Pursuant to Article 6 of the CEQA Guidelines, the City of Berkeley Land Use Planning Division has prepared this document because the City proposes to find that the project described herein would not have a significant effect on the environment. The public comment period for the proposed negative declaration shall be from May 26 to June 15, 2010.

PROJECT DESCRIPTION
The proposed project is an amendment to the City’s Zoning Ordinance (Berkeley Municipal Code Title 23) that would allow modification with a Use Permit of any zoning requirement applicable to a change, expansion, or reconstruction of an existing public library, where a Variance is currently required for most such modifications. The proposed amendment would not affect existing requirements for a Use Permit for any new library or for any change or expansion of an existing nonconforming library. The draft proposed amendment is as follows, and is subject to further review and modification by the Planning Commission and City Council:

Notwithstanding any other provision of this Title, any conforming or lawful non-conforming public library existing as of May 1, 2010 may be (1) changed, (2) expanded, or (3) demolished and a new public library constructed on the same site, subject to issuance of a Use Permit, unless such change, expansion or new library is otherwise allowed by this Title. The Board may modify any requirement of this Title applicable to such change, expansion or new library as part of the Use Permit.

The main purpose of the amendment is to facilitate the approval of improvements authorized under Measure FF, a bond measure approved by Berkeley voters in November 2008 to “renovate, expand, and make seismic and access improvements at four neighborhood branch libraries”. The amendment would also allow modification of zoning requirements applicable to future, as yet unknown, improvements that may be necessary. The amendment would not allow modification of zoning standards for any newly constructed building on a site other than the five currently existing library sites.

PROJECT LOCATION
The proposed amendment would apply to existing Berkeley public libraries, which are as follows:

- Central Library
  2090 Kittredge Street and 2031 Bancroft Way
  APNs: 057-2028-017-01, 057-2028-005-00

- South Branch Library
  1901 Russell Street
  APN: 053-1679-016-01

- Claremont Branch Library
  2940-2950 Benvenue Avenue
  APNs: 052-1573-016-00, 052-1573-017-00

- West Branch Library
  1125 University Avenue
  APN: 057-2085-011

- North Branch Library
  1170 The Alameda
  APN: 061-2605-035-00

PROJECT PROPONENT:
City of Berkeley

FURTHER INFORMATION
The proposed negative declaration and initial study are available at the Land Use Planning Division, 2120 Milvia Street, Berkeley, and online at http://www.ci.berkeley.ca.us/ContentDisplay.aspx?id=362. For further information, please contact Aaron Sage, Senior Planner, at 510-981-7425 or asage@cityofberkeley.info.

Attachment: Initial Study