



Expanding Library Programs to Nurture Your Growing Community

Maximizing Outdoor Spaces to Increase Visitation, Value

Envision your library. Would you like more space for additional community programming? Consider using the whole site — indoors and out. The reality is that many libraries underutilize outdoor space when considering new opportunities for their constituents. Leveraging outdoor space provides significant impact at moderate expense and creating out-of-doors experiences also promotes multisensory development and wellness in all ages. Let's explore several ideas to reimagine your library and bring the outdoors in.

Children's Programming

Storytime in the sunshine, reading while lying in the grass, and playing with friends with a breeze in your face are the vignettes of childhood. These experiences are encouraged and facilitated by thoughtful, whole-site design, where interior and exterior environments are successfully complemented to create opportunity for these memories. One of the most cost-effective benefits of providing outside space for these children's activities is the inherent noise separation. Carefully placed access to outdoor spaces also creates opportunities for larger events. Further, the need for safety and security measures when considering exterior children's venues is vital to providing confidence and comfort for both caregiver and child. Physical barriers, such as fencing or walls, are easy applications to secure a space, but they must be thoughtfully designed to successfully provide security, while conveying comfort and aesthetic appeal.



Adult Programming

Adults also seek a pleasant sensory environment to enjoy various activities, from independent reading to group activities. Depending on the site, the sounds of nature can be accentuated, while attenuating the noise of modern life. Some techniques utilized include building placement on site and its relationship to the parking lot and street, as well as carefully placed landscape features to deaden unwanted sound. A park-like setting is created by locating secluded pockets around larger, open spaces, perfect for physical wellness, such as yoga or dance. Paying careful attention to accessibility ensures that pathways throughout the property are easily traversed by all levels of mobility. A mix of landscape and hardscape can be used to form a rich tapestry of materials to reinforce our connection with nature and encourage unobstructed engagement.



Outdoor Engagement

Whether beach or park, lakeside or mountaintop, humans love to read outdoors. Libraries will foster increased visitation when they create open air spaces in which to read. Imagine library guests cozying up to a fire pit to enjoy their current read, or even hosting a fire side chat. Outdoor space is the perfect means to achieving a tranquil, private retreat from the main library space, while invoking a personal connection to nature. In today's digital age, where many are reading from tablet devices, successful incorporation of the outdoors requires the extension of wi-fi to those areas. Visualize an outside patio with a café or coffee house feel, or picture a bistro at dusk enveloped by string lighting.

Additionally, outdoor spaces open up a wealth of new opportunities for fostering group connections – larger-scale social events, receptions and catered events, movie nights, wellness programs, vocational trainings, club gatherings, live music. While 24/7/365 access is unlikely, outdoor spaces can be made useable during all hours to provide staff the flexibility to be creative with their programming. Successful outdoor event planning requires furniture solutions that are both weather-resistant and flexible, to ideally provide both indoor and outdoor usage. Outside power access is a must and can be used to support portable heating to extend the outdoor season. Under favorable circumstances, outdoor spaces can also generate revenue for the library in the form of venue rentals from outside organizations. Strategic partnerships with dog parks, skate parks, rails to trails, for example, are an available opportunity as well.



Holistic Library Design

The Becker Morgan Group library design team includes architects, interior designers, engineers, and landscape architects. Together, we are focused on promoting community engagement, learning, and growth. We have the experience with both building and site design to leverage the inclusion of outdoor spaces in your library to foster increased user engagement and visitation to your facility. We are passionate about connecting communities to knowledge and particularly enjoy when we can create warm and welcoming atmospheres that encourage the exchange of ideas.

