Discovery Woods

At The Discovery Museums
ACM Interactivity 2017
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Discovery Woods, The Discovery Museums

- Acton MA

- 10,000 sgft in two buildings/4.5 acre campus/Discovery Woods: 1 acre

- $1.5M including parking relocation
Today’s Challenges:

Lost connection to the outdoors

Children are becoming increasingly less connected with nature, missing out on the physical, emotional and cognitive benefits that outside play has on early development.
Designed for maximum independence and self-directed learning at all ages

- Examples:
  - two heights of treehouse tables
  - Montessori cube chairs can be used at different heights
  - Book shelves hung low and some books scattered on walls up higher
  - Windows at all different heights including at floor level
  - Open ended activities
  - Littles Lawn
natural materials

- open-ended, they evoke maker mindset of asking questions, taking risks, design thinking, problem solving, thinking sustainably
- variety in materials that we could while still being safe - textures, hardness, weight, size --- HARD TO DO
- a mix of highlighting totally natural areas/raw materials (painted stump in woodland nook - the paint draws people's attention to the area because it was previously overlooked)
- human designs with natural materials (beaver lodges, treehouse, etc. modeling maker mindset)
- incorporating tools or simple toys (buckets in gravel pit, kitchen items in beaver lodges, hula hoops, stilts)
Designed for social learning, communicating ideas, and reflecting

- seating all the way around treehouse tables
- two bean bags in reading corner
- surprising objects on treehouse walls provoke conversation - no labels
- intimate nooks like beaver lodges and Adirondack chairs
- large scale materials need multiple people like fabric forts in woodland nook and outlast blocks
The Discovery Museums Outdoor Mission
Maker-Space-Inspired spaces for our youngest visitors

Basic Institutional Constraints
Production Values
Complexity & Developmentally appropriate
Safety/Acceptable Risk
Sustainable Operation