

Akron-Summit County Public Library

Akron, Ohio



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The addition to and renovation of Akron-Summit County's existing Main Library has become a major civic destination in downtown Akron. Comprised of a series of "object" buildings along Main Street and designed to maximize transparency and light, the 270,000-square-foot library complex reestablishes the public and institutional image of the Main Library and reinforces downtown Akron as an urban, cultural and architectural center.

Beginning with a master plan and feasibility study, the program was defined both by the need to make the collection materials "browse-able"—by moving them out of existing basement stacks—and the need to expand and modernize seating, public service infrastructure and public programs.

The new addition mediates the twenty-five foot difference in elevation between High and Main Streets. The buildings has three points of entry: the primary pedestrian entrance at the lower level on Main Street, the High Street vehicular entrance on the second level, and an interior ramp linked to the municipal parking garage on High Street.

The Main Street entrance is marked by an iconic four-story pylon containing the library's boardroom on the third floor. The lower level includes two computer training classrooms, a library bookstore and cafe.

The addition affords open, loft-like reading rooms on all levels with flexible seating and stacks to meet departmental needs. Information desks are located within the reading rooms. Staff workrooms and back-of-house operations are clustered within the gutted and renovated old building,¹ allowing for space and operational efficiencies while maintaining the openness of the loft.

The library's second level, accessible to both school buses and cars, includes the Children's Library, a 425-seat auditorium and public meeting rooms available for community use. Patrons can access the auditorium during off-hours through the High Street entrance. The library's third floor houses the special collections department complete with its own environmentally controlled HVAC system. The sub-cellar and cellar levels of original library building contain additional back-of-house operations as well as mixed-use classroom spaces for the community.

By doubling the size of the library to properly accommodate the vast collection, as well as providing greatly expanded public service components, the library complex is a significant public amenity within its community. Designed to be a patron-friendly place that is open, airy and inviting, the Akron-Summit County Library has become an essential catalyst of the city's revitalization.

¹ Model view from southwest



View looking south along High Street



View looking north from Library Park

Akron-Summit County Public Library



View looking south along Main Street



View looking southwest along Main Street



Reading room



Reading room

Akron-Summit County Public Library



View of reading room and bridge to parking garage



Reading room



Conference room

Akron-Summit County Public Library

Key Project Information

- focal point of downtown Akron's cultural, commercial and architectural center
- includes feasibility study for two sites during initial project phase
- latest technology and communication systems
- 425-seat theater
- book store/cafe
- public meeting rooms
- art exhibition spaces
- direct link to City parking garage

- completion 2004
- gsf 270,000

Associated Architect

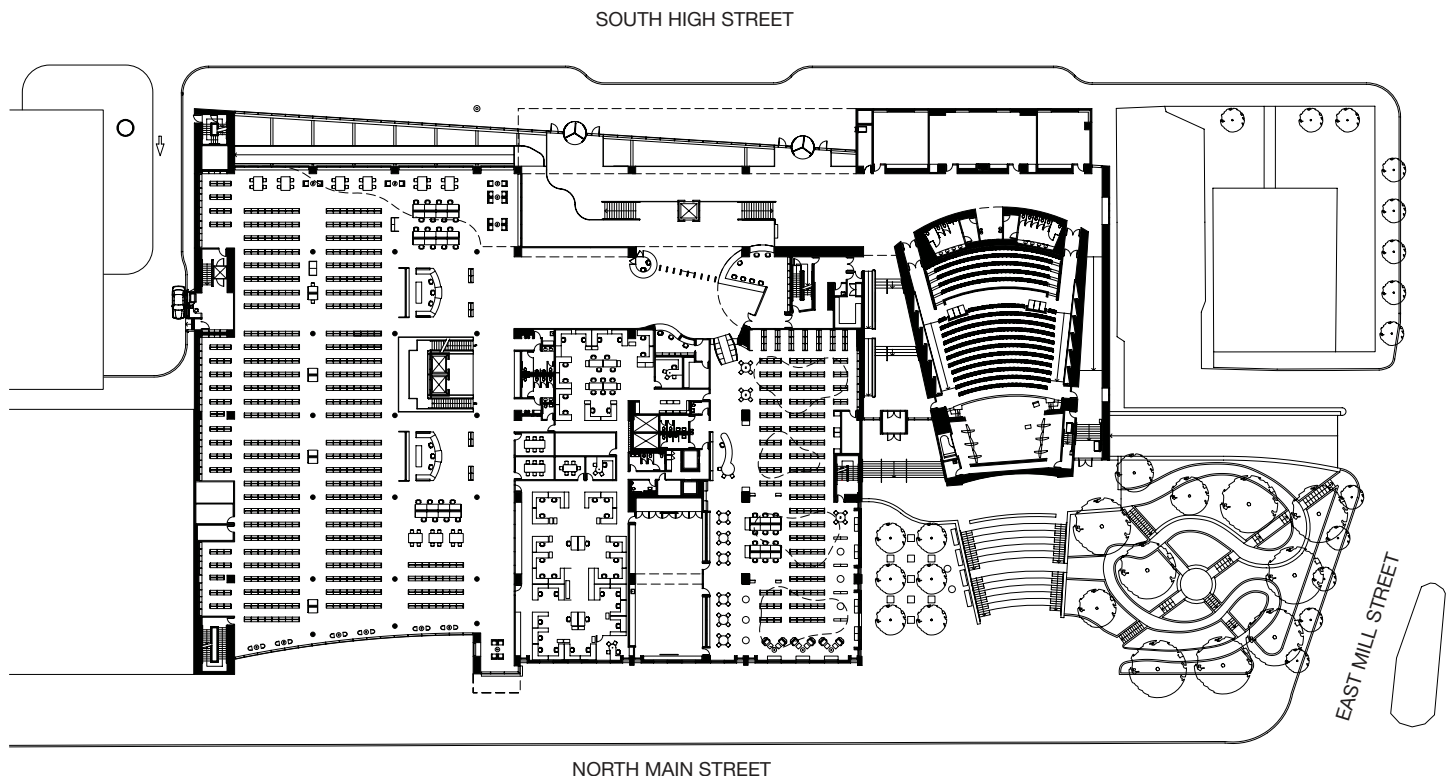
Richard Fleischman Architects

Award

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Service desk



Second Floor Plan