

In 2016, the Edgartown Public Library was awarded \$50,000 in CPC funds for a Sensory Garden and Literary Garden Project, to be located in the exterior area adjacent to the children's room. The project narrative was developed prior to occupying the then-new library located on West Tisbury Road.

It was quickly realized after developing design plans and seeking initial cost estimates that the sensory garden hardscape components alone would exceed the awarded amount, and at the time the library did not have sufficient supplemental funds to allocate toward the project. With the exception of designer expenses totalling \$2,640, no additional funds were used.

The silver lining of that project being on hold is that in the course of seven years, the library has been able to observe how the space is used in real time, especially with regard to our after-school kids. Over the past year, the library has worked with landscape architect Dharshini Joseph to develop a landscape design plan that encompasses the entire library campus, not just the outdoor space adjacent to the children's room.

Through the redesign and revitalization of the Edgartown Public Library's outdoor space, this project is designed to create opportunities to meet both the current and future needs of our community. This project is aimed at creating a beautiful and practical outdoor area that not only enhances the aesthetics of our library but also serves as a versatile community space for various activities, for patrons of all ages. The library foresees this space providing a multitude of uses, such as a much-needed area for kids to play and engage with the library after school, a musical performance venue, an outdoor learning commons, and an open but intentionally designed space for community gatherings.

Project Overview:

The project's goal is to reimagine our library's outdoor space, currently underutilized and overlooked, into a vibrant and dynamic community asset. Having been in its current location next to the Edgartown School for more than seven years, the library has seen the myriad ways in which community members engage with the building and grounds. We envision an inviting and accessible space that seamlessly integrates with the library's mission of fostering learning, community engagement, and literacy.

Objectives:

1. Enhanced Aesthetics: Transform the current space into an aesthetically pleasing and welcoming environment, featuring landscaping and sustainable design elements.
2. Versatility and Community Engagement: Create a multifunctional space that can accommodate a wide range of activities, including musical performances, outdoor storytimes, after school activities, author talks, outdoor dance and movement programs, open-air movie nights, and community events.

3. Youth Engagement: Develop a designated area for children to play, learn, and explore, promoting literacy and health through outdoor activities. In FY23, the library served over 6,300 children after school.

4. Accessibility: Ensure the space is accessible to all, including individuals with disabilities, through ramps, pathways, and seating options.

Budget, Revenue Sources, and Financial Sustainability:

The total estimated budget for this project is between \$600k-800k. It will include costs for landscaping and plantings, construction, hardscape, lighting, fencing, seating, and signage.

The library's primary source of funding for this project will be a library trust fund. Future maintenance mowing needs are included in the library's existing budget, and all plantings will be selected with low-maintenance and sustainability in mind.

Timeline:

The project is expected to commence in May 2024 with an estimated completion date of Fall 2024.

Community Impact:

The revitalization of our outdoor space will have a profound impact on our community. It will:

- Provide a safe and stimulating environment for children to play and learn, supporting early childhood development and literacy.
- Offer a versatile venue for outdoor programming, enhancing educational, cultural, entertainment, and community opportunities as well as promoting lifelong learning.
- Create a gathering place for residents and visitors, fostering a stronger sense of community and social connections.
- Encourage a deeper connection with nature, promoting health and well-being among library patrons.

We strongly believe that the driving philosophy of the library should be reflected both inside and outside the building. The space should be designed in a way that offers limitless uses and potential, to be adaptable to what the community needs in our ever-changing global and local landscape. We are excited about the potential of this project to transform our library and the surrounding community. We believe we can turn this underutilized outdoor space into a vibrant and inclusive community asset that will benefit generations to come.

Respectfully submitted for committee review,

Lisa Sherman
Edgartown Library Director