



EASTERN SHORE PUBLIC
LIBRARY FOUNDATION

Eastern Shore of Virginia

REGIONAL LIBRARY & HERITAGE CENTER

Beyond Books!



VISION

The vision for the regional library has grown with ever increasing community engagement.



The Shore's residents no longer need merely a facility for storing books.

The regional library provides family literacy resources, supports workforce development, and collaborates with nonprofits to build regional capacity. The Heritage Center preserves the unique history of the Eastern Shore of Virginia and makes it accessible to citizens, visitors, and virtual users.

Our facility is also part of a downtown revitalization of Parksley, a unique, Victorian railway town.

We appreciate your reading our Case for Support to understand how this regional library responds to the changing needs of the community.

BACKGROUND

A Regional Library Serving Virginia's Accomack and Northampton Counties



Every time you enter one of the four Eastern Shore of Virginia public libraries, you are using regional library services.

When the Eastern Shore Public Library in Accomac was built in 1964, the organizers could not have envisioned the modern library of today with broadband Internet, computers, large group programs, and collaborative meetings of local nonprofits.



The public libraries in Chincoteague and Nassawadox did not exist. Parksley and Exmore historically had short-lived libraries. Collaboration with Cape Charles Memorial Library was just beginning.

BACKGROUND

The Shore is One Big Small Town

The Eastern Shore of Virginia comprises Accomack and Northampton counties with a population of 45,553. Growth industries include aquaculture and rocket sciences.

The Shore has the last seventy miles of undeveloped shoreline on the East Coast. The Shore has geographically challenged areas with veins of “necks,” narrow peninsulas of land isolating residents from towns and highways. Community hubs are even more important to help the families connect with others.

The Shore has an aging population, with a higher proportion than the rest of Virginia above age 60. Those of age in the working years remains stable. One in 5 Eastern Shore residents live in poverty and over 30% of children below 17 live in poverty.

The diversity of the area has changed dramatically since 1964. Both counties now have a Hispanic population of 9%, making up much of the young, growing families. Haitian communities are growing as well, with Parksley being home to two Haitian grocery stores and a Haitian church. Library staff celebrates the multi-cultural community with an annual “Celebrate Us” children’s event.



PROJECT DETAILS

Site Location

Parksley, Virginia has a vision to capitalize on the economic growth seen in Chincoteague and Cape Charles.



Parksley is central to the larger populations of the Eastern Shore. The town is located less than thirty miles from Chincoteague, Onancock, Onley, Accomac, Saxis, Bloxom, Melfa, and Exmore. Parksley is located on main transportation arteries.



The state-of-the-art regional library is key to Parksley's Downtown Revitalization plan, knowing that it brings new traffic to the town. Already, several new businesses have located in Parksley because of the library. The town boasts the Eastern Shore Railway Museum, a traditional Town Park, a Farmer and Artisan Market, quaint shops, a history walking trail, and a planned bandshell-pavilion. Parksley makes for an inviting family destination.



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LITERACY CHALLENGES

Family Literacy and a Culture of Reading

A sad 18.9% of Accomack County and 15.4% of Northampton County Kindergarteners do not meet school readiness benchmarks.

The regional library infrastructure, technology and expanded capacity will foster the development of new or expanded programs. More effective collaboration with public schools, childcare centers, the Eastern Shore Literacy Council, Eastern Shore Community College, and other social service and health agencies provides a “family approach” to literacy.

Our responsibilities include early childhood reading programs, afterschool and summer reading programs, and English as a Second Language (ESL) learning resources.

Computer and financial literacy programs are supported by new program space.

The regional library provides key lifelong learning and technology resources.



INITIATIVES

Building Nonprofit Capacity and Workforce Development

Public libraries historically are the great collaborators with other nonprofit agencies, making information resources accessible.

The regional library partners with the Health Communities coalition and Community Partners of the Eastern Shore, involving library staff in the network of key service providers. The regional library provides grant application training and access to the Foundation Directory Online. The new program and meetings spaces provide opportunities for joint meetings and learning activities.

Workforce development capacity for small and medium local businesses is expanded with the regional library's small and large meeting rooms, presentation technology, and audio-visual recording equipment.

The regional library's new, larger capacity helps build the capacity of numerous nonprofits on the Shore.

The regional library's new spaces now allow staff to have basic workforce development programs to prepare citizens in areas of technology, hospitality, and small business.



INITIATIVES

A Heritage Hub for a Bedrock of the Nation's History

Local history documents and primary source materials are archived in a climate-controlled space. Valuable historical documents can remain on the Shore, rather than being donated to elsewhere.

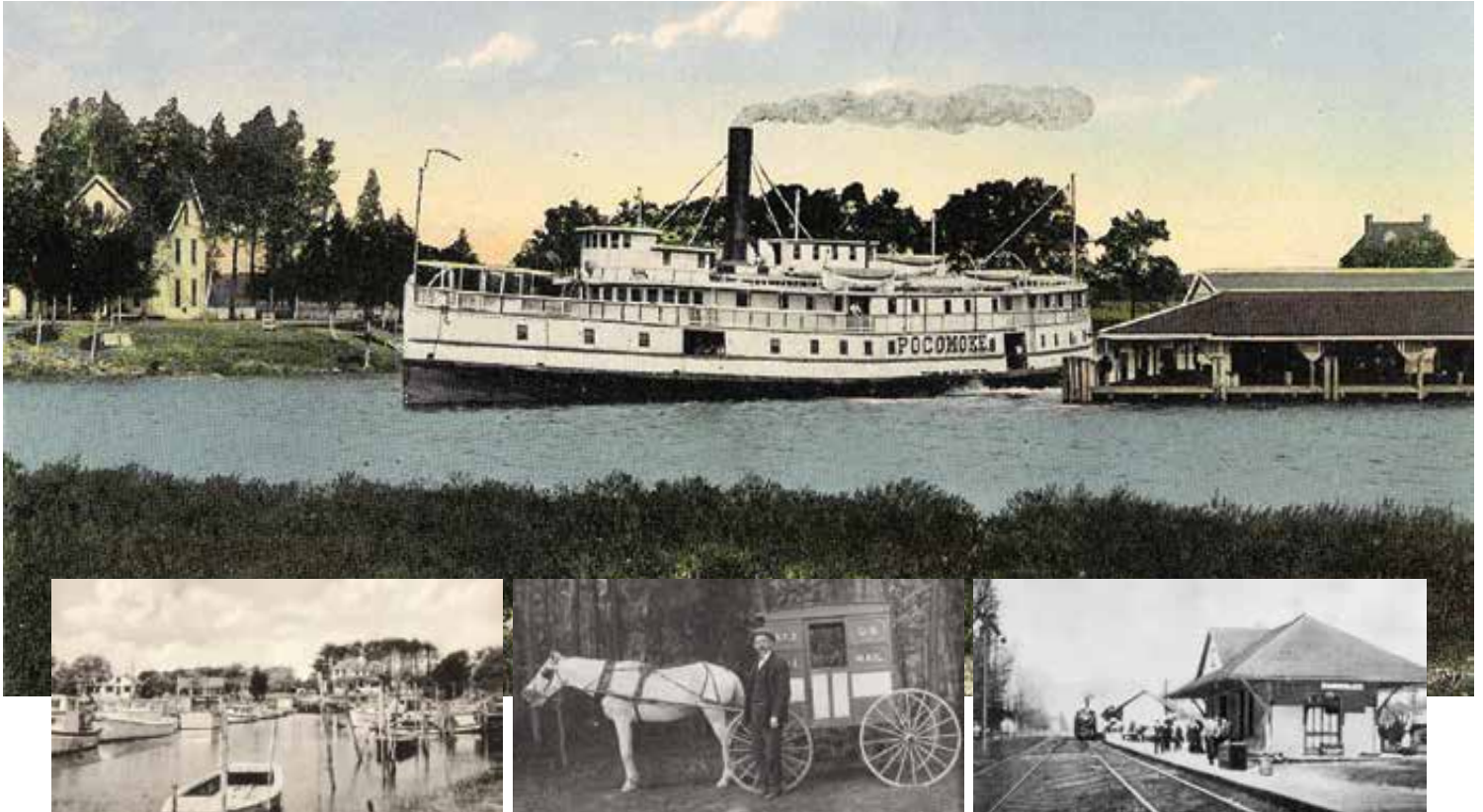
For centuries, the unique geography of the Eastern Shore of Virginia has fostered an equally distinct culture and economy within the United States. Given that special standing, the preservation of its heritage is critical. The Eastern Shore of Virginia Heritage Center serves as a premier resource for genealogists, historians, humanities students and scholars on local, regional and national levels. It is a resource for local schools and students. It provides the necessary infrastructure for the library's vital collections.

The National Endowment for the Humanities Challenge Grant recognized the value of the Heritage Center with a 2019 Challenge Grant. This brings the Center into a national network of cultural and humanities organizations. This strengthens the Library staff's role with the Museum Network, under the auspices of Virginia Humanities, to provide support and training to the Shore's museums and historical societies.



INITIATIVES

Preserving Our History



Shore history requires preservation:

The documents, photographs, materials and newspaper articles highlighting the different periods of Shore History dating from the 1600s are preserved with room to be proudly displayed, such as:

- > The early days of governance and the Eastern Shore role in Virginia History,
- > The changing names of Eastern Shore counties,
- > The evolving transportation systems over centuries: sailing, then steamships, then railroads, finally trucks and highways,
- > The evolving and historical economic engines of the Shore:
 - > The watermen and the crabbing, oystering, and fishing industries,
 - > The agriculture and farming culture: the history-making Produce Exchange,
 - > The History of the Barrier Islands, the Hunt Clubs,
 - > The coming of the Naval Air Station, Wallops Island and NASA,
 - > Tourism today.

SCOPE OF COLLECTIONS

Our Service Area

The value of the collections has been recognized by the National Endowment for the Humanities through multiple grants.



NATIONAL
ENDOWMENT
FOR THE
HUMANITIES



The new Heritage Center houses the largest and best organized collection of books, manuscripts, photographs, and other material related to the history, genealogy, and culture of the Eastern Shore of Virginia.

Dating to the 1600's, these mark the earliest European contact with North America. They bear witness to the birth and development of European settlement in the Atlantic and Chesapeake Bay region. This includes the library's existing unique local history collection of over two thousand books and thousands of documents.

Two large and important collections have recently been deeded to the Heritage Center by the estates of local historians Frances Bibbins Latimer and Kirk C. Mariner. Both collections have unique African American material that add diverse depth and scope. Staff and volunteers have been digitizing the Latimer Collection, parts of which can now be viewed online.

PROJECT DETAILS

Regional Library and Heritage Center Facility Overview

The new regional library is a 20,837 sf facility that includes the 11,000 sf grocery store structure. Fifty-five parking spaces, an ample municipal parking lot in easy walking distance, and a public transit bus stop provide enhanced accessibility.



1 Children's Area

Children and families are bathed in natural lighting as they seek new reading materials, learn new technology, and participate in programs. A 324 sf Children's Program Room introduces children to coding and virtual reality. The 2,491 sf Arthur W. Perdue Children's Room has an office for the children's librarian and a family restroom. The Frances Bibbins Latimer Children's Study Room serves a dual purpose as a calming place for learning. Comfortable seating and table space provide for both reading and computer use.

2 Young Adult Area

Teen library users have their own 753 sf space, next to the MakerSpace. It is strategically located for a highly-visible entrance and proximity to public service staff help. Wide windows invite students into the library and create a bright, engaging space.

3 Multi-generational Space

Fiction, nonfiction, and magazines for adult readers are located in a 4,596 sf open area with comfortable seating, reading tables, and computer stations. Two group study rooms are nearby, but away from the activity of the public service desk.

PROJECT DETAILS

4

Public Service, Gathering, and Gallery Space

Answering the transformation of the public libraries as the “Third Place,” the foyer, public service and hallways also serve as gallery space, meeting space, reader advisory, and information portal. A clerestory foyer distributes natural lighting. Artwork and history exhibits greet visitors.

5

Technical Services and Administration

If the Nassawadox, Chincoteague, and Cape Charles libraries provided technical services on their own, significant increases in operating costs would need to be provided by these localities. Staff and volunteers can now work in uncluttered, organized spaces designed for flexible future use.



ESVA HERITAGE CENTER

6

Large Community Room and Lecture Hall

The 1,289 sf large meeting space is available to community groups in addition to library programs. A storage room and refreshment preparation room is available as well as restrooms. Conferencing technology is available.

7

Eastern Shore Room, Archives Storage, and Lab

Valuable collections of papers, photographs, and rare books are protected from the high humidity and extreme temperatures of the Eastern Shore. Specialized dehumidification, vapor-barrier, and fire protection give donors confidence in deeding their collections to the Heritage Center. Digitization technology is also available.

8

MakerSpace

Our visitors are no longer merely consumers of information. They use the library to create their own content. Audio-visual equipment in the sound-controlled studio provides recording and production equipment for use in making podcasts, educational programs, oral histories, and for teaching these technologies.

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