



## Interpretive Center

### The Park Gateway

#### Goal

Create a gateway to the park that excites visitors about the entire 6,150 acres and entices them to cross over into the green side of the park.

#### Strategy

“With its highly visible location on Perdido Beach Highway, the Interpretive Center is well positioned to act as an interactive hub that sends visitors out to explore all of the regions’ educational opportunities.”

- GSPP Team, June 2015

Design a building that communicates the uniqueness of the park’s environments and then directly connects to the park trail system via a pedestrian bridge crossing East Beach Boulevard. Invite beach visitors into the park.

Target full certification under the Living Building Challenge (LBC). With only 16 fully certified buildings as of 2018, it is considered the most rigorous environmental standard in the

world. Also target LEED Platinum and Fortified Commercial certifications.

Integrate a variety of interactive educational experiences that describe the ecologies of the park and the LBC building standards. These exhibits create a foundation for learning that invites visitors to learn more by exploring the park and experiencing the natural environment.

#### Outcomes

- An elevated building with an integrated pedestrian bridge connecting to the trails in the green side of the park
- A fully certified Living Building

- Interpretive elements that highlight the sustainable elements of the building
- An outdoor porch containing an interactive representation of the park ecosystems

The Interpretive Center should inspire visitors to leave the beach. It should create a curiosity about the rest of the park.

*Tye Warren,  
GSP Project Director*



Overview of connection between Interpretive Center and Park Trails



**Solar Panels**

105% of energy expected to be consumed and used on site is collected on the roof

**Interpretive Wall**

Exhibits highlighting the sustainable features of the building seeking full certification as a Living Building

**Native Plantings**

All foliage and flora were carefully selected from a palette of local materials to align with habitat and water needs

**225' Setback**

Design setback to allow for dune regrowth

**Pedestrian Bridge**

Safe pedestrian connection to the park trail system

**Interpretive Porch**

Contains an interactive introduction to the park environment

**Multiuse Room**

Contains exhibits about the Living Building Challenge and how this building responds to them; Also available for community, organization, non-profit, and educational events

**Sand & Water Play Area**

Interactive play area for kids of all ages and abilities

**Skview Benches**

Places to enjoy views of the clouds and stars

**Amphitheater Seating**

Shaded outdoor seating for teaching and lectures

**Water Treatment Room**

105% of water expected to be consumed and used on site is collected and treated

**Rain Chains**

Celebrate the collection of water



Site Plan

- 1. Interpretive Porch
- 2. Meeting Space
- 3. Sand Education Area

- 4. Pedestrian Bridge
- 5. Revised Landscape
- 6. Improved Entry Sequence

- 7. Pedestrian Plaza
- 8. Improved Beach Access
- 9. Existing Pavilion

Top:

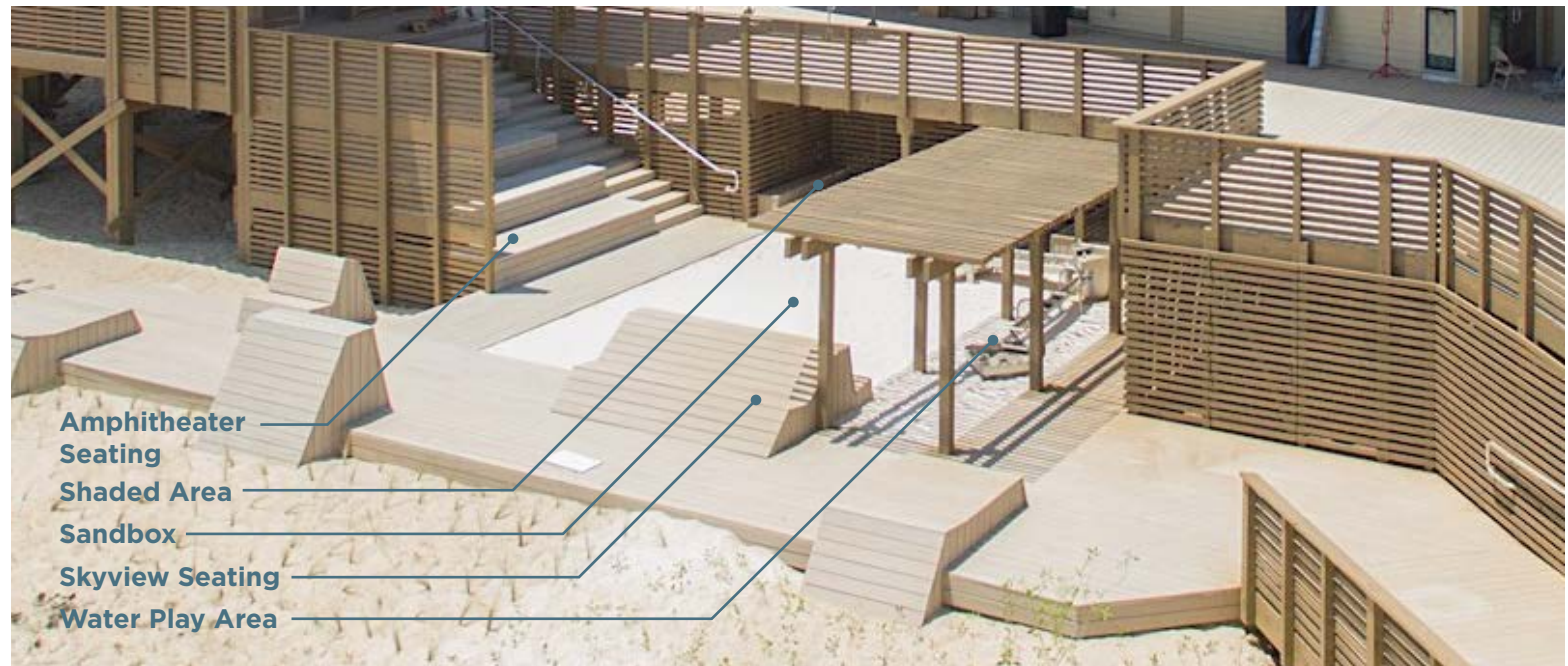
The lower level of the Interpretive Center is designed as a series of interactive experiences. The “sandbox” explores our relationship with water and sand by encouraging play. There are also a series of benches for visitors to pause and watch clouds pass by during the day or do a little stargazing at night. Amphitheater seating will be used for educational programs and provide a place to relax in the shade.

Bottom:

The connection of the Interpretive Center to the rest of Gulf State Park is physically realized as the ramping for the Pedestrian Bridges passes between the two major structures. Visitors will be able to easily interact with the exhibits as they move from the beach inland or from the park to the beach. The building is primarily constructed of wood because of the wide availability of this renewable resource and its friendly relationship to human health.

Opposite:

A portion of the project infographic describing how the building responds to the Living Building Challenge’s unique requirements for improving all aspects of the environment.





### HEALTH & HAPPINESS

in the design of the Interpretive Center means windows and walls that give you access to plenty of sunshine, fresh air and nature whether you are indoors or out.



**ENERGY** The Interpretive Center's design combines over 100 solar panels, clever materials and efficient batteries to make and store more than 100% of the electricity it needs.



**WATER** is a precious resource. On the Island, there has always been a deep respect for the water (and a lot of it!). However, fresh, clean drinking water isn't always easy to find. That's why the Interpretive Center is designed to capture, store and clean more than 100% of the water it needs.



**EQUITY** means everyone deserves to be able to enjoy this amazing Park. The Interpretive Center is built to provide access to nature for all types of people.



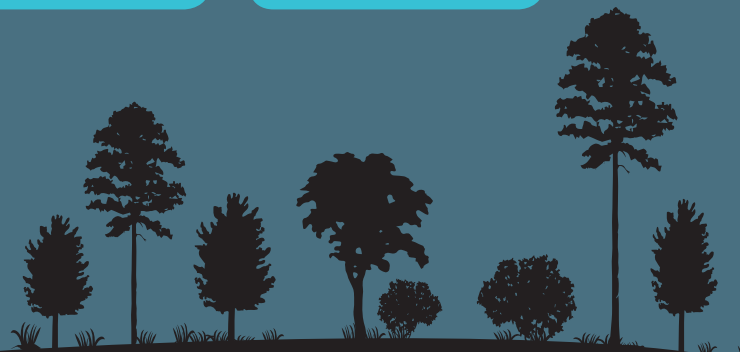
**PLACE** is crucial for helping people connect to the natural environment. The Interpretive Center was designed to honor this special place by acting as a gateway to the park.



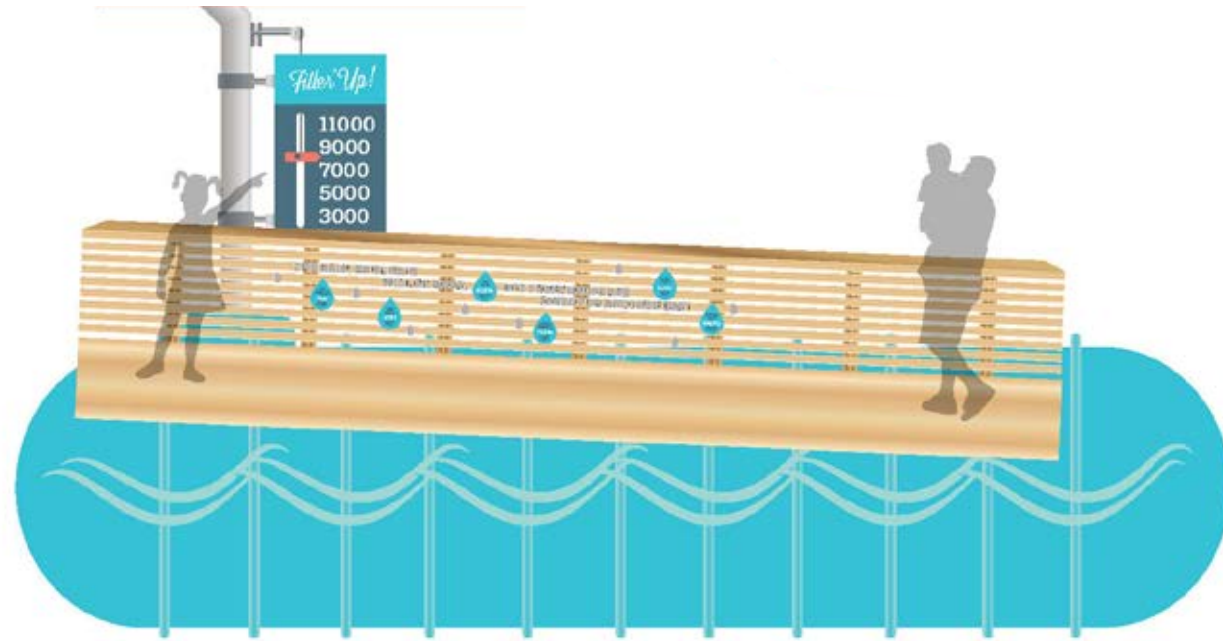
**BEAUTY** means the Interpretive Center is built with respect for and as part of the dune landscape. When you're on the IC's porch, you're never far from a gorgeous view or an inspiring discovery.



**MATERIALS** can make a big difference. The Interpretive Center is made out of things that do no harm to people or the environment (today, tomorrow and forever!), that reuse as much as possible while wasting as little as possible and come from sources as close to the site as possible.



Top:  
 Interpretive elements highlight the sustainable components designed to achieve full Living Building Certification. The focal point of this exhibit is the water tank that can hold up to 11,000 gallons of water that are collected and treated on-site for human consumption and use.



Bottom Left:  
 The informative and approachable exhibits connect visitors to Gulf State Park's natural wonders and history, as well as the building's innovative and environmentally friendly design.

Bottom Right:  
 In this water cycle exhibit, the life of a water drop is explored using a ring game that engages kids in understanding the process of evaporation, condensation, and precipitation.

Opposite Top:  
 The interpretive porch is an open air moment for people to learn about nature while being immersed in it. This design takes advantage of the Gulf's cooling breezes to reduce energy consumption.



Opposite Bottom Left:  
 A large interactive element introduces visitors to the park's ecologies and the diversity of nature found within them, inspiring people to explore their relationship with nature through experiences within the park.

Opposite Bottom Right:  
 The water for the play area is also supplied by water tank. When there is no water, kids (and adults) experience the relationship between rain and the water they use everyday.



