

Draft Environmental Assessment

**Cameron Parish Library and  
Genealogy Museum  
Change of Location/Consolidation**

Cameron Parish, Louisiana

May 2012



**FEMA**

U.S. Department of Homeland Security  
Federal Emergency Management Agency, Region VI  
Louisiana Recovery Office  
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## LIST OF ACRONYMS

APE	Area of Potential Effects
BFE	Base Flood Elevation
CAA	Clean Air Act
CBRA	Coastal Barrier Resources Act
CFR	Code of Federal Regulations
CWA	Clean Water Act
CZMA	Coastal Zone Management Act
DFE	Design Flood Elevation
DFIRM	Digital Flood Insurance Rate Map
EA	Environmental Assessment
EFH	Essential Fish Habitat
EL	Elevation
EO	Executive Order
ESA	Endangered Species Act
FEMA	Federal Emergency Management Agency
FIRM	Flood Insurance Rate Map
FONSI	Finding of No Significant Impact
FPPA	Farmland Protection Policy Act
GOHSEP	Governor's Office of Homeland Security and Emergency Preparedness
HP	Historic Preservation
HWM	High Water Mark
LDEQ	Louisiana Department of Environmental Quality
LDNR	Louisiana Department of Natural Resources
LDWF	Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries
LGS	Louisiana Geological Survey
NEPA	National Environmental Policy Act
NFIP	National Flood Insurance Program
NHPA	National Historic Preservation Act
NMFS	National Marine Fisheries Service
NOAA	National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration
NRCS	Natural Resources Conservation Service
NWI	National Wetlands Inventory
PA	Programmatic Agreement
PA	Public Assistance
RCRA	Resource Conservation and Recovery Act
SFA	Sustainable Fisheries Act
SFHA	Special Flood Hazard Area
SHPO	State Historic Preservation Office/Officer
SWD	Still Water Depth
SWEL	Still Water Elevation
USACE	U. S. Army Corps of Engineers
USDA	U. S. Department of Agriculture
USEPA	U. S. Environmental Protection Agency
USFWS	U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service
USGS	U. S. Geological Survey

## **1.0 INTRODUCTION**

### **1.1 Project Authority**

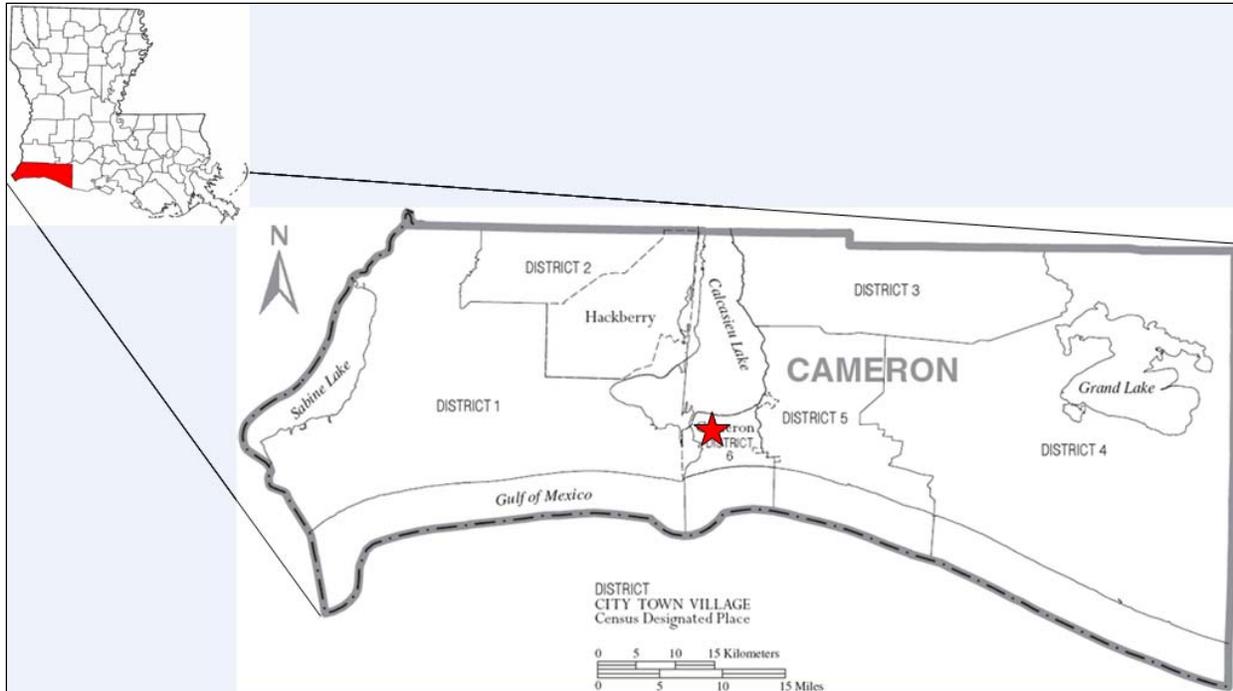
Hurricane Rita made landfall on September 24, 2005, between Sabine Pass Texas and Johnson Bayou Louisiana, as a Category 3 storm. Maximum sustained winds at landfall were estimated at 120 miles per hour and were accompanied by strong and damaging storm surge well above normal high tide. President G.W. Bush declared a major disaster for the State of Louisiana and signed a disaster declaration (FEMA-1607-DR-LA) on September 24, 2005, authorizing the Department of Homeland Security's Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) to provide federal assistance in designated areas of Louisiana.

Cameron Parish requested through the State of Louisiana Governor's Office of Homeland Security and Emergency Preparedness (GOHSEP) that FEMA provide disaster assistance through the provision of federal grant funding pursuant to the Robert T. Stafford Disaster Relief and Emergency Assistance Act (Stafford Act), PL 93-288, as amended (Police Jury Parish of Cameron, 2007 and 2012). Section 406 of the Stafford Act authorizes FEMA's Public Assistance (PA) Program to fund projects to repair, restore and replace facilities damaged as a result of the declared event.

Cameron Parish was deemed eligible by FEMA for federal disaster public assistance as an eligible applicant serving the needs of the general public. The Main Cameron Library (Cameron Library) and the Cameron Genealogy Museum/Library (Cameron Genealogy Museum) provided library and other community services such as internet access, meeting spaces, interlibrary loans, and public notices. These facilities and their contents were destroyed as a result of the declared event and FEMA has deemed them eligible for replacement.

Cameron Parish determined that replacement of the two facilities in their current location would not best meet the needs of the community. Therefore, the parish is requesting approval and federal grant funds for a change of location consolidation project. The proposed action will replace two pre-storm facilities with a consolidated facility providing similar functions at a new location in the town of Cameron in south central Cameron Parish (Figure 1).

In accordance with 44 Code of Federal Regulation (CFR) for FEMA, Subpart B – Agency Implementing Procedures, Section 10.9, an Environmental Assessment (EA) is being prepared pursuant to Section 102 of the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) of 1969, as implemented by the regulations promulgated by the President's Council on Environmental Quality (40 CFR Parts 1500-1508). This EA will determine if the proposed reconstruction and change of location of the Cameron Library and Cameron Genealogy Museum will have the potential for significant adverse effects on the quality of the human and natural environment. The results of this EA will be used to make a decision whether to initiate preparation of an Environmental Impact Statement or to prepare a Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI).



**Figure 1 – Cameron Parish, Louisiana Site Location Map**

## 1.2 Area Description

Cameron Parish is located entirely in the coastal marsh area in the extreme southwestern corner of Louisiana (U. S. Geological Survey, USGS, 2009). It is bordered by Sabine Lake, the Sabine River, the City of Port Arthur, Texas, and Jefferson County, Texas to the west; Orange County, Texas to the northwest; Calcasieu and Jefferson Davis Parishes to the north; Vermilion Parish to the east; and the Gulf of Mexico to the south. Calcasieu Lake forms a natural division between the eastern and western parts of the parish.

Cameron Parish has no incorporated areas and the parish seat is the town of Cameron (Figure 1), which is located in the south-central section of the parish. Port Arthur, Texas, lies seven miles across Sabine Lake, and Beaumont, Texas is ten miles beyond. Lake Charles lies approximately eight miles north of the Cameron Parish boundary, and Lafayette is approximately 35 miles northeast of the parish. Encompassing an area of 1,932 square miles (1,313 square miles of land and 619 square miles of water), Cameron is the largest parish in the state. Its population, however, is the smallest among Louisiana parishes. The parish 2010 U.S. Census total reported population is 6,839 with a population density of 3.54 individuals per square mile (U.S. Census, 2010).

The unincorporated town of Cameron is approximately 35 miles east of the Texas border and three miles south of Calcasieu Lake. This community has fire protection, medical care, and school facilities, as well as utilities and secondary services that are provided to the community. This community is linked to the parish's other coastal villages such as Grand Chenier and Johnson Bayou by Louisiana State Highway 82/27.

### 1.3 Project Location

#### Former Locations

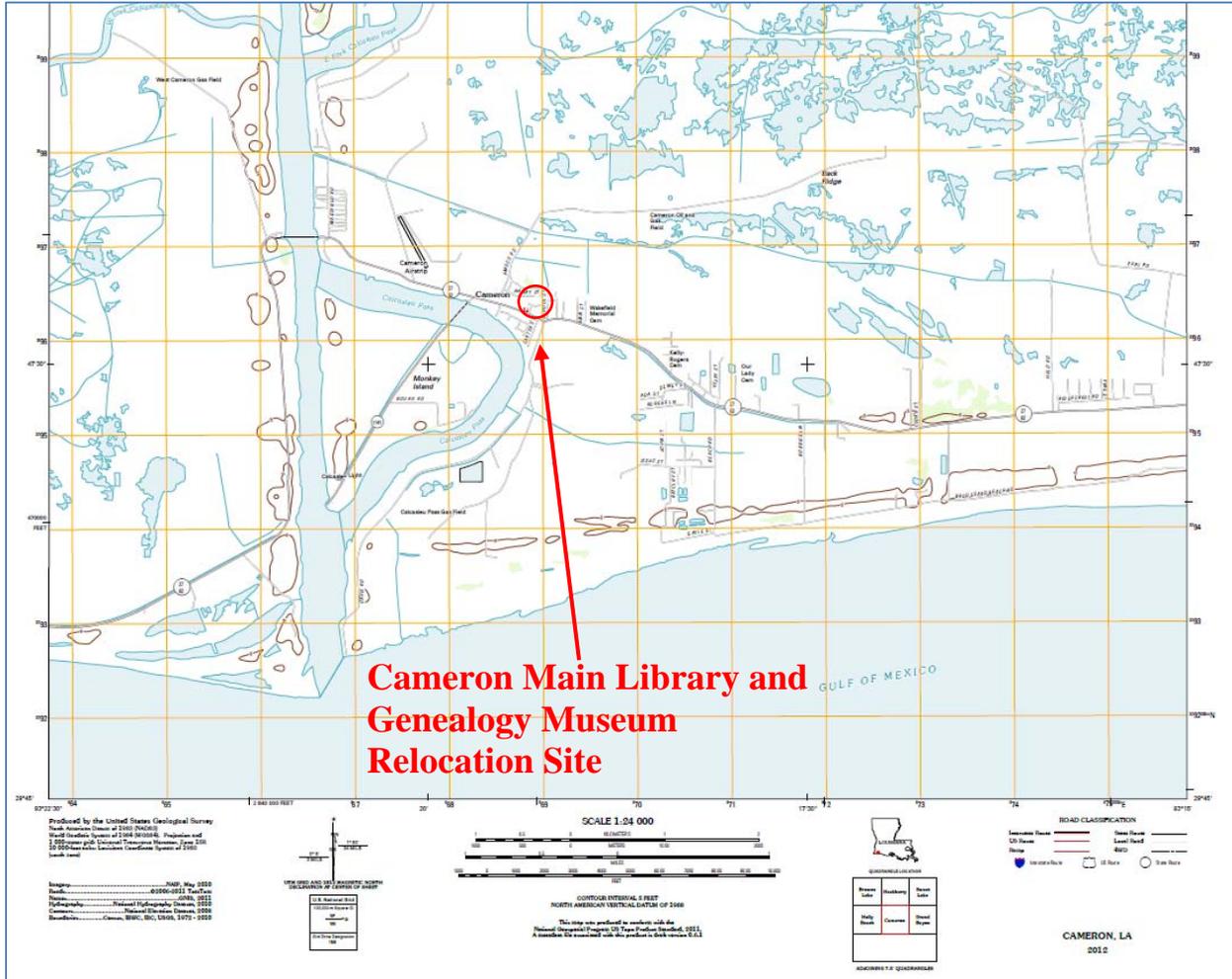
The original one story 5,314 square feet Cameron Library was located at 489 Marshall Street (Latitude 29.79576/Longitude -93.31989, Figure 2). This facility consisted of a slab on grade wood framed structure with a shingled roof. The one story 1,643 square feet Cameron Genealogy Museum was located approximately 21 miles east of the main Cameron Library on the north side of Louisiana State Highway 82/27 at 2863 Grand Chenier Highway (Latitude 29.76700/Longitude, -92.97633, Figure 2). This facility was constructed in approximately 1950 and consisted of a wood framed structure on masonry grade foundation walls (The Sellers Group, 2011).



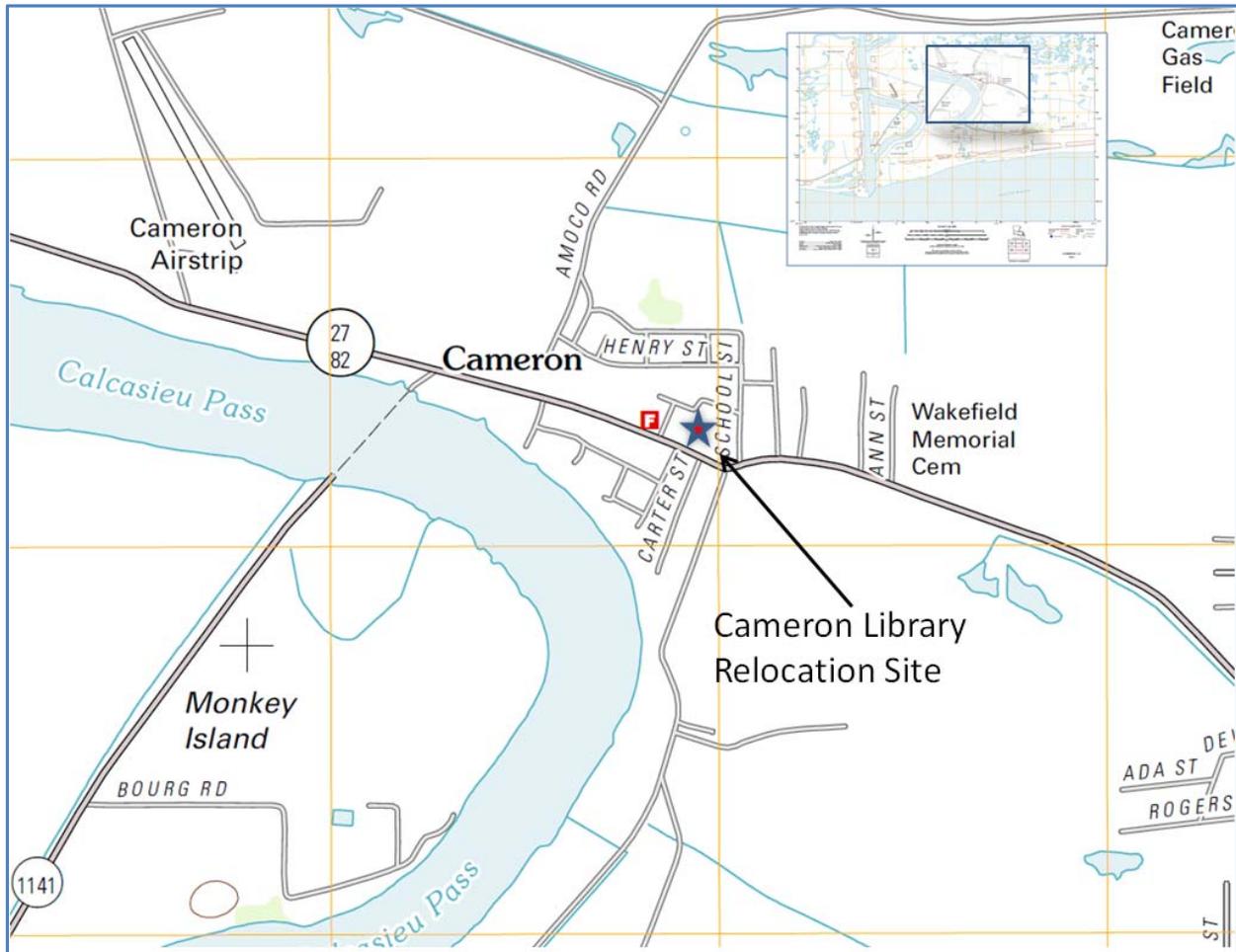
Figure 2 - Cameron Library and Genealogy Museum, Original Locations

## Proposed Relocation

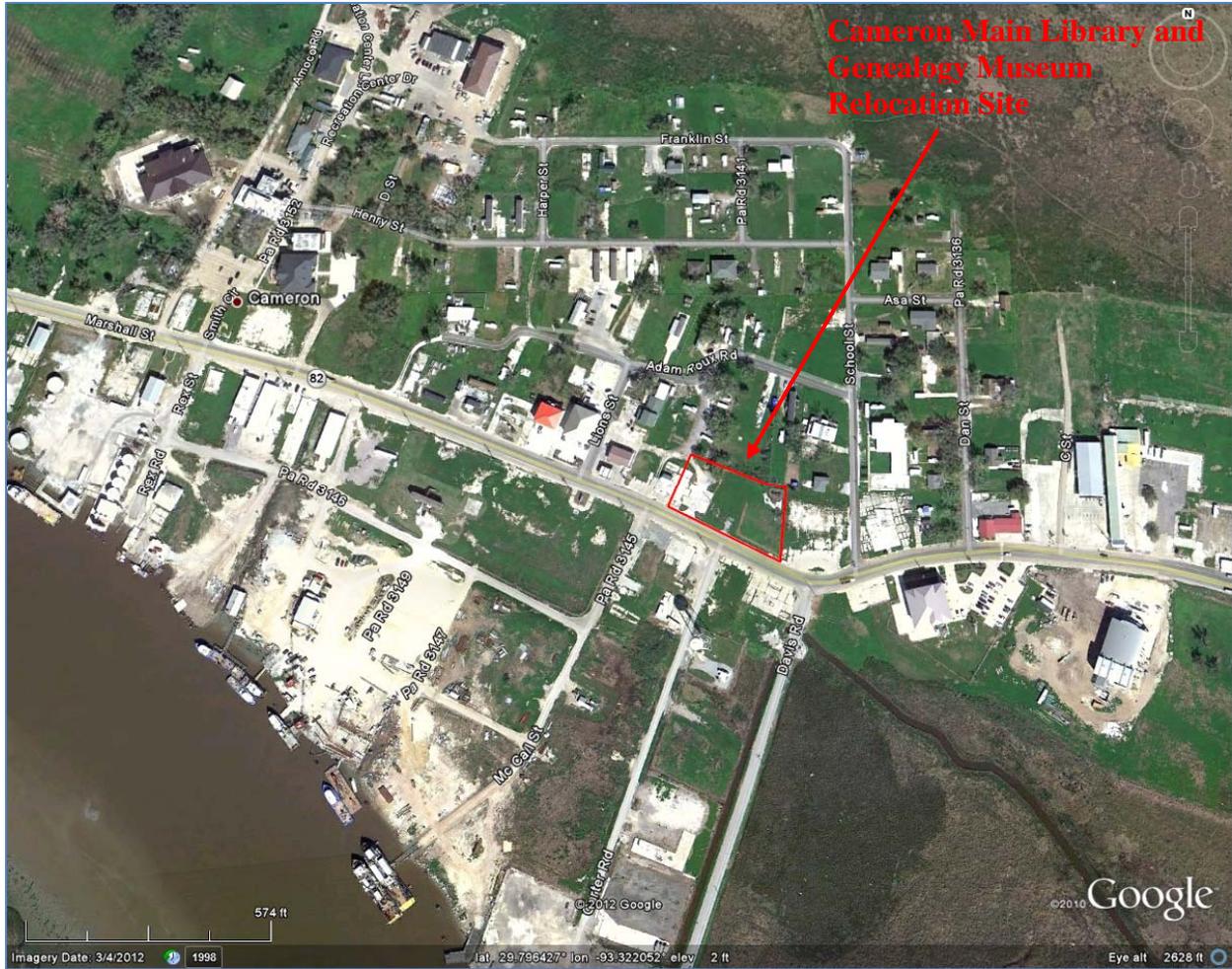
The proposed location of the consolidated replacement of the Cameron Library and the Cameron Genealogy Museum is within the town of Cameron at 469 Marshall Street, Cameron Parish, Louisiana (Latitude 29.79629, Longitude -93.32110, Figures 3 through 5).



**Figure 3 – Proposed Relocation Site Topographic Map (USGS Cameron Quadrangle 7.5-Minute National Map US Topo®, 2012)**



**Figure 4 - Relocation Site Map (USGS, 2012)**



**Figure 5 - Relocation Site Aerial Photograph Highlighting Boundaries and Showing nearby Land Use (Google Earth, 2012)**

## 2.0 PURPOSE AND NEED FOR THE PROPOSED ACTION

The objective of the FEMA PA Grant Program is to provide assistance to State, Tribal and local governments, and certain types of private nonprofit organizations so that communities can quickly respond to and recover from major disasters or emergencies declared by the President. Through the PA Program, FEMA provides supplemental federal disaster grant assistance for debris removal, emergency protective measures, and the repair, replacement, or restoration of disaster-damaged, publicly owned facilities and the facilities of certain private nonprofit organizations. The PA Program also encourages protection of these damaged facilities from future events by providing assistance for hazard mitigation measures during the recovery process. In order to restore the services, facilities, and resources that were destroyed as a result of the hurricane, the parish seeks federal grant funds to replace the Cameron Library and the Cameron Genealogy Museum, including their former building contents (all appurtenant equipment, materials, and supplies). This project would support implementation of the long-term community recovery plan, ensure community cohesiveness, and eliminate gaps in the resources available to ensure follow-through of recovery and hazard mitigation efforts.

Presently, the Cameron Library is providing limited basic services to the community through a temporary facility provided by FEMA at 469 Marshall Street in the town of Cameron. The parish needs replacement library facilities to provide residents with a place for essential community services, a center for public gathering, and a place for information exchange. Public collections and services are needed for use by people who choose not to — or cannot afford to — purchase an extensive collection themselves, who need material no individual can reasonably be expected to have, or who require professional assistance with their research. The library is needed to provide public facilities for access to their electronic resources and the internet. Additionally, the loss of the Genealogy Museum created a need for a place to further the study of local families and the tracing of their lineages and history. In addition to providing materials, the Cameron Library is needed to provide the services of librarians who are experts at finding and organizing information and at interpreting information needs. Librarians support these community needs by operating locally accessible institutions that select, collect, organize, preserve, conserve, and provide access to media. The library is needed to provide quiet study areas and common areas to facilitate group study and collaboration.

The purpose of the proposed action includes restoring longstanding roles such as offering books and resources, providing space for community meetings and access to internet and other wireless services, delivering public announcements and releases, and providing access to the collections of other libraries. The library would restore a genealogy section that would provide a space for historical records containing information about families and lineage and provide the community a way to access these historical records. Reconstruction is proposed to include consolidation of the replacement buildings into a single building with upgrades for compliance with current codes and standards. The new library building would be located at the site of the temporary library that is currently providing limited services. The site of the consolidated replacement facility is 0.25 miles northwest of the original location of the Cameron Library and approximately 21 miles west of the original location of the Genealogy Museum (Figure 3). The parish chose the new location to meet the current needs of the post-storm community demographics.

### **3.0 ALTERNATIVES CONSIDERED**

#### **3.1 Alternative 1 - No Action**

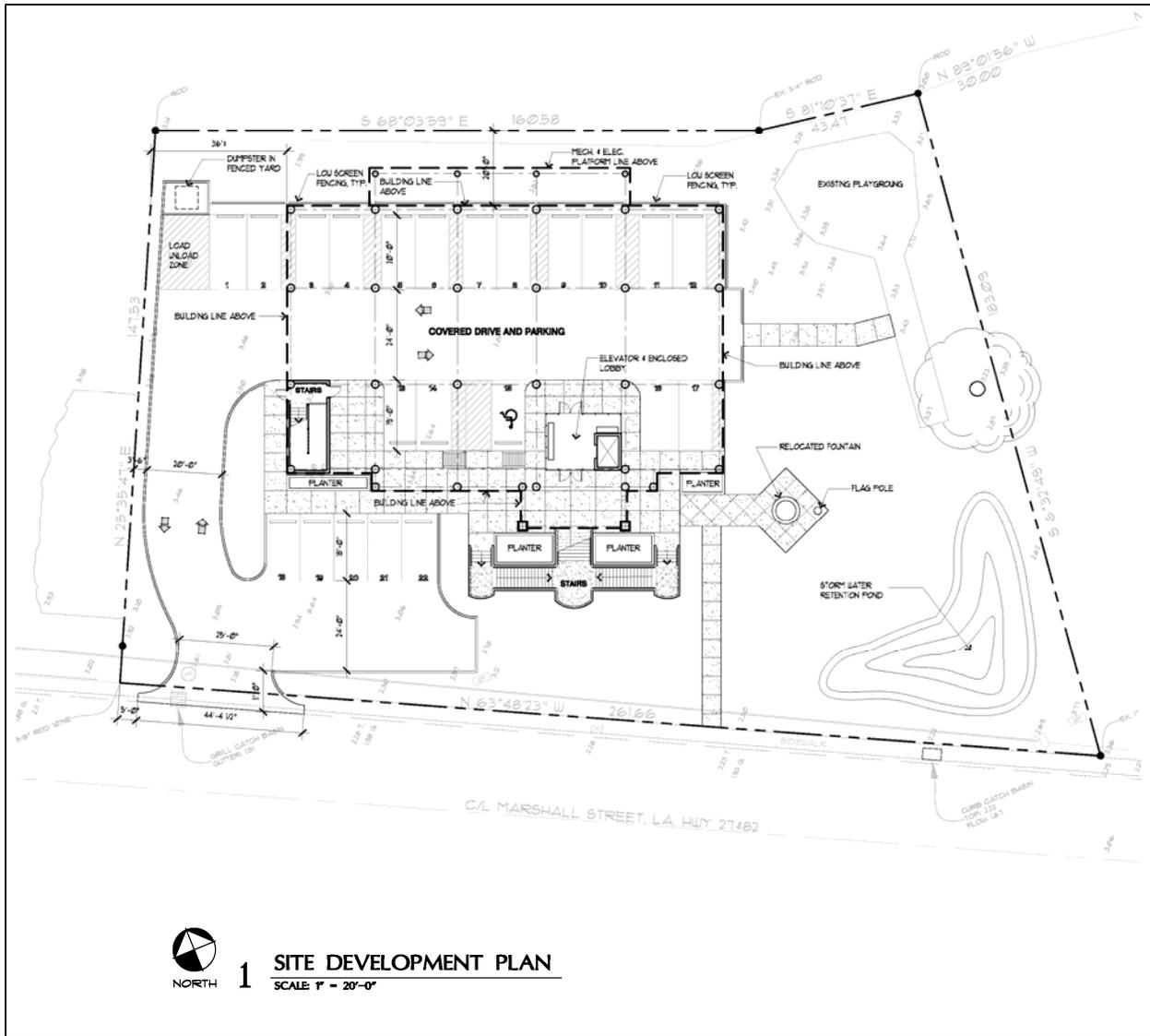
With the no action alternative, there would be no replacement of the destroyed main Cameron Library or the Cameron Genealogy Museum. As a result, area residents would continue to use the limited services provided by the temporary emergency services and would be without the restoration of important community service facilities providing books, journals, videos, and other materials and services for education and entertainment.

#### **3.2 Alternative 2 – Library Consolidation at Alternate Site – Proposed Action**

The proposed replacement action is for construction of an improved library facility at a site approximately 0.25 miles northwest of the original location in the town of Cameron. Because the damaged main library possessed a genealogy section, board members designed the replacement facility to be a consolidation of the two hurricane damaged facilities, the Main Cameron Library and the Cameron Genealogy Museum. This consolidation includes increasing the square footage due to required codes and standards (e.g., American with Disabilities Act, building codes, local floodplain ordinances, etc.).

#### **3.3 Alternative 3 – Reconstruct at Original Sites – Alternative Eliminated from Consideration**

This alternative would rebuild the destroyed main Cameron Library and the Cameron Genealogy Museum at their original sites to pre-disaster configuration, function, and capacity. Grading of the sites would be necessary to prepare for reconstruction. The facilities would be constructed within their respective original footprints and would include improvements for meeting current codes and standards. Cameron Library requested FEMA approval for a change of location and consolidation project to enable the Genealogy Museum functions to be incorporated into the main library, which reduces the number of facilities at risk by one. Also, the relocation to the town of Cameron eases access by eliminating the need for town residents to travel to the original site 21 miles to the west. Therefore, this alternative will not be carried forward for further consideration.



**Figure 6 - Cameron Library Site Development Plan (Police Jury Parish of Cameron, 2010)**

### Site Development Plan

The proposed design (Figure 6, Police Jury Parish of Cameron, 2010) consists of a 9,353 square foot facility designed to be elevated above grade on piles with covered drive and parking below. Additional parking will be provided in front of the building adjacent to Marshall Street. Site features include a playground, a storm water retention pond, a fountain, a flag pole, sidewalks, fencing, catch basins, and planters. Building access will be provided by a covered porch and stairs and an upgrade for a code required elevator and enclosed lobby (Figure 6, Police Jury Parish of Cameron, 2010). The proposed project requires site grading and other ground disturbing activities to provide access to the existing Cameron utilities. Site plans include building a new sidewalk along Marshall Street.

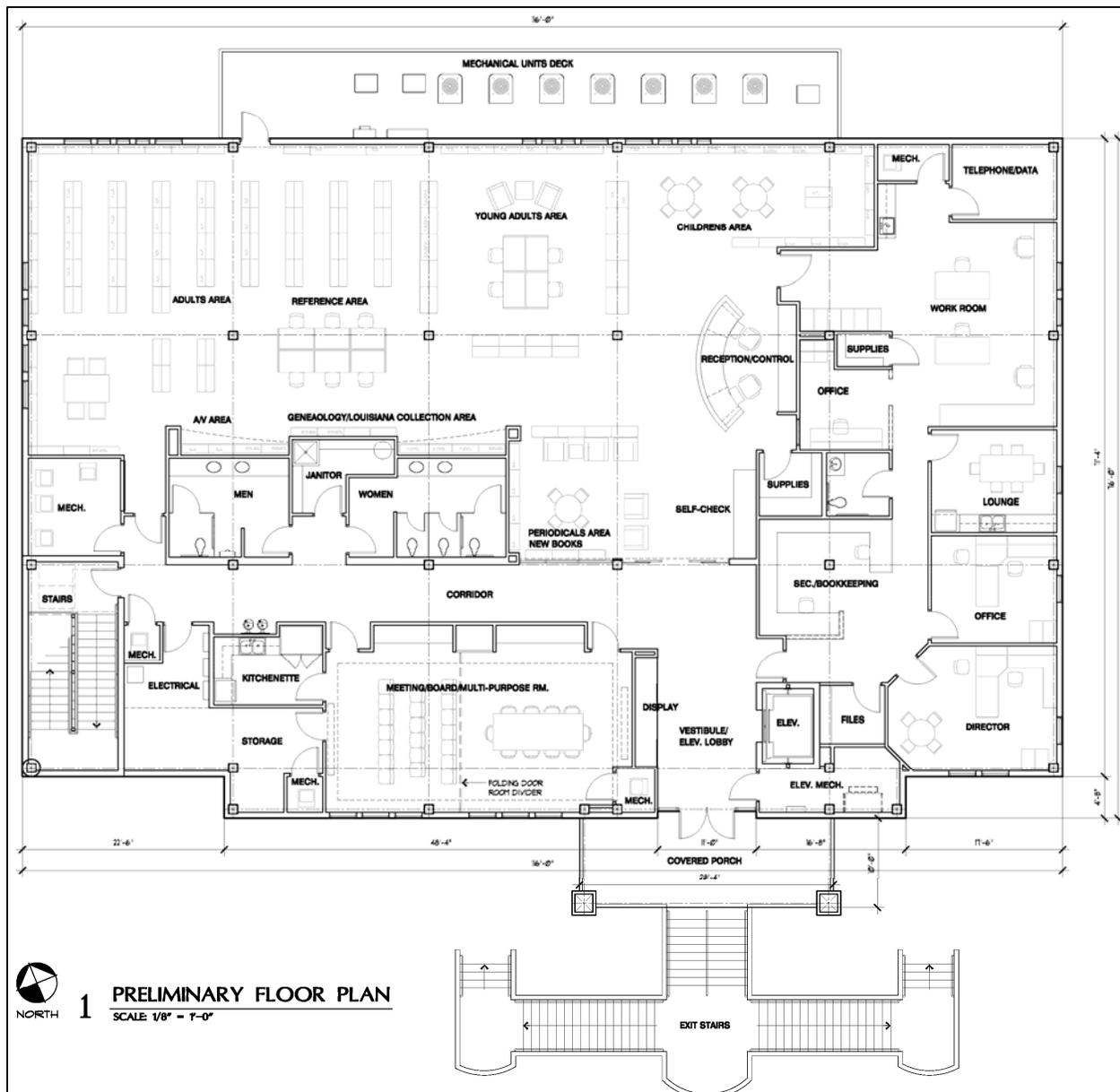


Figure 7 - Preliminary Floor Plan (Police Jury Parish of Cameron, 2010)

### Preliminary Floor Plan

The preliminary floor plan (Figure 7, Police Jury Parish of Cameron, 2010) includes exterior elevated mechanical units, offices, collection areas, restrooms, a mechanical and electrical room, a kitchenette, corridors, and a reception control/lobby area. The proposed action includes the replacement of the contents of the damaged structures or their equivalent, insofar as practical, including library materials, furniture, heat/mechanical components and miscellaneous appurtenant systems.

## **4.0 AFFECTED ENVIRONMENT AND POTENTIAL IMPACTS**

### **4.1 Physical Resources**

This section provides a description of the physical setting and information on the existing environment, or baseline conditions, for those resources/areas of concern that may be affected by the proposed action or alternatives. The following environmentally-related resources/areas of concern are discussed: geology and soils, surface water, groundwater and wetlands, floodplains, threatened and endangered species and critical habitat, cultural resources, and environmental justice. Other related resources/areas of concern are addressed where the proposed action and/or alternatives have the potential to affect that resource/area of concern including air quality, noise, traffic, public services and utilities, and hazardous materials and wastes.

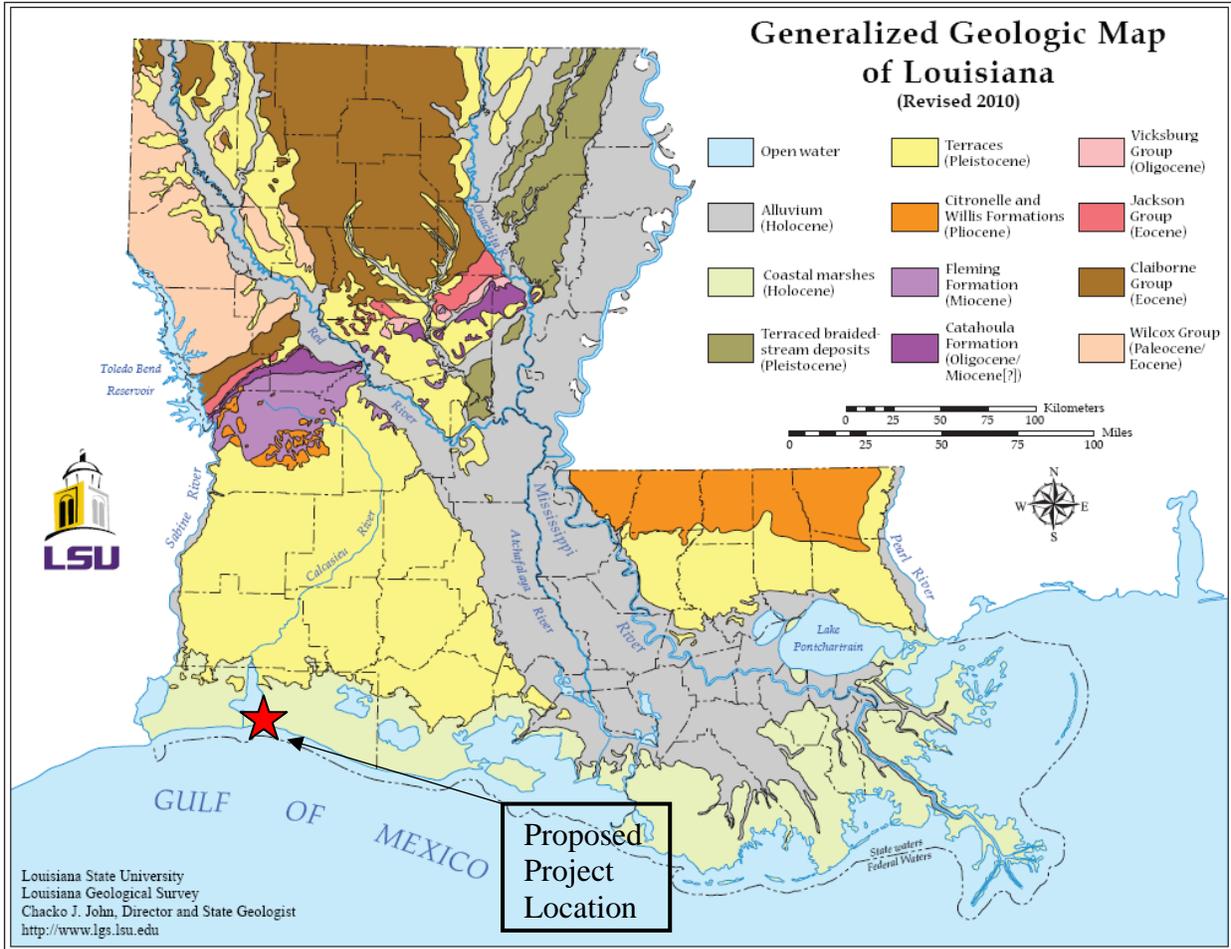
#### **4.1.1 Geology and Soil**

Southwest Louisiana is characterized by extensive coastal marshland interrupted by numerous forests atop relict beach ridges, or chenier ridges, and natural ridges or levees (Louisiana Department of Natural Resources, LDNR 2009). According to the Louisiana Geological Survey (LGS), the geology in the vicinity of the site is predominantly Holocene coastal marshes, river sedimentary deposits composed mainly of sands, silts and clays (LGS, 2008). Figure 8 is a generalized geology map for Louisiana showing the location of the proposed project site in Cameron Parish.

The parish has elevations ranging from sea level to 20 feet. A short distance inland and parallel to the coastline, there are numerous chenier ridges, which are generally at elevations of 4 to 7 feet; in a few cases, they are at elevations of 10 feet or slightly higher. These cheniers are long, narrow beach ridges composed essentially of sand and shells thrown up by waves during storms.

The soils in Cameron Parish vary widely in their potential for most important land uses and urban development. Specific mapped soils in the vicinity of the proposed project site include the Hackberry loamy fine sand, drained (Figures 9 and 10, Natural Resources Conservation Service, NRCS, Web Soil Survey Mapper, 2011). This somewhat poorly drained soil is on toe slopes and in other areas on low ridges. The ridges are generally parallel to the coast and the Gulf of Mexico. The soil is subject to rare flooding when hurricanes and tropical storms pass over or near the parish. Areas are elliptical and range from 10 to 1,500 acres in size.

This soil is poorly suited to urban development. Population growth, however, has increased the extent of home site and industrial/commercial development on this soil type in Cameron Parish (USDA, 1995). The main management concerns are the wetness and the hazard of flooding during hurricanes. Pilings or mounds can elevate buildings above the expected level of flooding and adherence to building codes and standards ensures utilization of appropriate construction methods and materials for this soil type.



**Figure 8 - Generalized Geology Map of Louisiana (Louisiana State University, 2010)**