

# DOWNEY CITY LIBRARY





## “Ignite a community of creative and critical thinkers.”

— DOWNEY LIBRARY’S MISSION STATEMENT



Downey City Library was to be transformed to a 21st Century public learning environment.

The Library and the City had evaluated the role of the institution in its community. While the library had been known for free access to books and resources, it was ready to shift to an audience-focused learning space. The library would no longer be just about books and reading but about hands-on learning in a social setting.

How could the architecture facilitate this shift to activate learning?

By shuffling the library’s main open areas, additional programming could be added while providing flexibility within in each space. The team used shifts in floor and ceiling levels to create unique learning spaces and color to orient the visitor in the space.



—SCOPE OF WORK & BUDGET—



The Library is located in the heart of the Civic Center District and adjacent to Downey High School.

Location | **Downey City, CA**

Budget | **\$5,500,000**

Square Footage | **29,000**

Construction Start | **July 2019**

Partial Opening | **May 2021**

The original 16,000 square foot building was constructed in 1959. As the community grew so did the library. In 1987, the library underwent a 12,000 square foot expansion. Thirty-five years would pass before the next renovation.

In 2016, Downey voters approved Measure S which would fund the upgrade of several civic buildings including the library, public parks, and multiple fire stations.



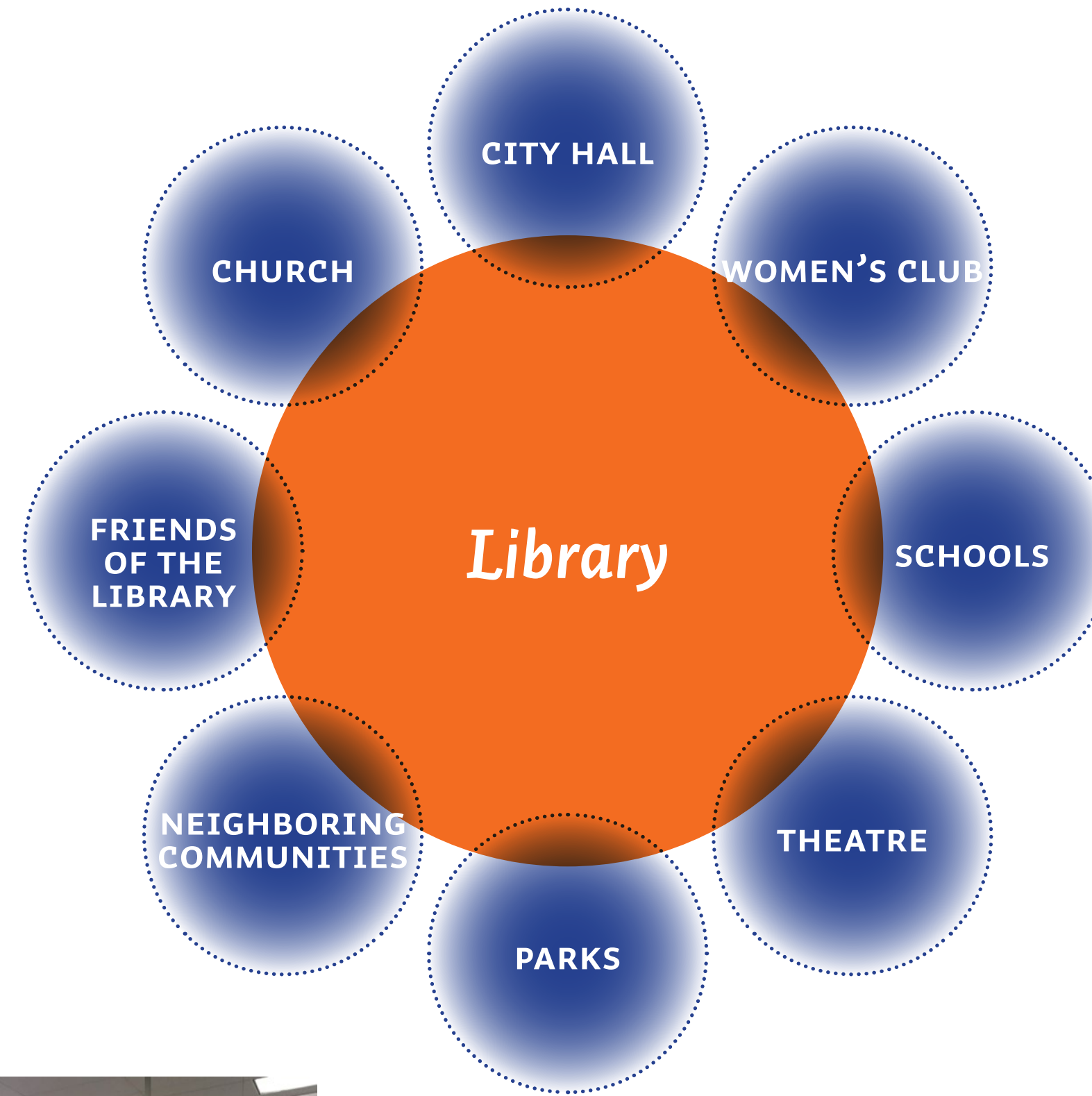
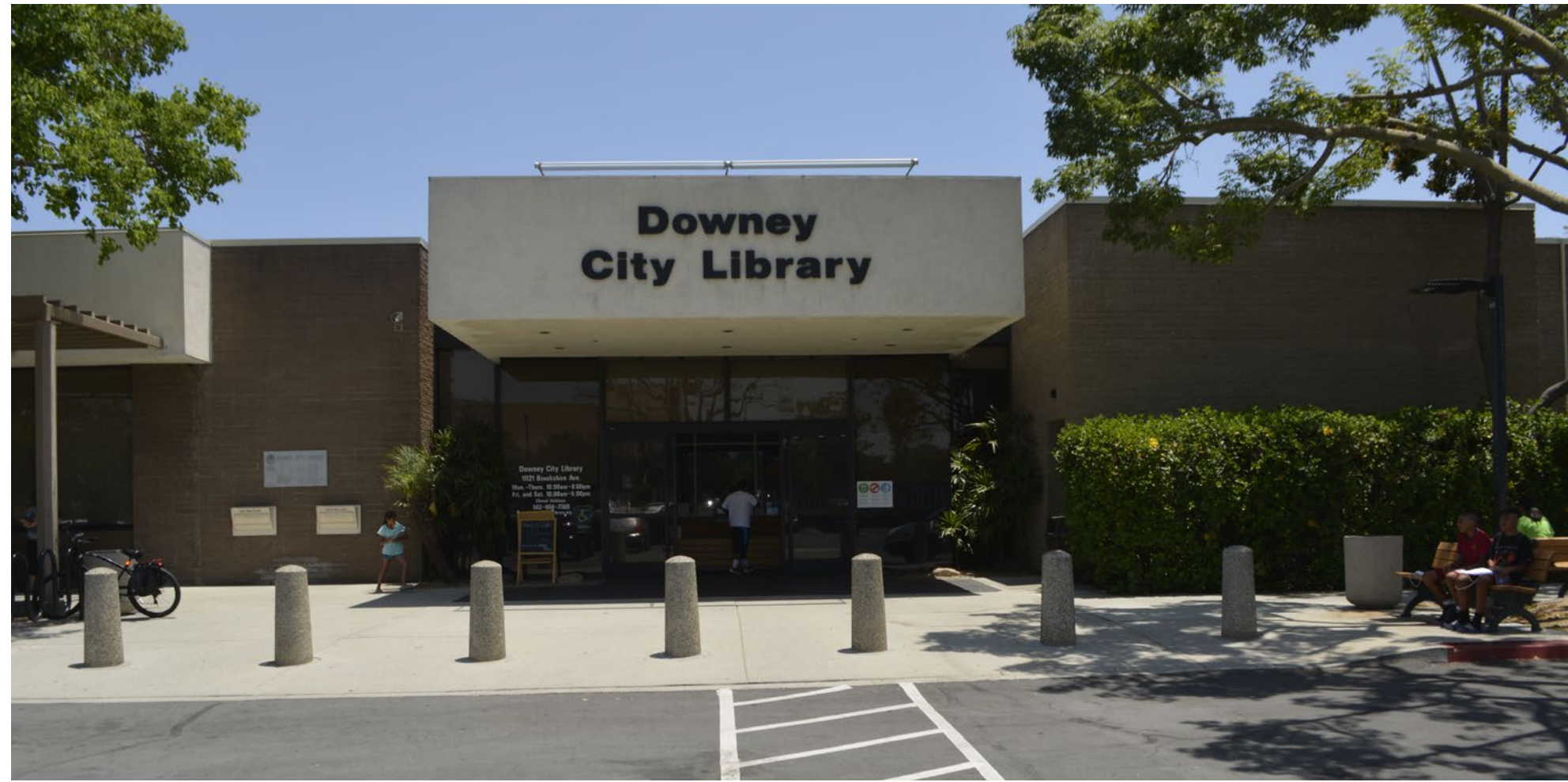
**LIBRARY IN 1959**



**LIBRARY EXPANSION IN 1987**



— EDUCATIONAL & COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT —



The Library actively meets with focus groups to understand the evolving needs of their community. Based on the Harwood Institute ideology, it poses a series of questions that becomes the basis for the public programming.

The Library has very diverse stakeholders that range from a new parent learning to read to their infant to Friends of the Downey Library who's fundraising efforts allow for special programming.

The design team's challenge was to work within the existing building's parameters while creating a new way of using the public space.



IMAGES OF THE EXISTING LIBRARY



— FLOOR PLAN —

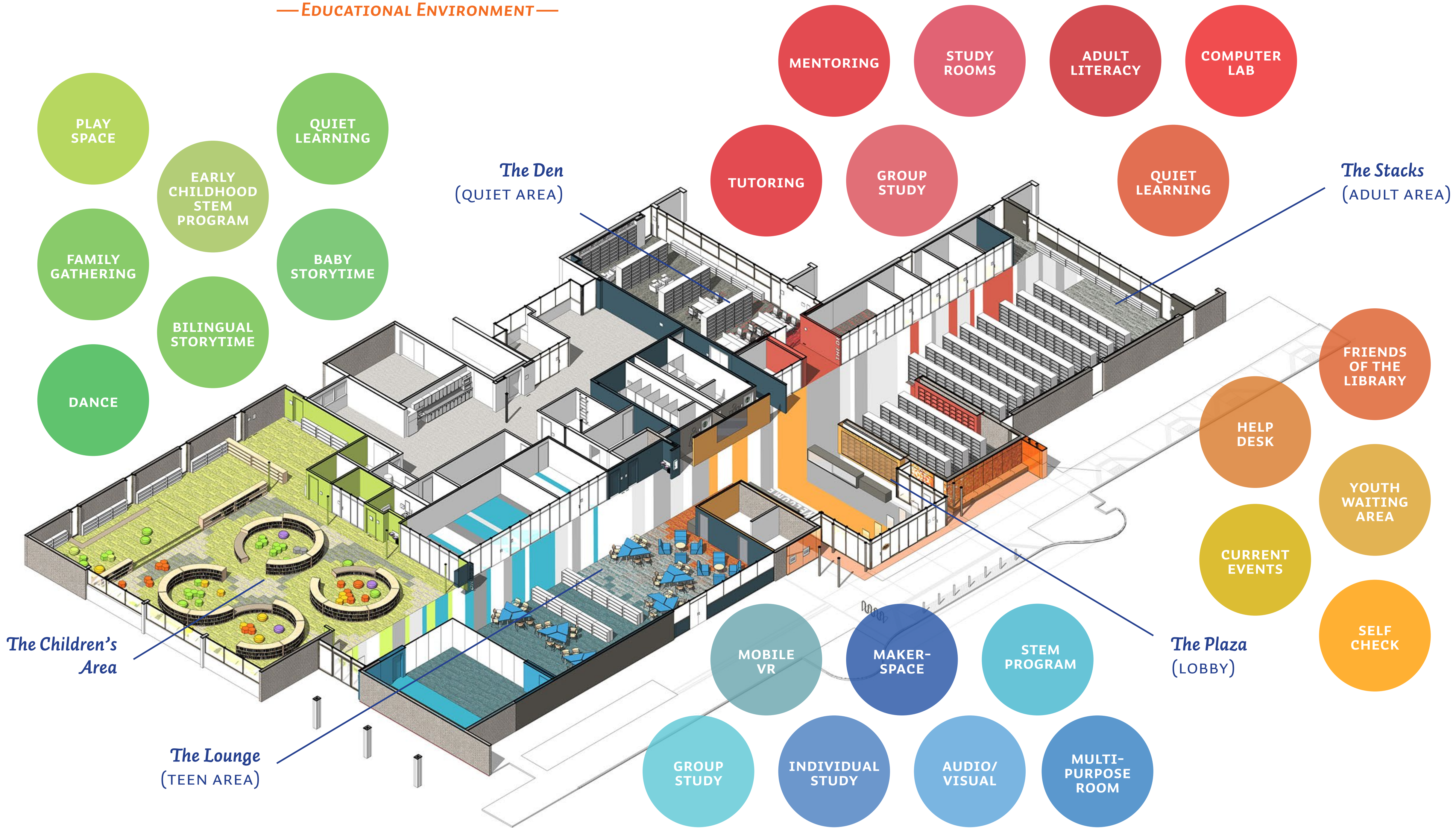


The public space is comprised of 4 main areas:

- ***The Plaza*** (the lobby)
- ***The Lounge*** (the teen area)
- ***The Children's Area***
- ***The Stacks+The Den*** (the adult area)



— EDUCATIONAL ENVIRONMENT —



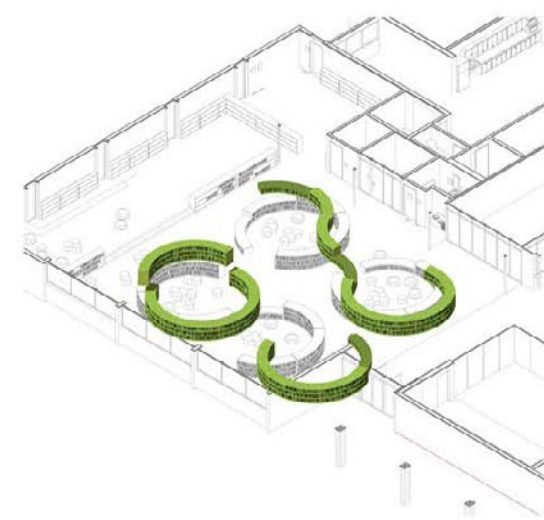
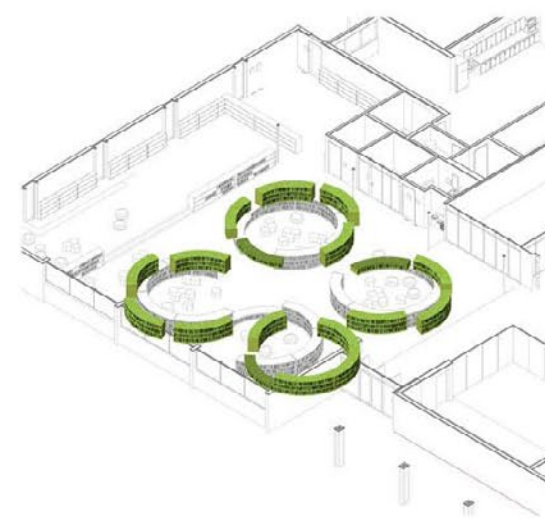
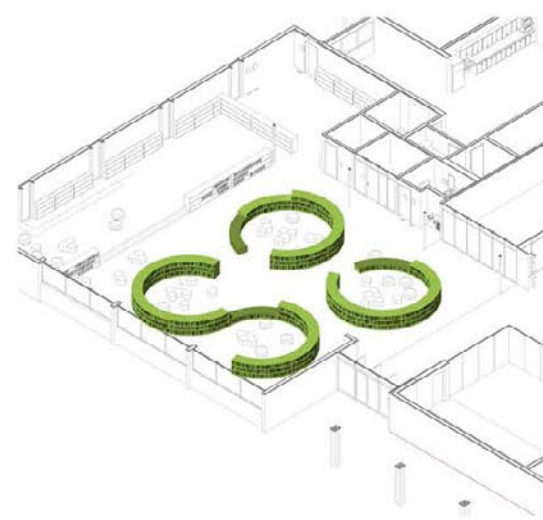
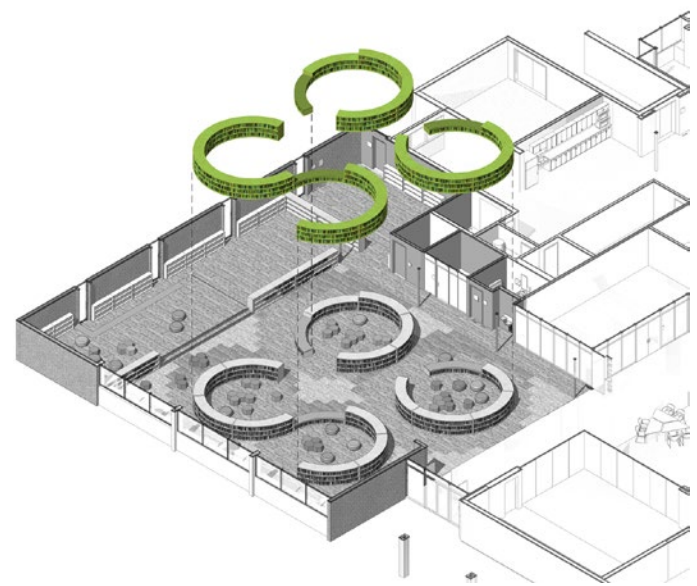


— EDUCATIONAL ENVIRONMENT — ADAPTABLE LEARNING SPACES IN THE CHILDREN'S AREA





— EDUCATIONAL ENVIRONMENT — ADAPTABLE LEARNING SPACES IN THE CHILDREN'S AREA



The Children's Area is designed with a child's perspective and physical exploration in mind.

It includes a stage for play, performances, and story time.

Circular mobile shelves define space and allow for multiple configurations and functions.

The design team lowered the ceiling and raised floor to create an intimate environment for small ones. Circular shelves provide a playful core to the room and encourage active learning and discovery for all.



“The Library is erasing the barriers that prevent someone from having access to learning.”

— DOWNEY LIBRARY ADMINISTRATOR

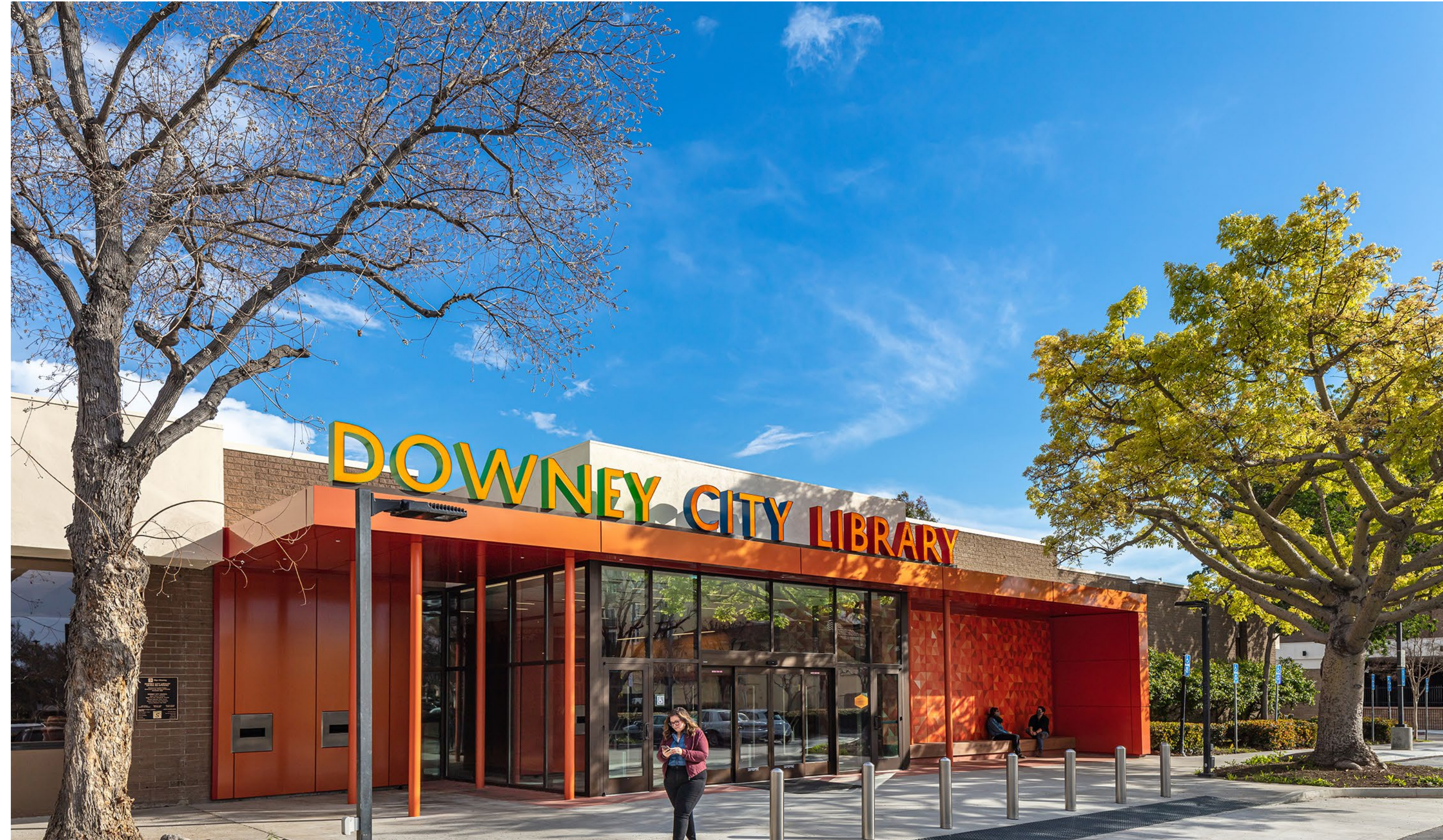
The City wanted to increase the overall square footage of their lobby by moving the edge of the existing entry out.

The design team envisioned a prominent and expressive new front door, welcoming all to a rethought civic space.

By adding a new exterior canopy clad in a pearlescent metal, the focus shifts from the existing building to the new main entry. The new canopy extends past the main entry and wraps down to provide an area for covered seating.

The seating backdrop’s custom artwork is a response to the shimmering shadows cast by the mature tree.

The bold new signage gives a hint of the interior colorscales.







### The Plaza

The Plaza is the beginning of one's adventure at the library. The visitor determines what they want to learn on any given day, and no two days need to be the same.

Librarians stand ready to help coders, makers, learners, new readers, and writers alike. The Plaza reflects this wide range of possibilities and the desire of the staff to “ignite curious minds.”





— THE PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT —

“The Adult Literacy program is a program that changes people’s lives.”

— DOWNEY LIBRARY ADMINISTRATOR

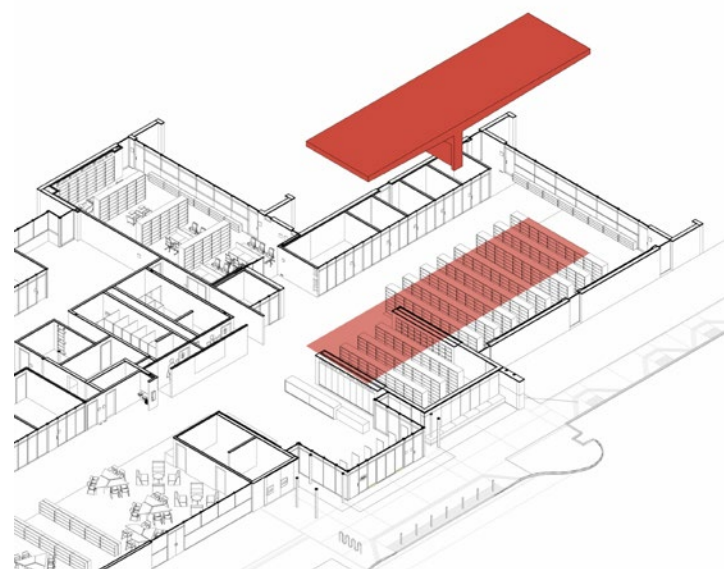


### **The Stacks**

The Adult Area, known as The Stacks, is the main repository of the library’s books. A tapered canopy crowns the collection.

Within it are the computer lab and private study rooms where mentors guide adults learning to read for the first time.

To celebrate the variety of learning and teaching styles, this area provides active, collaborative, contemplative and private spaces.



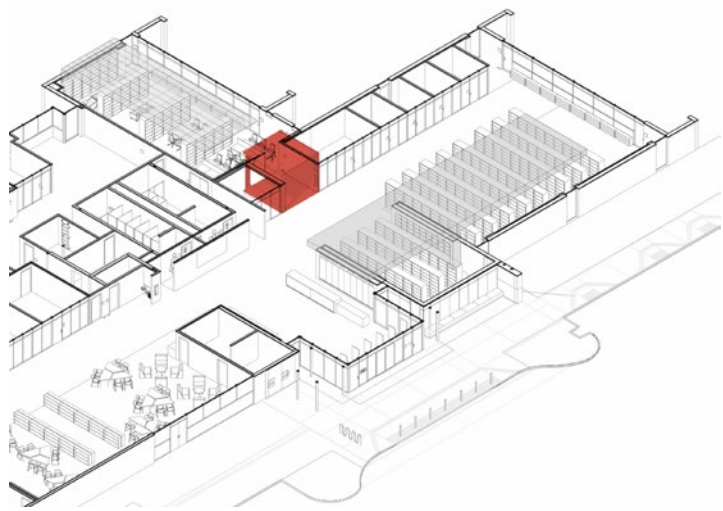


— THE PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT —





— THE PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT —



### The Den

The design team framed a portal into the quiet reading area known as The Den. This area is for learners who prefer a quiet, intimate surrounding.

The bookshelves breakup the soft seating and study carols into small groups. A continuous soffit lowers the ceiling and a pendant lighting hangs over each study area to help the learner feel like it could be their own living room.

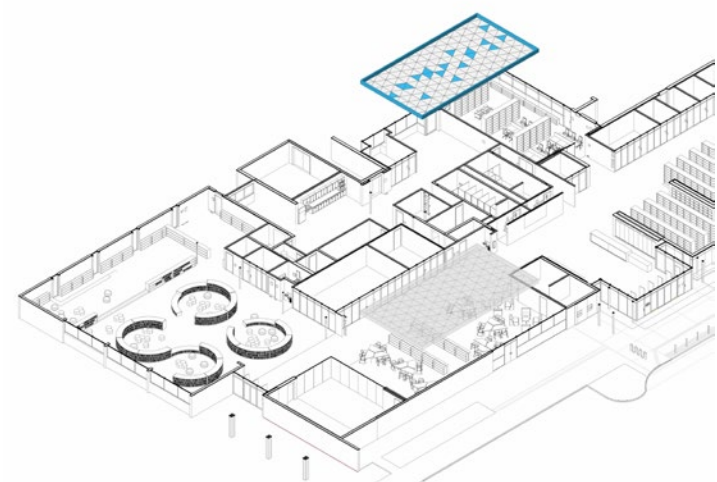




## The Lounge

The Library's ultimate goal is to grow its offerings according to the community's interest and needs, whether existing or in the making. In order to meet these community and educational goals, flexibility is paramount.

In The Lounge, all shelves are on wheels, and all objects can be moved around the space. Sawhorses provide charging stations, and casual seating is available for socializing and impromptu meetings.





## The Workshop

This makerspace is the nexus between the Library and the City's Science Center. STEM programming is available to supplement the local high school's programs.

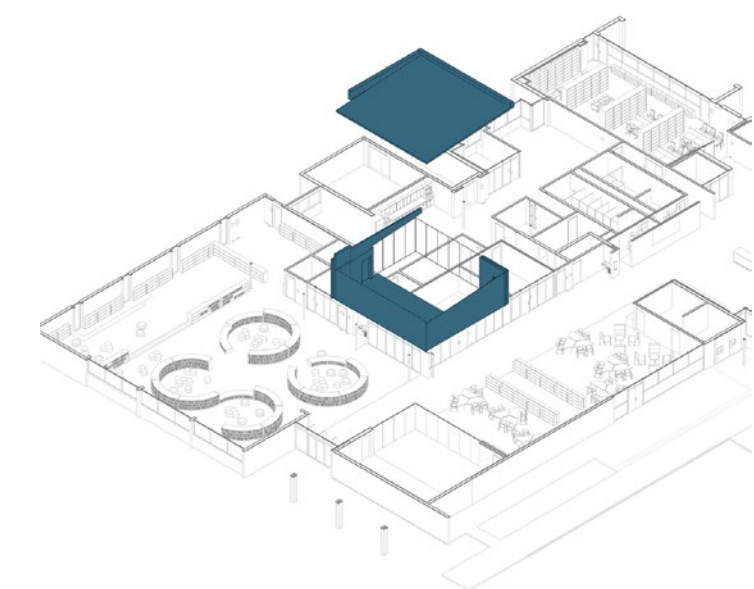
The Workshop is equipped with a 3D scanner, a 3D printer, an industrial sewing machine, a laser cutter, and a full tool shed. The Studio (adjacent to The Workshop) offers digital-based programs for VR, film, and animation. The Library provides programs in coding and robotics. Downey Library is ranked 1st in California for VR and has received multiple grants.





## The Cormack Room

The room accommodates the gatherings of larger groups, such as community meetings, live performances, book readings, and movie screenings. It is equipped with retractable bleachers to allow maximum flexibility in the space, as well as a movable glass wall to allow for expansion.









## *Inclusivity*

Introverts and extroverts. Readers and makers. Writers and daydreamers. Independent and assisted. There is room for everyone here.

## *Intergenerationality*

A diverse population benefits from its own diversity. Key programs and spaces attract and encourage interaction of age groups supporting that youth may learn from the elders... and vice versa.

## *Diverse Learning Overload*

This is a program larger than the space available. This is achieved through devoting ample floor area to the expanding, flexible and interactive spaces of the library.

## *Democratizing Access*

The library is a place of access to technology in a community that has such needs. The building is a pipeline and a conduit to opportunity.

## *Cultivating the Quiet Mind*

In a busy world, the library provides space to think, to dream, to imagine, to learn. Every inch is important; edges become places where the quiet mind thrives.

## *Cultivating the Social Learner*

What percentage of the library is quiet? It's flexible. The library welcomes collaboration and exchange as intellectual.

## *Comfort & Wellness*

A bench at the entry, a gallery at the front desk, a safe place for young children, tools and space for teens, and adults with a quiet window upon a tree.

## *Community Responsive*

There is a deficit of truly civic space. The library has a diverse program because of diverse community needs. It is designed to respond with an agile infrastructure.

## *Library as a Joyous Mindset*

Color is a tool. New color is a symbol. An intended result is the communication of exuberance and enthusiasm for community knowledge, thought, and culture.



A photograph of the Downey City Library at dusk. The building features a prominent entrance with large glass doors and windows, flanked by walls with a geometric orange and red pattern. The name 'DOWNEY CITY LIBRARY' is displayed in large, illuminated letters above the entrance. Two large trees are on either side of the building, and a bird is flying in the sky above. The interior of the library is visible through the glass, showing a modern design with orange and red accents.

# DOWNEY CITY LIBRARY