Library in NW Portland

Northwest Portland needs a new (larger) library that provides more services than are possible in the existing facility. Modern libraries rather than being singular uses tend to support the unmet needs of the community. The project will be to bring together the services of a conventional library with the additional appropriate needs of the community.

The site, which is 150' x 200', is at the corner of NW 21st and Lovejoy, a major crossing of two very important streets in the Northwest neighborhood.

The library will be a complex building with a number of functions required in the community. In addition to being a repository for a large collection of books, including a reference section and a large reading room for after school study, the library will provide services somewhat unusual in community libraries. These will include social services offices, a small number of short term homeless accommodations, community offices and meeting rooms, a large community room for general use and a preschool for children ages two to five.

In addition to these services, the new library building will speak to residents and visitors of NW Portland of values that gave rise to the building. Residents of the neighborhood have felt for a number of years that the importance of education and reading have been impaired by the inadequacy of the current library. Similarly, the lack of community meeting space and places for events have reduced the sociability of the neighborhood. An obligation to less advantaged people in the community also led to the realization that the library could be a source for some social services and occasionally to meet homeless needs. This neighborhood is very aware of urban sustainability and insists that the new building be as sustainable as possible and that sustainability should be expressed in the form of the new building.

All these values should be visible and apparent in the design of the new library. For this reason the choice of typology, the combination of physical elements chosen, their form and materials should be considered in terms of their collective meaning to the user.