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Adams Memorial Library Children's Room

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Adams Memorial Library Children's Room

Community Partner:
Adams Memorial Library,
Central Falls, RI

Academic Partner:
The School of Architecture, Art
and Historic Preservation
The School of Education

Fall 2012

The Roger Williams University Community Partnerships Center

The Roger Williams University (RWU) Community Partnerships Center (CPC) provides project-based assistance to non-profit organizations, government agencies and low- and moderate-income communities in Rhode Island and Southeastern Massachusetts. Our mission is to undertake and complete projects that will benefit the local community while providing RWU students with experience in real-world projects that deepen their academic experiences.

CPC projects draw upon the skills and experience of students and faculty from RWU programs in areas such as:

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- Architecture and Urban Design
- Business
- Community Development
- Education
- Engineering and Construction Management
- Environmental Science and Sustainability
- Finance

- Graphic Design
- Historic Preservation
- History
- Justice Studies
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- Psychology
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Students discuss the project with
Library Executive Director Joel Petit.

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Faculty: DesignLab Architects of Boston, Massachusetts - Principal Robert Miklos | Partner Sam Batchelor | Associate Kelly Ard
ARCH 515.01 - Advanced Architectural Design Studio
CPC Support: Lindsay Guastafeste | Jake Wheeler

Introduction

In the fall of 2012, Roger Williams University School of Architecture, Art and Historic Preservation hosted a firm-in-residence: Design-Lab Architects of Boston, Massachusetts. Principal Robert Miklos, partner Sam Batchelor and associate Kelly Ard co-taught a graduate architectural design studio with a focus on adapting historic properties as a catalyst for community revitalization. The case study for the semester was Adams Memorial Library, located in Central Falls, Rhode Island.

At a time when traditional libraries suffer from a loss of relevance in the technology age, the goal of this studio was to explore how a library can adapt to new uses and the needs of a community. Central Falls, Rhode Island, is the smallest yet most densely populated city in the state. In recent years, the city has declared bankruptcy; the public school system continues to decline; and almost 30% of the population is below the poverty line.



The 1980s addition to the rear of the library.

In the midst of a failing city, the Adams Memorial Library sits as a little oasis in a residential neighborhood. Opened to the public in 1910, the Greek revival library was modeled after the Carnegie typology. In the early 1980s, an addition was added to the rear of the library to include additional book stacks, a large flexible meeting space and a code-compliant elevator and second means of egress. In 2011, after 100 years of continuous operation, the library closed due to municipal financial failure. However, a group of enthusiastic citizens rallied together and were able to re-open the Adams Memorial Library to the public through donations and volunteer support.

Methodology

The students in the design studio worked to develop ideas of community connectivity and corresponding architectural program through three-dimensional collaging of images, objects and materials. Next, they participated in a workshop with students from the Roger Williams University School of Education to gain a better understanding of spaces that are exciting yet appropriate for use by children.

Throughout the design studio, students worked with an expanded architectural program, allowing them to experiment with the philosophy and methodology of historic rehabilitation while adding contemporary additions to iconic historic architecture. Final design solutions from the semester were presented by the students in December 2012 and were reviewed by a panel of architecture and historic preservation faculty and professionals.

The following February, the student designs were presented to Joel Petit, the Executive Director of the Adams Memorial Library, with the goal of identifying elements and features that could be scaled down to a realistic scope of achievable design for the library. Many of the design suggestions that appealed to Mr. Petit were from a single student; this served as the starting point for the design process, which would continue with graduate assistants and work study staff from the Community Partnerships Center.



Proposed north facade
and garden perspective
by Rebecca Sargent.

Existing Conditions

The children's room is currently located in the basement of the library, has little natural day lighting and lacks accommodations and design features appropriate for children. The basement level is accessible via a staircase and an elevator installed in the 1980s addition. A stage is centered in the children's room, however, the step up to access the space is considered to be a hazard for small children. This area is not usually used for performances; instead, it is a static space holding additional bookshelves.

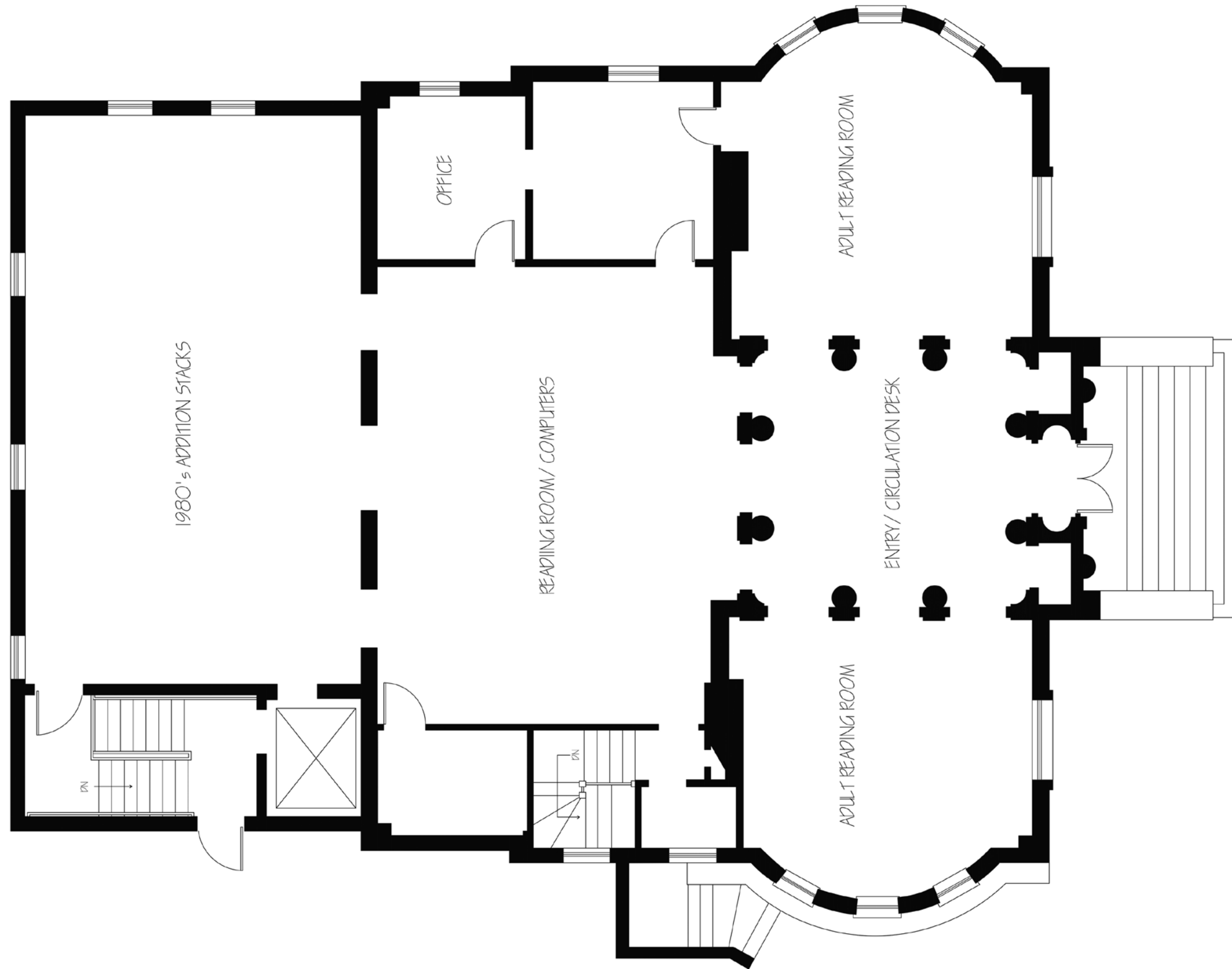
The windows are small and high on the wall, making the space rely solely on artificial lighting. The floor finish is a low-pile carpet in a neutral gray color. Furnishings include bookshelves, tables, chairs and a designated children-friendly computer area. However, parents often utilize the computers more than the children.



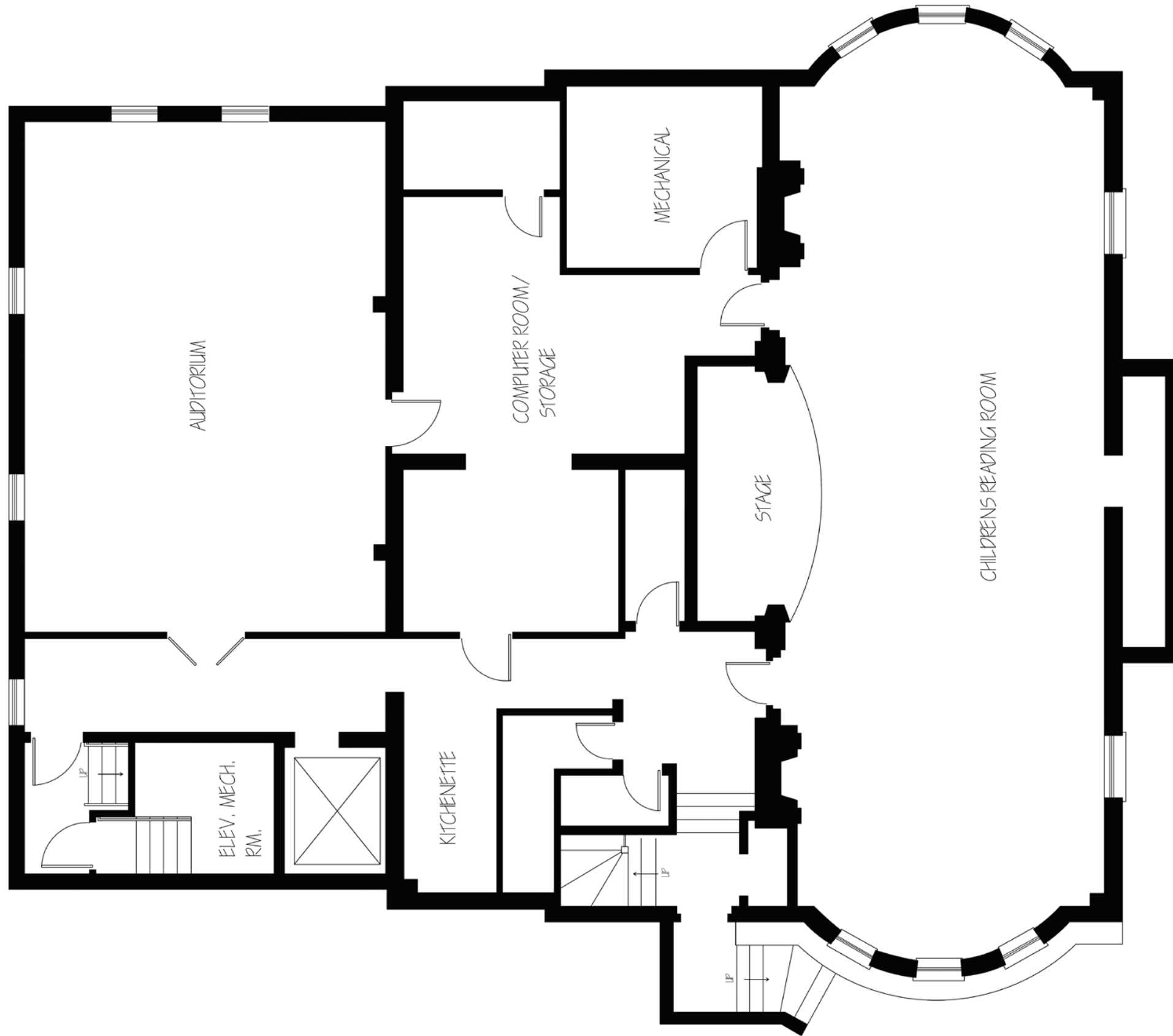
Current children's room in the basement of the library.



1. The outdated children's room uses artificial lighting.
2. The stage area is used as storage for books instead of a performance area for children.
3. The computer room is not child-friendly and is used more often by adults.



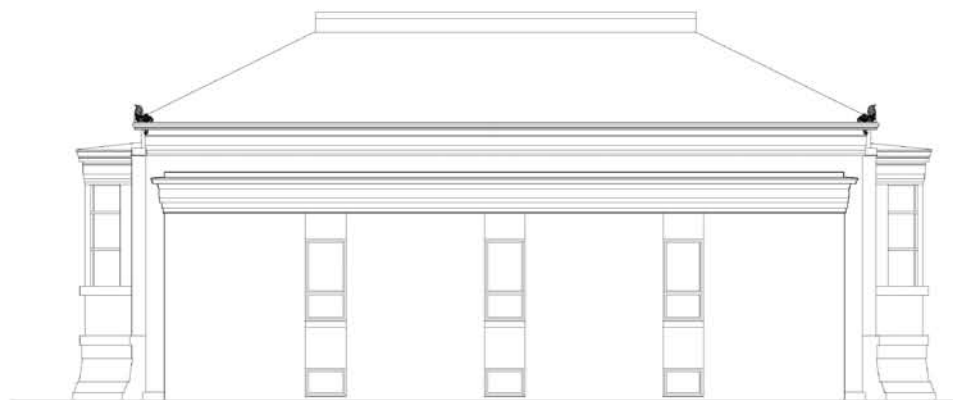
Existing ground floor plan
(1/4" = 1'0").



Existing basement floor plan.



Existing elevations.



Recommendations from the School of Education

Students from the School of Education provided their professional opinions on key features to include in children's library spaces. They also shared precedent studies of best practices in this area of design.

The library spaces that were deemed most successful by the education students were those completed by the Robin Hood Foundation, which frequently rehabilitates underutilized spaces in inner-city schools to insert interactive, colorful and children-friendly library and learning spaces. Some shared suggestions to ensure such children-friendly accessibility were low bookshelves with book covers facing outwards, engaging and lively color schemes and comfortable furnishings.



Children's room
perspective by
Cam Chafee.

Student Designs

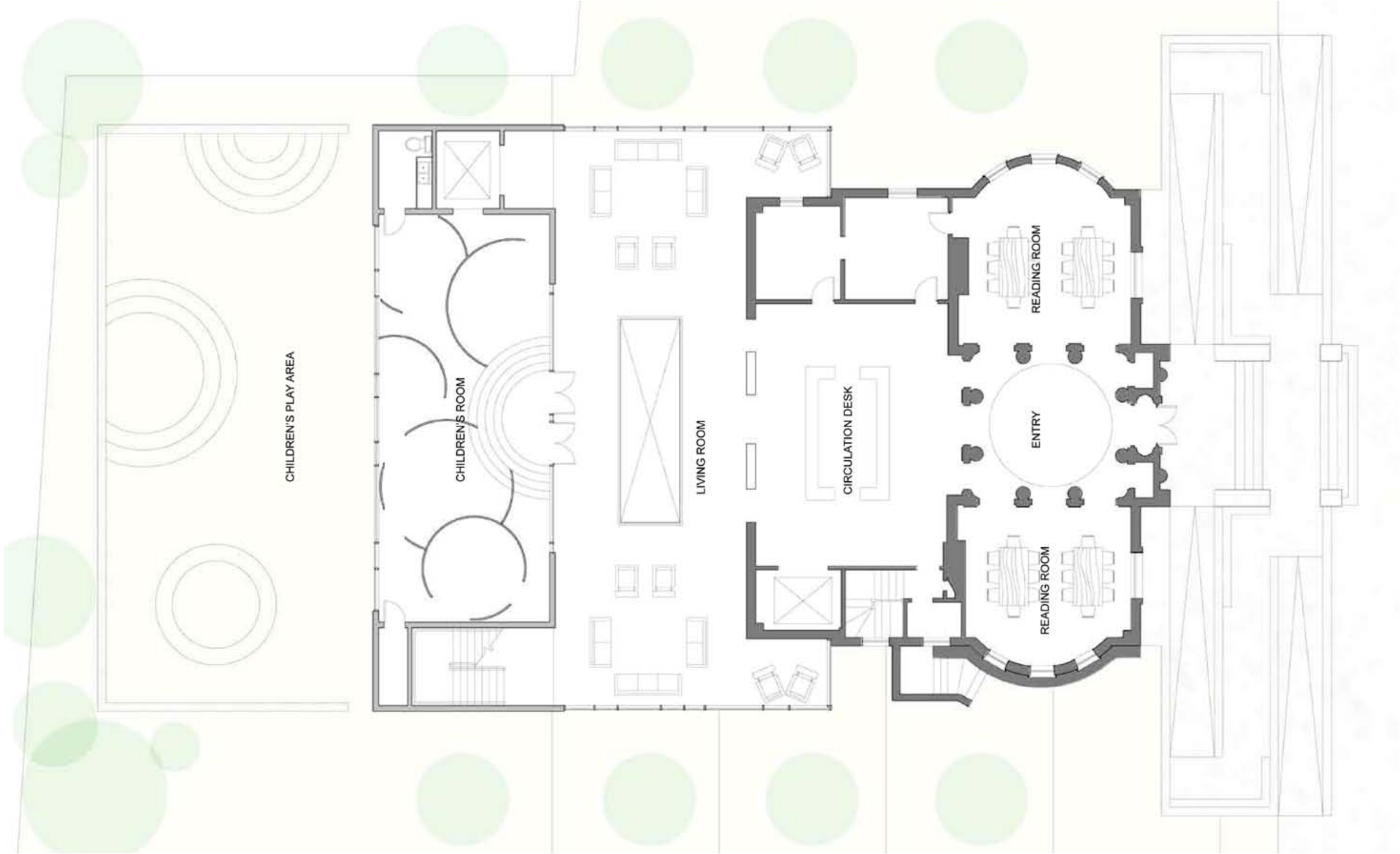
Leaha Bovino

"A community space is a multi-generational gathering place in which a variety of activities, programs and services are offered for the benefit of the public. This space should be a pillar of the community. Just like in a family unit, a community that overcomes hard times, controversial issues and challenging obstacles together will grow closer. In areas that are facing poor education, low income and a general decomposition of core values, a community center that encompasses resources for family, education, guidance, arts and entertainment, and technology can act as the catalyst for overall community improvement and a new cycle of living. The community center acts as a welcoming and equalizing place that operates without stigma, judgment or prejudice. It should encourage both personal and communal growth."

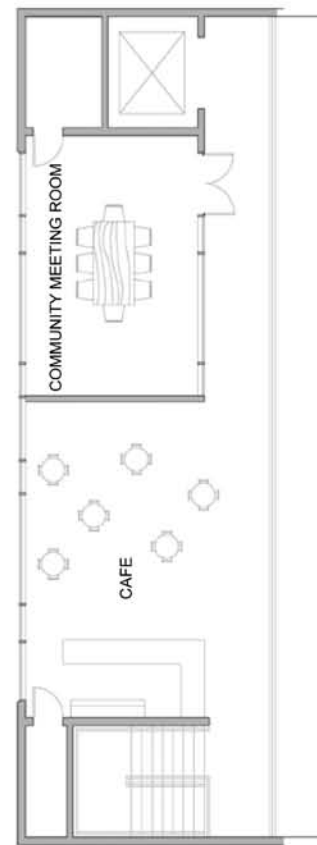


1. Children's room model.

2. Living room perspective.



First floor plan.



Basement floor plan
with proposed addition
on the left.

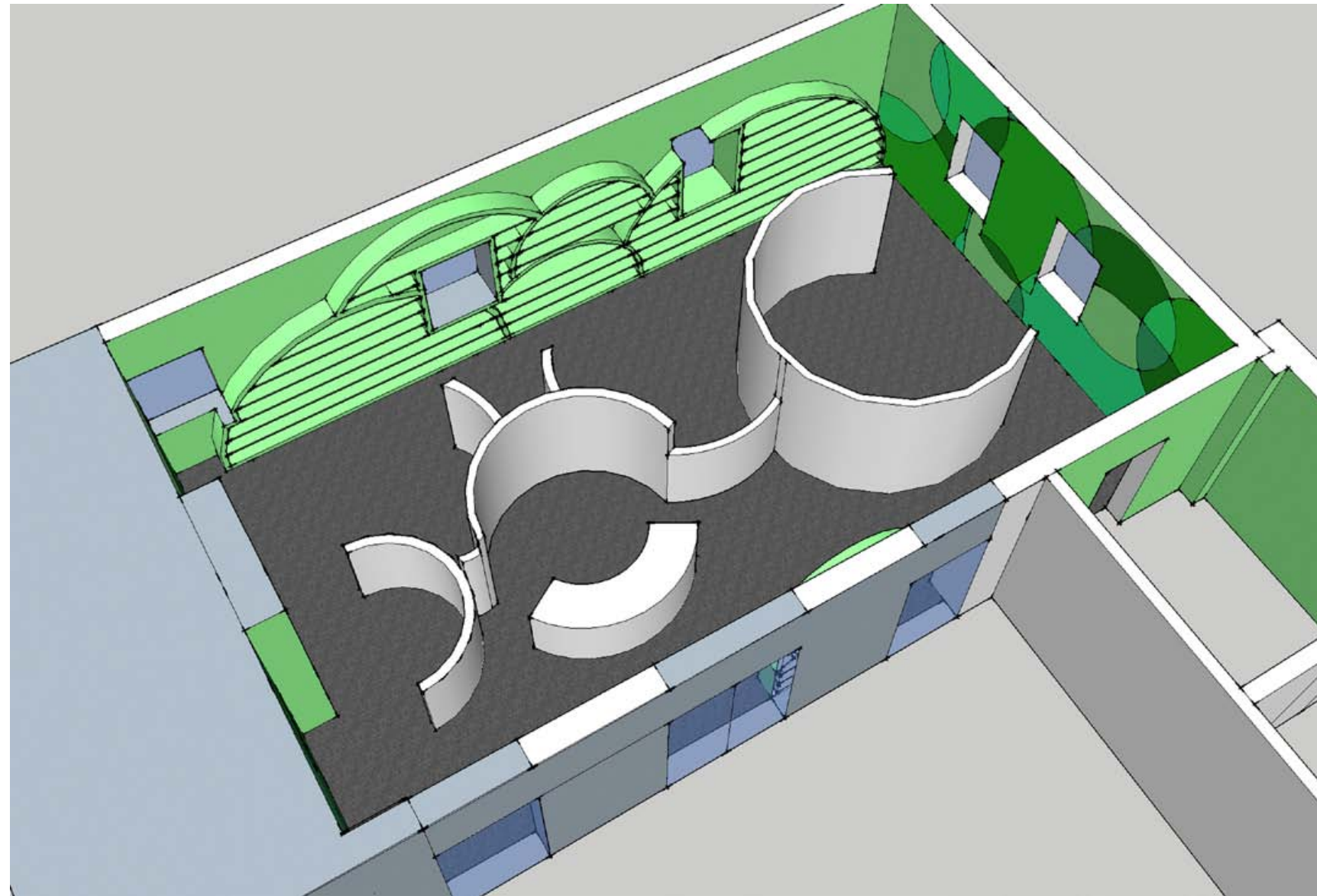


1. East elevation.

2. Section.

3. North elevation.

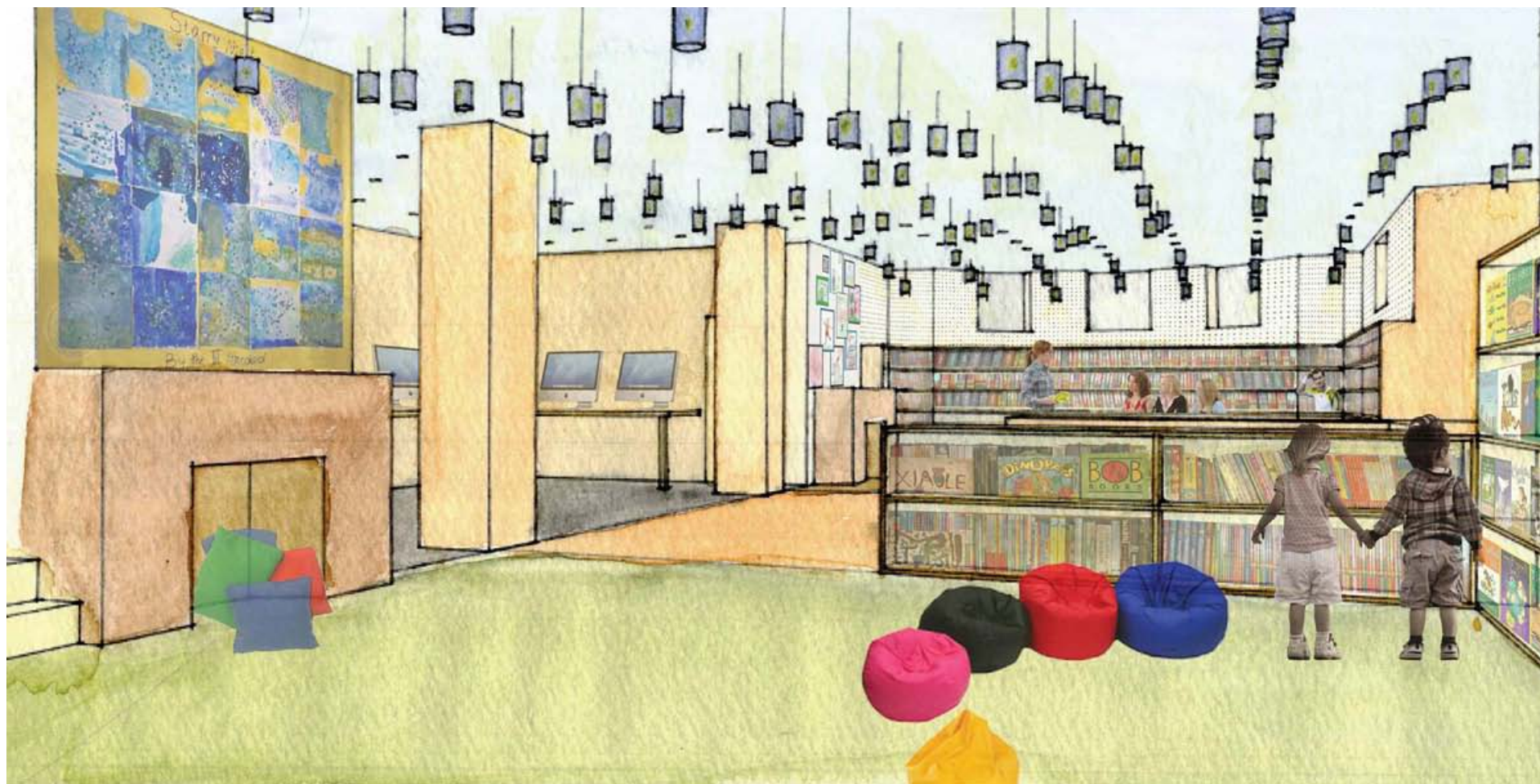




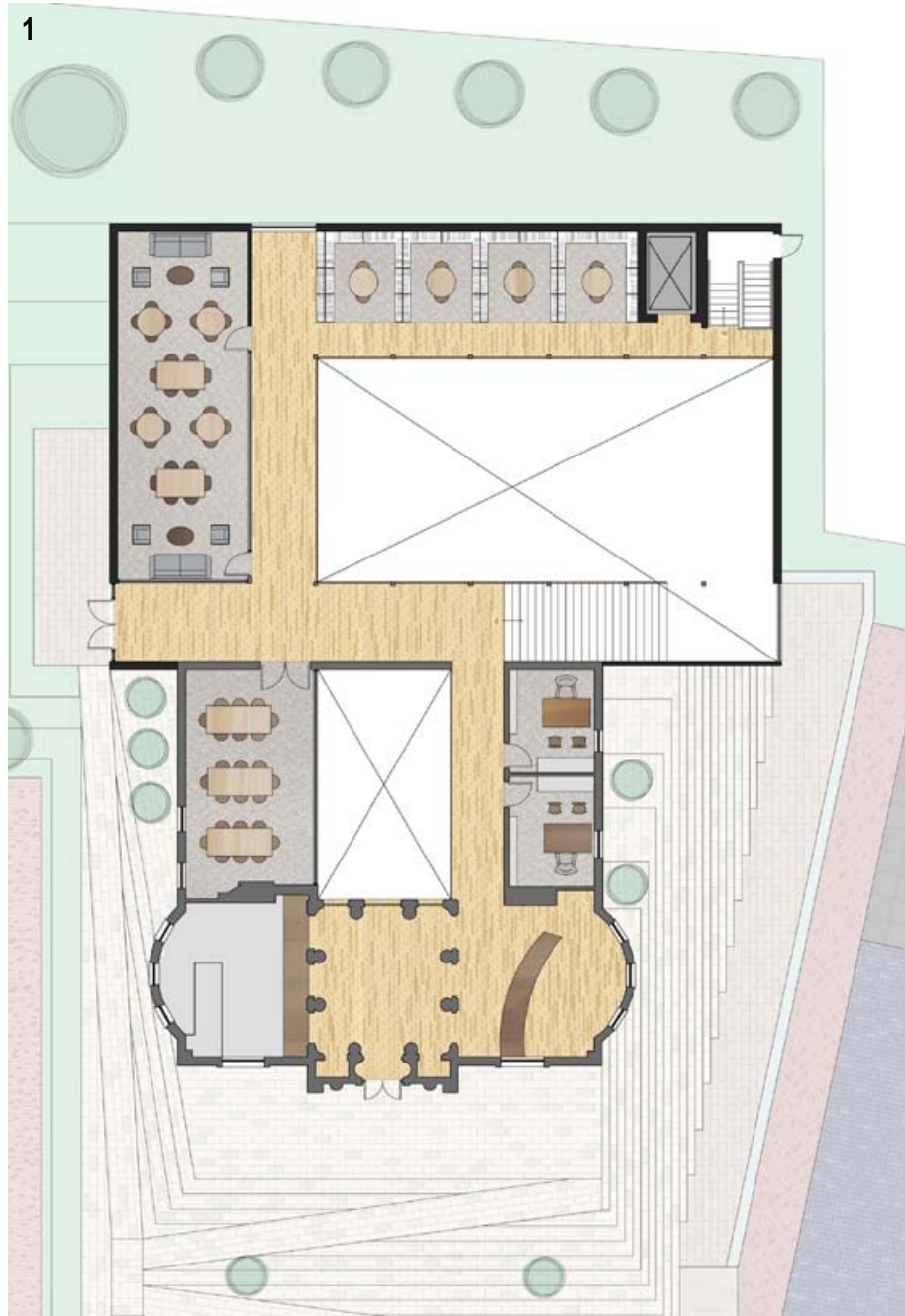
Aerial perspective into
children's room.

Student Designs

Cam Chafee



Children's room
perspective.



1. First floor plan.

2. Basement floor plan.



1. Longitudinal section.

2. Exterior perspective.





1. West elevation.

2. Community room perspective.

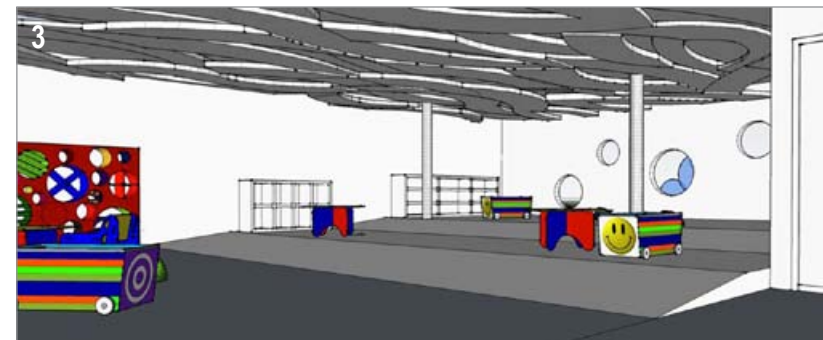
3. Interior perspective.



Student Designs

Karen Hirose

"A community space is a multi-generational gathering place in which a variety of activities with program and services offered for the benefit of the public. This space should be a pillar of the community, just like in a family unit, a community that overcomes hard times, controversial issues, and challenging obstacles together will grow closer. In areas that area facing poor education, low income, and a general decomposition of core values, a community center that encompass, resources for family, education, guidance, arts and entertainment, and technology can act as the catalyst for overall community improvement and a new cycle of living. The community center acts as a welcoming and equalizing place that operates without stigma, judgment, or prejudice. It should encourage both personal and communal growth."



1. Aerial perspective
from southwest.

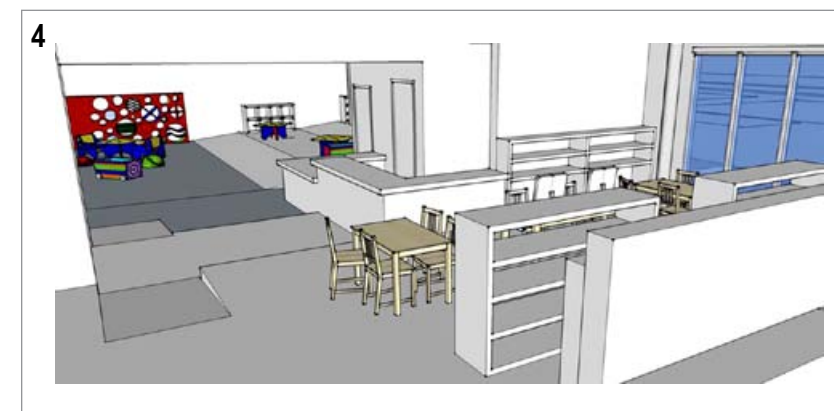
2. Perspective of adult
reading room.

3. Perspective of
PK-K3 library area



1. First floor plan.

2. Basement floor plan.



1. Exterior perspective.

2. Main entrance perspective.

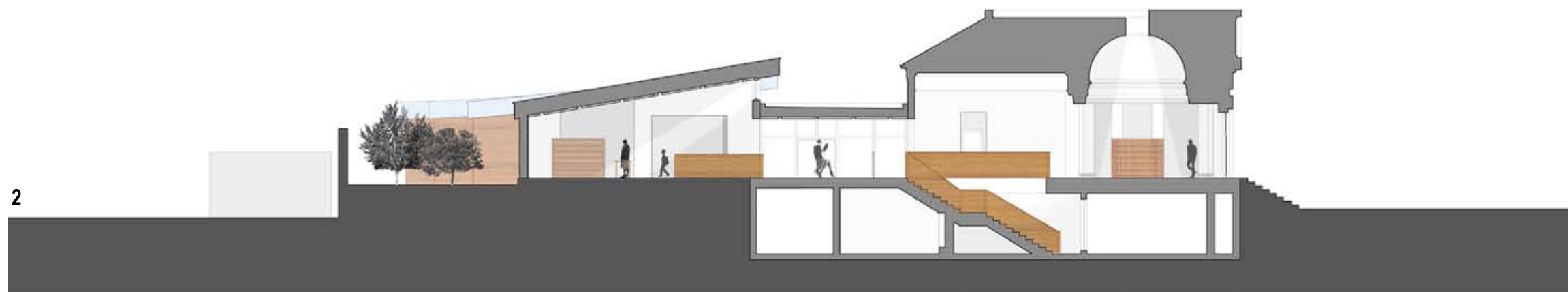
3. Perspective of PK-K3 library area.

4. Perspective of P4-K6 library area.



1. Elevation.

2. Section.



Student Designs

Shawn Johnson

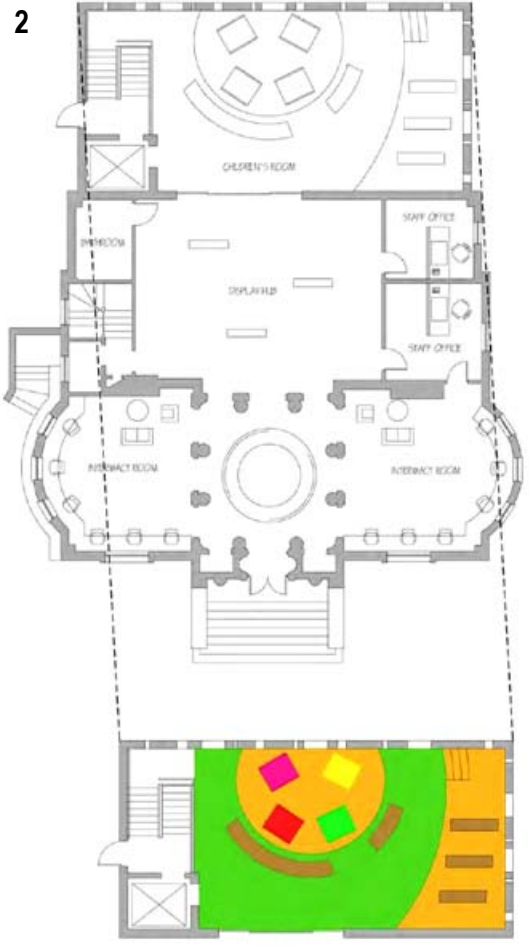
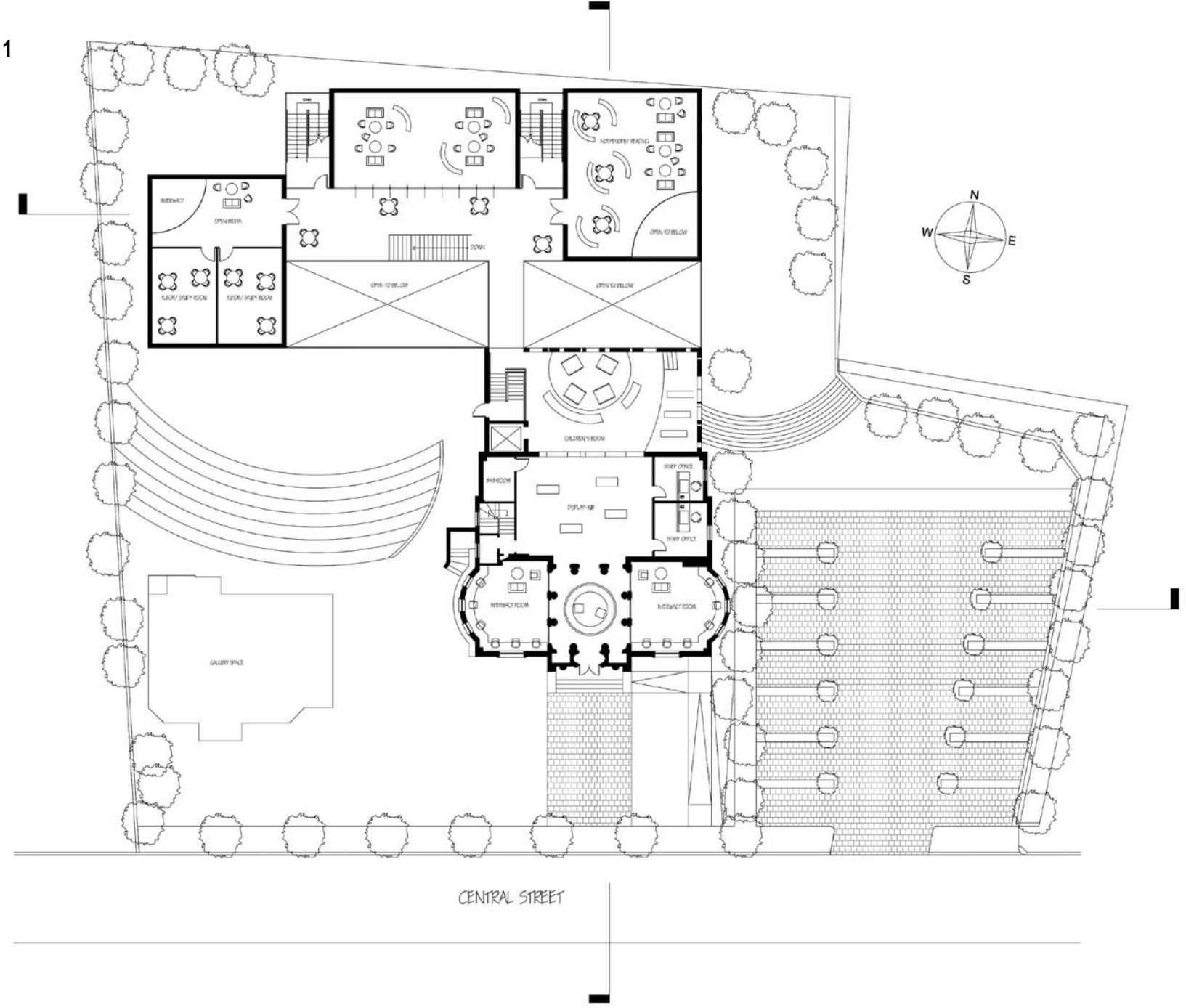
“Community space is a selected area designated to serving society by providing staff and resources that inspire, encourage and assist in the overall positive development of the general public. Due to the fast changing world we live in, community spaces should implement the newest technologies available but use them as a lens to magnify and revitalize the core values of education, wellness, and entertainment. These ideals should be made available to all individuals with both diversity and economy kept in mind.”



1. West elevation.

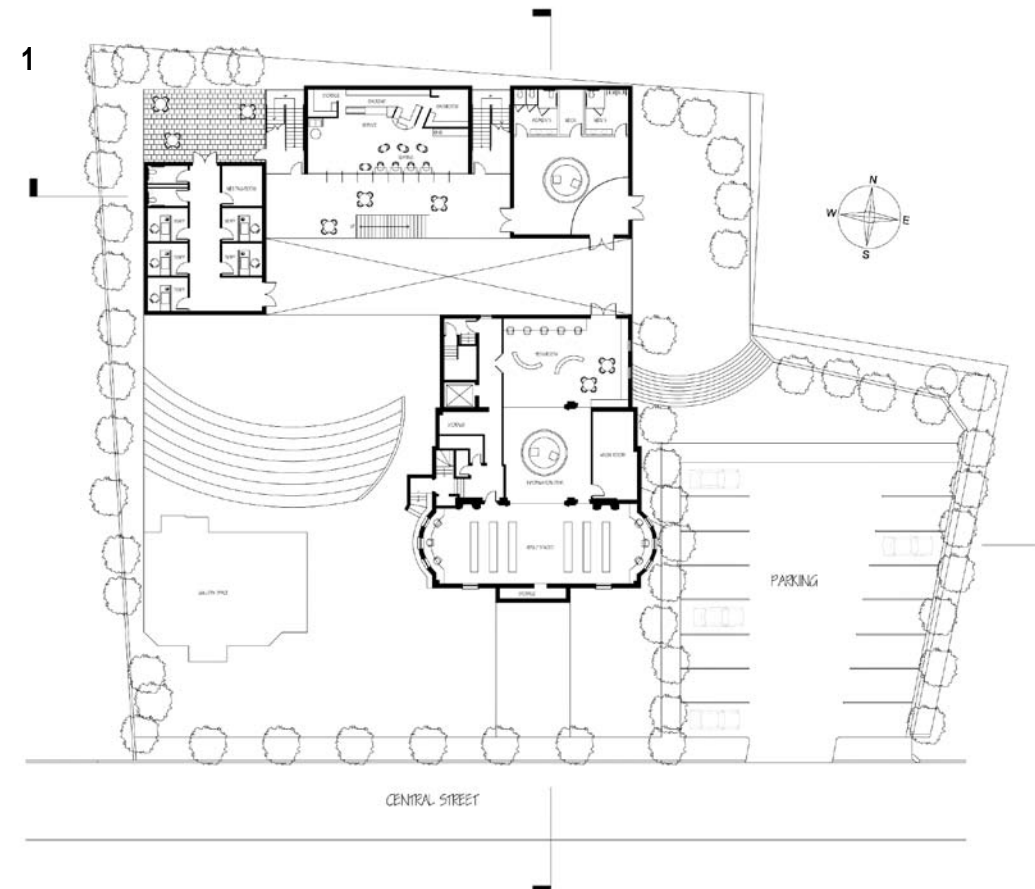
2. Children's room perspective.





1. First floor plan.

2. Children's room floor plan.



1. Basement floor plan.

2. Sections.



Student Designs

Jimmy Meiklejohn

"A community is a forever changing interaction of social living that, although is made up of several aspects, there is a harmonious balance among them. The flexibility of a community space is essential to maintaining the harmonious balance. Unity can only be achieved by allowing generational difference to coincide with one another. This space must reach into the community and combine these elements into a universal hub."

1

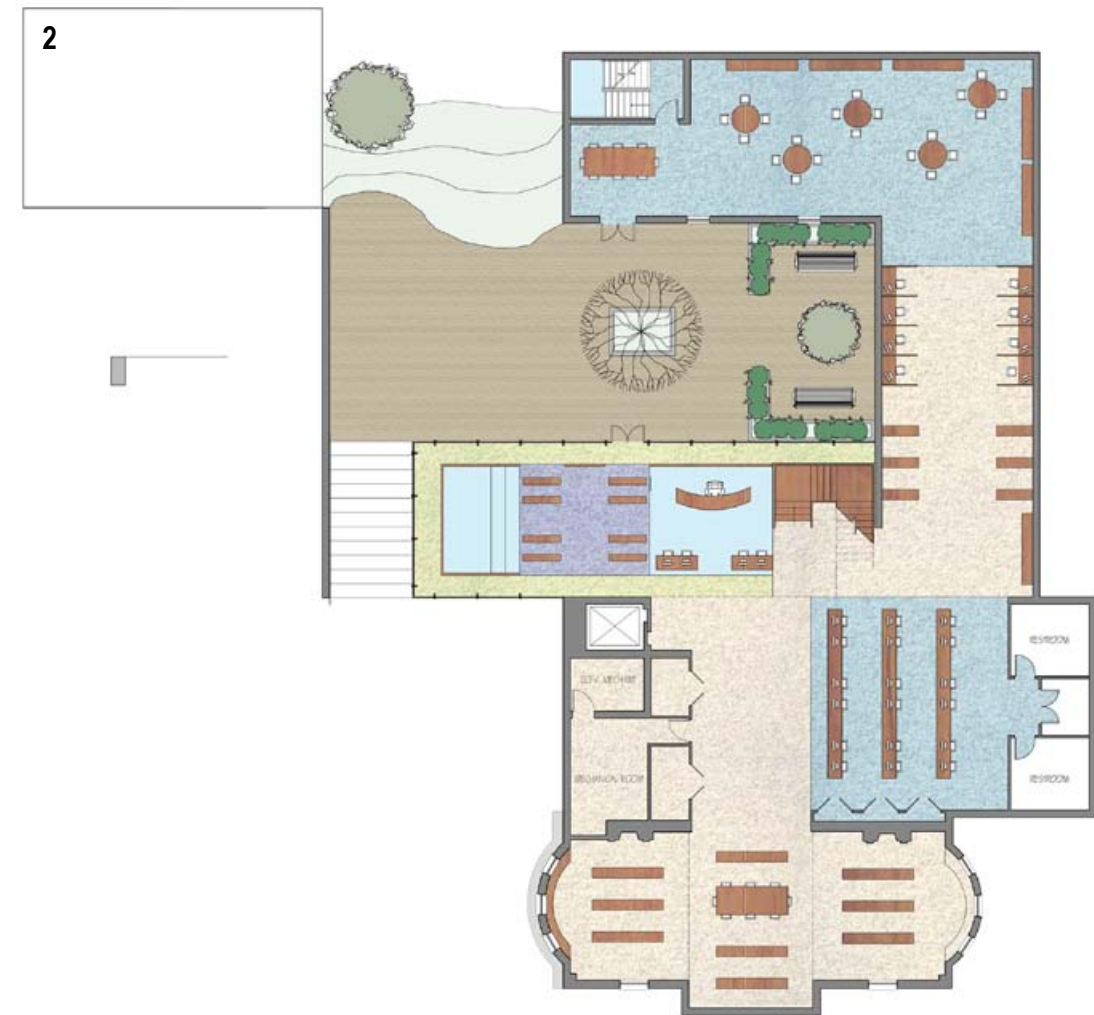


2



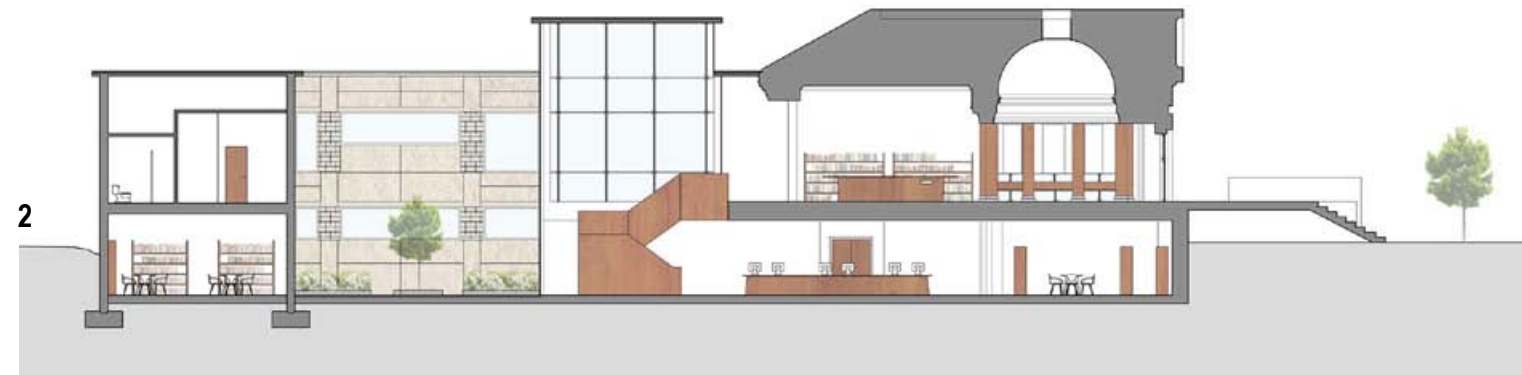
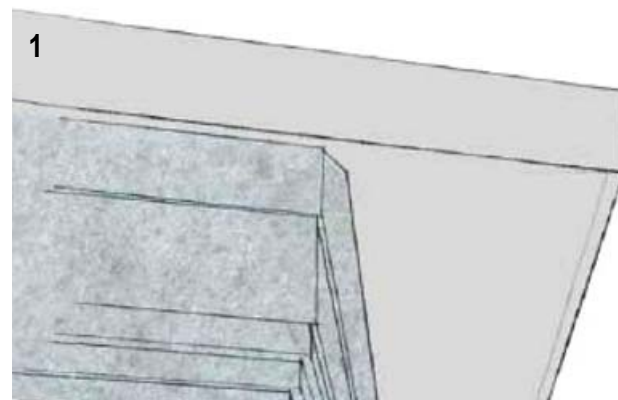
1. North elevation.

2. Children's room perspective.



1. First floor plan.

2. Second floor plan.



1. Exterior view of courtyard.

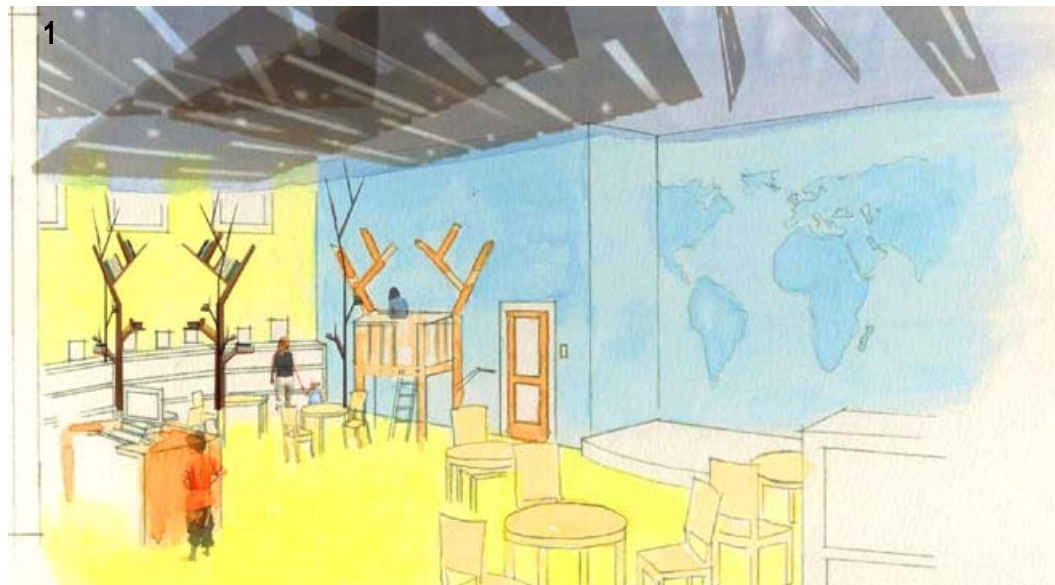
2. Section A.

3. Exterior view of glass box addition.

Student Designs

Rebecca Sargent

“Community spaces are created to promote an integration of different people, ideas, and activities. The building must allow for a variety of spaces that comfortably adapt to fit the various conditions. Interwoven needs of the community members inform the nature of the spaces. It is necessary to provide an access for communication that will connect the physical space with the outside world and allow for an exchange of ideas. By implementing new technology with relevant tools of the past it is possible to create a more productive environment for collaboration.”



1. Overlap zone for
afterschool studies.

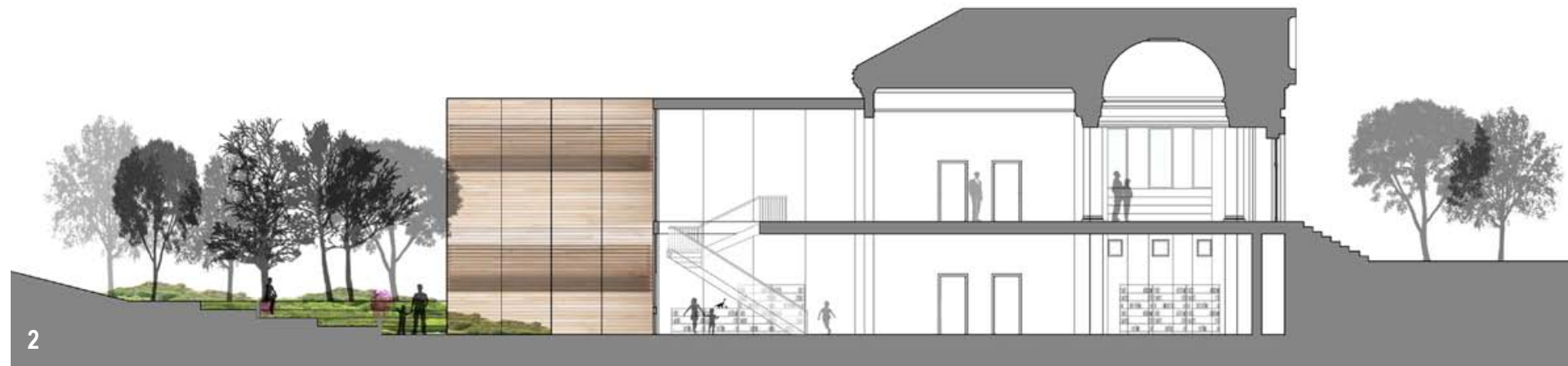
2. Children's room model.



First floor plan.



Basement floor plan.



1. Perspective of front addition.

2. Section.

3. South elevation.



Preferred Design

The selected design for the Children's Room at Adams Memorial Library was completed by graduate student Leaha Bovino. Leaha's original work from the studio was developed over the course of the spring 2013 semester in conjunction with Joel Petit from the Adams Memorial Library. Leaha's design was selected because of the practicality of her proposal. The library felt the relocation and updated design of the new space was something that would be reasonable to accomplish with support from donors and that it would create a vibrant and engaging space for children and families on the first floor of the library.

The first design change was to relocate the current book stacks to the existing children's room and to move the children's room to the area that houses the current book stacks. This allows the first floor of the library to be active for community members of all ages and sends a positive message about the value of educating children.

A circular motif was selected for the Children's Room, keeping with the shape and form of the historic library dome, and it was carried into the partitions, paint design and bookshelves. The proposal also included closing two of the three current openings



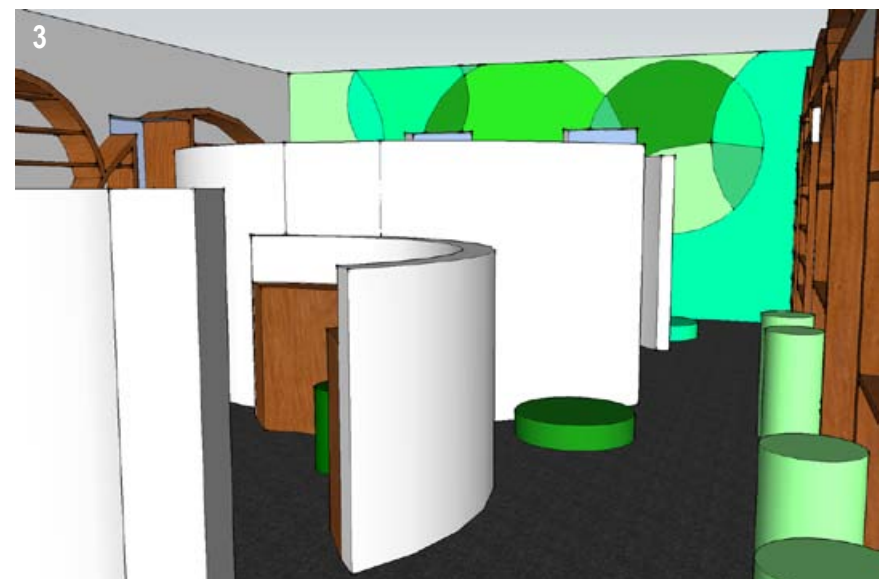
into the space and turning them into window seats, thus leaving the central doorway and children's library circulation on axis with the library's original symmetry.

Throughout the space, curved partition walls of varying heights would be constructed out of opaque white, mirrored and frosted Plexiglas and lit from within an interior cavity. Custom bookshelves would line the two long walls to provide ample book storage and built-in computer stations.

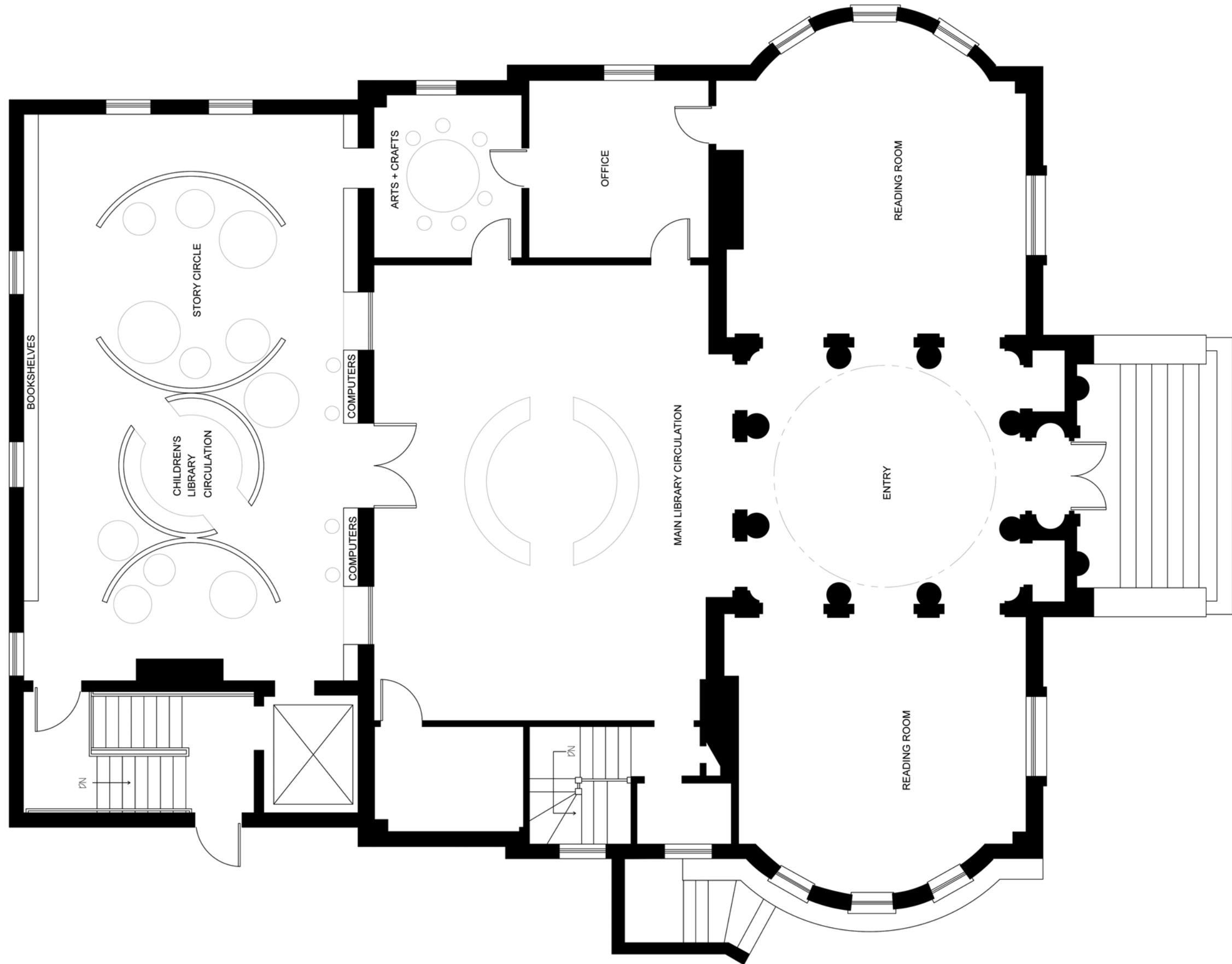
Aerial perspective of preferred children's room design.

After working with students from the School of Education, a color scheme in shades of green was selected due to its known ability to promote reading comprehension. Research and support from the School of Education emphasized that not all children learn through prescriptive methods, such as sitting at a table and chairs. Thus, flexible and washable floor cushions and beanbags were utilized as seating in this recommended design. This provides visitors with the opportunity to find a cozy nook to read in as well as large space that could be used for designated storytelling.

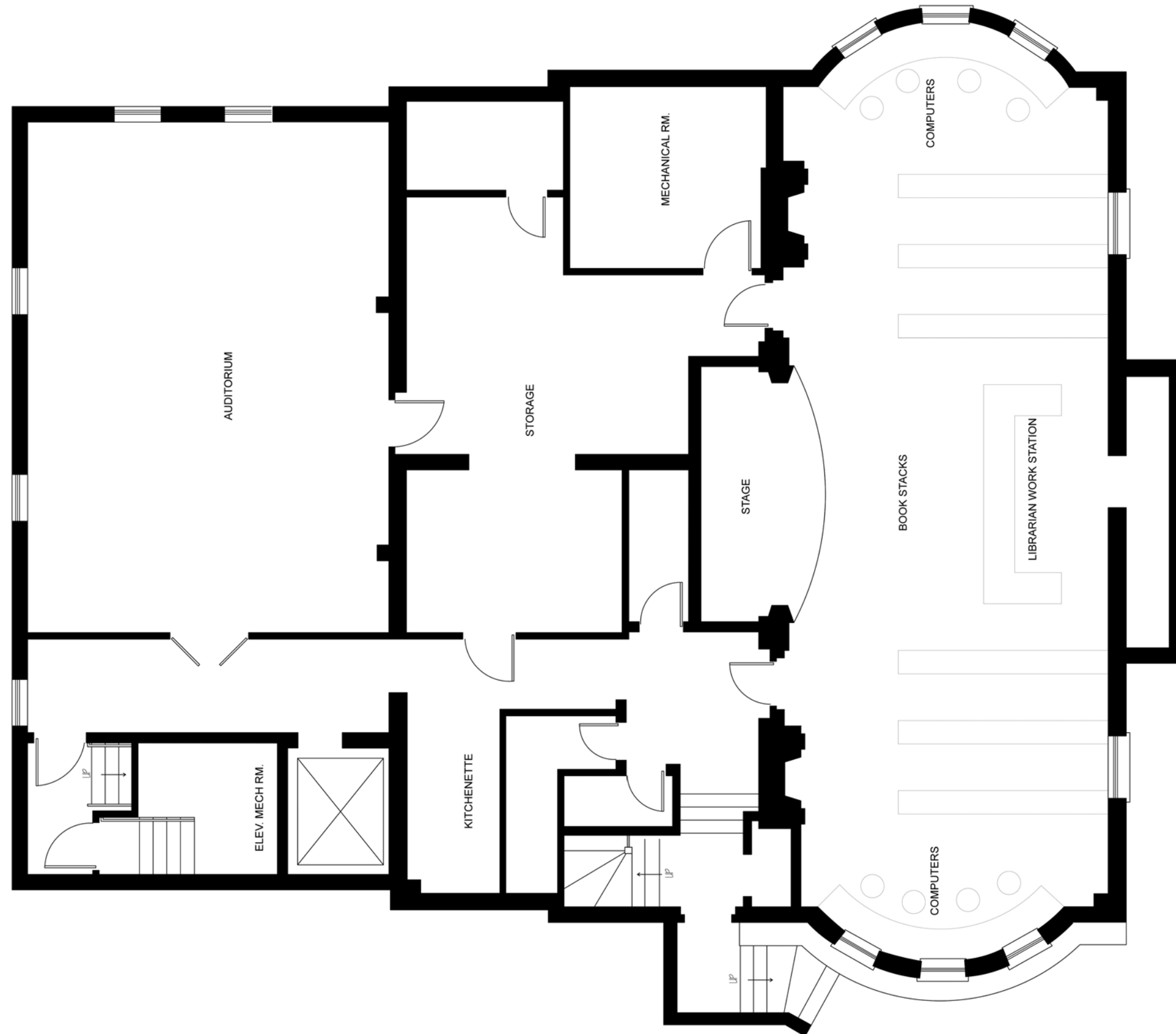
The design of the Children's Room provides a fun, sensory experience of colors and textures without being over-stimulating or distracting.



1. Children's room perspective with flexible floor cushions for reading.
2. Entry to children's room.
3. Children's room perspective uses multi-level circular walls to divide space and mimic the library's historic dome.



Preferred first floor plan.



Preferred basement plan.

Cost Estimate for Preferred Design

Circular Panels				
¼" x 48" x 72" Frosted Finish Sheet	16	\$228.00	\$3,648.00	http://www.eoplastics.com/Plastic?search=frosted+finish+sheet
.250" x 48" x 48" Clear Mirror Sheet	7	\$199.27	\$1,394.89	http://www.eoplastics.com/Plastic?search=Clear+Mirror+Sheet
.060" x 48" x 72 2447 White Sheet	9	\$43.33	\$389.97	http://www.eoplastics.com/Plastic?search=acrylic+sheet+paper+masked
Estimated Total			\$5,432.86	
Lighting				
Fillsta Pendant Lamps	8	\$29.99	\$239.92	http://www.ikea.com/us/en/catalog/products/40155009/
Estimated Total			\$239.92	
Seating				
Cotton Bean Bag Chairs Small with Recycled Beads	6	\$129.99	\$779.94	http://www.thebeanbagchairoutlet.com/soft_cotton_bean_bag_chairs.htm
Cotton Bean Bag Chairs Large with Recycled Beads	6	\$171.99	\$1,031.94	http://www.thebeanbagchairoutlet.com/soft_cotton_bean_bag_chairs.htm
Cylindrical Stools	12	\$30.00	\$360.00	http://www.bluesuntree.co.uk/site/outdoor/outdoor-tables/cylindrical-stool
Estimated Total			\$2,171.88	
Carpeting				
TrafficMaster Caserta Sky Grey Hobnail 18 in. x 18 in. Indoor/Outdoor Carpet Tile (10 Tiles/ Case) \$1.57/ sq. ft \$35.33 CA Case Covers 22.5 sq.ft.	897 sq. ft.	\$1.57	\$1,408.29	http://www.homedepot.com/b/Flooring-Carpet-Carpet-Tile-Carpet-Tile/N-5yc1vZbo4w
Estimated Total			\$1,408.29	
Estimated Total for Materials				
			\$9,252.95	
This estimate does not include expenses for the following				
Paint				
Labor + materials for wooden bookshelves				
Framing materials for partition walls				
Lighting? For hollow spaces of partition walls				

Conclusion

The design of an updated children's room at the Adams Memorial Library tasked students with creating an engaging and fun space for children and families, which could be easily implemented by the library. Library Director Joel Petit worked closely with student Leah Bovino during the second phase of this project to finalize materials, colors and layout for the proposed space.

Since the completion of this project, the library has been fundraising and implementing plans to make the preferred design a reality for the children and families of Central Falls.



The interior of the historic dome of Adams Memorial Library.



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