

COLUMBUS METROPOLITAN LIBRARY WHITEHALL BRANCH

LOCATION

Whitehall, Ohio

PROJECT TYPE

New Construction

COMPLETION

2015

USE TYPE

Institutional

Envisioned as a library for a new generation—as much community center and tech portal as a place to discover books—the new Whitehall Branch of the Columbus Metropolitan Library system goes beyond the traditional role as a repository of books and hard-published resources. Rather, it stands to serve as a vital source for lifelong learning within the surrounding area.

The project's simple design goals—that the building should be **inviting, accessible, transparent, open and flexible**—have fostered a coherency where building access, functions and wayfinding are simultaneously evident throughout.

The new 19,500 square foot library is located on a three acre parcel along a main arterial road in Whitehall, an enclave of Columbus. The single story, pedestrian-scaled structure is sited along the main thoroughfare to the north. The gentle bow-shape of the building responds to the linear site and emphasizes the centered entries. The exterior facades are composed of flat, metal panels and glass storefront with greater transparency at the public spaces to the north and less so at the staff spaces and meeting rooms facing south.

The north pedestrian entry and south vehicular entry are each signified by a proscenium of orange terra cotta with views through each projecting into and through the building. By extending above the roof, the frame of the south entry provides backlighting to the exterior space below.

The entry sequence is defined by a compression created by the interior welcome zone that connects the entries and bisects the main public space. The terra cotta cladding continues from the exterior to the interior of the welcome zone and the ceiling transitions to a wood screen with integral lighting.

The public space, extending east and west from the compressed space of the entry, expands vertically with warped ceilings of exposed structural steel beams. The raised volumes open to views of the meadow grass landscape that extends outward from the building lines. With these pastoral views and the more urban views of the busy street to the north, the library's connection to and identity with the community is made evident.

The library's main public functions are defined by a large, rational, rectangular space

accommodating a children's area, teen area, community computing, main book stacks and a quiet reading room. The simple configuration and a raised access floor throughout create maximum flexibility. This will allow the library to respond easily and effectively to rapidly changing functional demands in the short and long terms. Northern exposure provides the predominant source of natural light through large expanses of glass making the spaces both well-lit and reading-friendly. Additional functions include a homework help area, reconfigurable meeting spaces, a teen recording studio, staff work spaces.

Having achieved LEED Silver certification, the library's sustainable strategies can be noted throughout. Interior fins and external louvers on the library's west-facing glass control heat gain while still providing quality reading light, and advanced HVAC systems in the public areas provide service from only the perimeter, allowing easy accommodation of new technologies and future opportunities. Further adding to the library's arsenal of teaching tools, a series of LED screens displays the structure's energy performance in real time.

