

Libraries are no longer just about borrowing a book. They have become complex community centers of learning, gathering, and support. The new Greece Children's Library enhances the symbolic and physical heart of the community, and "engages, inspires, and informs" its young patrons.

Reflecting current best practices in library design, and planning for future changes in library services, the expansion added over 7,000 SF to the Greece Public Library, which more than tripled the size of the Greece's Library to over 10,000 square feet. The design focuses on learning through play with interactive three-dimensional elements in a "Story Garden" theme.



The addition accommodates lower shelving for easy reach by young children and expanded space for growing collections. The expansion includes a new multi-purpose story and craft room, outdoor reading patio, hands-on activity space, offices, and a family restroom. The design team used its expertise in library design to optimize the flow and process through the Children's Library, maximizing staff interaction, line of sight, and the location of programmatic elements within the space.



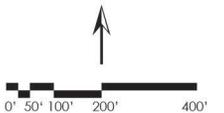
Design for Equitable Communities

Each public library is a direct reflection of the community it serves, and the architecture should share the identity in a seamless way. While the interior function of the library is critical to a successful branch, the site, local history, location, and people in the community are equally important.

The largest town in its county, Greece, NY, serves a large and diverse population. Lacking a traditional “Main Street,” the Town has worked for decades to develop a public campus where services and amenities are available to residents in a walkable and accessible environment. Families are one of the largest user groups of this campus and the former Children’s Library was undersized for the population. Located near the entrance to the campus, it is also one of the first impressions visitors have of the campus.

We believe transparency is a powerful way to demonstrate - physically and metaphorically - what the library and its community values. This simple approach showcases library services and minimizes visual barriers for those to whom a library may be intimidating. A prominent rotunda, encircled with glass, welcomes visitors to the Town Campus and the Library and illuminates the liveliness created by the new Children’s Library space.

- ADDITION
- MUNICIPAL
- RESIDENTIAL
- RECREATIONAL



TECHNOLOGY



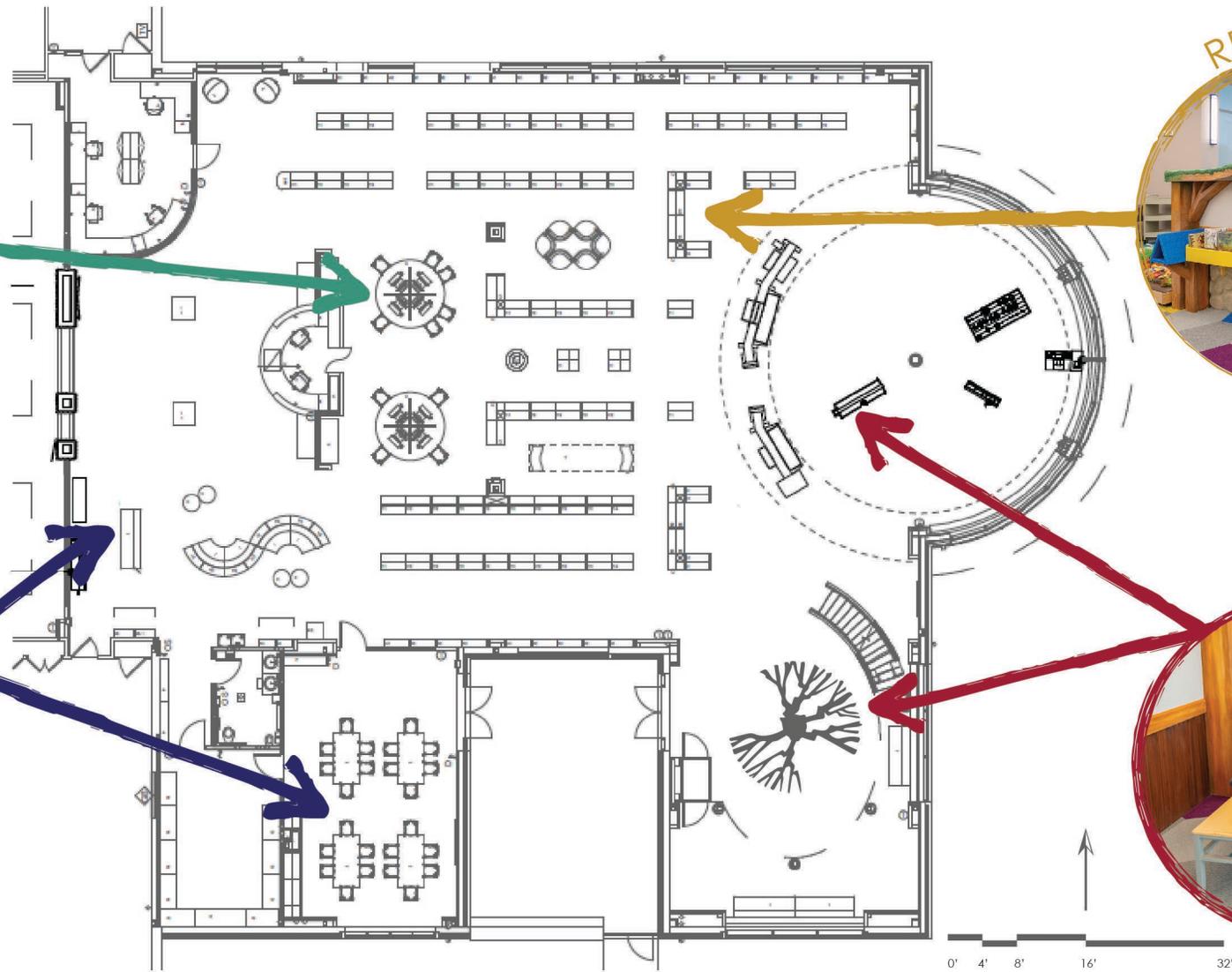
READING



CREATION



PLAY



Programmatic Plan

The Children's Library serves children, parents, and staff. Staff gains a new office and desk that offers transparency and accessibility. Shelves are low for children to reach easily while offering line of sight. Children have multiple hands-on opportunities to learn through play.



Design for Economy

The design team used its expertise in library design to optimize the flow and process through the Children's Library, maximizing staff interaction, line of sight, and the location of programmatic elements within the space. Multi-functional spaces provide more with less.

Most of the library is open, with furniture and shelving creating spaces for browsing, reading, individual play, group play, and many other activities. Low shelves are accessible to children and allow clear sight lines between staff and patrons, caregivers and children, and create an easily understood interior visual environment.

The mezzanine and treehouse areas provide additional play space without increasing the building footprint or obscuring the sightline connection for staff. One of the few defined spaces in the library, the Story & Craft Room is a multi-functional space for programs, crafts, and story time. The furniture within the space is easily moveable to accommodate a variety of activities.

The incorporation of high efficiency lighting, durable furniture, and flexible spaces makes for an economic addition.





Before & After Exterior



The prominent rotunda emphasizes transparency and immediately welcomes visitors or locals.



Design for Energy

The design team's philosophy is to create attractive, functional, durable, and energy-efficient facilities that meet all client requirements while working within budget and schedule constraints. Green technologies were evaluated for use in the project based on budgets, initial costs, and return on investment. The building has a highly efficient thermal envelope with all LED lighting controlled by a building management system. The design effectively uses daylighting and features highly insulated translucent skylight systems to bring natural light into the center of the space.

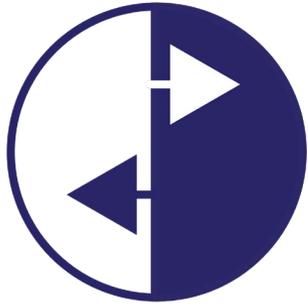




Before & After Play Area



Durable, attractive, and immersive architectural features allow for a unique learning experience for children of all ages.



Design for Change

Particularly true in libraries serving diverse and changing populations, a notable design challenge is to find the balance between an iconic presence and the flexibility needed to allow the library to evolve. The needs of communities served today are rapidly changing and are vastly different versus only five years ago. Physical spaces typically adapt at a much slower pace and at a high cost. Simple, open plans defined by movable fixtures and operable walls allow libraries to change with their communities. At the Children's Library, shelving, seating, and play elements create defined spaces for today's users but are easily adaptable for future changes.





Before & After Library



Reimagination of the space with integrated furniture and unique lighting features foster a highly interactive area. Low and moveable furniture is more accessible to children, gives parents a clear line of sight, and allows for flexibility.

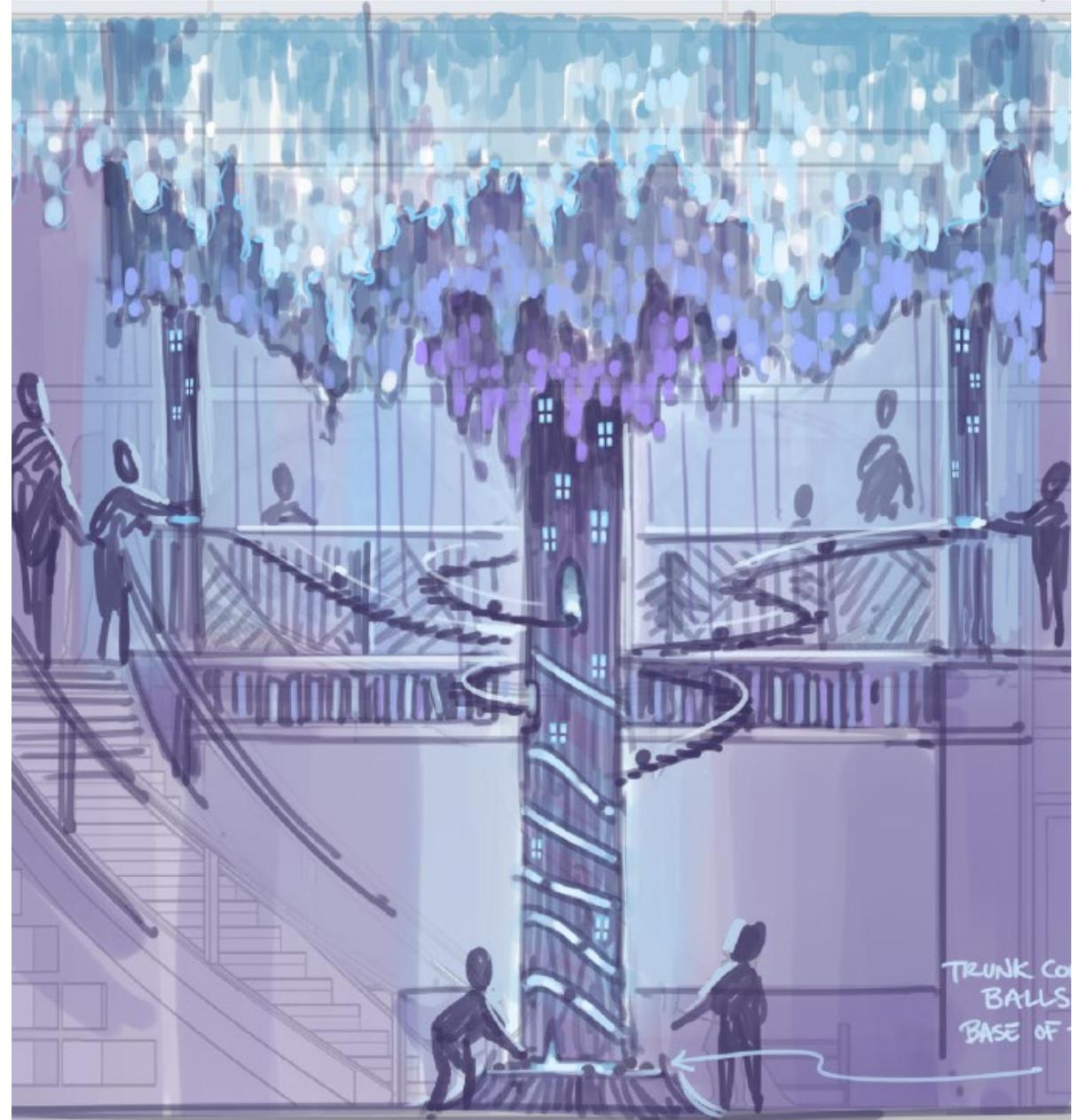


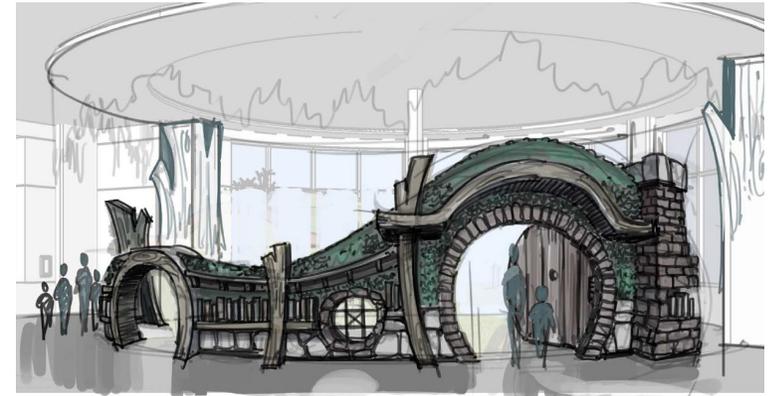
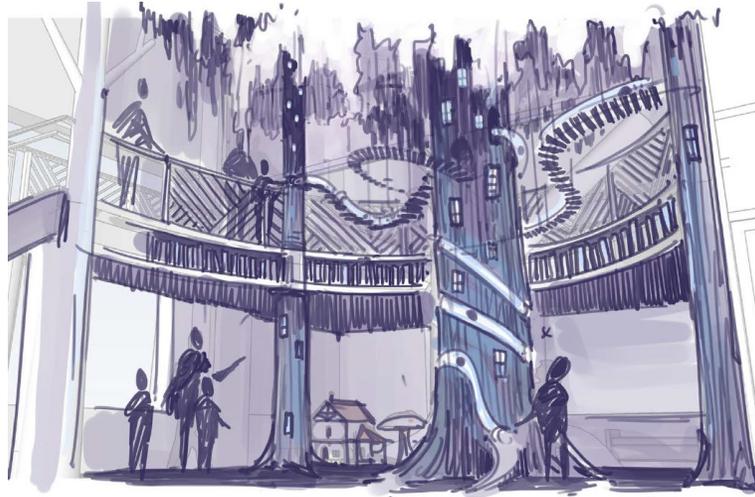
Design for Wellness

Public libraries are leaders in providing children's educational services. New research coupled with emerging technologies allows for more targeted approaches to create engaging spaces. These spaces should be colorful and exciting to stimulate young minds, but also intimate and safe to reassure them and their caregivers. The library promotes early literacy to build a smarter, more engaged community of children.

Learning through play was the driving force behind the Children's Library design. Activities for various age groups are sprinkled throughout the space, creating zones for playing, learning, and reading, with ample, comfortable seating for caregivers. The Town and design team worked with a renowned exhibit design company to conceptualize and create the many interactive play elements. The new Library provides a museum quality experience free to the public.

Families are not the only users of the space; it is important to address the needs of the Library staff as well. Librarianship is hard work. Physically it includes continuous repetitive motion, lifting, pushing, moving, and occasionally, performing. It is also draining, as patrons can, at any moment, approach with confusion, frustration, anger, happiness, or wonder. The library serves all, and librarians are confronted with the full spectrum of the community – the good and the challenging. That's why it's imperative that Librarian's workspaces minimize the stress of the job and maximize the relaxation and privacy of the moments "off-stage." The desk and office were designed to meet the Librarians' daily needs, and to provide visibility between staff and patrons, while also providing a private workspace.





Conceptual Sketches

The story garden comes to life through custom interactive elements. Magical trees and elegant arches set the stage for young readers.



Nature Motifs

Colorful butterflies, blue sky ceilings, and fairy trees are just some of the ways the library leans into the Story Garden theme. These motifs not only occur as finishes, but as architectural elements.



New Offices

While staying on theme with meadowy window films, the new office connects the main library to the new addition and offers line of sight for the librarians.

Community Impact Award

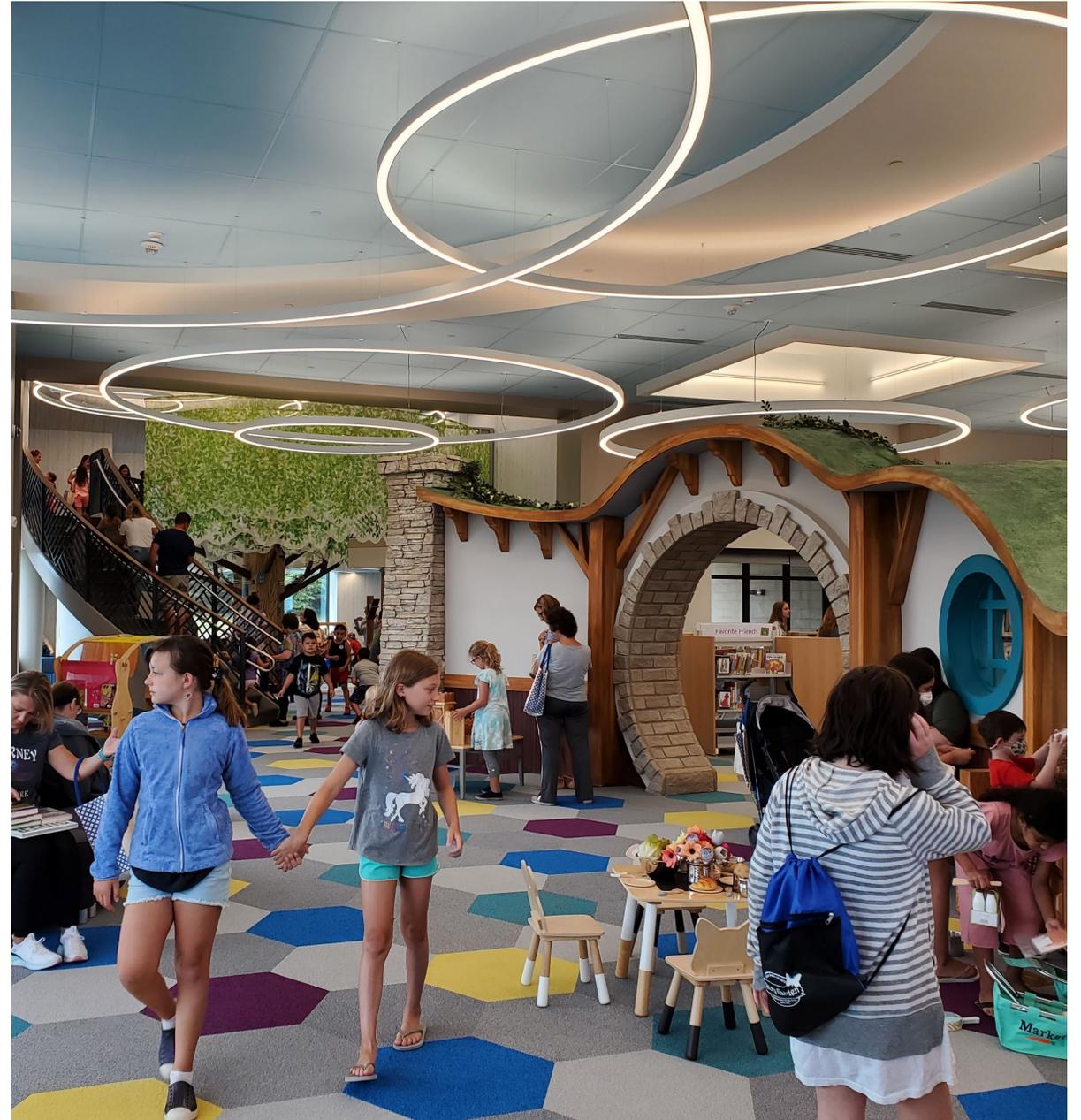
Stepping through the stone arch into the Children's Library, known as the "Story Garden," the first thing to hit you are the sounds:

children laughing, children playing, and children reading.

More than a place to borrow a book, the Children's Library is a gathering place for families. Providing museum level amenities for free, it draws visitors from the Town of Greece and beyond. From the Assistant Library Director, Keith Suhr, "One unanticipated outcome of the project was how it brought young Greece families together; introducing themselves to one another; bonded by the common ground of raising children in a town that values recreation and learning. In the winter, it gave them a place to gather and not only enjoy what was available to their children, but a place that also provided offerings for their own interests."

For caregivers, the library is a safe and affordable place to bring their children. Low shelves and an open layout provide visibility to keep kids in sight. Amenities such as a check-out desk and family restroom are located within the space. For children, there are numerous play areas and activities for all ages. A story and craft room is constantly filled with fun and educational programs run by the talented librarians. An enclosed outdoor patio allows visitors to enjoy some fresh air when the weather is beautiful. The collections have expanded and include not only a huge variety of books for children and caregivers, but also unique discovery kits, homeschool kits, and other activities.

Where previously the library was dark and static, the new space is alive and dynamic, bright and colorful, and full of the joy of children learning and playing. In the words of one young patron, "Before, it was fun, but this is *fun!*"





Greece Children's Library

The new Greece Children's Library is engaging, inspiring, and informative for its young patrons, local families, and visitors. Working as a design team, the goals of creating an aesthetic, fun, and durable facility were achieved.