

Connecting with Transparency

Project Name / Location

Laurel Branch Library /
Laurel, MD

Category

Institutional Education

Project Summary

Envisioned as a modern space for discovery and community rather than a repository for print media, Laurel Branch Library embraces its place in the community through transparency — dissolving the barriers between in-

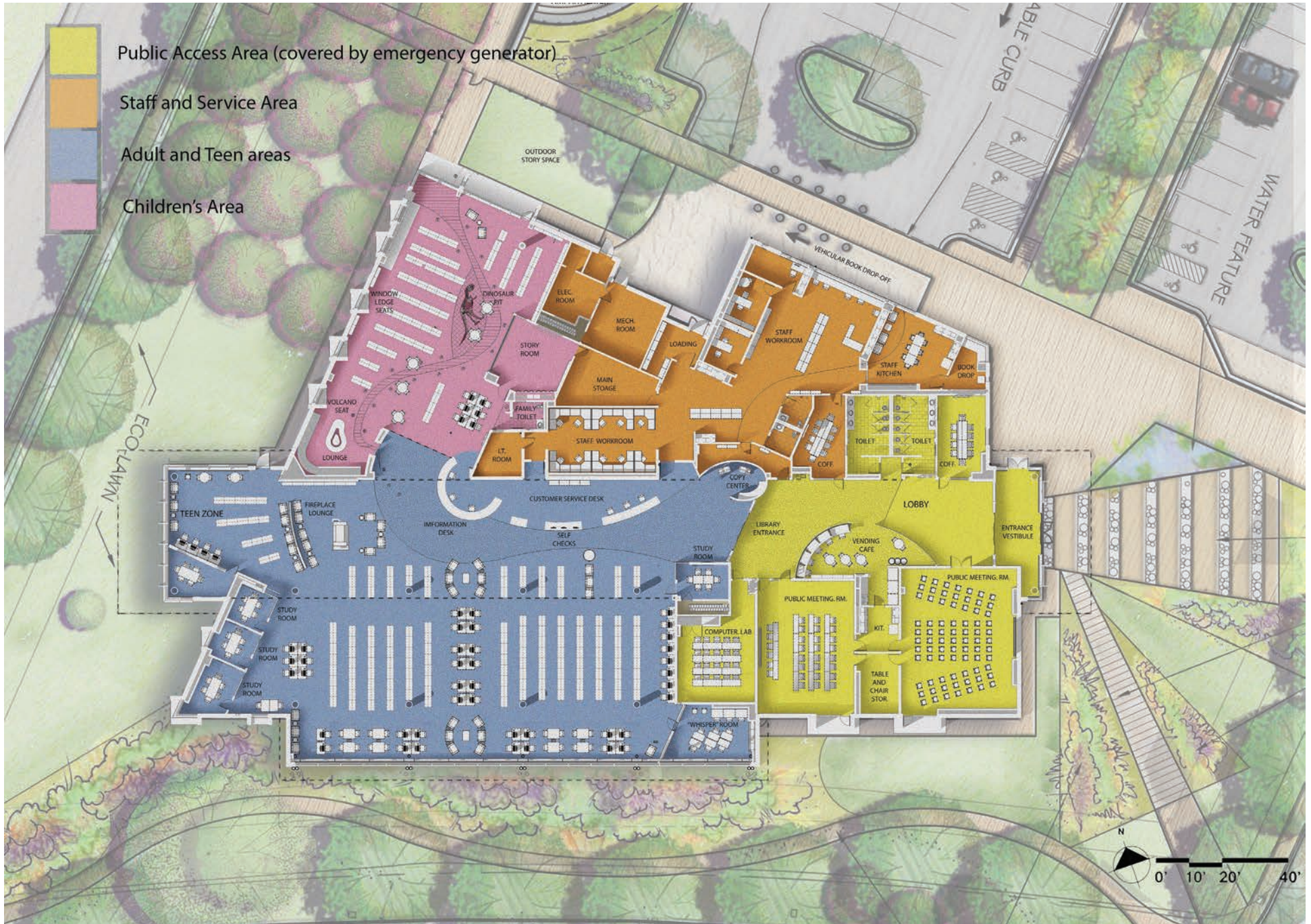
terior and exterior while providing an array of modern educational amenities. At 31,000 sf, its open, intuitive floorplan and comprehensive technology integration along with its pedestrian friendly location make Laurel Branch Library an accessible space for socializing and exploring educational resources. Private study and conference rooms serve as meeting spaces for groups of students and local organizations, and all user groups are valued with their own modern spaces including adult, teen, and

children’s reading areas with specially selected, age appropriate features and furnishings.

The liveliest of these spaces is the children’s wing, or “Discovery Island”— an exploration zone intended to encourage early literacy. Children enter via a cave-like opening in a stone wall, emerging onto a lush tropical island where they are greeted by reading nooks tucked into the greenery. Young readers navigate the stacks, following illuminated dinosaur

tracks to discover a complete model Nanotyrannus skeleton, encased in the glass floor, and illuminated from within as though recently excavated. The remainder of the tracks lead young readers to another hidden reading nook — this time disguised as a discarded dinosaur ribcage. Utilizing Laurel Branch Library’s transparency to full effect, this nook overlooks an adjoining pathway, linking the library to the newly renovated historic Emancipation Community Park.





Floorplan + site plan

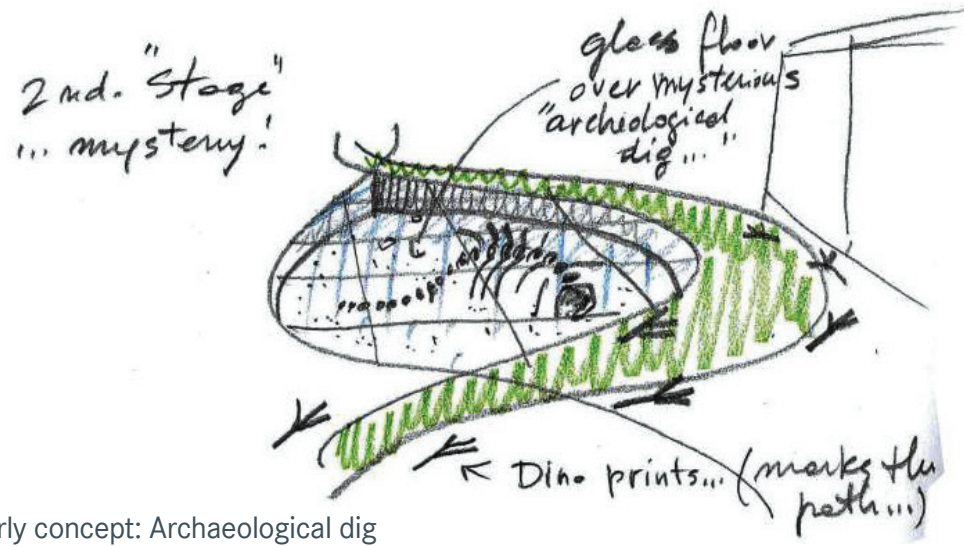


Lobby entrance / cafe

The design program philosophy for the new Laurel Branch Library aspired to create an environment that promotes learning, encourages social interaction and lifts the human spirit.



Circulation desk / stacks



Early concept: Archaeological dig



Reading nooks



Children's Area - "Discovery Island"



West exterior



Whisper room



Designed for a community ever more immersed in technology, the design enhances the library services offered by maximizing connections between interior space, landscape and surrounding community with the intent of adding sensory excitement through views to the exterior, letting the user enjoy sunlight, watch the change of seasons, experience color and texture and, from the exterior, letting the library be a beacon of the community.



South exterior

Program requirements for the exterior included an emphasis on the library's institutional place within the community in terms of architectural character and close attention to the integration of the facility on its site in a way that respects and improves Emancipation Park. The solution provides a pedestrian friendly building and site while balancing the necessary practical exterior requirements such as a vehicular book drop-off lane, security and visibility, around one single main entrance.

