



CITY of NORFOLK
Office of the Mayor

Paul D. Fraim
Mayor

NORFOLK TO BUILD NEW CENTRAL LIBRARY

\$20 MILLION GIFT PLACES LIBRARY ON FAST TRACK

MEDIA ADVISORY

Mayor Paul Fraim announced today that Frank Batten, Sr., the long-time chairman of Landmark Communications, has committed a \$20,000,000 contribution to the construction of a new central library in downtown Norfolk. Fraim described the gift as “the largest in the city’s history” and expressed gratitude on behalf of the city’s citizens for the Batten family’s generosity.

During a press conference called to announce the gift, Fraim said that construction of the new central library may begin as soon as the fall of 2010.

Mayor Fraim also announced that the new library will be named in honor of Samuel L. Slover, who founded Landmark when he acquired the Ledger Star and then merged that newspaper with the Virginian Pilot, which he purchased in the early 1930s. For more than 50 years, “Colonel Slover” was a dominant figure in Virginia newspaper publishing circles.

Slover was Batten’s uncle. In 1954 at the age of 27, Batten assumed the leadership of the Virginian Pilot and the Ledger Star. With strategic acquisitions and key investments, Batten developed Landmark Communications into one of the nation’s largest and most influential media companies.

In a prepared statement, Frank Batten, Sr., who was not available for the news conference, made the following comments:

“I take great pleasure and satisfaction in being able to provide this gift to the City of Norfolk.

I am pleased the new central library will be named in honor of my uncle, Samuel Slover, who raised me after my father died when I was less than a year old.

Col. Slover was the founder of Landmark Communications and a former Mayor of Norfolk. Col. Slover loved this city, and he believed that an informed citizenry is one of the most important keys to its success.

Throughout my life and career, I have tried to honor my uncle and his devotion to the betterment of the communities that we serve, and his commitment to integrity, honesty and a sense of fair play. He would be glad to know that this state-of-the art library will be named in his honor.”

Fraim said a new central library will be composed of the historic Seaboard Building on Plume Street and a new structure that will be constructed between the Seaboard Building and Selden Arcade. It is anticipated that they will be connected by a glass – enclosed courtyard and atrium.

The combination of the restoration of the Seaboard Building and the construction of the two new structures will create a national model for blending an historic building with the most up-to-date library technology. It will contain creative spaces for the future, but will also be a place where the memories of Norfolk will be preserved.

The city acquired the Seaboard Building in 2007 for \$7.2 million. The city is spending an additional \$2.8 million to restore the building.

Ray Gindroz, an internationally known and respected architect, planner and designer, described the Seaboard Building as one of the most outstanding works of architecture in America.

“It is a superb example of the 19th century Renaissance Revival Style, exquisitely crafted, with meticulous detailing,” Gindroz said.

The original plan called for the Seaboard Building to serve as a temporary location for the city’s aging Kirn Memorial Library, which is scheduled to be demolished in March, 2009 to pave the way for the construction of a light rail passenger station.

The new building will be designed to reflect the architectural integrity of the Seaboard Building.

“Mr. Batten has always championed causes that improve the lives of people,” Fraim said. “The unwavering commitment to invest in the lives of all of our citizens has been the cornerstone of Mr. Batten’s extraordinary life”

To honor Batten’s wishes, Fraim vowed that the new Slover Library will be the most technologically advanced in the United States.

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“Mr. Batten believes that technology has the potential to change lives,” Fraim said. We are determined that the new library will permit our citizens to access the latest 21st century technology with the goal of providing a more informed society.”

The cost of the new construction will total nearly \$40,000,000. Combined with the cost of the purchase and renovation of the Seaboard Building the price of the Slover Library will total nearly \$50,000,000.

Fraim will also lead an effort to raise additional funds for the construction cost of the new facility.

“I believe that a gift from a man of Mr. Batten’s stature and reputation will influence other people to support this project,” Fraim said.

The estimated programmable space for the new main library will increase to approximately 92,000 square feet, 34,000 square feet more than currently available in Kim Memorial Library.