

A LIBRARY

for

CHARLES CITY COUNTY, VIRGINIA

THE CASE FOR SUPPORT





WHAT DOES A LIBRARY MEAN TO CHARLES CITY COUNTY?

More than a building that houses books and data, the library represents a window to a larger world. ...

—Barack Obama

A library is not about building walls; it's about tearing them down.

It means opening up opportunities for learning. It means bringing people of all ages and from all races and economic backgrounds together. It means expanding our awareness beyond the world in which we live.

When we imagine a public library for Charles City County, we dream of open doors and unlimited possibilities for our community.

A LIBRARY IS A RIGHT

Libraries are America's great information equalizers – the only place people of all ages and backgrounds can find and freely use such a diversity of resources. ...

— John W. Berry, former president of the American Library Association

In other words, the library – and its free access to knowledge and resources – is the right of every citizen, in every community.

However for most of our history, the residents of Charles City County have not enjoyed this right. Charles City County has been the only jurisdiction within the Commonwealth of Virginia without a public library facility. For 27 years, the county's only claim to library service was the Heritage Public Library shared with a neighboring county. Located in New Kent, this library was 20 miles away from many residents, making it inconvenient – and sometimes even impossible – to use.

In January 2008, things went from bad to worse when the Heritage Library building was declared unsafe for occupancy and was closed. Following this closure, the Library Board of Trustees opened two smaller facilities: one in New Kent and one in Charles City. The facility in Charles City, located in an unused courtroom of the new Charles City County courthouse, provides only 2,200 square feet of space, has no room for meetings or programs and is open only 17 hours a week.

But in addition to its deficits, this facility is merely a stopgap measure. By May 2011, the space in the county courthouse will no longer be available. At that time, the library collection will be without a home and Charles City will once again become the only jurisdiction in Virginia without a public library.



Informing the community Social Services Director **Byron Adkins** believes that the library will play a critical role in the community. He even goes so far as to say that it's perhaps even more important than institutions like the post office, the bank and the fire station because it reinforces the benefits of these institutions. Whether Adkins' clients need to secure a loan, send a registered letter or search online for a job, the library provides an "endless resource of information" for them.

However, Adkins would love to see the library in Charles City County play an even larger role in his clients' lives. He hopes that a better-equipped facility will be able to teach computer skills and interview techniques to the community as well as offer workshops on even more general information such as how to fix a pipe and when to call a plumber. To Adkins, the library is "a knowledge center" for the people of the county.

A gateway for information, technology and resources. "Where to go if you want to know"

For 12 years, Charles City has also supported the Center for Local History, a non-circulating reference library and archives. While the Center contains an extensive collection, it does not meet the need for a public library. Also, space is extremely limited. The Center's books, archives and equipment are spread over seven small rooms on two floors of the Neighborhood facility. There is so little space that sometimes patrons must stand as they use resources.

A LIBRARY IS A NEED

A library outranks any other one thing a community can do to benefit its people.
— *Andrew Carnegie*

Not only do the people of Charles City County have a right to a facility of their own, but the county also has a greater need than most.

Economics

The county's population is comprised of 46.4 percent African Americans, 7.3 percent Native Americans and 44.5 percent Caucasians. Nearly ten percent of these residents live below the poverty line. The median household income is \$6,216 below the state average and among the lowest for jurisdictions in the Richmond region.

Many residents simply do not have the financial means to purchase books, magazines and CDs, or rent movies and attend programs.

While some people may see the Internet as leading to libraries' obsolescence, the reverse is definitely true in Charles City. Many county residents do not own a computer, much less have access to the Internet. Because online application is often required by colleges and employers (for entry-level jobs), the library may provide the only avenue for job seekers and college-bound students to apply for employment and enrollment. The library may also offer the only resource for residents entering the workforce to learn computer skills, and for those who have left the work force to learn about programs for assistance. However, due to the limited hours and shortage of computers in the temporary facility, many residents don't have access to a computer when they need it. In fact, the demand is so great that the library has been forced to impose time limits on the computers, especially on Saturdays.

Nowadays, demographics are not the only economic rationale for having a library in the county. The national economy factors in just as powerfully. During the last recession in 2001, a study commissioned by the University of Illinois Library Research Center (LRC) proved that a drop in the economy triggers an increase in library usage. The current economy may drive even those who have historically purchased books, rented movies and paid for other forms of entertainment to turn to the library as a free source of these much-needed diversions.

If local residents had to spend their hard-earned money on the materials circulated in the Heritage Library in 2006-07 alone, it would have cost them about **\$1,208,700**, based on an average cost of \$20 per piece!

Education

Charles City County schools struggle to meet state Standards of Learning and federal No Child Left Behind standards and goals. Many children lack a quiet, distraction-free place to study because of crowded home environments. A library will provide a safe and comfortable place for students to do research, work on homework, type papers, and learn to study and work in groups. It will also allow those students without Internet access to participate in online classes, complete assignments and communicate with their peers. School reading lists, videos, seminars, and tutorials, offered at the library through a collaborative relationship with the schools, will enhance students' literacy and expand their cultural awareness.

High school graduation rates in Charles City now exceed the state average; however, 34.3 percent of county residents over the age of 25 still do not have a high school diploma. This is the highest rate in the Richmond area. For these residents, the library can provide a space to teach vitally important GED classes or other training programs. Even high school graduates may be motivated to pursue a higher education if community college courses are offered at the library.

By giving students of all ages easy access to a library – and compelling reasons to want to use the library – we open doors for enhanced educational performance and higher levels of education.





Opportunities for adult education

Harold Adkins was exposed to his first large library in high school in Oklahoma. There, he started reading for pleasure and has been reading ever since. At 71, Adkins is partial to mysteries by James Patterson, Patricia Cornwell and Lisa Gardner. Since retiring in 1999, he devours about a book and a half a week.

Adkins, who is a Chickahominy elder, credits the Heritage Library for broadening his people's reading base. But he feels there is also the opportunity for the library to provide resources for the Chickahominy people that the tribe cannot afford. In its meetings, the tribe has discussed the need for adult education as well as a relaxed setting where people can come together. Adkins sees the library as a resource that extends far beyond books.

I feel that the library can provide services to the County in several ways beyond providing books. Meeting rooms for the purpose of providing a relaxed atmosphere to discuss county, neighborhood, and cultural issues. Perhaps health & nutrition classes could be taught there.

Community

But the need for a library in Charles City County runs even deeper than economics or education. With only 38 people living per square mile in Charles City, compared to 1,102 in Henrico County, Charles City residents have fewer opportunities to connect. People need a sense of community – a place where they can conduct organization and civic meetings, attend performances, learn about political candidates, or simply catch up with old friends and meet new neighbors.

Part of the way that the old Heritage Library facility fostered this sense of community was through a variety of programs for the children and adults of both counties. When this library was open, it hosted 360 heavily attended programs (total annual program attendance was 8,000), including weekly family story times, authors' visits, Christmas ornament-making and build-your-own-birdhouse workshops, and special programs conducted by the Virginia Living Museum. When the library was divided between the two smaller locations, many programs were discontinued.

Less than one-third of 13-year-olds read for fun and nearly half of 18- to 25-year-old adults read **no books** for pleasure in 2007.¹

¹ 2007 National Endowment for the Arts study – To Read or Not To Read: A Question of National Consequence

When a library serves as a venue for bringing people together, it not only encourages a sense of community, but it also enhances the cultural life of the community. In addition to providing space for classes and club meetings, a large meeting room also creates the opportunity to host lectures, small performances, recitals, movies, and exhibitions. Through exposure to library resources, county residents may become more socially aware, politically astute or culturally enriched.

Add to all that ... use of library services has steadily been on the rise. In 2006-07, the last year of its operation, the old Heritage Library recorded a circulation of 60,435, representing an 88 percent increase since 2000. In addition, the Center for Local History serves an average of 1,000 in-person and 5,000 Internet patrons per year. The demand is there; we need to listen and act.



A LIBRARY IS AN INVESTMENT

I have found the most valuable thing in my wallet is my library card. — Laura Bush

A library represents a solid investment for the Charles City community. In fact, a 2006 economic impact study showed that a group of Ohio libraries provided an annual benefit nearly four times what was invested in their 2005 operations. That benefit was based on the value of the use of books, music, films, reference material, economic databases as well as library computers, meeting rooms, computer training programs, tutoring, and test proctoring. The estimated value of reference questions answered by librarians was also factored in.²

Investment in a new library pays dividends not only in terms of residents' quality of life, but also for the local economy. A vital new facility will make Charles City more attractive for developers as well as new businesses and residents looking to relocate. Local businesses will also profit from a library because it provides them with the tools to research markets, suppliers and competitive businesses and equips prospective employees in the community with important job skills. Restaurants, gas stations and other businesses in the vicinity of the library will benefit because library patrons often spend money before and after their visit.

A 2006 economic impact study showed that a group of Ohio libraries provided an annual benefit nearly four times what was invested in their 2005 operations.

² 2006 Levin, Driscoll & Fleeter study: Southwestern Ohio's Return from Investment in Public Libraries

A place to gather When **Marjorie Yates'** children were younger, the Heritage Library gave her an outlet. It was a place where she could catch up with friends and find out what was going on in town, while indulging her love of reading. "The library was our home away from home. My children were coming to the library before they could walk or talk," she says.

Her children are now 10, 14, and 17, but the library is still an integral part of the whole family's lives. After going to the library a couple of times a week for years, her children have become avid readers and Yates has even written a novel. However, these days, because both Charles City and New Kent facilities have limited collections and hours, she has had to fill the gap with memberships at libraries in nearby cities and counties. Yates misses having a library where she can get together with the people of the community, talk and share ideas. A library, she says, is all about "comfort."



Fun is the key It's hard to contain most six-year-olds, and **Troy** is no exception. He's full of energy and personality and would rather be swinging and running around at the park than just about anything else. But in between trips to the park, this first grader also loves to sit down with a book or magazine about sports. While most of his friends don't share his love of reading, he suggests that movies and computer games might convince kids his age that libraries are just as much fun as an afternoon at the park!

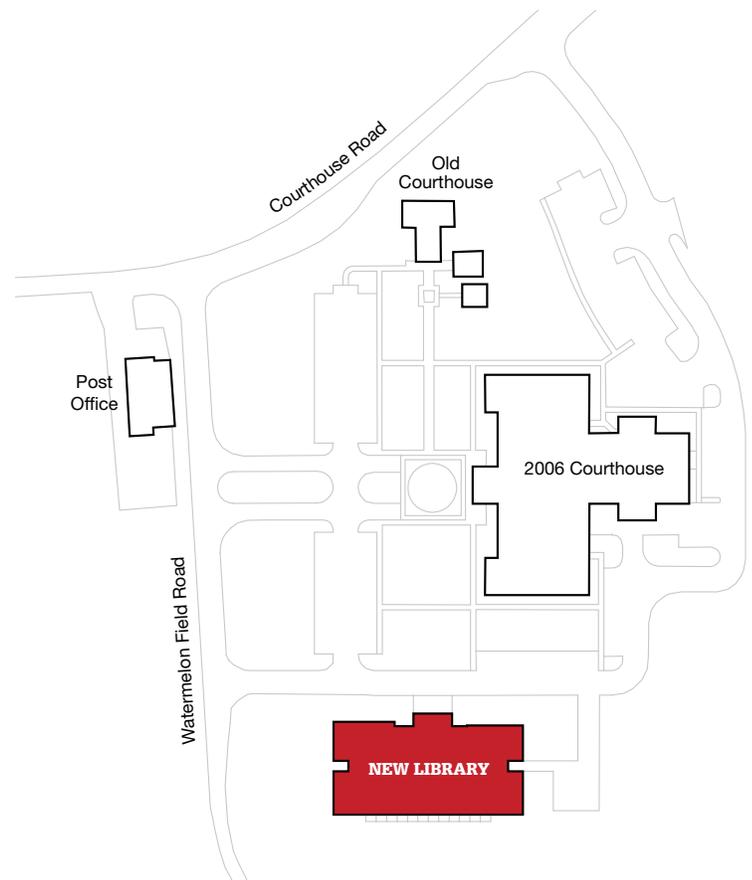




THE PLAN

The Heritage Public Library and the Center for Local History both have well-developed collections, committed professional and volunteer staffs, and a community of loyal patrons. The only missing piece of the puzzle is a suitable building from which to operate.

Our goal to become a hub or a gathering place for the community makes location of the library critical. The proposed location positions the library adjacent to the new courthouse and the post office and facing the historic courthouse. It is also close to schools, a bank and doctors' offices. The new library will serve as an anchor to the town center developing around the courthouse. The courthouse area is adjacent to Route 5, the county's east-west highway, and the Virginia Capital Trail, a major bike and pedestrian trail under development. Thus, the library will be easily accessible to patrons traveling from all parts of the county.



Turning the library into a hang-out There are so many things to distract an 11-year-old from reading. While **Taylor** loves adventure and mystery books, this sixth-grade cheerleader admits that the library can be “a little bit boring” if her friends aren’t around. She thinks the new library might appeal more to kids her age if it hosted fun activities like book discussion groups, and had a large poetry section and plenty of computers. And so that she and her friends have a place to hang out, Taylor suggests a café might be the ticket.

Charles City would probably need a new library to attract lots of kids. A lot of kids don't like to go to libraries because they think books are boring. If clubs and other things like that were added I think more kids would come to libraries and increase their learning habits.

Inside our Four Walls

Imagine a place where the people of the community can find company and knowledge, a place buzzing with patrons and activities. We have many dreams for this new facility; below are just a few of the possibilities:

Movie and book discussion clubs (for all ages)

Speakers: Subjects such as reminiscences by local seniors, programs by authors, travelogs, and candidate forums

Performances: From puppet theaters and children's recitals to teen bands and chamber musicians

Club meetings: Scouts, 4-H, chess, quilting, teen robotics, scrapbooking, and more

Workshops: Topics such as peer pressure, preparing for a career, navigating Medicare, and writing a book

Art exhibits: From work by preschool artists to traveling shows

Tutoring: One-to-one tutoring for students, young and old

Coffee shop: A place to enjoy a beverage while reading a book or chatting with friends

Classes

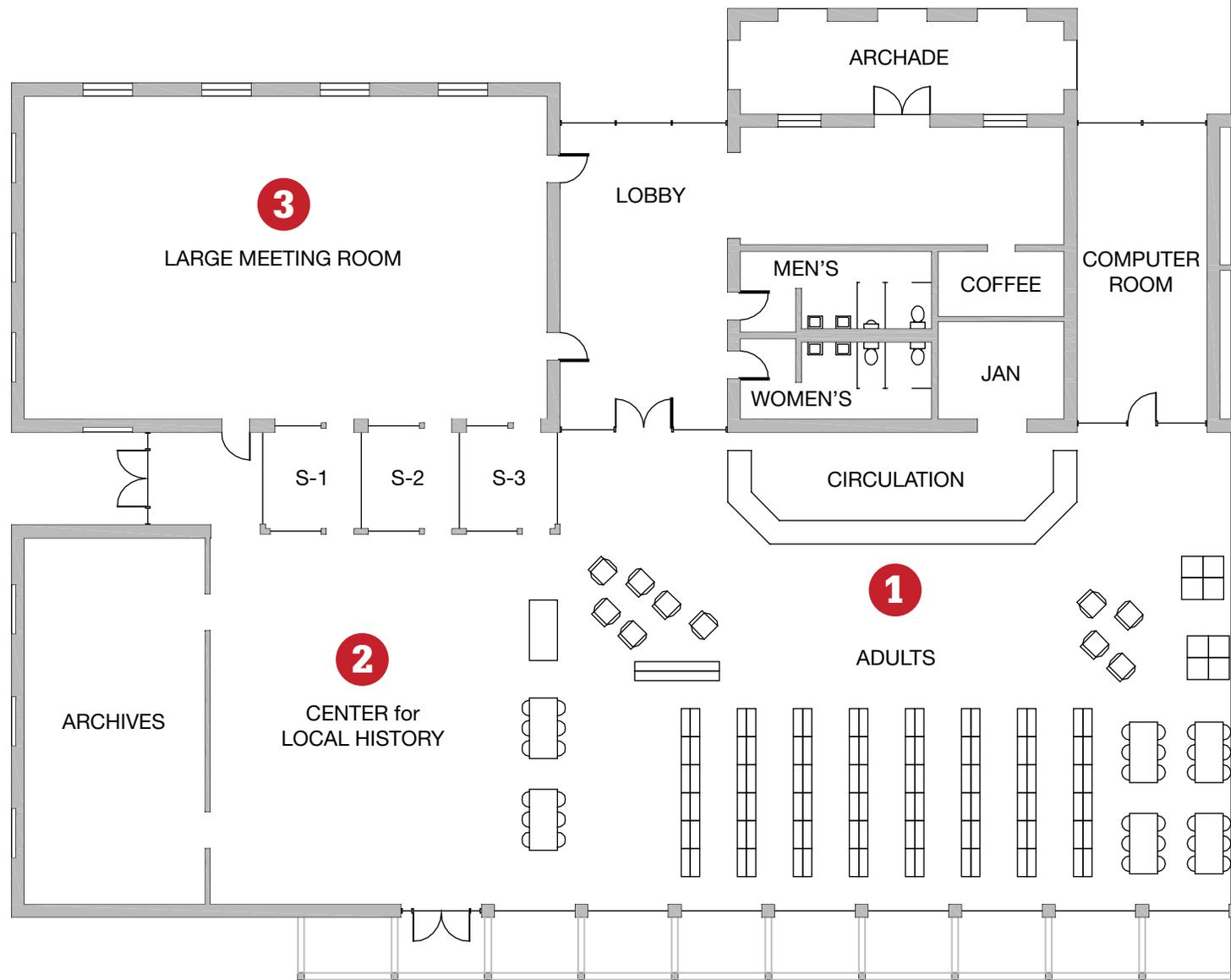
- Computer: From basic literacy to simple Web design
- How-to: From filing your taxes to charting your ancestors
- GED and community college courses
- Literacy and "English as a Second Language" classes



Because the new library faces north toward the two courthouses, the architect's design draws from the scale, hipped roof and arcade forms of the old colonial courthouse and the new courthouse. While the new library will be large in comparison to the old courthouse, multiple repetitive forms are used to produce a scale more compatible with the older structure.

Three distinct brick rectangular forms with hipped roofs, separated from one another by expanses of glass, create the front of the new library. Large repetitive openings with lintels send natural light into the interior of these rectangular brick forms. The openings in the center form create an arcade entrance into the library.

On the south side of the new library, the reading room, book stacks and archives are housed in a long rectangular form with a hipped roof. A north-facing clerestory sends natural light into the reading room and stack areas. The large glass opening on the south wall of the reading room provides a view of the pony pasture and mature trees beyond. This south-facing glass is shaded by a colonnade with plantings, which can be used for outdoor reading and other activities.



The new library facility, with 16,000 gross square feet (GSF) of space, will include three distinct areas:

1. The Public Library section (12,049 GSF) will include shelf space for 15,300 adult volumes. It will also feature reference tables and reading tables, all with computer hook-ups, comfortable reading chairs, an enclosed computer room, and three enclosed study rooms. An area specifically designed for children is also part of the plan with shelf space for 8,585 volumes, reading tables, comfortable chairs, and a small meeting room suitable for story time and other children's programs.

2. The Center for Local History section (2,190 GSF) will include shelf space for 5,000 volumes and an archives room that will house our manuscript and rare book collections.



Building “Green” Shows our Ongoing Commitment

Our commitment goes beyond a commitment to our own community. By the conscientious way we plan to build, we are also making a valuable commitment to the environment.

LEED (Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design), a third-party certification for the design, construction and operation of green buildings, is based on six key areas: sustainable site development, water savings, energy efficiency, material selection, indoor environmental quality, and innovative design.

Our use of LEED practices ensures that our new library:

- Has the least impact on the environment (for example, we plan to use local suppliers to reduce our carbon footprint)
- Achieves a high level of indoor environmental quality for the health of both staff and users
- Efficiently manages long-term operation and maintenance costs

3. The Large Meeting Room (2,190 GSF) will seat 100 people but can be divided into two smaller spaces to accommodate simultaneous events. Separate access makes the meeting room usable after library hours. Adjacent to the meeting room is a small service area/café for relaxing or providing simple food service for meetings.

A tree-shaded walkway will connect the new structure with the existing courthouse structures. An exterior area that can be used for animal and wildlife programs, exhibits, demonstrations, and educational gardens is also part of the plan. The library will share the unused south parking lot with the new courthouse.



Creating new authors Nine-year-old **Abigail** likes to write fairy-tales. She uses her three brothers, three sisters and parents as the main characters. One day, she says she might write a book about her own life. That creativity stems in part from a love of reading, which her parents have always promoted. After recently winning a *Judy Moody* reading contest at the Heritage Library, she went on to compete at the Williamsburg Regional Library. She loved the larger library so much that her mother says, "I had to beg her to leave!"

I think that it would be good to have a public library in Charles City/ County. If they made a public library I would really want to go there. A library is a really educational place to go. And libraries are fun and very cool.



THE LEADERSHIP

In meetings on the Comprehensive Plan held throughout Charles City, residents have consistently voiced the need for a library. The Board of Supervisors applauds the efforts of local residents to raise funds for that purpose. Once the library is built, the Board will ensure its future by supporting the costs of operation.

— *Gilbert A. Smith, chairman of the Charles City County Board of Supervisors*

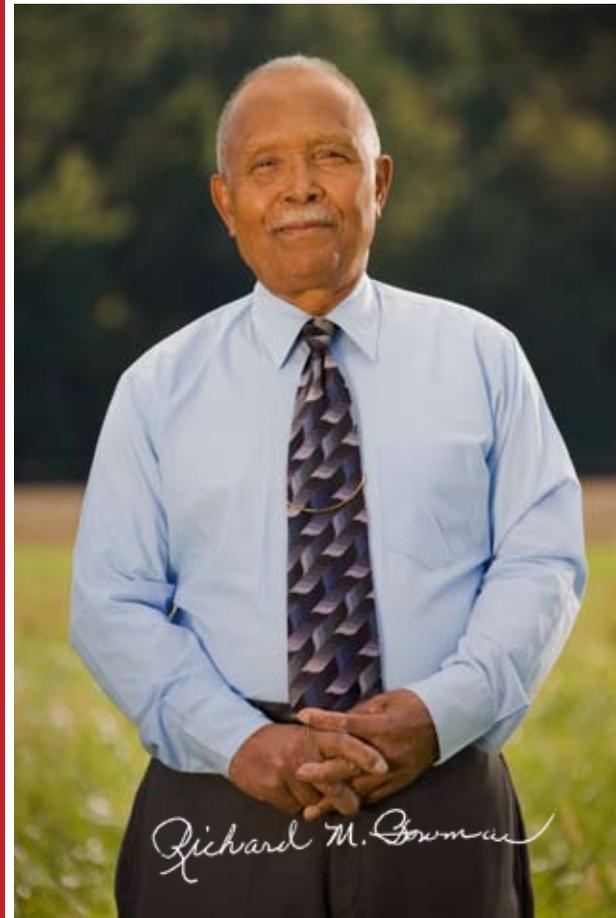
The Charles City County Library Campaign was created by a Memorandum of Understanding between the Heritage Public Library Board of Trustees, the Heritage Regional Library Foundation, Inc. and the Charles City County Board of Supervisors to direct fundraising for a new library facility within the county. Membership includes representatives of the Foundation Board, the Library Trustees, the Center for Local History Advisory Commission, library and county staff, and local residents. All contributions raised by the Campaign will be received by the Foundation, a 501(c)(3) non-profit entity, except in those circumstances where the county itself is the applicant for a grant. The facility will be constructed, owned and maintained by the county.

A way to preserve our local archives

In 1995, **Richard Bowman** helped found the Center for Local History, which draws patrons from all over the state and as far away as Washington, D.C. and Baltimore, MD. He believes that a larger facility would help the Center properly house and protect its valuable archives. “It would mean the world to me,” he says.

80-year-old Bowman, who is better known as “Mr. History,” has always loved libraries. In fact, he traces his love of libraries and reading back to 1936 when his third-grade teacher called the small book storage area in their classroom “the library.” While he still enjoys Henry Wadsworth Longfellow and other poets and authors, he isn’t able to read as much as he used to. “I’m not able to keep my eyes open long enough,” he laughs.

I FEEL THE NEED OF A PUBLIC LIBRARY FOR THIS COMMUNITY (CHARLES CITY COUNTY). IT WOULD SERVE ALL LEVELS OF THE POPULATION, CERTAIN IT WOULD BUTTRESS THE SCHOOL SYSTEM IN ITS ONGOING NEEDS. AND FROM MY VANTAGE POINT AS A SENIOR CITIZEN, IT WOULD ADD JOY AND PLEASURE TO MY DECLINING YEARS.



THE COST

Whatever the cost of our libraries, the price is cheap compared to that of an ignorant nation.

—Walter Cronkite

Charles City has proffered the land, connection to the county wastewater treatment system, leadership in the design and construction process, and support for the increased costs of operating a full-time library. However, the \$5,000,000 construction cost is prohibitive for a county with an estimated 7,200 residents and an existing debt load of \$7 million incurred in the building of new schools and a new courthouse. Also, the need to build a new emergency services building must take precedence over library construction. Among Virginia jurisdictions Charles City County is ranked above average in the Composite Fiscal Stress Index (65th out of 134), at the same time that it is ranked well above average in its Revenue Effort (46th out of 134).³

Funds will be raised in three phases:

Phase One: Direct appeal to potential major donors.

Phase Two: Direct appeal and written applications to potential mid-level donors, including corporations, organizations, governmental entities and individuals.

Phase Three: Public appeal to county residents, community groups and others with a potential interest in the new library. Donors will be solicited via a Web site and through meetings and mailings.

Completion: Completion of the new facility is projected for June 2011.

The privilege of naming sections of the facility or the library itself will be given to the most substantial donors. A memorial brick campaign will also allow members of the community to recognize loved ones.

Donations may be spread over a five-year period and are tax deductible.

³ 2008 Commonwealth of Virginia Department of Housing and Community Development: Final Report on the Comparative Revenue Capacity, Revenue Effort, and Fiscal Stress of Virginia's Counties and Cities 2005/2006



Whiling away the hours 17-year-old **Clifford** says one of his favorite pastimes is finding a chair in the library and reading until he completely loses track of time. "I'd like to be a night watchman at a library so I could just sit in a chair and read until early in the morning," he dreams. History is his favorite subject and is also his planned major when he starts college next year. This 12th grader even participates in an online discussion board about the Civil War.

Charles City County needs a library because it is both convenient and very much needed for education, recreation and fellowship.

WHAT DOES A LIBRARY MEAN TO YOU?



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About this document All photographs used throughout this publication feature residents of Charles City County. No models or actors were used. The location chosen for these photos is the currently empty field that will be the future site of the Charles City County Public Library.