



PROJECT

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Walden Pond Visitor Center

Maryann Thompson Architects



SHARED BY
[Ayda Ayoubi](#)

PROJECT NAME
Walden Pond Visitor



SHARED BY[Ayda Ayoubi](#)**PROJECT NAME**

Walden Pond Visitor Center

LOCATION[Concord, MA](#)**PROJECT STATUS**

Built

YEAR COMPLETED

2016

SIZE

6,000 sq. feet

CLIENT/OWNER

Massachusetts Department of Conservation and Recreation (DCR)

CONSULTANTSLandscape Architect: Crosby Schlessinger Smallridge
Landscape Architect: Michael Van Valkenburgh and Associates**TYPE**[Cultural](#)
[Education](#)
[Other](#)**SCOPE**[New Construction](#)[View all \(5\) images](#)**PROJECT DESCRIPTION****FROM THE ARCHITECTS:**

Walden Pond State Reservation is an internationally-acclaimed National Historic Landmark and protected open space along 330 acres. Over 500,000 people a year visit the pond due to its great beauty, as well as being the famed retreat of Henry David Thoreau. The surrounding towns of Concord and Lincoln are the founts of American literature in the mid-nineteenth century, as well as the birthplace of the modern Conservation Movement in the US. The Walden Pond Visitor Center was the result of a decades-long planning and implementation process, and the fruition of an in-depth collaboration between DCR, the design team and stakeholders, including the Walden Woods Project and The Thoreau Society.

The new Visitor Center interweaves with the landscape to emphasize Walden Pond and the site. Maryann Thompson Architects held the building off the central axis from the pond to the parking lot so that the Center takes a secondary position to the view of the pond. A meandering and accessible ramp draws the public up and onto the trellised deck, which leads to the exhibition space and public facilities. Nestled within existing trees and new plantings, the project gives a sense of unfolding sequence and exploration. Exhibition spaces dedicated to the impact of Walden on the world, as well as a community meeting room, and staff offices, create a new hub.

Local context and site conditions informed the design strategy and implementation at all levels. The deck with black locust trellis members is clad with locally-sourced, heat-treated ash. Heat-treating wood is excellent for outdoor applications, and prevents the use of scarce rainforest woods such as Ipe. The project also used a portion of the former visitor center foundation, as part of an ethos of salvaging and saving. The office millwork was done in Massachusetts Red Oak harvested by DCR's forestry team specifically for the Visitor Center.

The building is net-zero energy, with no reliance on fossil fuels for its operation. A PV solar array doubles as a shade structure over the parking lot and supplies all of the project energy needs. In winter, triple-pane windows and super insulation keeps the spaces at a comfortable temperature with little reliance on the energy-efficient electric heat pump system. In warmer months, the ample operable windows and ceiling fans create natural ventilation. Projecting timber overhangs work to reduce solar heat gain. As the structure and building components are visible and legible, visitors to the Center also have an interactive sense of the ecological building principles, which are contemporary expressions of the legacy of Henry David Thoreau and the American Conservation Movement.