



Churchill County (NV) Library Expansion: Needs Assessment

ABSTRACT

The library is an active, vibrant community asset but the need to expand the Churchill County Library is certain. It is undersized for its population and the exponential growth in program attendance has more than maxed-out the capacity of the library to serve its entire and growing community. Now is the time to focus on the desperate, timely, needed expansion of the library.

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

- 1 *Introduction* 1
- 2 *Need for Expansion*..... 1
- 3 *Additional Space Needed*..... 3
- 4 *Design Considerations* 3
- 5 *Use of Additional Space: Library Building Program Diagram*..... 4
- 6 *Estimated Project Construction Cost Range* 8
- 7 *Additional Information to Advance the Project*..... 9
- 8 *In Conclusion*..... 10
- Exhibit A: Aerial Photo* 11
- Exhibit B: Patio Photos* 12
- Acknowledgements*..... 14

1 INTRODUCTION

With funding from a federal Library Services and Technology Act (LSTA) grant awarded by the Nevada State Library, Churchill County Library authorized Ruth Metz Associates (RMA), Portland, OR, to do an initial, focused needs assessment related to expansion of the Churchill County Library. The purpose of this initial assessment is to answer these specific questions concerning the library. This report addresses these questions in order.

1. Is there need for expansion?
2. How much additional space is needed?
3. What design considerations should be taken into account?
4. How would additional space be used?
5. What is the estimated cost range?
6. What additional information should the County obtain to move the project forward?

The assessment process, consisting of site visit, selected stakeholder and staff interviews, continuing dialog with the Library Director, and review of relevant documents and data, and analysis of needs commenced in August 2019. Subsequently, library consultant Ruth Metz, Ruth Metz Associates and architect David Wark, Hennebery Eddy Architects, Inc., both of Portland, OR, collaborated to develop the model elements in response to the needs assessment analysis. David Wark developed the proposed Library Building Program Diagram, a design the consultant team considers optimal for its responsiveness to community needs and integration of best library building practices.

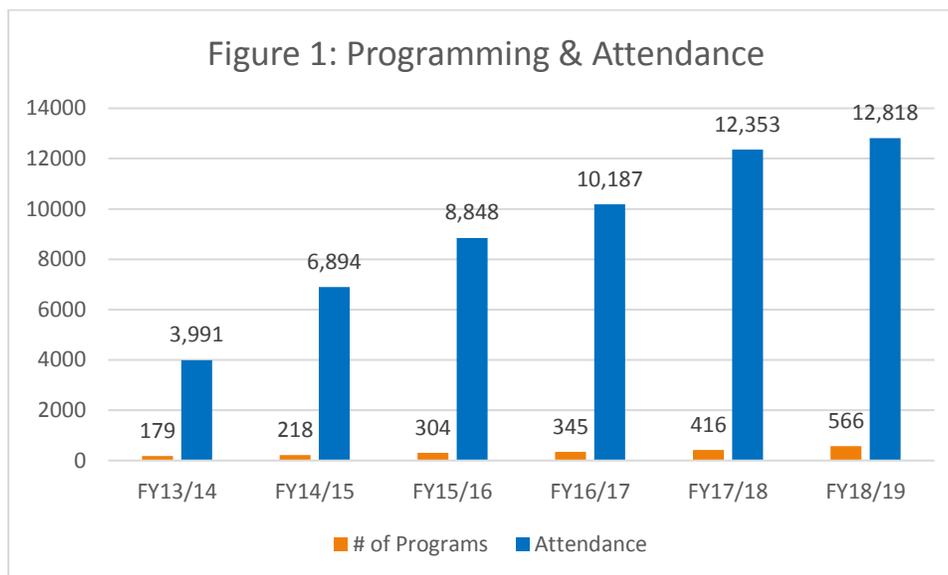
2 NEED FOR EXPANSION

The need to expand the library is certain. At 9,265 square feet (SF), the library is small for its current service area population (25,387)¹, affording only about 1/3 SF per capita (.364). Library industry best practices, the volume of use, and the central role the library plays as collaborative agent and venue for community engagement clearly justify an expansion.

One indication of the library's extreme space limitations is its seating capacity. Industry guidelines call for 5-8 seats per thousand residents (and the floor space for the seats), or 160-256 seats, with additional seating for adult, children, and teen programs. The library has a total of 48 seats, or 1.7 seats per thousand residents. The number of computer work stations in the library is also far below industry guidelines. The 1/3 SF per capita is simply too small for the seating, computers, programming and people space that is needed. Because of the library's limited space, multi-purpose meeting rooms that are standard in public libraries serving similar populations are virtually non-existent at the Churchill County Library.

¹ <https://tax.nv.gov/uploadedFiles/taxnvgov/Content/TaxLibrary/2017-20-Year-Total-Population-Projections-Report.pdf>. Nevada County Population Projections 2017 to 2036. Jeff Hardcastle, AICP Nevada State Demographer Nevada Department of Taxation, 2017.

In the last five years, the library's programs attendance has grown dramatically from 179 programs with an attendance of 3,991 to 566 with an attendance of 12,818. (See Figure 1 below).



The Library Director and staff have coped, persevered, and made the seemingly impossible possible by arranging and furnishing the library so that programming space can be made available by rolling shelving and other objects on wheels out of the way for the duration of any given program. This resourcefulness is extraordinary and commendable, but pushing carts of books and other objects around on a daily basis is unsustainable and ineffectual. Even as staff make room for one purpose, they are undoing the effectiveness of another. These accommodations result in disruption and inconvenience to other functions and uses of the library. Program attendance overflows other service zones, such as children's and teens, both of which are already too small. Over-crowding has also resulted in the loss of quiet reading areas, which are also highly desired by residents. Everything is crammed into the main room of the library and it is bursting at the seams.

The library is "programming-central" now and the desire for it to expand capacity is very strong in the community. For example, David Ernst, County Park and Recreation Supervisor, hopes that an expanded library will provide a variety of multi-purpose spaces to support children, teen, and adult music education. The advocates and programming partners with the library--the Churchill County School District, County Parks and Recreation, the Churchill County Museum and Archives, and non-profits and organizations such as the Fallon Food Hub, are eager to see the library's programming space expand.

Expectations of the library for being the venue for formal and informal learning and for collaborative community events is very high and makes a great deal of sense. There is expressed desire amongst these entities for expanding the library venue to support community objectives. These expectations are consistent with the purposes of the library and the intentions of its leadership.

Wisely, Churchill County's local governments, agencies, and organizations are predisposed to conserve and leverage resources, avoiding duplication of effort and expenditures. Thus, the library is the venue of choice for key community entities. These entities use and want to make more use of "the library as programming nexus": that place in the community where common needs and objectives can be efficiently addressed. The library's Strategic Plan emphasizes partnerships, literacy in all its forms,

economic development, workforce development, early childhood and learning and language development, and school-age learning success. Similarly, these are objectives that motivate local government, agencies, and organizations that have found in the library leadership a willing and resourceful partner.

3 ADDITIONAL SPACE NEEDED

The existing library building, parking, and grounds together occupy about 22,000 SF. An aerial view, Exhibit A, shows the location of the library and the adjacent space. We recommend an expansion that makes full use of the property immediately north of the library. This would add another 22,000 SF of building and grounds and include the addition of interior as well as exterior program and events space. The library building itself would expand by about 9,200 SF, double its current footprint; a Courtyard adds another 6,800 SF, bringing the library square footage to about 25,200 (.90 SF/capita). A Plaza adds 4,200 SF of exterior space.

The Library Annex sits on the northern most lot of the adjoining properties. For the purposes of this analysis, we have assumed the Library Annex would be moved to another site. It currently houses Emergency Preparedness offices; it also is the setting for library and community meetings and computer lab. These latter uses would be incorporated into the expansion.

4 DESIGN CONSIDERATIONS

These design considerations have guided the development of the Library Building Program Diagram that follows. For the purposes of this needs assessment, we have assumed that the Library Annex would be relocated.

- A. The design supports the library's mission which is "educating, entertaining and enriching our community."² Advance the library's mission, leverage community resources to advantage through collaboration with current and future partners.
- B. Emphasize the inclusion of people space for collaborative activities and program and event attendance. Programs include speakers and formal instructional activities as well as independent collaborations and hands-on activities. Enlarge people (not collection) space for children and teens. The overall physical collection growth will remain relatively stable (e-content is growing; access to the 1.1 million Cooperative collections items).
- C. Community connection and articulation: build the capacity and success of the library in collaboration with community partners including local government, agencies, and organizations.
- D. The Churchill County Library is a single-facility system serving a population that is expected to increase to 27,957 by 2035. Most of the population lives within or close to Fallon. The library's

² The Library's Strategic Plan goals emphasize educational and cultural opportunities for the community, especially early childhood literacy, school readiness, Nevada's Read by Grade Three, literacy (literary, health, numeracy, cultural) for all ages; science, technology, engineering, art and math (STEAM), economic and workforce development.

virtual presence is expected to serve outlying households. The intention is to continue as a 1-facility, county-wide system, so as to keep operating costs contained. Depending upon future population growth patterns, mobile or other outlet options might be warranted in the future.

- E. Line of sight visibility is maximized. The library leadership is intent on expanding the facility without adding staff and while containing operating costs as much as possible. Visibility is a staffing and a safety factor.
- F. Cost efficiency and achieving maximize value: note, for example, in the cost table on page 8 that the Courtyard and the Plaza help achieve the maximum programming space while reducing the Project square footage costs.
- G. Telecommunications, data, and technology ubiquity: the constantly changing technology and the virtual landscape of information (infoscape) demands a high level of capacity throughout the library, interior and exterior, and virtually.
- H. Maximum spatial flexibility to accommodate current and future capacity and to change the use of space to meet emerging needs. Adjacencies that effectively articulate with children, teen, community, and other zones.

5 USE OF ADDITIONAL SPACE: LIBRARY BUILDING PROGRAM DIAGRAM

The adjacent space which is available to the library consists (SEE EXHIBIT A, AERIAL MAP) equals approximately 22,000 SF. The Library Building Program Diagram below illustrates how the library could be optimally expanded to meet its space needs and the set of design considerations previously described.

The key change elements of the Library Building Program Diagram are:

A. EXISTING LIBRARY SPACE

Reorganize the current library public space to enlarge the children's and the teen's zones. The existing space would house the audiovisual and popular collection which would remain largely portable. The existing library area would be the focal point for information and reference assistance, for customer accounts transactions, holds pick-ups, and public computers.

Reorganize the staff space. Open the existing north wall to the expanded space. Add interior windows to provide line-of-sight between the existing library and the expansion. Enclose the existing small patio to make it a small meeting room. The southeast-end, which many years ago was adapted from bookmobile bay to staging and storage would be upgraded in the expansion, as should be other building systems, including HVAC, lighting, power, and telecommunications.

B. EXPANDED LIBRARY SPACE

Create a Readers' Commons and a suite of small, medium, and large public meeting rooms. The Readers' Commons would house the majority of the physical collection, seating, quiet reading, and public computers and tables.

The suite of meeting rooms includes small, medium, and large capacity, multipurpose rooms: a community room (seats 125); 2 multi-purpose (classrooms, media, voice studio, maker-space, etc.); 2 study/ tutor rooms (2 people). The area includes a gallery for exhibits and displays.

C. COURTYARD

An enclosed Courtyard would increase the library's programming and events space. To illustrate the concept, Exhibit B includes examples of such spaces from three libraries. The Courtyard would be secure and contained with a wall/fence with access controlled by the library staff. The Courtyard could have a set of gates/sliding walls that connect to the Plaza (described below) so they can work together for events. Adding windows in the north elevation of the existing library will provide visual oversight by staff from their work areas. Glass on the east wall of the addition provides natural daylight into the library and views into the Courtyard, and also opportunity for a "second set of eyes" to help monitor behavior.

In Option A, the Courtyard is on the east side where it would be shaded by the addition from the west sun, making it more useable. Option A establishes a strong urban edge and relationship and provides views into the library meeting rooms, maker space, media room, etc. adding activity to the pedestrian sidewalk and street. People can see what is going on inside the library.

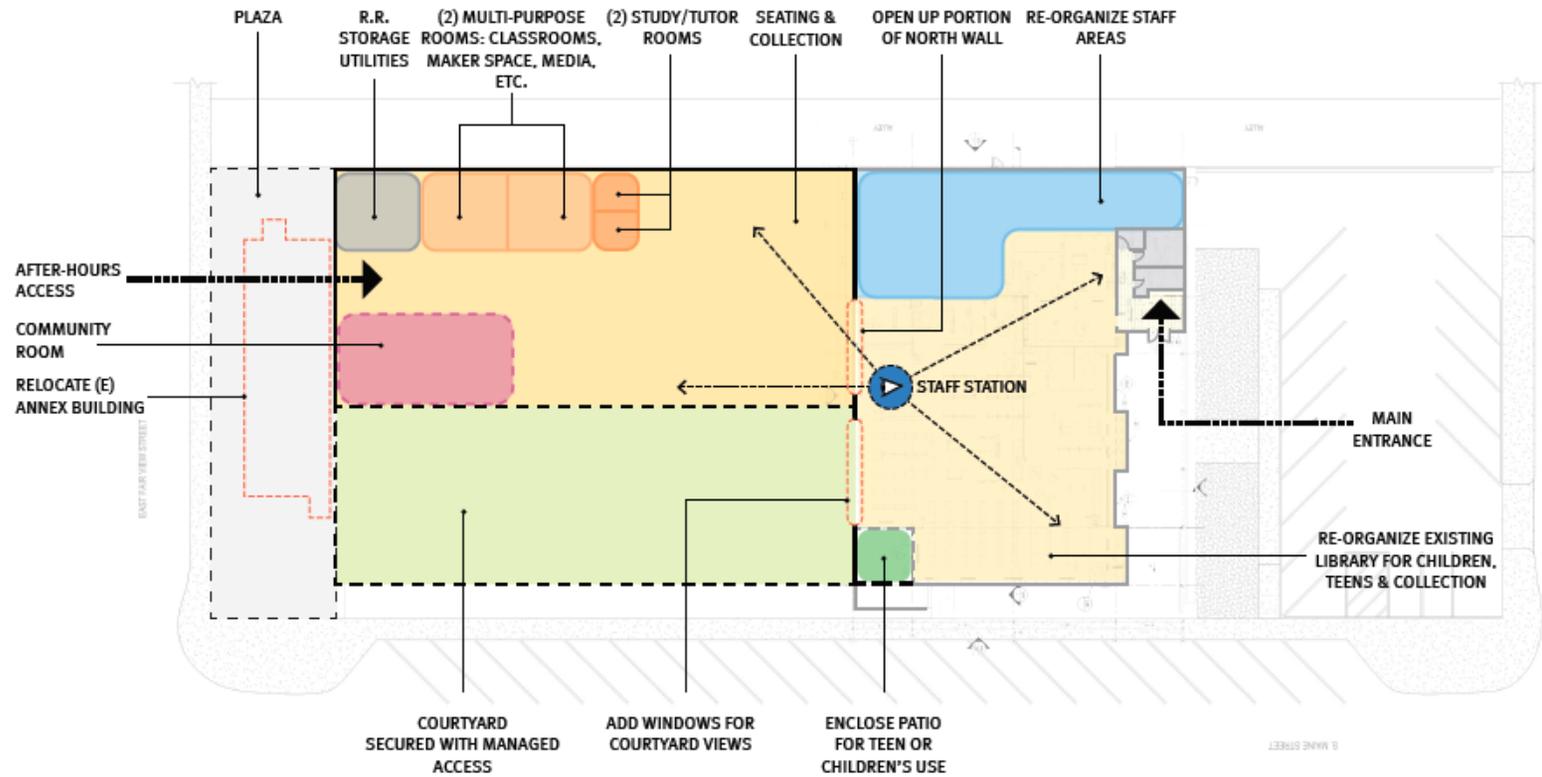
Alternatively, in Option B, the Courtyard is switched to the west side, away from the alley. In either case, the design of the Courtyard can make a conscious connection with the urban edge, articulate with the Plaza, and together with the suite of meeting rooms, provide a "center" for library and community programs and events. At times, the library addition can function as a "mini-conference center", either independent of the existing library space or in conjunction with it.

D. PLAZA

A Plaza on the north end of the expansion can be used for additional outdoor programming and events. The Plaza further conjoins the library to the community as an events, educational, and recreational venue. It is a bridge to Maine Street. An after-hours entrance makes the expansion programming space accessible when the library is closed. The library could rent out the space to recapture costs and/or generate revenue.

OPTION B

Plan Diagram 02 - Churchill County Library Expansion - Option B - 25 September 2019



6 ESTIMATED PROJECT CONSTRUCTION COST RANGE

The cost range for the proposed Project is \$6.7 to \$11.5 million in 2019 dollars. The estimates are an allowance representing a range of possible costs that will vary depending on many factors: the ultimate scope of the Project, the funding timeline, the start of the project, the economy, and so forth. A placeholder number for inflationary costs is 4.5%/year applied to the total cost (construction and soft costs). Since we do not know when the Project might start, we have not applied inflationary costs.

The Expansion Project estimated cost range table below includes an allowance for the Existing Building changes and code upgrades (i.e. power, electric, data, etc.), as well as the Building Addition, the Courtyard, and the Plaza. Note that the Courtyard and the Plaza provide added space at lesser cost than the Addition construction. The nature of the Plaza and the Courtyard have the potential, in particular, for attracting grantors or funding partners.

Soft costs are in addition to the construction costs. Note that the soft costs range is calculated by adding a factor of 30-45%. Soft cost is a construction industry term but more specifically a contractor accounting term for an expense item that is not considered direct construction cost. Soft costs include architectural, engineering, financing, and legal fees, and other pre-and post-construction expenses.

The estimated cost range also includes a contingency factor of 15% applied to the total of construction and soft costs. Inflationary costs are another consideration that should be taken into account when the Project advances. Our cost estimate does not include inflationary costs as these vary a great deal depending upon the timing of any given project. Operating costs for power and custodial and maintenance services are expected to increase and ought to be calculated as the Project advances; they are not included here.

When the Project advances, it should also require more precise estimating, and construction cost escalation, based on the features that have been detailed in schematic design.

FIGURE 2: CHURCHILL COUNTY NV EXPANSION PROJECT COST ESTIMATE

As previously noted, these numbers are an allowance that represent a range of possible costs and will vary depending on many factors. Among those factors are the extent of improvements and an appraisal of the existing building conditions.

	Square feet +/-	from \$/SF	to \$/SF
CONSTRUCTION COSTS			
Existing Building Modifications	9200	\$150	\$250
Subtotal Existing Building		\$1,380,000	\$2,300,000
Building addition	9200	\$275	\$375
Subtotal Building Addition		\$2,530,000	\$3,450,000
Courtyard	6800	\$50	\$100
Subtotal Courtyard		\$340,000	\$680,000
Plaza	4200	\$50	\$100
Subtotal Plaza		\$210,000	\$420,000
TOTAL CONSTRUCTION COSTS		\$4,460,000	\$6,850,000
Soft costs		30%	45%
Subtotal Soft Costs		\$1,338,000	\$3,082,500
TOTAL CONSTRUCTION & SOFT COSTS		\$5,798,000	\$9,932,500
Project Contingency		15%	15%
Subtotal Project Contingency		\$869,700	\$1,489,875
PROJECT GRAND TOTAL ESTIMATED		\$6,667,700	\$11,422,375

7 ADDITIONAL INFORMATION TO ADVANCE THE PROJECT

A. PROJECT FUNDING FEASIBILITY

The most fundamental information to obtain next is how the Project will be funded. Funding of the Library's Expansion will undoubtedly have to come from a combination of sources. Typically, public library capital projects are funded by the local parent government, grants and foundations, local donors, and fundraisers.

Foundations that fund capital projects want to see that the parent government has skin in the game, that the community members are committed and engaged, before they are willing to fund a project. Typically foundations expect 50% or more of the project costs secured or pledged.

One approach the library might undertake is to appoint a small Task Force to develop a funding plan over the next few months. This will involve meeting together, meeting with the County leadership over various options, and identifying knowledgeable resource people that can help the Task Force discover local funding options that have worked in Nevada.

B. THE LIBRARY ANNEX

Determine the options for the Library Annex.

C. HISTORIC SITE

The current building is said to be eligible to be on the National Register because the architect is important in the state of Nevada. This should be explored further in the next phase. The National Register nomination typically starts with a Determination of Eligibility to officially evaluate the building's status and integrity (how much original material still exists). Once that has been completed the National Register of Historic Places (NRHP) nomination form is the next step. The process is essentially the same for all states.

D. EXISTING LIBRARY FACILITY ASSESSMENT

The 1967 Churchill County Library underwent a repurposing in 2015 and its systems have been maintained by the County. It is important to assess the totality of the building and site to help insure that the expansion objectives are able to be supported by the building and its systems and to know the extent and costs of bringing the existing space to code.

E. OPERATING COSTS

Even with the Project completed, the Library Director is intent on keeping the complement of staffing the same as now. Other operating costs may be affected, including custodial and maintenance, and electricity and other power sources. These costs should also be approximated as the Project advances. The increased costs, if any, may be attributable to public financing, for example, if there is to be a levy for the Project. In any case, these costs need to be known as they will impact the library's operating budget. Without forewarning, increases could impinge upon staffing allocations.

F. BUILDING PROGRAM, ARCHITECTURAL SCHEMATICS, DETAILED COST ESTIMATE

Once the Project funding feasibility is established, the County would need a detailed building program (describing the spaces and functions of each part of the library for use with an architect), and architectural services that include:

- Preparation of Conceptual Design – first architectural phase
- Preparation of Schematic Design and detailed cost estimate
- Preparation of Construction Drawings – detailed instructions for construction firm
- Preparation of Construction Request for Proposal – by architect and management committee
- Construction – includes site preparation as well as construction

8 IN CONCLUSION

The library is undersized for its population and the exponential growth in program attendance has more than maxed-out the capacity of the library to effectively and efficiently serve its entire and growing community. Future population growth is conservatively estimated at 10% over the next 15 years (27,957). The time has come to expand the library so that it accommodates contemporary library and community needs and is poised for the future. The library is an active, vibrant place. The library leadership is ready, willing, and able to serve the entire community. The County has a gem in the library, its leadership, and its advocates, partners, and collaborators. Now is the time to focus on the desperate, timely, needed expansion of the library.

EXHIBIT A: AERIAL PHOTO

This aerial view shows the existing library and the parking lot, both taking up the south portion of the property. The Library Annex is situated on the north end of the property. The expansion proposal would use all of the vacant property, including the Library Annex space. Options for the Library Annex would need to be explored.

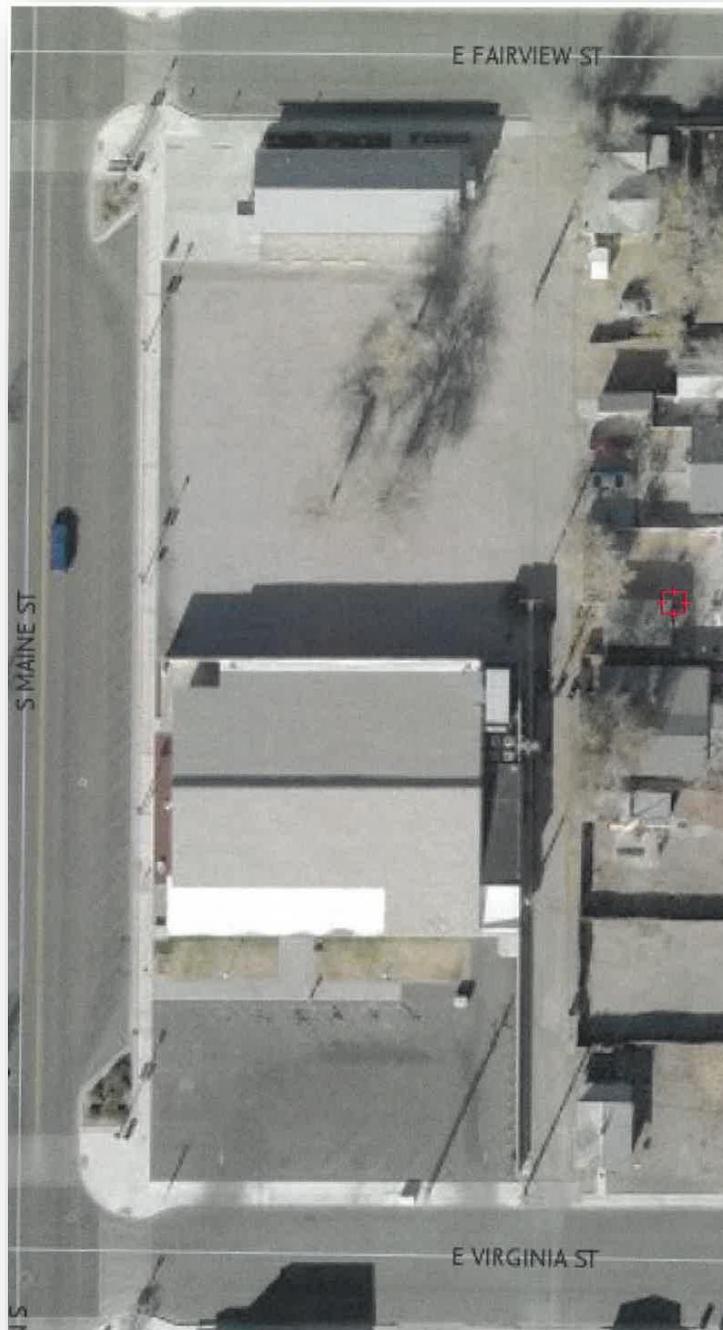
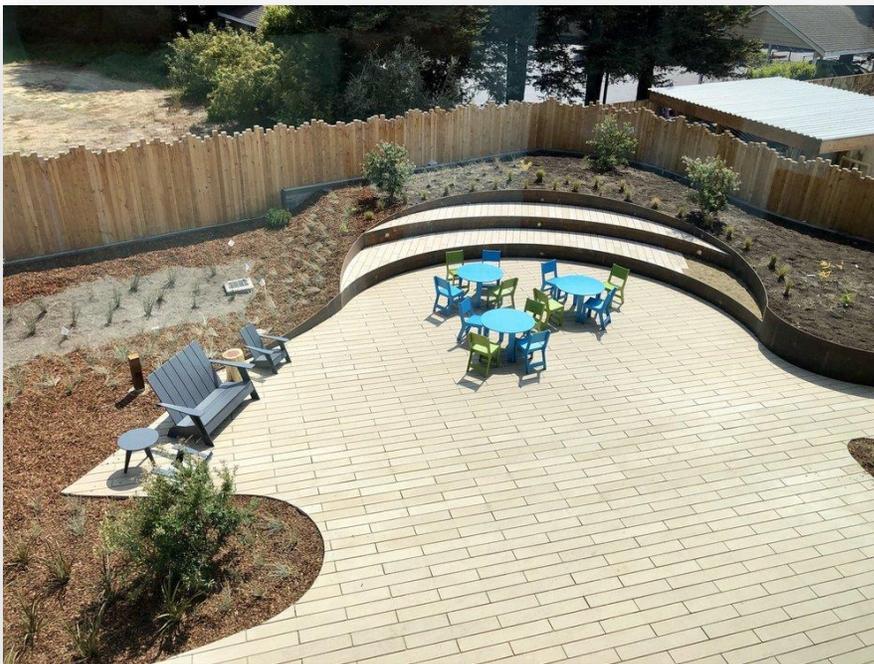


EXHIBIT B: PATIO AND COURTYARD EXAMPLES

These patio and courtyard photos are included to illustrate with examples Library Building Program Diagram's Courtyard concept.

Patio at the Half-Moon Bay Library, CA.



Courtyard, Skokie, IL Public Library



Courtyard, Desert Foothills Public Library, Cave Creek AZ



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Churchill County Library Association

Churchill County Library Board of Trustees

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