

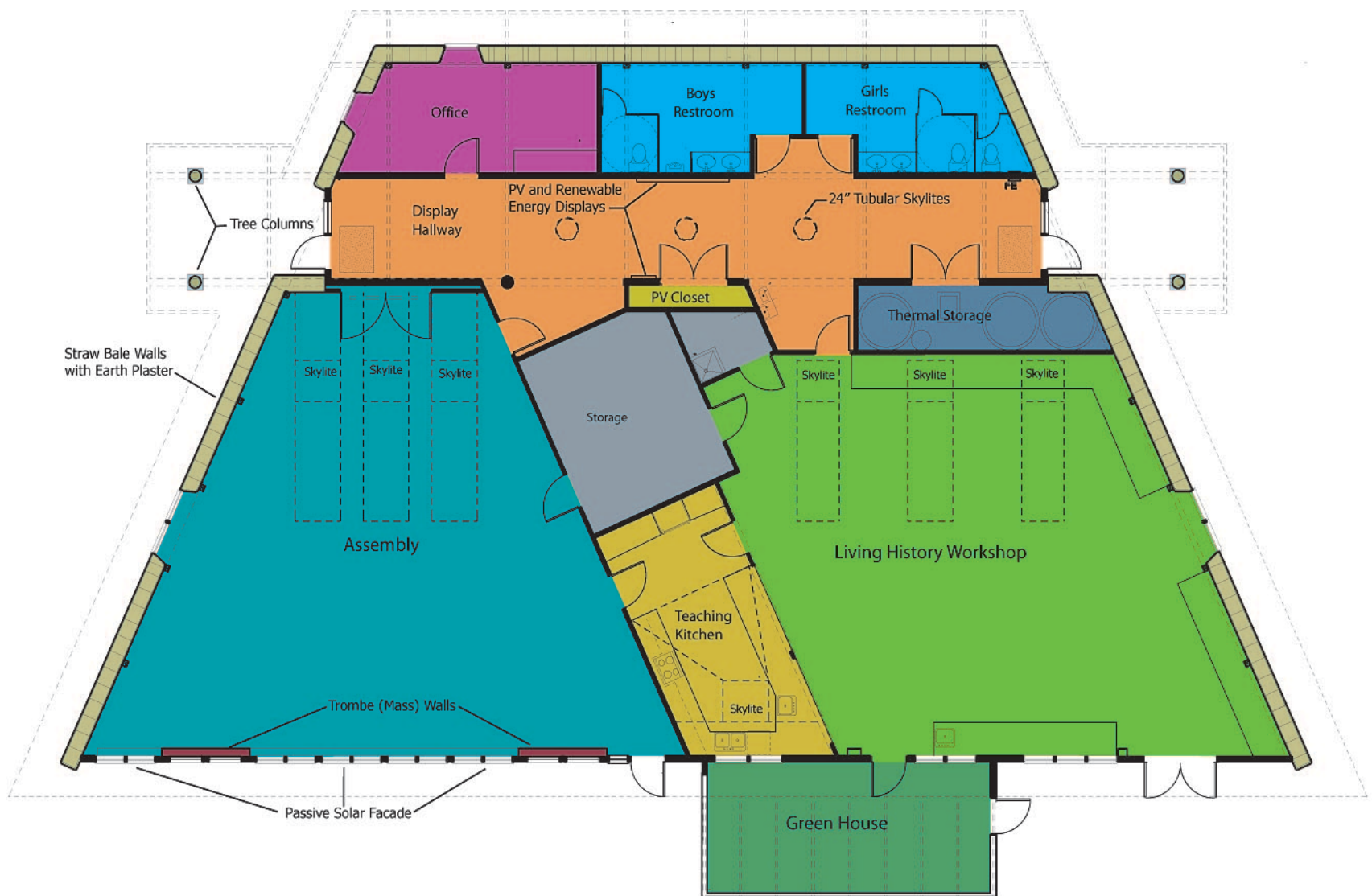
The Willows Environmental Center



Chatfield School's Willows Environmental Center will offer the greater Lapeer community experiential learning programs with a focus on ecological education, living history, the domestic arts and community service. The 5,300 sf classroom building will be completed in May of 2008, and will itself become a lesson in living in harmony with nature.

North, east and west walls are made with straw bales, infilling a post and beam wood frame and plastered with local clay soils. The south facade opens to the sun for passive solar gain directly through the windows and indirectly through glazed concrete mass walls. Skylights illuminate the interior, eliminating the need for electric lighting during daylight hours.

Photovoltaic and solar thermal panels on the south roof provide much of the building's electric and heating needs from the sun. The children will grow plants and observe aquatic life in the greenhouse. The green roof will become its own native prairie ecosystem while it keeps the building cool.



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