



Urban Libraries Council Recognizes Valente Branch with Innovation Award

Cambridge, MA, May 19, 2023 — The Urban Libraries Council announced that the Cambridge Public Library’s Valente Branch Library is one of eight Top Innovators during the 2023 Innovations Celebration held virtually on April 27. The ULC’s annual Innovations awards recognize transformative programs from its member library systems across the U.S. and Canada that enhance the library field to further advocacy, anti-racism and digital equity, democracy, education, health and wellness, and workforce development.

The Valente Branch was chosen from nearly 150 submissions in eight categories that showcase creative thinking and out-of-the-box applications of library resources. The Valente Branch won in the Health and Wellness category. The winners were recognized for their level of inventiveness, the outcomes achieved, and the opportunity for other libraries to adapt and implement their work.

“It is clear from this year’s selected 2023 Innovations that ULC member libraries are at the forefront of industry creativity, leading far-reaching efforts, and developing original programming,” said ULC President and CEO Brooks Rainwater. “These winners illustrate the exceptional leadership, dedication and perseverance demonstrated by our libraries amidst ongoing change and pressure. We applaud the Cambridge Public Library Valente Branch for their visionary program, which will revolutionize their library and community and serve as a template for public libraries across North America.”

In 2015, the City of Cambridge committed to an Action Plan to become a Net Zero community by 2040. The Valente Branch Library is one of the City’s first projects to be built under this mandate. The building serves as a model for integrating sustainability and wellness into library design.

The design of the building incorporates the community’s demand for a healthier and more resilient city ascertained through witnessing charrettes at schools, sporting and community events, and senior centers, resulting in a responsive design. Connecting with nature and providing thermal and acoustical comfort and modulated daylight were incorporated in the design. Five play spaces, a reading garden, and a bocce court support physical and emotional wellness. The building integrates durable and healthy materials with a variety of seating options to create a comfortable and welcoming space for everyone. The library was built with a focus on flexibility, providing space to open for

larger gatherings. Today, the library's circulation and programming have more than doubled. The building's amenities – its auditorium, cafeteria, pools, and gyms – attract people of all ages and abilities to engage with their city library.

“The design of the Valente Branch demonstrates that the concepts of sustainability, wellness, and creating a welcoming space go together,” said Dr. Maria McCauley, Director of Libraries for the City of Cambridge. “Increased circulation, programming, and patron visits indicate that patrons appreciate this architectural and service design innovation.”

Partners include the Cambridge Public Library, the City of Cambridge, William Rawn Associates, and Arrow Street. All 2023 ULC Innovations entries can be viewed at urbanlibraries.org.

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About the Cambridge Public Library:

At the Cambridge Public Library, we welcome all, inspire minds and empower community. We support a Cambridge where everyone has equitable opportunities to learn, people live their best lives, and democracy thrives. [Visit our website](#) to learn more.