

Virginia Society – AIA Prize Competition 2024

INTRODUCTION

Since Ben Franklin's founding of lending subscription libraries in Philadelphia, and the subsequent open access libraries later in the 19th century, public libraries have received broad and consistent popular support for their democratic missions and services. The ability to access free information has become a core ideal of what it means to be an American citizen, despite periods of historic inequality. Libraries help make this access possible by placing public benefit at the center of their work and by continually adapting their strategies over time to meet the public's changing needs.

In recent years, the cost of printed material has made meeting that mission very difficult. Also, the impact of today's digital culture has shifted users away from traditional 'literary' library services such as books. In terms of both cost and impact on the general public appetite for literature, journalism, and research, libraries have had to find more avenues by which they fulfill their mission. Access to the internet, digital content and services greatly enhances the library's role and value as a *community public room*. The success of libraries moving into this reconceived role may hinge greatly on how architects 're-present' and fit their design into the context. Accessibility is critical in terms of equity, diversity and inclusion, as well as to physical access.

THE CHALLENGE

Design a public library as a *community public room* in Phoebus, VA. This is a "bookless" library providing Wi-Fi connectivity, and access to digital collections and services. It will expand the offerings of the traditional "book-filled" branch library located on the corner across the street from the project site. The overall design challenge is to integrate "bookless" library and community room, so that site is building, and building is site. The resulting design must be a place both welcoming and safe for individuals, as well as for groups that choose to gather and interact-

Programmatic requirements are organized into public indoor and outdoor areas: The indoor components are main entrance and digital work gallery, computer access and support lounge, children's room with enclosed terrace, community meeting room, librarian and IT workspaces, and accessible restrooms. Outdoor components are an open-air large space for speeches, performances, concerts, movies, workshops, etc.; and a number (defined by the designer) of smaller open-air nooks where individuals or groups can study and research by connecting to the library's Wi-Fi using their own devices. These spaces can be shaped by and woven into the ramp system. On-site parking for library staff, and at least one accessible parking space is also required. A detailed program is provided to facilitate diagramming and coordination of spatial relationships and the form of programmatic components.

Important challenges to be addressed by the design on the selected site are both its future-proofing as well as its resilience. Nor'easters, hurricanes, storm surge, subsidence and sea level rise can affect the site. Because the area is prone to flooding, ordinances require the building's lowest floor to have an elevation at least 3 feet above adjoining grade. Care must be taken to ensure that indoor and outdoor programmatic spaces are accessible to all. This calls for greater attention to the creative approaches proposed in bridging and connecting outdoor-to-indoor levels and in the creation of outdoor rooms.

Ordinances for this district also require the following:

- *Use of flood-damage resistant materials for building components that are below the base flood elevation.*
- *Electrical, heating, ventilation, plumbing, and air conditioning equipment, as well as other service facilities, designed and/or located so that water does not enter or accumulate within these components during flooding.*

SITE

- The project's proposed location is the corner site at the intersection of N. Mallory St. and E. County, bound on the east by an alley named Tennis Lane. The existing Hampton Public Library Phoebus Branch is on the side of E. County St opposite the project site. Traffic on Mallory Street is heavy during peak times, as it connects the Lower Peninsula to I-64. County Street used to be the link to downtown Hampton City via Old Buckroe Rd; but now serves as a feeder to Mallory St. The north end of Mallory Street leads to Buckroe Beach.
- The project site is zoned C-2. Allowable maximum building height is two and one-half stories or thirty-five feet. Where a proposed building height is to exceed this limit, that building must be set back one foot from all required front, side, and rear yards for every 3 feet of additional height. Ten percent of the lot area must be designated and shown as a green area for trees, shrubs, and turf. Accurate site plans and photographs are provided separately. Assume that the area to the east of the competition site will be developed as a mixed-use project with commercial space on N. Mallory St. and residential on Tennis Lane.

DESIGN PRESENTATION Minimum REQUIREMENTS

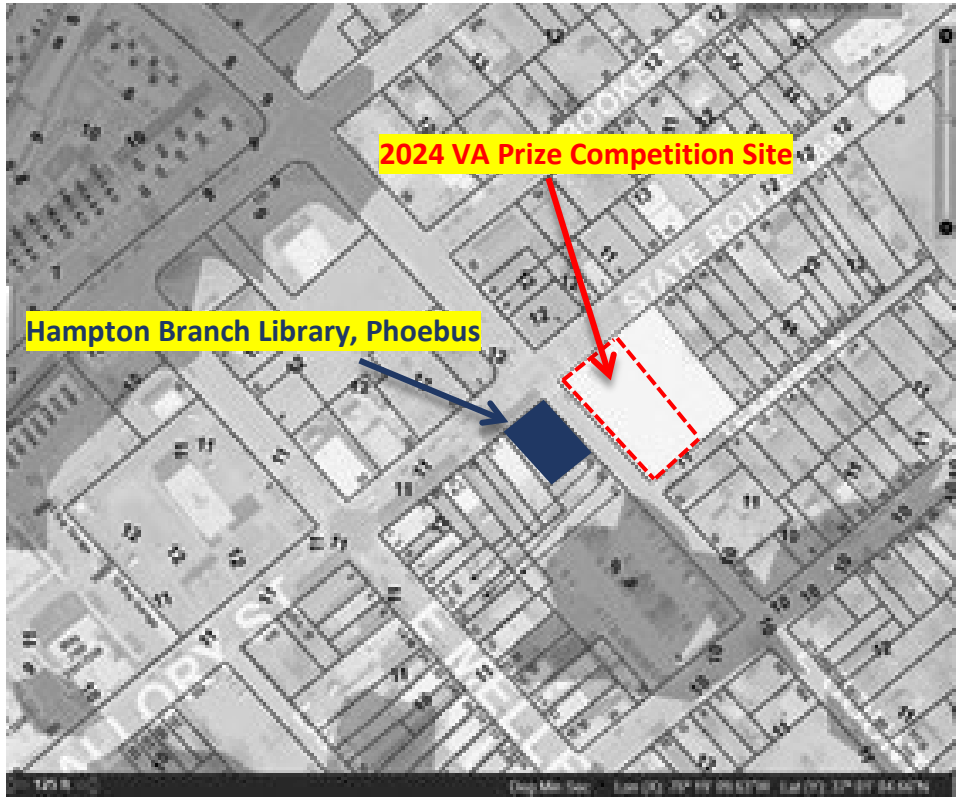
Format: **20" X 30" vertical or horizontal**

- **Site Plan Design:** Must include the proposed new library floor plan, outdoor rooms, ramps and steps, parking etc., on a base map that includes sidewalks and the two main streets. Scale defined by the designer must be appropriate for a 20" X 30" area. Include graphic scale.
- **Site Cross-Section:** Must demonstrate design approach for elevating and connecting spaces visually and physically. Site section must cut through the library building. Provide at the same scale as for the site plan design.
- **A Perspective:** Must highlight that area of the design that best demonstrates response to the competition's main challenges – elevation change required between site grade and building floor level; building entry, egress, and accessibility; provision of building and site as a community public room. **OR, provide a Series of Small Perspectival Vignettes** as a visual spatial narrative demonstrating the interaction between indoor and outdoor rooms – site as building, building as site.

More...BACKGROUND | Historical Significance of the District

Phoebus is a district of Hampton, VA. The history of Phoebus is directly related to the history of Fort Monroe. Before the arrival of Europeans, it was the land of the Kecoughtan Indians. The indigenous orchards and villages were removed and replaced by farms. Less than a mile away, closer to Fort Monroe, is the arrival point of the first Africans brought into the Virginia English colony in 1619. During the Civil War the Union's Camp Hamilton was located in the area. The First Colored Calvary Regiment was formed in the camp. It was also Slabtown's site, a neighborhood created by formerly enslaved people who built their cabins and sustenance gardens here. By the 1880's the historian Robert Eng describes Phoebus as a "predominantly black" settlement.

In the late 1890's and into the early 20th century, Mallory Street and Mellen Street comprised an active business district where breweries, saloons, restaurants, and hotels were located. The businesses on these streets provided for vacationers, watermen, and soldiers, as well as for local residents. A bridge connects Mellen Street to the peninsula where Fort Monroe is located. Fort Monroe continued to be a major military base where soldiers embarked and disembarked for many years. Also, the Old Soldier's Home was located on the south end of Mallory Street. Trolleys ran down Mellen and Mallory from downtown Newport News via downtown Hampton. During the 20th and early 21st centuries Phoebus went through periods of disinvestment and reversal. Most recently, it appears to be on an economic upswing. New multifamily housing has been constructed and restaurants, cafés and breweries have opened, attracting patrons from the Hampton Roads region.



Intersection N. Mallory St. and E. County St, Phoebus: Hampton, VA. Not to scale. North is ^
AIA VA Society 2024 Competition

Public Library Community Hub | Programmatic Requirements

INDOOR ROOMS	SQFT	Notes
Main Entrance and Digital Gallery	300	Easy access to community meeting room
Digital Access Lounge with computers and plug-in for patrons tablets, smartphone, laptops.	600	Tables, seating, computers, power charge zone. Visually accessible from librarians/ IT workspace. Capacity 10-12 people.
Children's Space	500	Space for workshops and readings, plays. Capacity 12-15 children and facilitator. Directly accessible to outdoor controlled-access terrace.
Outdoor Learning and Reading Terrace	500	Access controlled from library interior. Associated to children's space. No access from outside. Finished floor above flooding level
Community Meeting Room	600	Close to main entry. Movable tables and chairs for 10-15 persons, minimal kitchenette with storage. Meeting room must be accessible when library is not operating.
Clustered Public Inclusive Unisex Single Room & Accessible Family Restrooms	200	Accessible to community meeting room when other library spaces are closed. Two 4' – 6'-6" single user toilet room (toilet and lavatory), Two 7'-4" X 6'-6" accessible/family toilet rooms and janitor closet
SUBTOTAL indoor public	2,700	
LIBRARY OPERATION		
Reception information/ Check out/return equipment/ workspace	300	Next to entry/ lobby. Space for two librarians counter and workspace. Must have visual access to all spaces.
Storage for in-house use circulating tablets and VR headsets	60	Must be next to check in/out librarians' space
IT workspace and control	200	Close to librarians' workspace. Workspace and control center for all digital.
SUBTOTAL library operation space	560	
SERVICE Spaces		
Mechanical	150	
Electrical /Telecomm	60	
Subtotal service	210	
Total	3,470	
OUTDOOR ROOMS		
Outdoor open air community meeting room for lectures, concerts, performances, demonstrations		Capacity 50-60 persons. Must be 3' above grade
Outdoor nooks for individuals and small group gatherings		Number of spaces to be determined by each designer
Other Site		
Staff Parking*		3 parking spaces. One space must be accessible. All must be close to a library entrance.
Accessible public parking		1 accessible space for patron - van
Bicycle Parking	75	Bicycle rack for 5 bicycles with overhead protection and placed at same elevation as interior floor. Next to entry

(*) Vehicular parking for patrons available in public parking in adjacent lot.