SUMMARY OF STAKEHOLDER INPUT

stakeholder visioning sessions

visioning sessions | library staff themes

What does “best in class” library service mean to you? What barriers, if any, are there to providing exceptional service?

Easy to get to the library and accessible once you are here.

Provide a wide range of programs and services that customers ask for, and do it well.

Barriers include lack of public will for improvements/changes, staff time, ability to implement change quickly

What does the Rochester community need to thrive? If you were granted 3 wishes to enhance your ability to provide what is needed, what would you ask for?

Affordable housing, food security, better transportation infrastructure.

Community: sense of belonging for new community members, community support, better investment in public amenities

3 wishes: free internet, mental health resources, library seen as a vital community asset

How does the library contribute to the community’s unique identity? How might it in the future?

Library can set a welcoming and caring tone for the rest of the community: show what welcoming is and can be.

Multiple languages, advance guard of DEI initiatives in the city

Future: How can the library be world-class, like Mayo, and not just good enough?

How might the library further reflect the community’s diversity to be welcoming to all?

Space for everyone + space for the community to join together

Branches that mirror the neighborhood communities

Programming that reflects the community’s diversity

visioning sessions | steering committee themes

What does the Rochester community need to thrive? If you were granted 3 wishes to enhance your ability to provide what is needed, what would you ask for?

Embrace that Rochester is no longer a small town: build institutions to reflect large city status

expand civic presence outside of downtown for improved access

celebrate diversity.

What does “best in class” library service for Rochester mean to you?

Service that responds to community needs

inviting space that is easy to get to and easy to use

How does the library contribute to the community’s unique identity? How might it in the future?

Welcoming place for all and an exemplar for what Rochester wants to be; filling a hole in the community that higher ed institutions and arts organizations would typically fill;

how can the library help Rochester’s image be more than Mayo and IBM?

Imagine the master plan process is complete. What outcomes would indicate that it was a resounding success?

Community is excited about the library services and offerings

Council is supportive of the plan because it’s based on data and there is strong support from constituents

Mayo sees an opportunity to support the library

Aspirational + obtainable

More than about a building – must include library service recommendations and look beyond physical space needs.

What is wildly successful at the library now? What opportunities or initiatives would inspire the community to engage with the library more?

Libby, youth programming, seed library, book donations, reading champions are all popular.
Easier access (better public transportation, free parking)
more innovative programs (library of things, seed library)
community meeting space, and keeping the library front of mind increase engagement.

What does the Rochester community need to thrive? If you were granted 3 wishes to provide what is needed, what would you ask for?

Rochester needs affordable housing
branch library locations, and a library location outside of downtown.
affordable housing, more parks and trails, inclusive spaces for the entire community
improved access to downtown, library coffee shop

How might the library further reflect the community's diversity?

A more diverse library staff – including leadership team and friends members
cultural programming, people library where you can meet and learn with community members with different experiences from you

What does the Rochester community need to thrive? If you were granted 3 wishes to provide what is needed, what would you ask for?

Vision and Action team
free entertainment, affordable housing, culturally sensitive programming
better connection between resources and those who need them
better awareness of library offerings, infrastructure improvements

How does the library contribute to the community's unique identity? How might it in the future?

Library is a leader in DEI, addressing the digital divide and providing access to those who need it
use the broad skillsets of librarians to serve community needs
improved tools/offerings for library users needing mental health services
bring in speakers that challenge and contribute to the community identity

Imagine the master plan process is complete. What outcomes would indicate that it was a resounding success?

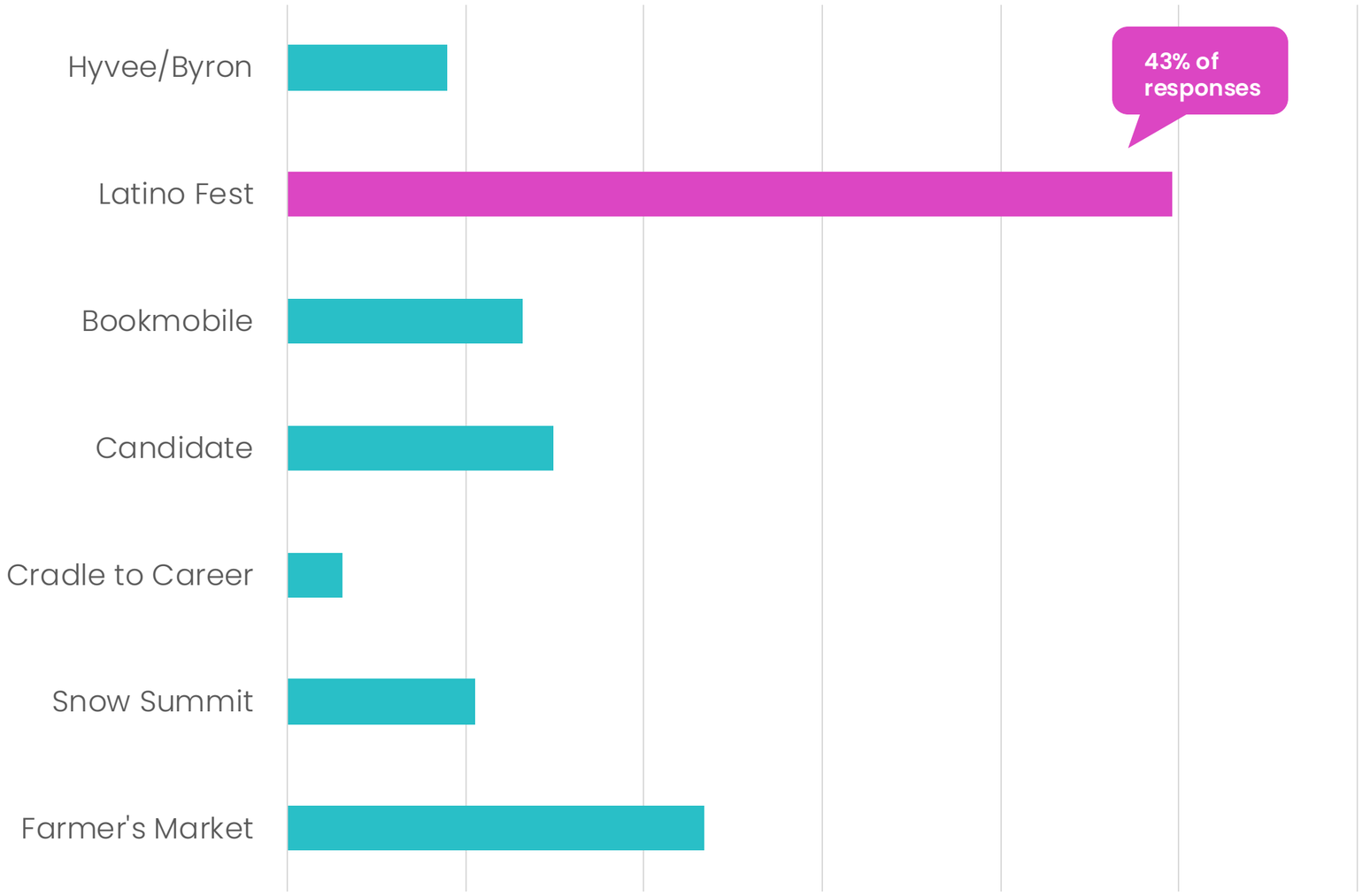
Community understands what the library does now and what it would like to do in the future with their support
strategy for engaging people over the years
improved library accessibility
more library patrons
community is aware of the master plan and excited to support it

visioning sessions | common themes from key stakeholder one-on-ones

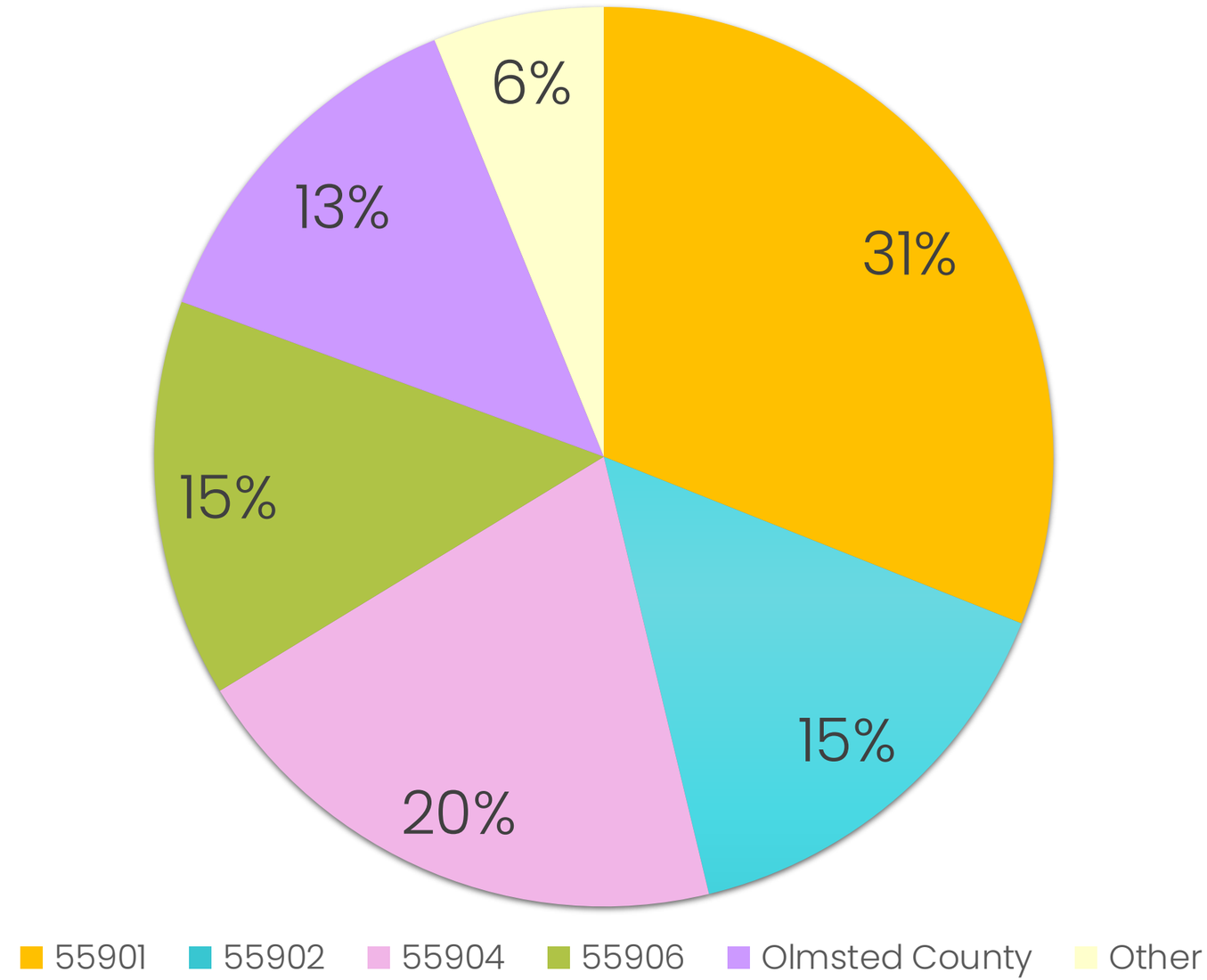
- city is growing and diversifying
- co-location, pop-ups to extend service reach
- little-to-no appetite (or funding) for a new downtown library
- opportunity to better align library board and council expectations
- barriers to downtown location: disruptive users, parking cost, access, downtown construction (next 7 years), downtown mainly a campus for Mayo
- library is dated, lacks outlets, those with means don't use it
- some use library as a 2nd office
- more mobile services desired
- library is important to children
- mixed ideas about importance of meeting spaces

round 1
community engagement

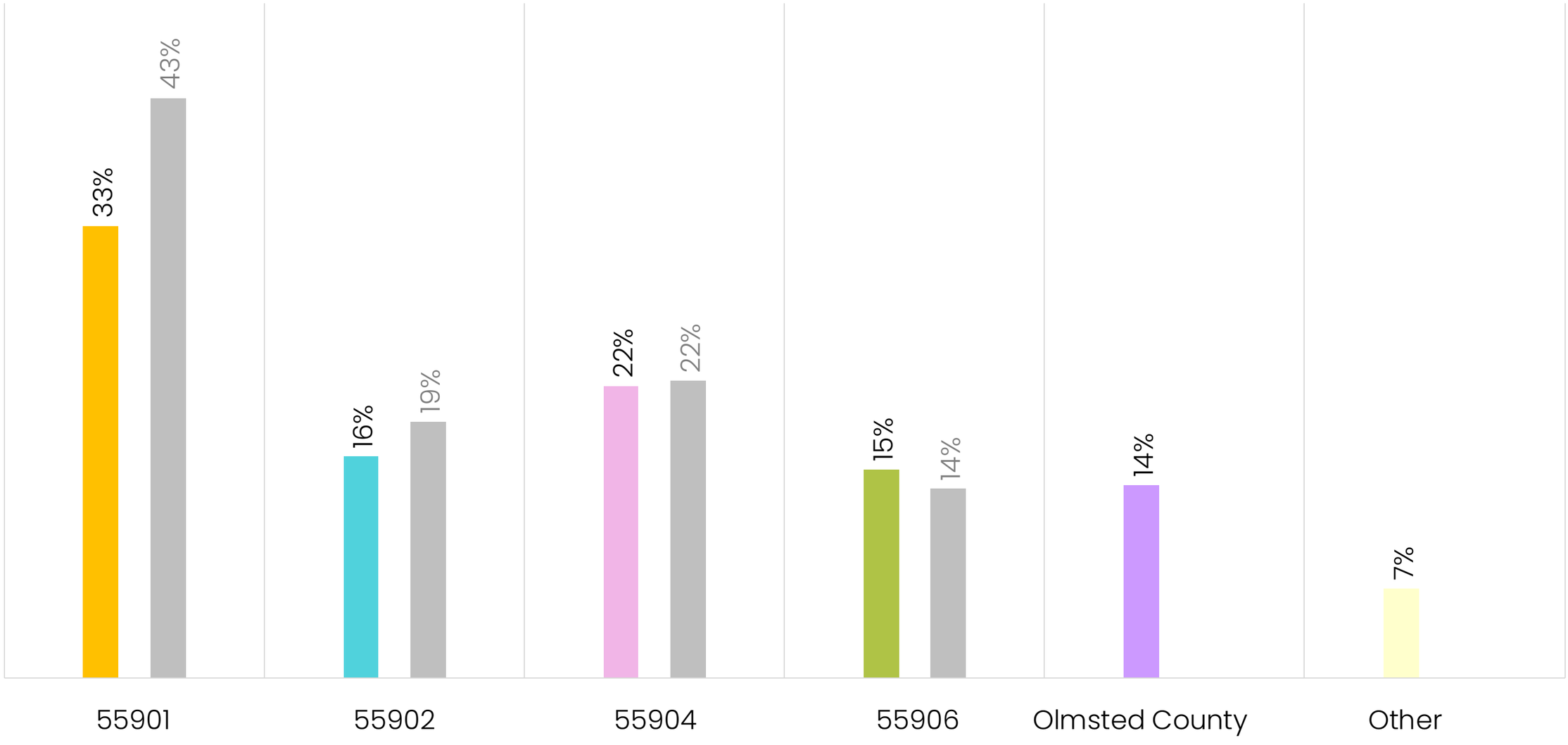
engagement turnout | responses



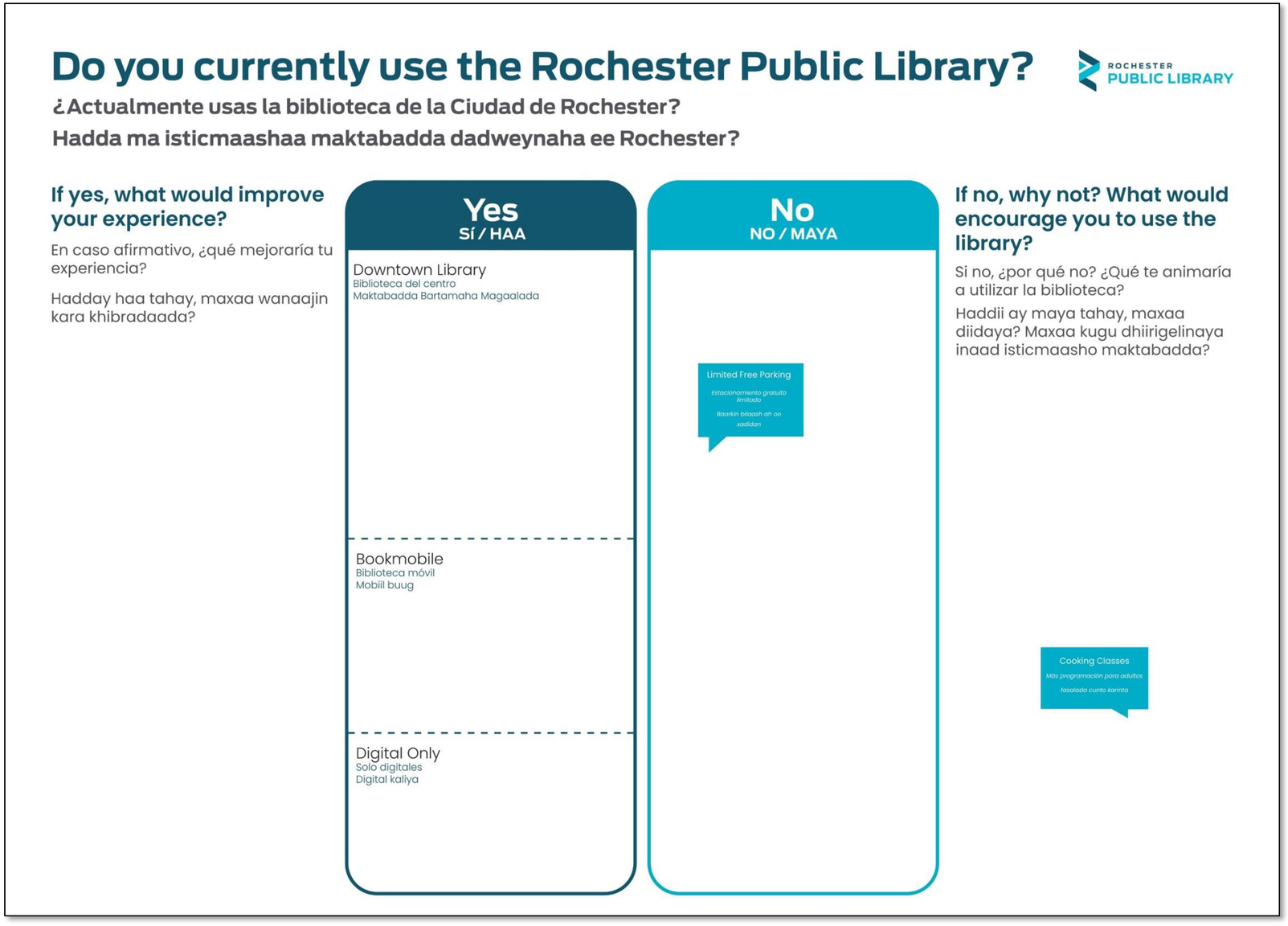
engagement turnout | responses



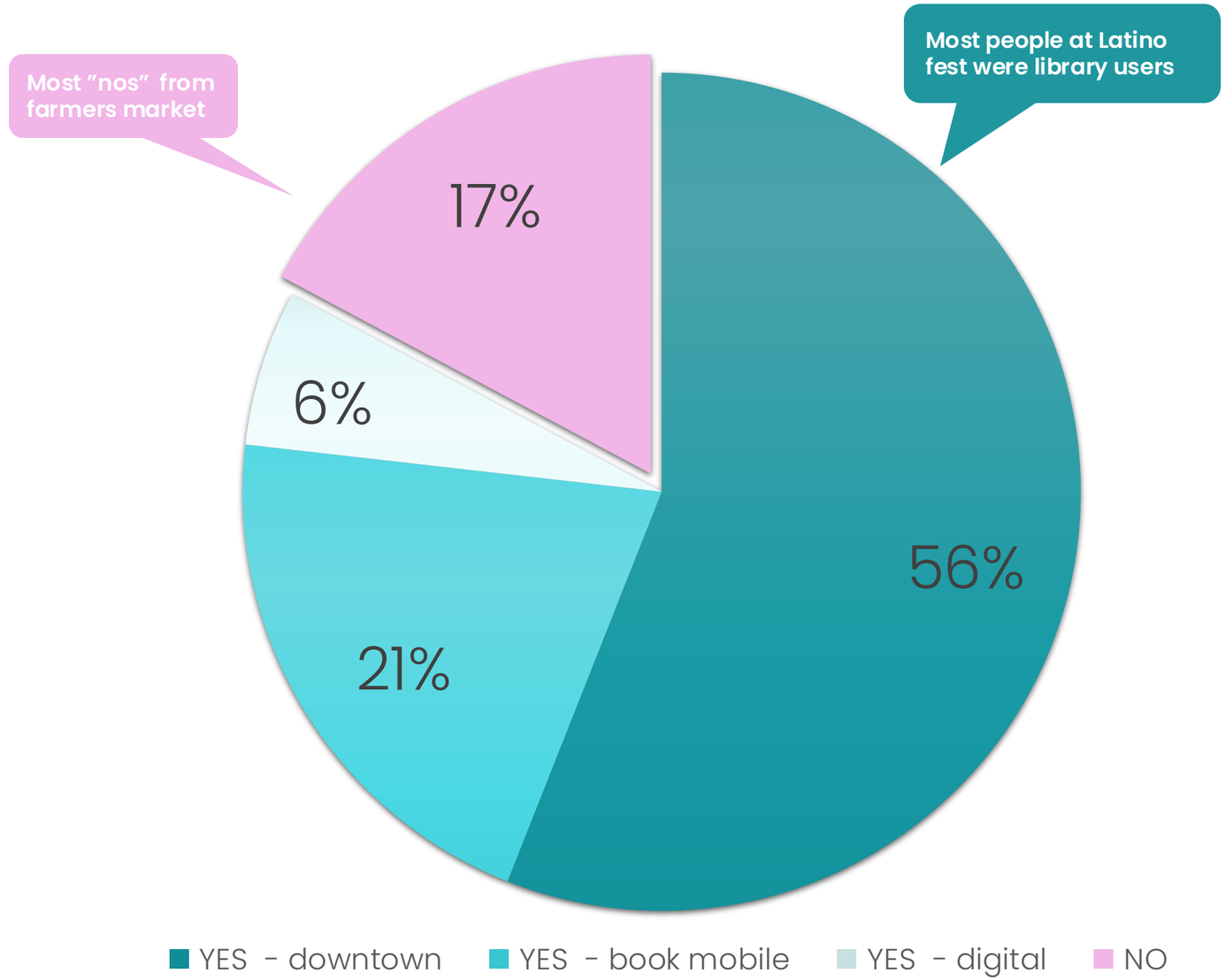
zip code responses vs actual population



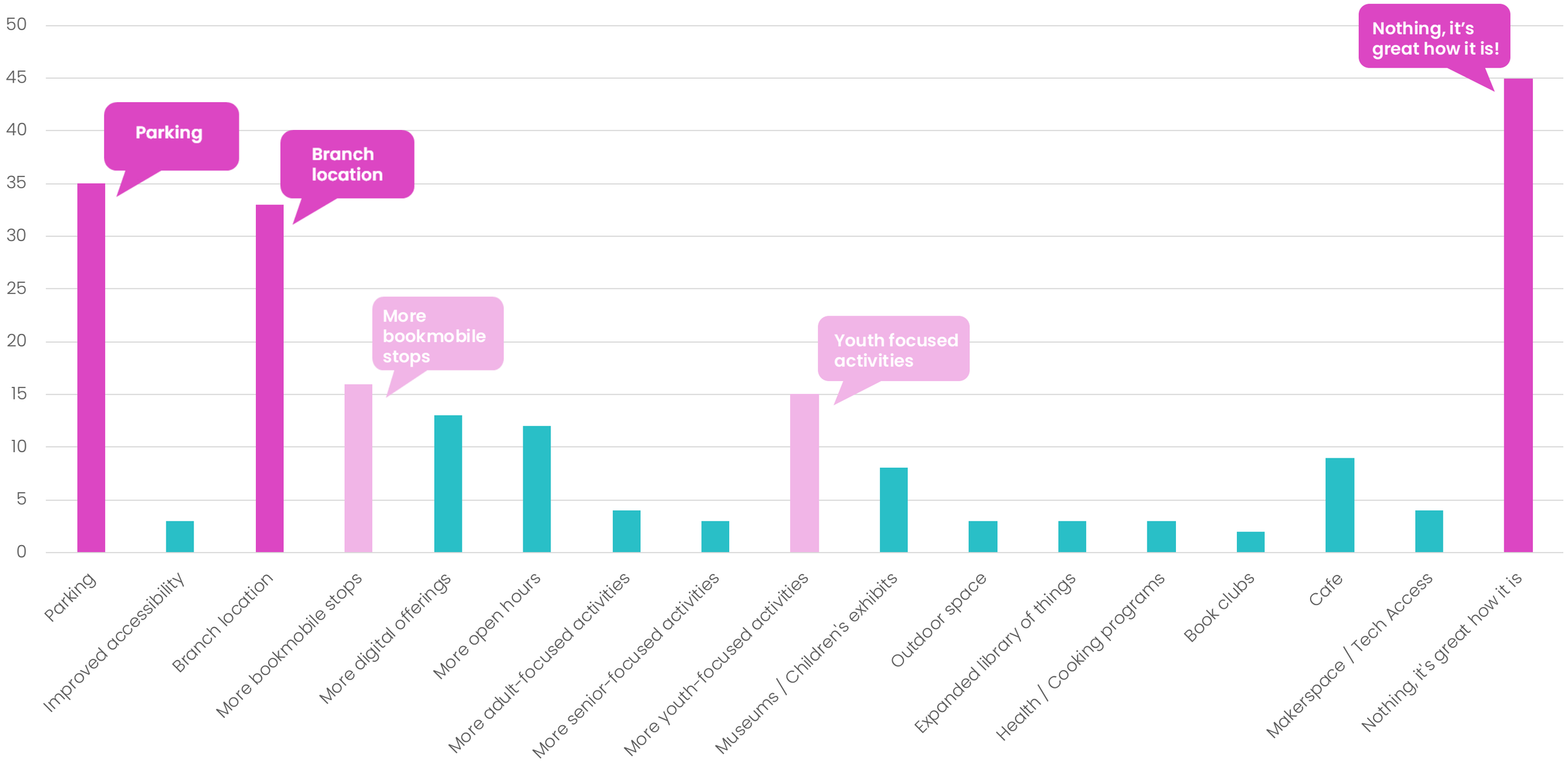
engagement boards | first round



Do you currently use Rochester Public Library?

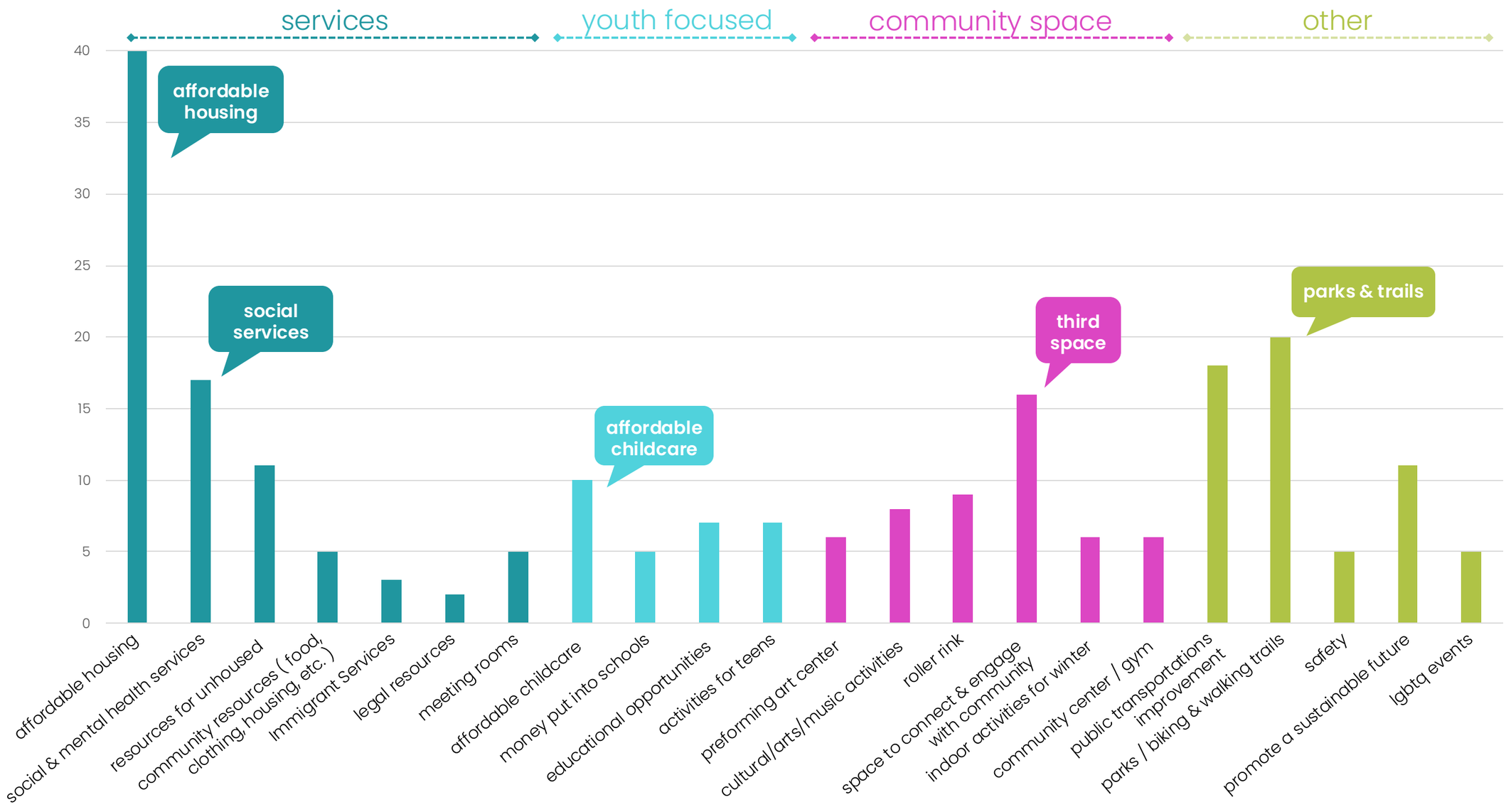


What would improve your experience?

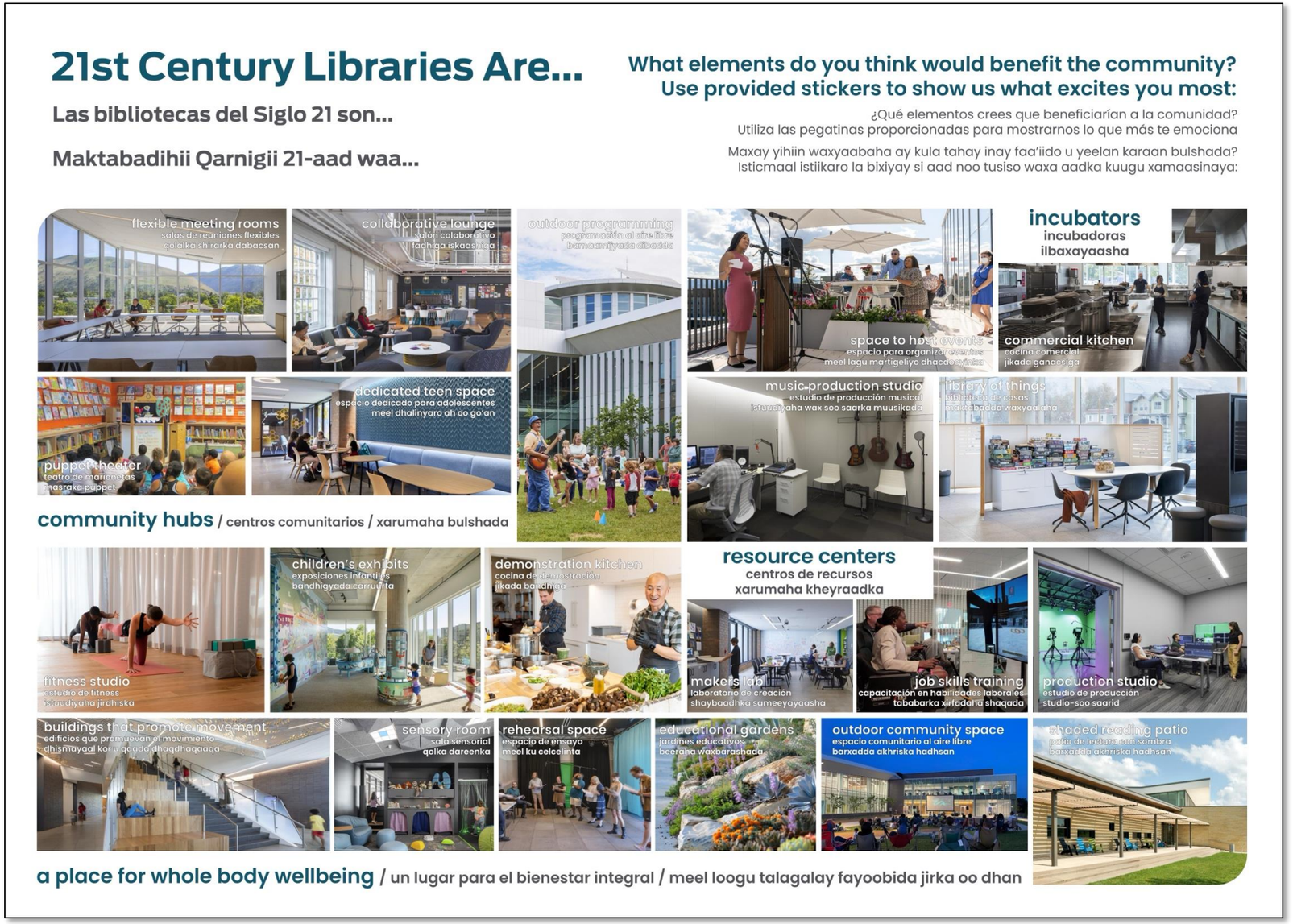


engagement boards | first round

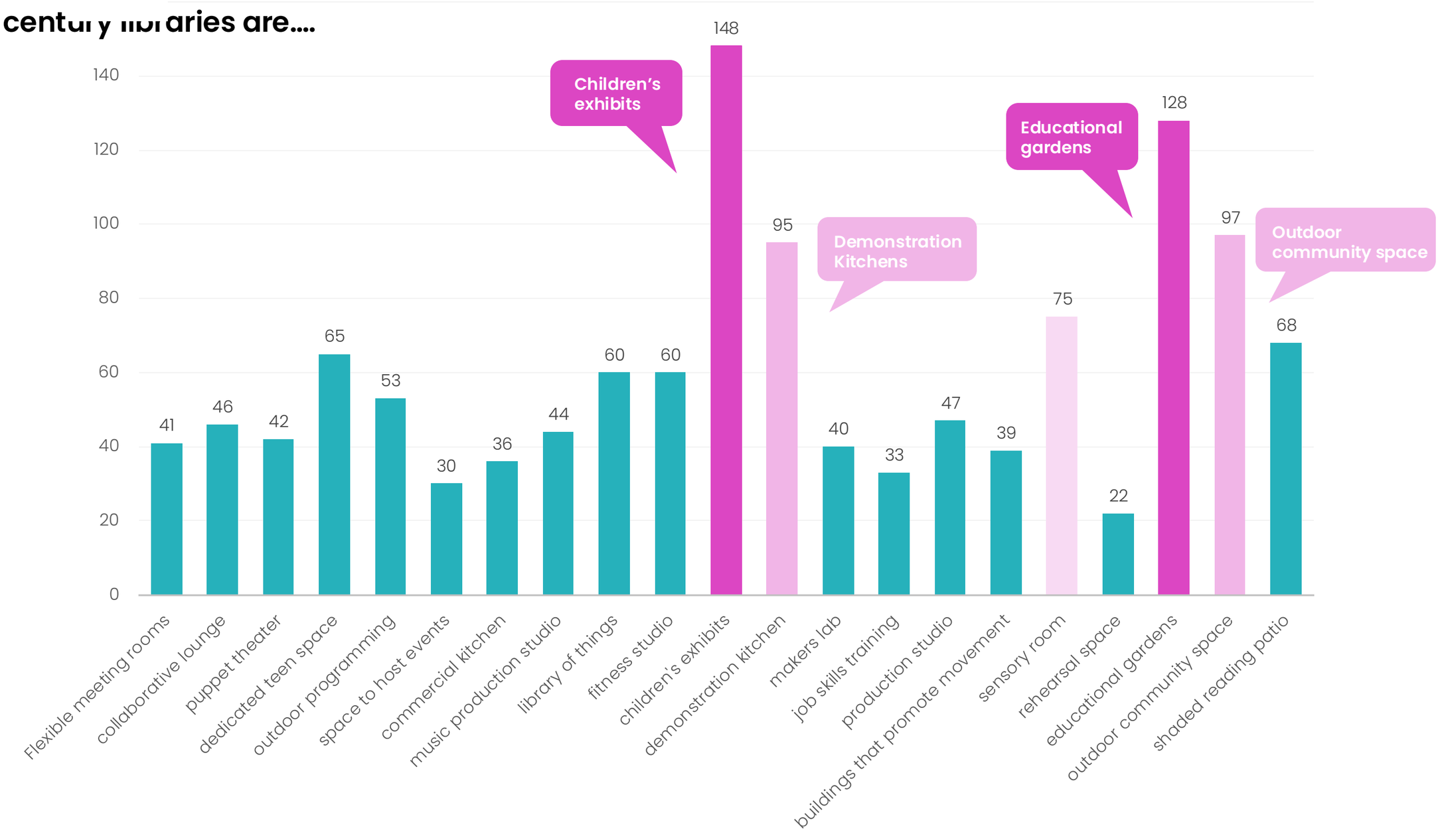
What does your community need?



engagement boards | first round

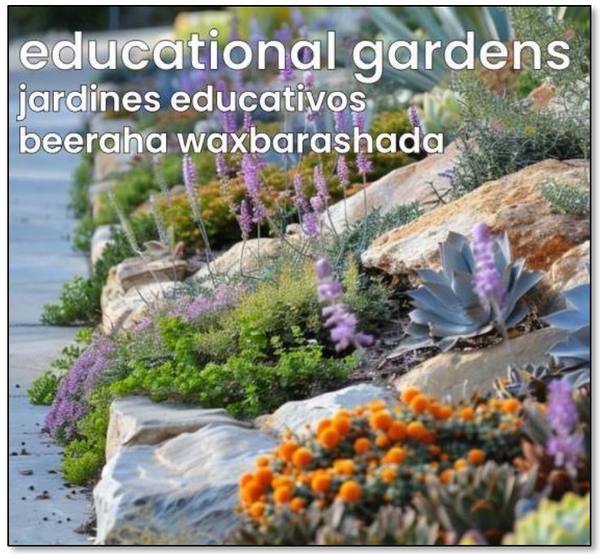


21st century libraries are....



highest ranking

1



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3

4

ROCHESTER
PUBLIC LIBRARY

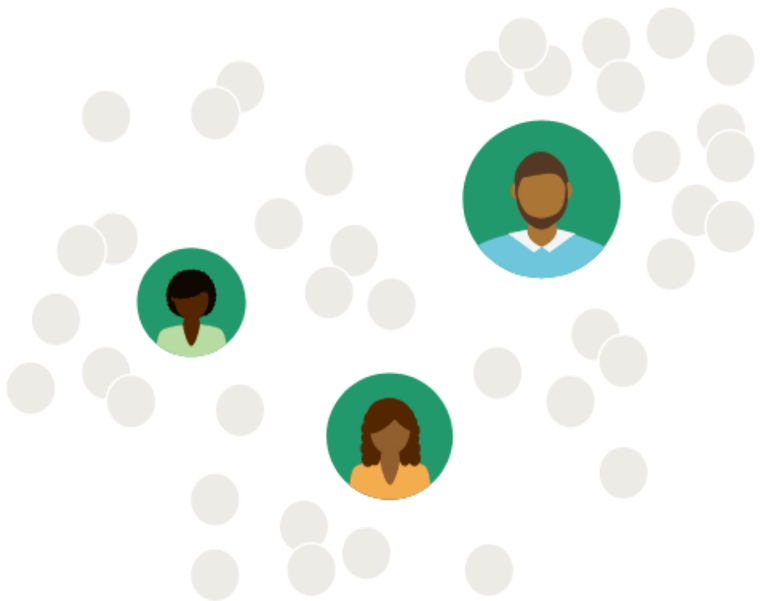
round 2
community engagement
co-design process

Source: CULTURE OF HEALTH **BY DESIGN**

WHY EQUITABLE CO-DESIGN RECRUITMENT?

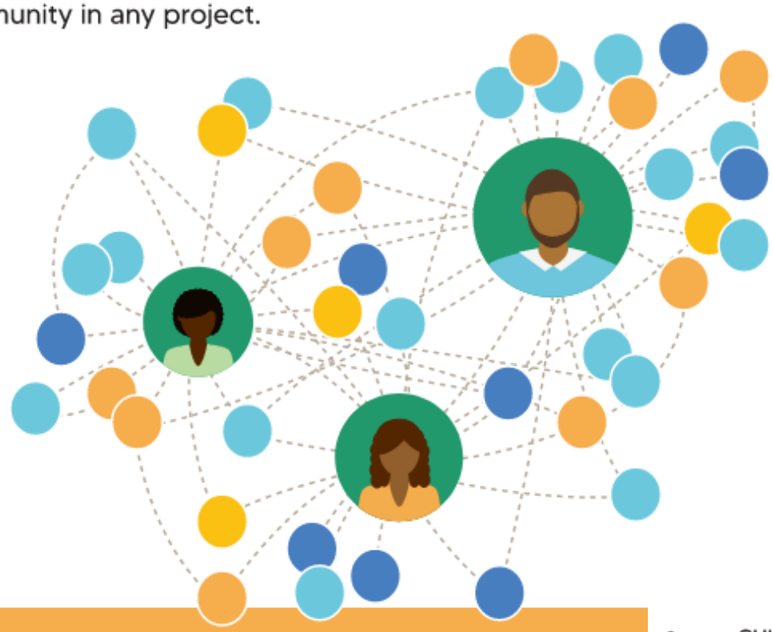
TRADITIONAL COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

Traditional approaches tend to engage the "usual suspects" who are often treated as universal token representatives of the communities they are part of. This approach offers a very limited, and often inaccurate, perspective on community experiences and values.



COMMUNITY CO-DESIGN

In a co-design approach, the community co-designers (who are from under-represented communities) are conduits to difficult-to-reach community networks (friends, family, co-workers, neighbors, etc.). In this way you have access to a much broader and more diverse collection of perspectives and experiences from those that would not be accessible through other methods. In short, the co-design process is a cost effective, equitable, and mutually beneficial way to include community in any project.

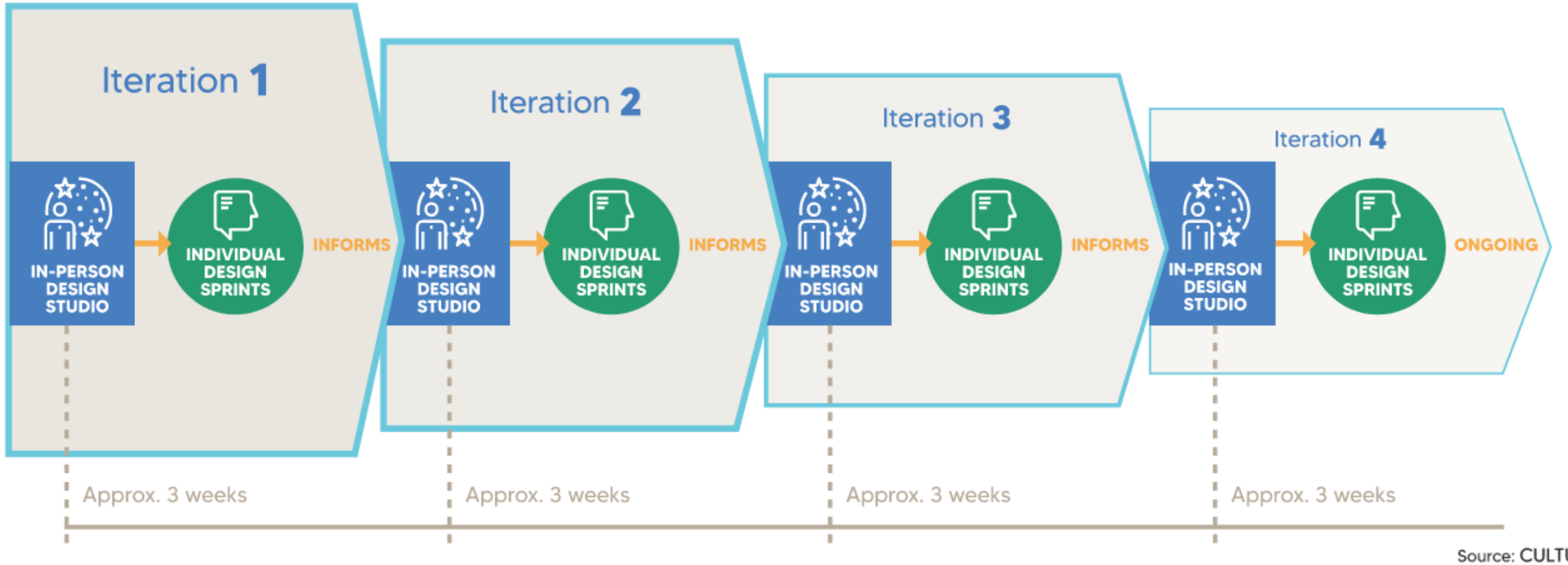


Source: CULTURE OF HEALTH **BY DESIGN**

ITERATIVE STRUCTURE

The iterative structure for co-design allows for longitudinal and in-depth engagement with community stakeholders which allows for the emergence of insights that would be inaccessible through other methods, regardless of investment of resources or time. This structure is rigorous enough to move the work forward while being open enough to allow for unexpected insights to emerge which is critically important when looking for co-designer's experiences to drive the process.

Each iteration informs the focus and scope of the next (following co-designer's lead), but there are general priorities that should be covered in each iteration. This guide outlines a general co-design sequence, but this process and number of iterations will depend the project scope, objectives, and timeline.



Source: CULTURE OF HEALTH **BY DESIGN**

co-design report

bydesign

Community Co-Design Report

A co-design project to supplement Rochester Public Library community engagement and strategic planning.

DRAFT

Report to
Rochester Public Library

February 2024

ROCHESTER PUBLIC LIBRARY

Acknowledgement

Rochester Public Library (RPL) recognizes that many communities that could benefit most from library services and resources often struggle most with identifying and accessing them. This co-design effort explored strategies and approaches for RPL to better connect with and support a diverse set of community needs and experiences within and surrounding Rochester, Minnesota.

We would also like to offer a special thank you to the community co-designers for their honesty, strength, and hope. We cannot do our work without the voice of those most impacted by these challenges. We will continue to promote and connect project leaders with willing co-designers from this project.

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Intended Use

This report was developed for the sole purpose of Rochester Public Library to improving awareness and access to supportive materials, resources, and services to communities that lack reliable connection and relationships with the Library.

All findings from this report are the property of Rochester Public Library and are protected under all applicable rules, policies, and guidelines (include contact information and/or legal language here).

All other materials outlining the co-design approach, structure, application, and next steps, including diagrams, logos, website, and other intellectual property are the property of By Design LLC and are not intended to be reproduced without prior written consent.

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Intent and Background

This co-design effort engaged with a variety of communities across the Rochester region, specifically those who have not had a meaningful way to inform library policy and practices in the past. The co-designers met on 3 occasions and held interviews with friends, family, neighbors, and others in their personal networks to guide the work of Rochester Public Library and its partners to develop library design, policies, practices, and resources of the future.

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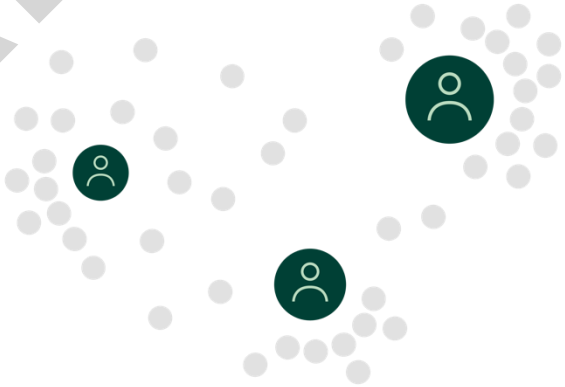
What is Co-Design?

Wicked and complex problems persist today because of a power imbalance in how solutions (policies, programs, and resources) are defined, developed, and implemented. Co-design is a rigorous and meaningful opportunity for those disproportionately impacted by a problem to leverage their shared lived experiences and participate in more equitable decision-making structures.

Traditional Engagement

The most valuable aspect of a co-design approach is that you can access perspectives and voices that would not be accessible through traditional approaches (listening sessions and surveys for example). Traditional approaches tend to engage the “usual suspects” who are often treated as universal token representatives of the communities they are part of. This approach offers a very limited, and often inaccurate, perspective on community experiences and values.



Community Co-Design

In a co-design approach, the community co-designers (who are from under-represented communities) are conduits to difficult-to-reach community networks (friends, family, co-workers, neighbors, etc.). In this way you have access to a much broader and more diverse collection of perspectives and experiences from those that would not be accessible through other methods. In short, the co-design process is a cost effective, equitable, and mutually beneficial way to include a diversity of community insights and values in any project.

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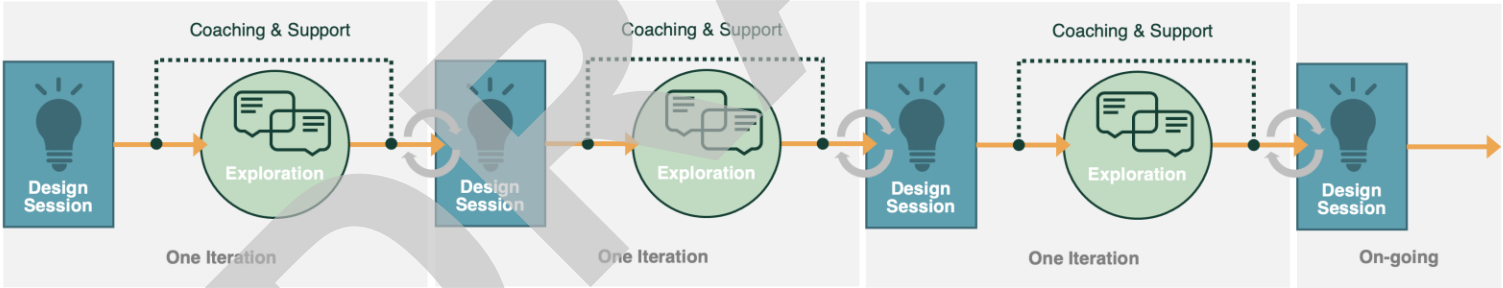
Co-Design Structure

A co-design structure is an iterative sequence of in-person (or virtual) design sessions followed by community co-designer explorations. The design sessions are where a diverse collection of community co-designers **(who are all professionally compensated as designers and researchers)** come together and collectively interpret information and insights from their community conversations (explorations) as well as co-develop promising solution concepts to test with community members in subsequent iterations.



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The following insights and proposals were informed by the insights, fears, hopes, and values of those in the young adult, elderly, Somali, Hispanic, and LGBTQIA+ community. The guiding principles have been identified and revised through the shared lived experiences of a broad range of stakeholders (between 20-30 individuals of varying age, geography, race, gender, socioeconomics, etc.) that were engaged by the co-designers over the course of this project.

Priority Concepts/Themes

The following themes were identified and prioritized by the co-designers following the first two rounds of community conversations/interviews. The priorities (shared through our first 3 co-design sessions) are as followed:

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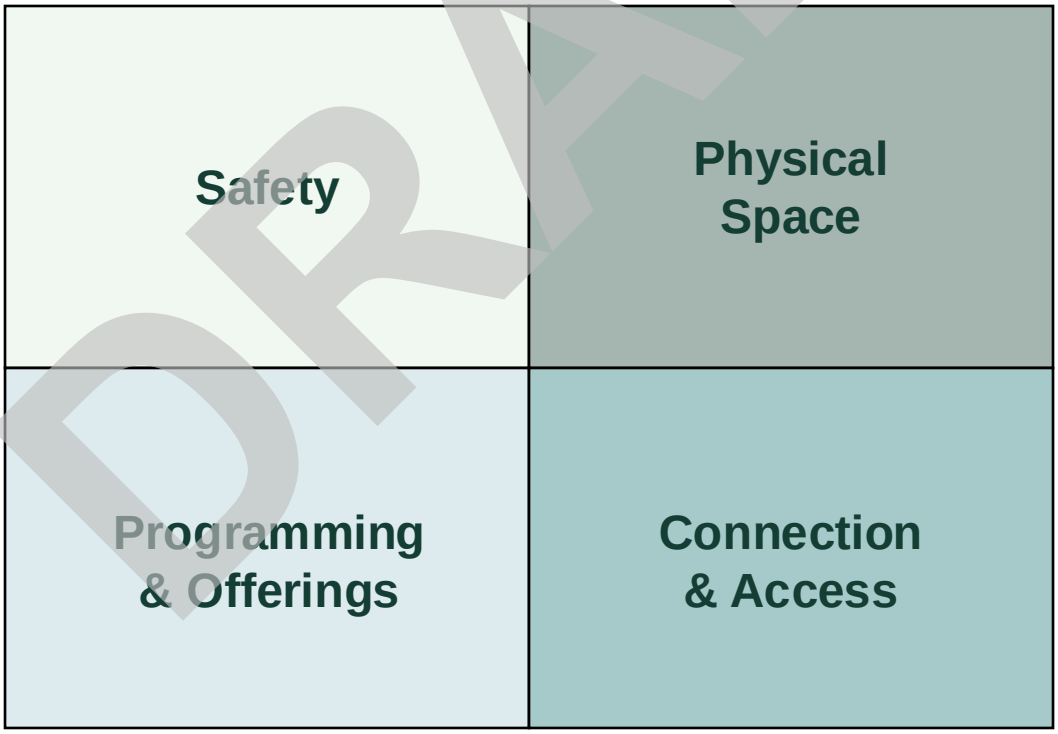

Safety

Safety

Develop strategies, spaces, and programming that ensure safe and welcoming experiences for everyone, especially women (of all ages), LGBTQIA+ individuals, and under-represented communities.

Safety was one of the most important themes across communities. People emphasized that feeling safe when visiting an organization or using its services is essential. Safety goes beyond just physical security—it includes health, psychological well-being, and accessibility for people with disabilities. Single, disabled, young and elderly women were especially concerned with safety or a lack thereof.

Feeling welcome and included is just as important as the resources offered. Many shared that no matter how great a space looks or what services it provides, if they don't feel safe, they won't return or recommend it to others.

> *Spiritual spaces feel safe and welcoming because people have similar experiences and backgrounds and speak the same language I do.*
> -Co-Designer

DRAFT

Safety

Safety

Develop strategies, spaces, and programming that ensure safe and welcoming experiences for everyone, especially women (of all ages), LGBTQIA+ individuals, and under-represented communities.

Insights & Considerations:

Priority safety considerations for co-designers, and those they interviewed, included: 1) Representation in people (patrons and workforce), materials, and communications. 2) Opportunities to know "what to expect" before they would visit the library. 3) Personalized or family/culturally-specific wayfinding (what are the things that others like me need to know/find valuable at/throughout the library)?

- Most felt that getting to the library often felt unsafe, especially for women, elderly, and those with disabilities. Individuals noted that people loitering around the library felt scary and some women even had experiences of being "catcalled."
- Many noted that spiritual spaces were where they felt most welcome and safe. Some also noted the value of having spaces for prayer while at the library.
- While the library is open to everyone, many noted that people sleeping on the chairs or at work areas made it feel unsafe to use the space.
- Some noted that events or busy times make those with weakened immune systems (elderly and those with disabilities) fearful of contracting an illness, especially during the winters.
- Some noted the need for a community/cultural liaison or connector for outreach to communities that are unaware or uncertain of the library.

DRAFT

Safety

Safety

Develop strategies, spaces, and programming that ensure safe and welcoming experiences for everyone, especially women (of all ages), LGBTQIA+ individuals, and under-represented communities.

Insights & Considerations (continued):

- Some discussed a need for focus on the full family-unit, ensuring simultaneous spaces and programming for a variety of family member needs so that each family member was able to engage with the programming and enjoy their time.
- For LGBTQIA+ individuals' safety is always top of mind when looking for something to do– either hold identity or have indicator of allyship – how are you showing a welcoming space through flags, greetings, books, etcetera?
    - Most LGBTQIA+ felt that library was welcoming to them (participation in PRIDE, books, Human Library etc.)
- Individuals with disabilities felt nervous going to the library because it caused anxiety to know if the spaces would be organized enough/quiet enough to get through with a wheelchair or if they would need to find an alternative route to get into the building (one mentioned that they had to go down to 1st in the elevator then back up to second to have an accessible route).
- Because most people were not familiar with the library (what it offers, how to use it, etc.) many people would simply avoid visiting. Many were seeking someway to know "what to expect" before they would go, especially from a trusted community peer.

DRAFT

Safety

Safety

Develop strategies, spaces, and programming that ensure safe and welcoming experiences for everyone, especially women (of all ages), LGBTQIA+ individuals, and under-represented communities.

Insights & Considerations (continued):

- Be proactive about reaching out to and connecting with communities that lack connection with the library (no amount information or marketing will "convince" people to show up).
- Many noted that seeing the library at community events was very important to building trust and feeling more welcome at the library, especially given the current political environment.
- Most noted that spaces that were well lit and clean, but still comfortable and offered opportunities for privacy felt the most welcoming and safe.

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Physical Space

Physical Space

Develop spaces that are broadly welcoming and respond the the community's sense of place, safety, and wellbeing.

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The design and location of a library—or any community space—play a significant role in whether people feel welcome and choose to visit. Many respondents noted that both the physical appearance of a space and its location (whether downtown, in the broader city, or in surrounding areas) influence how they engage with it. While the look and feel of a space matter, most people emphasized that what happens in the space and how they are treated there are more important than the design itself.

> *A safe space is where my kids cannot get in trouble, lost, or bother others.*
> -Co-Designer

Physical Space

Physical Space

Develop spaces that are broadly welcoming and respond the the community's sense of place, safety, and wellbeing.

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Insights & Considerations:

Priority design and space considerations for co-designers, and those they interviewed, included: 1) A diversity of spaces, specifically for family-units, ensuring simultaneous spaces and programming for a variety of family member needs (generation-focus). 2) A need for third spaces, specifically for young adults and elder men (both groups cited cafes as comfortable and welcoming spaces). 3) Accessibility needed to be explicitly designed into the spaces, wayfinding, access points, and displays (going beyond ADA minimums).

- While almost everyone had an issue with parking downtown (especially in a ramp not connected to the library), it was especially problematic for respondents that were elderly, parents of young children, and disabled individuals.
- While library spaces met minimal ADA compliance, for those with disabilities, they did not see specifically welcoming ques, such as tables where wheelchairs could fit under, larger elevators, and the ability to see books on the top shelves (too high to see from wheelchair).
- For most, the current library felt too open and chaotic. Most were seeking smaller, more semi-private spaces that would feel more humane, safe, and private.
- Many noted that if their children didn't have safe spaces (where they could not get in trouble, break something, or get lost) they would not feel comfortable – it was more work than it was worth.

Physical Space

Physical Space

Develop spaces that are broadly welcoming and respond the the community's sense of place, safety, and wellbeing.

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Insights & Considerations (continued):

- Younger adults and elderly noted that there were not sufficient spaces for independent/small group study/discussions. The small rooms were limited but preferred for safety and privacy (and quiet) among young people.
- Younger people noted that after COVID, people aren't leaving their homes as much as they used to and were looking for other ways of connecting.
- Young adults were looking for spaces to connect with others, possibly for gaming or other virtual experiences.
- LGBTQIA+ and younger communities are looking for laid-back environments that are well lit but avoided a lot of florescent lighting as it can be difficult for those with disabilities (think cafe/coffee shop).
- Elders, especially men of many cultures, were seeking a "third" place like young adults that was safe, comfortable, and semi-private such as a coffee shop or diner.
- Everyone spoke to the need for comfortable and clean seating.
- Many noted that spaces with plantings/nature is also very important and should, where possible, include native plantings in a variety of global environments.

Physical Space

Physical Space

Develop spaces that are broadly welcoming and respond the the community's sense of place, safety, and wellbeing.

Insights & Considerations (continued):

- Many noted a desire for outdoor space at the library, perhaps rooftop space.
- Those with disabilities were seeking strong visual ques that spaces were accessible, such as flat flooring, tall tables that wheelchairs would fit under, and open isles/spaces between tables.
- Many noted that there should be multiple spaces that gave all family members something to do (for example, if there is a safe place for children, a place for parents to “recharge”).

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Programing & Offerings

Programming & Offerings

Develop strategies, spaces, and programming that align with a diversity of community values, beliefs, rituals, and hopes without being overwhelming or confusing to navigate.

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One of the most valuable aspects of a library—or any community organization—is the ability to find and access resources, build and share knowledge, and participate in programs that support individual and family needs. Many people emphasized that having a diverse range of programs and services to meet different community needs was more important than simply having many resources. In fact, too many resources without clear guidance could make navigation overwhelming. While libraries are traditionally known for books, community members often saw programming—both current and potential future offerings—as more essential to their community than book rentals.

> *I cannot bring my children to the library because they would be too loud and disruptive.*
>
> -Co-Designer

Programing & Offerings

Programming & Offerings

Develop strategies, spaces, and programming that align with a diversity of community values, beliefs, rituals, and hopes without being overwhelming or confusing to navigate.

Insights & Considerations:

Priority programming & offering considerations for co-designers, and those they interviewed, included: 1) Those unfamiliar with the library are afraid that it is not child-friendly, especially for neurodivergent children (children would be too loud/disruptive for others). 2) Some cultures/families do not learn/exchange knowledge through reading (alternatives include storytelling, dance, imagery, etc.). 3) Finding safe spaces for cultural events (especially affordable ones) is difficult.

- One of the biggest challenges is that most parents (especially in underserved and BIPOC communities) felt that they could not take their children to the library because they would be too loud and disruptive to others.
    - This is especially the case for parents of neurodivergent children, especially children with autism, who often did not feel welcome anywhere. Many noted the importance of sensory spaces – both for adults and children.
- Some mentioned a desire for a Human Library (from previous experiences) that helps bring to life the library resources.
- In addition to children, some noted that cultures, such as Somali are very vocal and felt they would not be welcome in the library where it is supposed to be quiet.

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Programing & Offerings

Programming & Offerings

Develop strategies, spaces, and programming that align with a diversity of community values, beliefs, rituals, and hopes without being overwhelming or confusing to navigate.

Insights & Considerations (continued):

- Older individuals felt that while there was lots of programming for children, there was limited options for Elderly.
- Young adults felt that tutoring and English classes would be beneficial.
- Most were not aware of virtual or bookmobile options. Those that were found that while the bookmobile was equally distributed around the community, they found that it was more welcoming in some communities than others (doors would be closed in communities that were perceived as less “safe”).
- Young adults (not teenagers and not parent/adults) felt a need for spaces and resources that was more geared to their interests.
- Many noted the difficulty in finding spaces for hosting cultural events, especially ones that are affordable for communities and Community Based Organizations.
- Many noted the differences in how families and cultures learn or exchange knowledge (Somali individuals noted the importance of offering children’s story time with Somali elders).

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Connection & Access

Connection & Access

Develop culturally-nourishing strategies, spaces, and programming that proactively reaches communities that have not traditionally visited the library or used its services.

Even the best resources and programming won't make an impact if people don't know they exist or don't feel comfortable accessing them. Many respondents acknowledged that while the library offers valuable programs and services, those who might benefit most are often unaware of them or feel hesitant to engage. Additionally, many emphasized that a single negative experience can be enough to discourage them from returning. First impressions matter, and organizations must prioritize creating welcoming and accessible experiences from the start.

> *I thought that only schools had libraries.*
>
> -Co-Designer

DRAFT

Connection & Access

Connection & Access

Develop culturally-nourishing strategies, spaces, and programming that proactively reaches communities that have not traditionally visited the library or used its services.

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Insights & Considerations:

Priority connection and access considerations for co-designers, and those they interviewed, included: 1) Most were unaware of the library services or if it even existed. 2) Outreach and connection needed to occur through community/peer connectors or liaisons where trust and relationship already existed. 3) Connecting different generations, specifically young adults with elders (in outreach and/or programming) is a priority. 4) The downtown location was not a barrier, if the services and resources were valuable, and parking could be made as easy as possible.

- Somali community members mentioned not feeling welcome or that the library feels accessible:
  - "As they walk in, people assume they know where they are going or how to navigate. No one welcomes them."
  - "Culturally specific books are hard to find, you would have to ask someone to assist you to find them and don't feel comfortable doing so."
- Language barriers are always a challenge. For many, if they could not find someone that looked/spoke like them, they would be unlikely to come back.
- Many in the Somali community thought that libraries only existed in schools and were completely unaware of the library or its services/value.

Connection & Access

Connection & Access

Develop culturally-nourishing strategies, spaces, and programming that proactively reaches communities that have not traditionally visited the library or used its services.

Insights & Considerations (continued):

- Young adults (peers) across cultures were most likely to be able to identify and help others in their community (families and elders) navigate spaces and resources.
- The library needs proactive and targeted ways of reaching under-represented communities where and how it makes sense and needs to be bi-directional (the U of M extension program is a possible model for doing so – at a smaller scale).
- Some noted that they only saw the library as a place for reading which excluded some cultures and families where reading is not as important as it might be with the dominant culture.
- Some from the Somali community noted that knowledge is not shared through reading, but instead through storytelling, especially with elders. They thought programming that aligned with culturally sensitive knowledge exchange would be important.
- For most, they learned about the library through other avenues, such as Hawthorne, United Way, and the Boys and Girls Club .
- Transportation is of specific concern for underserved communities, those from outside of Rochester, elderly, and those with disabilities.

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Connection & Access

Connection & Access

Develop culturally-nourishing strategies, spaces, and programming that proactively reaches communities that have not traditionally visited the library or used its services.

Insights & Considerations (continued):

- The Somali community sees heavy utilization of the Library during Ramadhan, but not much the rest of the year. Many also noted that they did not see many books related to Somali culture.
- Many Somalis noted that they go to the Twin Cities to feel more welcome at the library. They usually leveraged WhatsApp for finding resources .
- Transportation can be a challenge, but it felt too complicated for individuals and families, with at least one individual mentioning that they got lost on the bus.
- Young adults may be valuable on-going assets for the library to help identify, build, and support/deliver programs.

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Development & Implementation

Co-Design does not end once the co-design sessions are complete. One of the most important next steps is to collaboratively continue the development and implementation of the community-driven insights and opportunities at scales at in places that are most likely to yield practical change. Development and Implementation includes the development (in collaboration with co-designers) of small-scale prototypes to evaluate policy, practice, and/or service concepts that can be rapidly and safely tested with key stakeholders. Once prototyping has offered ample feedback, concepts are scaled up for full implementation and include the development of evaluation strategies that align with community priorities and values outlined in the co-design sessions.

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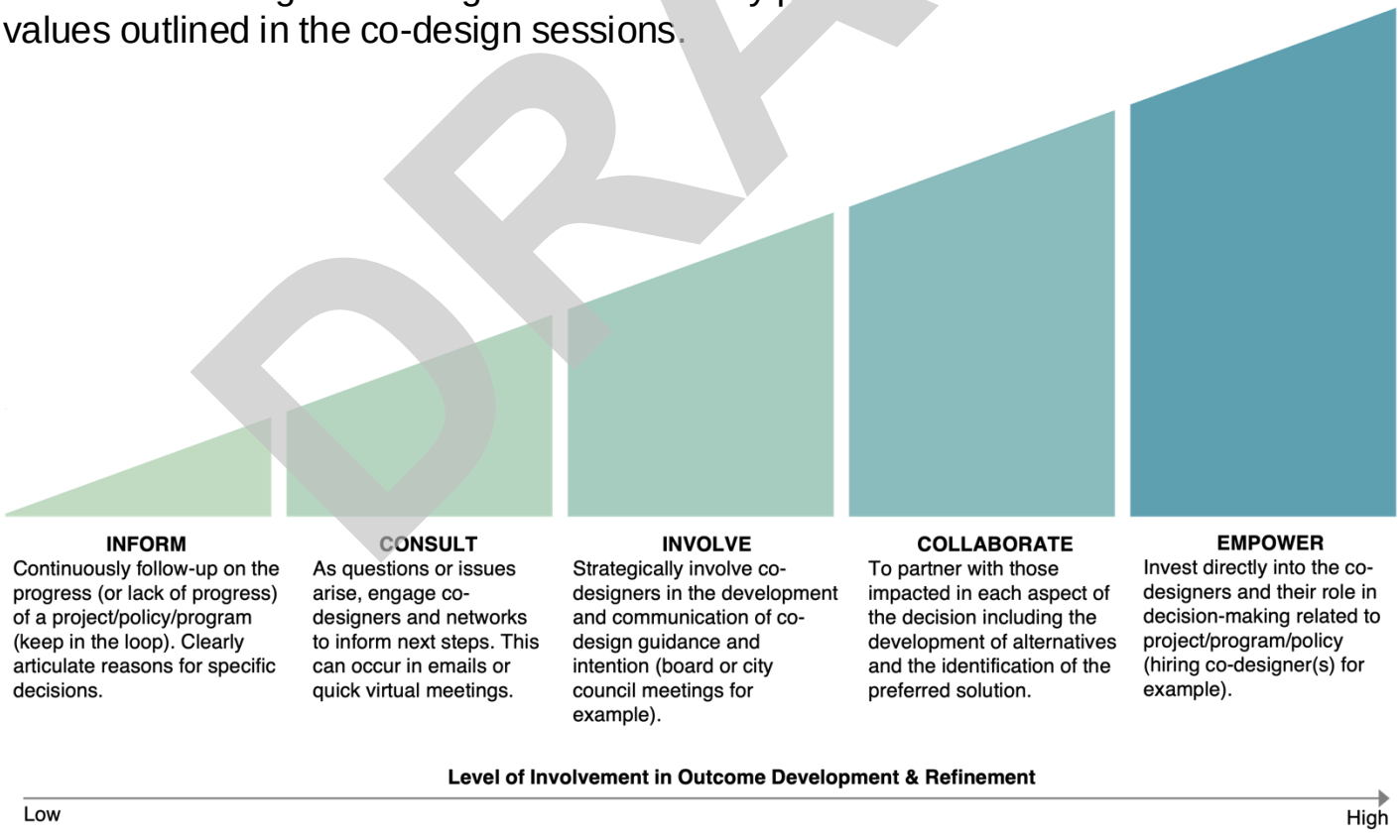


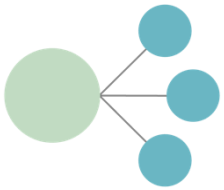
Adapted From: IAP2 Spectrum of Public Participation

Continuum of Development & Implementation

Developing concepts is not a linear approach and next steps will depend on the project. The most important part of this phase is to continue the momentum generated during the co-design sessions and look to find small, but meaningful opportunities to build, test, learn, and implement co-design principles and recommendations.

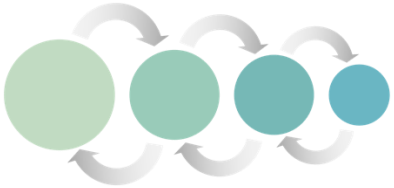
1. Dissemination

Strategically communicate project outcomes and objectives to key decision-makers and potential partners and collaborators. Be sure to include co-designers, in ways that are accessible and comfortable, to bring the context (lived experiences) behind project outcomes and to create informed and motivated discussions about next steps and ways to translate work into practical action.



2. Prototyping

Create small, inexpensive, and safe opportunities for project stakeholders to further explore and refine project solutions. Prototypes are ways to get project solutions (or aspects of those solutions) into the real world, where real people can interact with them in real (and often unpredictable ways) to illustrate further development steps (or when solutions are not ready or appropriate).



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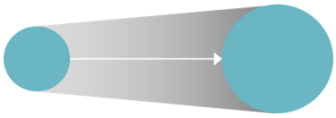
Continuum of Development & Implementation

3. Piloting

Test full-scale versions of your project solution with a small number of stakeholders before a full launch. Piloting allows you to expose what is working and what is not in places and in ways that allow you to "iron out" issues before scaling project outcomes. Piloting should be about exposing and addressing all the possible quirks in your solution.

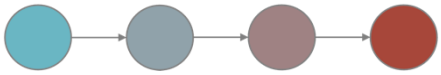
4. Scaling

Identify ripe environments (receptive and invested systems and people) where your project has the best opportunity to be implemented. Work closely with partners to tailor what you have learned in previous testing to ensure that projects are most likely to be successful beyond the original stakeholder groups/communities. Instead of looking to simply replicate solutions, look for ways of replicating (along with co-designers) solution principles in different contexts.



5. Continuous Improvement

Successful solutions are rarely static. Implementation should always be leveraged as opportunities to learn and refine the original solution, especially as the environment changes (technology, demographics, etc.). Regularly involve end-user stakeholders to offer input and feedback on what is working well and what is not.



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Thank You

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