CONNECTED BY NATURE INTERPRETIVE SCIENCE CENTER THUNDER BAY, ONTARIO, CA

HOW CAN ARCHITECTURE FOSTER A STRONGER CONNECTION BETWEEN ECOLOGICAL CONSERVATION RESEARCH AND THE PUBLIC?

As humanity continues to expand the built environment the pressure placed upon the natural world continues to grow. The impact can be seen in the numerous issues A hard reevaluation of how humans should react is needed as we forge into the next era of the Anthropocene. Despite this, society has chosen to largely disregard the individuals tasked to solve it. Scientists continue to feel resistance to their findings from both the public at large and those in charge of implementing change. This mindset erodes the self righting nature of society.

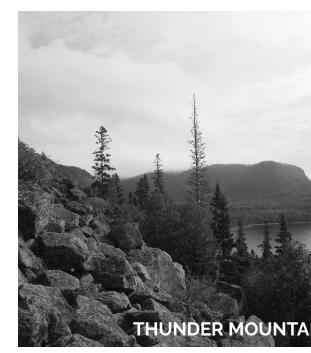
Providing a space that allows for interactions, transparency, and inspiration is an integral part to fix this discordance in our midst.

Interpretive science centers gained a major foothold since the mid-eighties when the Monterey Bay aquarium pioneered a new approach to presenting research to visitors. This now ubiquitous approach presents more than static exhibits, but an immersive experience. From here the next step is to provide a space for visitors to not only learn, but become part of the ecological research itself. Views to laboratories allow for people to see how science is conducted. Adjacent spaces for experts and interested individuals to work together benefit both group. Ecologists receive more support for their work while better educating visitors. By placing this facility along the reclaimed waterfront an easy connection to what is learned within the facility can be made to surrounding landscape.















INTERVIEWS

o provide insight into the needs and views of experts, a variety of interviews were conducted. Directors and scientists from some of the country's leading interpretive science centers participated. The questions asked varied from what they perceived to be essential to their work to how they interacted with the public. The responses gathered added to the literature research that explored how the general public can best be taught. The feedback provided better articulation of information that was in some cases absent from articles. Perceived success of outreach initiatives from those that perform them removed the idealized review that directors commonly provide.

ONTARIO MINISTRY OF NATURAL RESOURCES

THUNDER BAY, ON

Information provided gave insight into the public perception that scientists may have. Much of what the ministry does is report directly to lawmakers, skipping the crucial step of interacting with locals.

> EXPLORATORIUM

SAN FRANCISCO, CA

By showing the public live experiments they will be more engaged and inspired to take charge of their own lives.

"Nobody flunks a museum' Frank Oppenheime

5 PEROT MUSEUM OF NATURE AND SCIENCE

DALLAS, TX

With the new Perot facility locals have been discouraged to be involved with the research process. Research is built upon the naturally curious. Interpretive centers are a platform for discussion.

2 MINNESOTA SEA GRAN

"[W]e can actually get [the public] involved and participating in [research] through citizen science. Not only do they understand the work better, but they have greater trust in the outcomes of that work because they were

SEWARD ALASKA SEALIFE CENTER

SEWARD, AK

The main goal of a ecological center is to advance our knowledge of nature. Entertainment of visitors is secondary. This more research grounded approach emphasizes the importance of providing for the experts.

6 GREAT LAKES AQUARIUM

DULUTH, MN

Visitors come to learn, but they can also inform the experts. Provide information using a variety of methods to ensure that the greatest range of people are included.

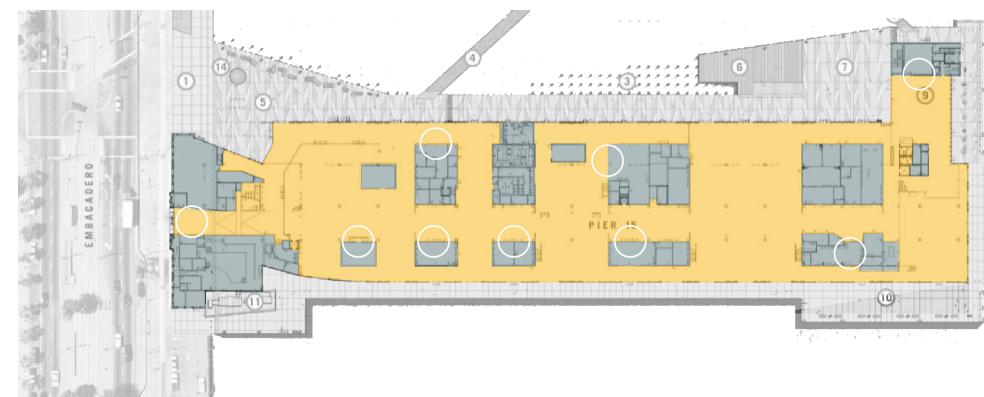


PUBLIC - PRIVATE ANALYSIS

To better understand what works for science centers, case studies on a wide variety of existing buildings were conducted. Focus was placed on observing how public and private space were treated, either distinctly separated or intermixed. A set of common features that were present on most examples was assembled. This language helped to inform what was required in plan for a successful facility.

The Thunder Bay Interpretive Center took these guidelines and modified them to fit its program and site. An effort has been made to give as much viewable frontage to research areas as possible. In several spots scientist are required to cross through public spaces. This creates points of spontaneous interactions between curious visitors and educated experts. Galleries have been placed next to laboratories and are given views to the environmental context which is referenced.

HUNDER BAY INTERPRETIVE CENTER GROUND FLOOR



EXPLORATORIUM



NATURAL HISTORY MUSEUM OF UTAH



MONTEREY BAY AQUARIUM