

[Home](#) > [Regional News](#)

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El Centro Celebrates Opening of New Library

Public Turns Out to See the Unveiling of \$17 Million Facility Paid for by Measure P

MIKE SALORIO ON NOVEMBER 11, 2022

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EL CENTRO — Children eagerly cut the ribbon and excitedly hurried through the front door of the new El Centro Library at its opening day ceremony on Thursday, Nov. 10.

It was a carnival-like atmosphere at the well-attended ceremony where there was a row of food trucks, balloon animals and face painting for children, a fire engine with a large American flag waving at the end of its extended ladder, and a dancing Mickey Mouse posing for photographs.

“I still remember my yellow library card that I got from the State Street library, but as we remember in 2010, unfortunately, we had a huge earthquake, and that earthquake devastated that building,” El Centro Mayor Tomás Oliva said during his opening remarks at the ribbon-cutting ceremony Thursday afternoon.

Oliva was referring to the Easter Sunday, magnitude-7.2 earthquake that struck Baja California, Mexico, on April 4, 2010. The earthquake caused extensive damage that forced the closure of the old library building on State Street in El Centro, and its eventual demolition.



The outside of the new state-of-the-art \$17 million El Centro Library at 1198 N. Imperial Ave. on its first day of operation on Thursday, Nov. 10. | MIKE SALC. PHOTO

The construction of the new \$17 million library was made possible via funds from Measure P, a half-cent sales tax increase approved by voters in 2017, explained Oliva, who thanked the community for approving the measure.

“We understood that it’s important to have a location for our kids to study, for them to learn, for them to imagine,” the mayor said.

The new library is 19,811 square feet, with separate areas for children, teens, and adults, a community room that can seat 200, craft areas, study rooms, and a “Friend of the Library” bookstore. And there are 10 laptops that can be checked out for use by community members.

Victor Zazueta, chairperson of the Friends of El Centro Community Services Foundation Board of Directors, said during his remarks that libraries are the “People’s University” that allow access to lifelong learning opportunities, such as adult education and information technology literacy. He explained the evolution of libraries from using card catalogs indexed by the Dewey decimal system, and the switch to online databases, and providing computer and Internet access to the community.

“In my years of working in public libraries, I’ve seen how public libraries have evolved. I mean, we are a community hub. We provide all kinds of services to everyone that walks in that door, and everyone is welcome,” Zazueta said.



Local youths play on top of an orange and gray Jeep modular set inside the Children’s reading area inside the new El Centro Library on Thursday afternoon, Nov. 10. | MIKE SALORIO PHOTO

Raj Singh, an Imperial resident, who was at the opening ceremony with his wife and three children, thought the new library was incredible.

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“My kids are home-schooled, and they’re going to be here quite a bit. It’s a great, great addition to the community,” he said.

Singh admitted to having a library card for the city of Imperial Public Library, but not for the El Centro Library, but he’ll be getting cards for himself and his children.

“They’re all big-time readers. Well, at least two of them are. The older one is probably the best reader, this middle one here he’s an OK reader, and honestly, the little one can’t read at all,” joked Singh.

The new El Centro Library is located at 1198 N. Imperial Ave. The library’s hours of operations are 10 a.m. to 7 p.m. Mondays through Thursdays and 10 a.m. to 6 p.m. Fridays and Saturdays. The library is closed on Sundays.



A wave of visitors to the first day of operations for the El Centro Library walk through the doors following a grand-opening ceremony on Thursday afternoon, Nov. 10. The \$17 million facility was paid for with Measure P half-cent sales tax revenues. | MIKE SALORIO PHOTO

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