

Francis A. Gregory Neighborhood Library

Washington, DC

Institutional

This library illustrates the dramatic effect that targeted public investment can have in communities of need. It is a bold vision for strengthening the social fabric of a neighborhood by instilling pride and inspiring individuals to elevate the caliber of their collective interaction. A replacement for a basic brick box, this space has become a community gathering space that integrates cultural programs, establishes a dynamic setting for children, teens, and adults to mingle with their peers while being part of the larger social fabric, creates both formal and fortuitous meeting places for the neighborhood to interact with itself and with the city at large, and at the same time be a peaceful space serving as a respite for individuals and families.

The site is very small – just the footprint of the building and a perimeter walk – and is surrounded by forested parkland. Set among the pines of Fort Dupont National Park, the Francis A. Gregory Library unites the urban community and the natural realm through its design.

The glass pavilion is a balance of transparency and reflectivity as its continuous 2-story high custom glass curtain-wall folds over as a glass roof. The design solution used geometric progressions to reflect the dynamic, natural setting. Outside, the building reflects its context with a crisp geometry and hard, reflective surfaces; but when one moves inside, one is suddenly enveloped with the warm cladding of the wood-encased curtain wall. What appeared from the outside to be a singular surface is revealed inside to be a complex screen. Interior spaces are suspended over the library stacks creating a dynamic meeting place for the community. The 20,000 sf program called for a large children's section, which was floated as a 2nd floor within the larger envelope to create a treehouse-like reclusive space with small-scale cubby hole windows that peek out to the forest.



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