future** - Additional ones at key junctures in the planning process

Space

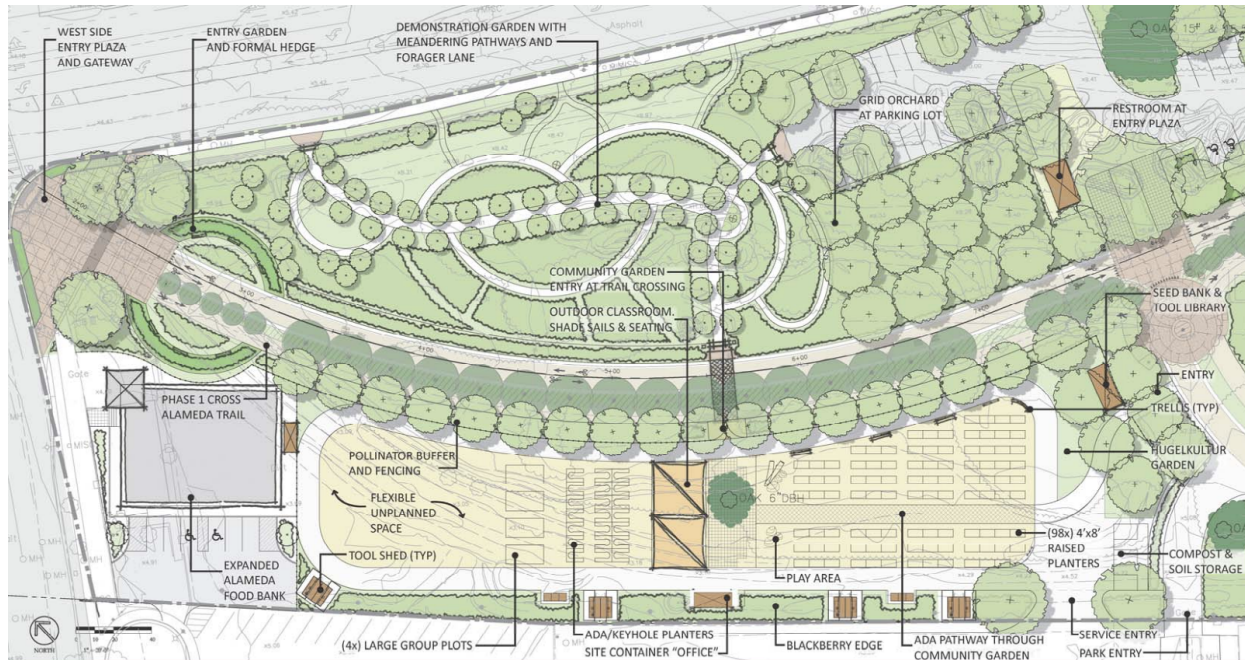
There's space already allocated on the [west side of Jane Sweeney Open Space Park for this Tool Library](#). Current plans have it situated close to the cross-Alameda trail and the future community gardens. With plans for a future aquatic center near this section of the park, significant changes are expected to this section. The Alameda Aquatic Center will be built and managed by the City's Recreation and Park department. Our goal is to align the Tool Library's construction at the same time, with electricity, internet and water lines run to the library (bathrooms will be served by the Aquatic center). The time line for this is in the mid- to late-2020s.

Next Steps

- **Spring 2023** - Get up to date plans and timelines and allocations from the Recreation and Park department, along with relaying the intentions for the Tool Library
 - With
 - Acting ARPD Director David Leimsieder dleimsieder@alamedaca.gov 510-747-7580

- City Assistant City Manager Amy Wooldridge (former ARPD Director)
- Matt Nowlen Parks Manager
- + Marlon Romero - Future Acting Library Director

Diagram from the original Sweeney Open Space Park Master Plan



Building

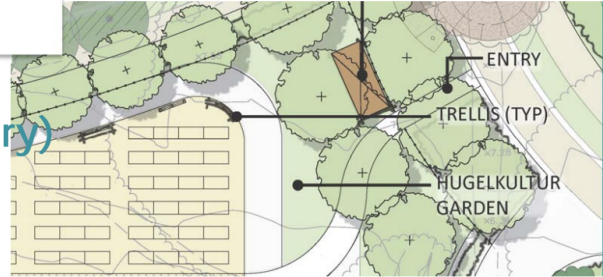
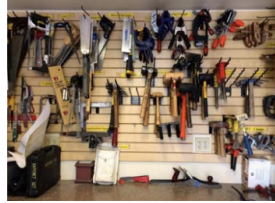
The initial plan is for a 40 foot shipping container to serve as the unit for the Tool Library. Shipping Containers are cost effective, sturdy and secure, and aesthetically can be designed to fit inline with an urban green space.

A “one-trip” 40 foot container (practically new) is easily found in Oakland. There’s [a company that specializes in selling these off](#) and price-wise they are very reasonable – with delivery under \$20k. Used ones go for under \$4k.

Diagram from the original Sweeney Open Space Park Master Plan

Urban Agriculture

Shipping Container Reuse (Seed & Tool Lending Library)



If there's any big feedback / learnings from touring the other Tool Libraries, it's that all wish they had more space, and that a 40 foot container may not be enough (or quickly outgrown).

Additional Notes & Ideas

- A layout prime for workshops or demonstrations
 - [Two level amphitheater seating to accommodate](#) 10-20 people for classes ("how to use XYZ tool" or other community events)
 - [Or a decking and rails above the containers for a viewing space + classes](#)
- Bring natural woods and to soften the feel of the industrial space
 - Like the [Presidio Tunnel Top Field Center](#)
- [Green Walls on the containers](#) to soften the industrial feel
- Mini-Library
 - [A glassed in enclosure](#) that invites hanging out in a small "mini-library" of books relevant to tools, gardening, nature. Could also house the "checkout" space for librarians

Proposal

We should plan for a comfortable amount of tool space. Proposing that we go with something larger.

- **Two shipping containers** run in parallel with a large wooden deck between them for classes and workshops
 - AI Generated mocks:



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- **Three shipping containers** in a U-shape with a large wooden deck between them
 - AI Generated mocks:



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Pinterest of ideas

<https://www.pinterest.com/thushanamarasiriwardena/tool-shed/>

Budget

We need to price out tools, infrastructure, build out, containers and materials – along with an “endowment” to fund ongoing maintenance and upkeep. A starting budget that seems reasonable is \$750k.

Next Steps

- **Summer 2023** – Ballpark estimates for major components (tools, infrastructure, build out, containers, materials, “endowment”, utilities/comfort for occupancy)
- **Fall 2023** – Ballpark estimates for on-going costs

Name & Logo

This project needs a name and galvanize it as a real concept. Below is a scratchpad of potential names, with the initial community survey and committee to gather more ideas. The committee will select the name with final approval by the Library Director.

Name Concepts

1. Library of Things
2. Tool Library
3. Library of Tools
4. Tool Lending Library

Logo

After a name is selected, an eye-catching logo in line with Alameda Municipal Style and the Library's aesthetic will be commissioned, to be designed by a local graphic designer. This logo is intended and suitable for placement on the Tool Library building signage, promotional flyers, documents, attire worn by staffers. It should be desirable enough that Alamedans proactively want to even purchase attire or posters with the logo – and a potential fundraising mechanic.

Next Steps

- **Summer 2023** – Determine project name
- **Summer 2023** – Design logo

Staffing

It seems like two people, even on a busy weekend day, could cover the needed attention required to run a successful tool library if it's as big as Oakland or Berkeley. While these aren't librarians, they were on staff at a part-time level. The experience of the teams seemed to vary – from some staffers just getting into this space, while others were formerly in the trades and are “retired”.

Next Steps

- **Spring 2023** - Estimate an annual budget for a “Staff” rate librarians for potential hours to shape up what annual costs for running the library could look like

Hours

Oakland's tool library is open every day the branch is, typically from 10-5:30pm and extended hours till 8, two days a week. Practically the same for Berkeley. Both evolved to this full schedule. Predictably, most of the traffic is near the weekend.

Our library could start small as a Thursday/Friday/Saturday openings and expand from there as interest demands.

Next Steps

- **Spring 2023** - Via the Community Survey determine critical days for the library to be open and what hours would allow the greatest access of services

Other Libraries

- **Find your Local Tool Lending Library**
 - Seems to be the best source of all libraries that exist worldwide
 - <https://localtools.org/find/>
- **Berkeley Tool Lending Library**
 - <https://www.berkeleypubliclibrary.org/locations/tool-lending-library>
- **Oakland Tool Lending Library**
 - [Website](#)
- **Sacramento Library of Things**
 - <https://www2.museumkey.com/things/?code=sacrca95814>
- **Richmond Tool Library**
 - <https://ioby.org/project/richmond-tool-library>
- **Silicon Valley Power**
 - Municipal Power's Library of Energy Efficiency tools
 - <https://www.siliconvalleypower.com/residents/save-energy/tool-lending-library>
- **Santa Rosa Tool Library**
 - Not part of the library system
 - <https://www.borrowtools.org/home>

May 16, 2023 | 📅 Seed and Tool Library Update

Attendees: Jane Chisaki Thushan Amarasiriwardena MRomero@alamedaca.gov

Notes

- The city is going to hire a project manager for the park/aquatic center
 - Cost out the different sizes of the pools and different infrastructure
 - And enable council to pick and choose
- Plan of record for us
 - Get the early plan, community feedback and costs ready to present to the city (be prepared in advance)
 - Policies and what we want
 - Stuff that we can do now
 - Size of things
 - The more that we show that we're prepared, the better that helps us
 - Community feedback
- Committee
 - Thushan to build committee
- Timeline ambitious
 - Push out
 - A full view of the timeline
- Community input
 - Give a framework of what we're looking for
- Hours
 - Agree its best to start small and then add
- Survey
 - Add name ideas
 - Target 200 respondents
- Lenses to have productive / wind-behind-our-sails conversations with City Council / City Managers
 - Show
 - The community wants it
 - That we're prepared to run it
 - How much it would cost to run
 - Overall benefits to the community
 - Keep equity in mind
 - Hoping to put it in the west end
 - Designed to be something that anyone in the community can participate and make living here more affordable
 - As an investment in the community

Action items

- ☐ Thushan Amarasiriwardena to (ideally with sarapendletonstrickler@gmail.com) formulate the draft survey for approval by Jane Chisaki and Marlon Romero by mid June
- ☐ Thushan Amarasiriwardena to formulate a committee for Jane Chisaki and Marlon Romero to review by late June
- ☐ Marlon Romero to estimate out staffing and utility costs by mid June
- ☐ Marlon Romero to introduce Thushan to Sarah Henry (City Information Officer) about setting up a form by mid June
- ☐ Thushan Amarasiriwardena to mock out the tool library further with illustrations by mid June
- ☐ Thushan Amarasiriwardena to hone a timeline out further for the group to review by mid June

Utilities

- \$1000-900 a month utilities
- \$110k with benefits - Library Technician 1
 - Library Associate 1 – Part Time Designation
 - \$25k for part time