

Amelia County Capital Improvement Plan
James L. Hamner Public Library Teen Zone
FY25 Proposal

Under the proposed project, funding will be used to create a “Teen Zone” in the Hamner Public Library for library patrons ages 13-18. While there are children and adult library spaces available in the library, there is no place for middle and high schoolers to gather, study, or utilize recreational and educational resources within the library. This project will increase the library’s capacity to serve middle and high school students, providing a safe space where they can study, socialize, do crafts, enjoy healthy snacks, access free Wi-Fi, and utilize the library’s collections.

Beginning with the 2023-24 school year, the Hamner Public Library has partnered with the Amelia County Public Schools to implement the “At-Risk Afterschool Meals” program funded by the U.S. Department of Agriculture. The program is designed to engage community partners to provide children a safe place to go after school and access nutritious food that allows them to concentrate on homework and join their friends in social and physical activities. These afterschool meals are free and accessible to any student age 18 or under (age 12-18 do not require a guardian to be present) who request them with demand and usage tracked by library staff and ordering and delivering of meals provided by Amelia County Public Schools.

In addition to the passive programming the Library provides to students such as makerspace kits and library collections materials, library staff will facilitate community connections to build learning opportunities for students. For example, the County 4-H office will offer afterschool on topics such as STEM exploration, healthy living, and financial literacy. The library also offers afterschool programs through the Virginia Commission for the Arts (VCA) touring and teaching artists grant program. The VCA grants fund programs such as textile art, comic book creation, and creative writing workshops. The VCA has already committed support for some of these programs for the 2023-24 academic year.

The success of these programs relies on the creation of a dedicated space for teens as is presented in the attached plans and furnishing cost estimates. The complete plan includes a reorganization of space and new furnishings to accommodate the demands for everyday and special uses of the library. County residents seek space to gather in small group meetings, socialize, utilize library resources such as books, newspapers, public computers or free notary services, and engage in quiet study, all within a limited space. The new furnishing plan for the library overall is designed to accommodate the many demands placed on the library space, with a range of audiences in mind. In the case of teens, they must currently choose between a dedicated adult space intended for quiet study and public computer usage, or an area dedicated for small children. The tweens and teens have no dedicated spaces to meet their needs and interests.

Liberty Systems, Inc., which has designed interior spaces and furnishing plans for dozens of libraries throughout Virginia, worked with the library staff on layout design and budget projections to plan a space that accommodates the Hamner Public Library’s multiple audiences under one roof. Liberty Systems completed the attached CAD drawings of the Library interior with furnishing types selected by staff to maintain the character of the Hamner Public Library and last in excellent condition for many years to come. The current library furnishings are the same age as the library building—25 years—and, in addition to showing wear and tear, are difficult to keep clean to maintain the public comfort and safety standards Amelia residents should be able to expect from their library.

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The attached estimate includes the cost for packing and storing the books and other library materials while the shelves are switched out, as well as the cost of removal of the old library furnishings and installation of the new furnishings.

Preparation for the installation of the teen area will require two full days of staff time with one member of the Amelia Department of Public Works staff to assist with removing four shelving sections from the adult section to accommodate the widening of the teen area. Other than those two days of preparation, the removal of old furnishings and installation of new furnishings will all be completed by Liberty Systems, with one subcontractor managing book crating and restoration on the new shelves.

During FY23, the Hamner Public Library experienced significant staff turnover with some positions remaining vacant for many months. The result was that \$47,000 of the Library's projected budget went unspent. In that same period, Amelia County received \$88,900 in state aid that was restricted for library services to Amelia County. It is proposed that the County utilize the \$47,000 remainder from the Library's FY23 budget, plus a portion of the state aid for the Library's FY25 budget to fund this project. Library furnishings are an allowable expenditure under state library funding guidelines.