

## CITY OF REDONDO BEACH

### Budget Response Report

#### **#35**

**June 3, 2025**

#### **Question:**

*What is the cost to create a sensory room in the Public Library?*

#### **Response:**

The addition of a sensory room aligns with Redondo Beach Public Library's mission to be a welcoming atmosphere to meet the information, educational, recreational, and cultural needs of all Library users.

A sensory room at a public library is a thoughtfully designed, calming space that offers a range of sensory experiences to support individuals of all ages, especially those with sensory processing needs such as autism, ADHD, or anxiety. Sensory rooms are being increasingly introduced in a wide range of public spaces, and libraries are incorporating sensory rooms to create more inclusive and welcoming spaces for all patrons. Rooms are made available for use by children, teens, and adults with sensory needs and are monitored and scheduled by staff.

Planning a sensory room in a public library requires careful consideration to ensure it is inclusive, functional, and supportive of diverse sensory needs. Key factors include selecting a quiet, low-traffic location within the library to minimize external noise and distractions. The room should be designed with flexible lighting options, such as dimmable or natural light, and soundproofing elements to create a calming atmosphere. Furniture and equipment—like soft seating, tactile panels, weighted blankets, and fidget tools—should accommodate a range of sensory preferences, from soothing to stimulating. Accessibility is crucial, so the layout must be wheelchair-friendly, with lever-style handles instead of knobs. Additionally, library staff should receive training on how to accommodate neurodivergent patrons and maintain the room as a respectful, welcoming space for all.

#### **Considerations:**

##### **Atmosphere & Lighting**

- Soft, dimmable lighting replaces harsh fluorescents—often with LED color-changing lights or fiber optic strands that gently shift hues

- The space feels quiet and cocooned, often with acoustic wall panels or soft furnishings to absorb sound

#### Furniture & Layout

- Comfortable seating includes bean bags, rocking chairs, floor cushions, or pod chairs that offer a feeling of enclosure
- The layout is open yet cozy, with defined zones for different activities (calming, interactive, reading, etc.)
- Shelves may house sensory-friendly books, including tactile and high-contrast picture books

#### Sensory Tools & Features

- Fidget toys, stress balls, textured tiles, and sensory bins with sand, beads, or rice are available for tactile engagement
- Weighted blankets or lap pads offer proprioceptive input for grounding and relaxation
- Some rooms feature bubble tubes, interactive light panels, or projection systems that display stars, clouds, or underwater scenes

#### Sound & Audio

- Acoustic panels can absorb ambient noise, reducing echoes and reverberations within the room. This helps create a more predictable and peaceful auditory environment
- A white noise machine or soft background music may play to create a soothing audio environment

#### Policies

- Sign-up system or time limits to manage capacity and ensure equitable time
- Orientation for first-time users
- Clear code of conduct for respectful use

The cost of designing and building a custom sensory room can range significantly, from several thousand to tens of thousands of dollars, based on multiple variables. Key factors influencing the total cost include the room's dimensions, the complexity and sophistication of the sensory equipment and technology, the selection of materials, and the geographical location of the project. The specific integration of sensory stimuli, such as lighting, sound systems, tactile surfaces, and interactive components, also contributes to the final price. On average, a custom sensory room can cost anywhere from \$25,000 to \$50,000 or more, depending on these considerations. These estimates are based on preliminary research, and more time would be needed to accurately predict total costs.

Two scalable options are provided below: a small (approx. 100 sq. ft.) and a moderate-sized (approx. 200-250 sq. ft.) sensory room.

<b>Category</b>	<b>Small Room</b>	<b>Moderate Room</b>
Remodeling & Construction	\$15,000	\$35,000
Equipment & Supplies	\$6,000	\$8,000
Installation & Setup	\$4,000	\$7,000
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$25,000</b>	<b>\$50,000</b>

Funding for a sensory room could come from a variety of sources. Libraries often seek local, state, or federal grants that support accessibility, inclusion, or public health initiatives. Private foundations, particularly those focused on neurodiversity, education, or disability advocacy, may also provide targeted funding. Additionally, community-based efforts, such as the Friends of the Redondo Beach Public Library, can potentially generate financial support. A combination of these sources can also help to ensure sustainable funding for both the creation and maintenance of the sensory room.

Staff recommends further investigation into the possible addition of a sensory room at the Library. This approach will ensure that the Library makes an informed decision based on real community needs, identifies appropriate furniture and equipment, and investigates how to use limited public library space effectively. It also allows staff the time to identify any specific design standards or guidelines that are applicable to sensory rooms and explore potential funding sources.