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New 32,000 s/f Walpole Public Library designed for LEED Gold Certification

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In the historic context of New England, the Walpole Public Library is a rare new building sited adjacent to the town buildings including the town hall, historic Blackburn Hall, police and fire departments, and just steps away from downtown and public transportation. The architects had been working with the Walpole community since 2007 when we were asked to re-envision and improve upon the previous library design, accepted for a construction grant from the Mass. Board of Library Commissioners. After a long, 20 year process and funding approval by a slim margin, the community can finally be proud of their new library.

The design of the new 32,000 s/f building uses traditional architectural textures, colors, and fundamentals of traditional architecture to respond to the New England context. The library program is organized around four vertical volumes encased in fiber cement panels which anchor the building's entries. In between them, circulation paths, a sculptural staircase, and skylights create a feeling of openness and lightness. The difference in treatment and fenestration on each facade of the library appropriately responds to its site orientation and unique environmental conditions.

On the interior, service desks for circulation, reference, and the children's area are centrally located for the highest visibility and security with the minimum number of staff. There are areas dedicated for young children, which includes a program room for community events; young adults, with computers and comfortable seating for lounging; and patrons looking for new books and media, or reference materials, or any of the 110,000 items in the library's collection.

The building is aiming for LEED Gold certification and is expected to receive, at a minimum, LEED Silver certification. It makes use of both passive sustainable strategies as well as active strategies. The incorporation of a green roof over the one-story wing creates a better insulated space for the program area. Natural light floods the interior spaces through the surrounding glazing and skylights and reduces the need for artificial lighting. The use of a photovoltaic panel system has assisted in generating over 5% of the building's utility features on-site, as well reducing the baseline energy use by nearly 25%. A rain garden at the entry of the building creates a small stream of rainwater from the roof to feed native plantings and remain on-site in a retention pond. To further promote sustainable design, significant efforts were made to use both local and high-recycled content materials and educational signs are displayed throughout the library to encourage the community to learn how the building contributes to a sustainable environment.

The library's past location was built in 1903 thanks to a grant from Andrew Carnegie, land donation by Walpole natives, and town money. Like then, Walpole's new library, with a project budget of \$11.2 million, has been made possible by various contributions including a generous grant from the MBLC, charitable donations from the community, and optimism from the taxpayers of Walpole. Since its dedication in April 2012, the Walpole Public Library has seen circulation levels dramatically

increase and it continues to welcome patrons offering endearing compliments.

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