

THE NEW SUNSET PARK LIBRARY

Central themes that emerged from the Sunset Park Community Engagement



INTRODUCTION

Brooklyn Public Library in collaboration with Hester Street and Grain Collective is gathering feedback from Sunset Park residents, organizations, policymakers, service providers, and other stakeholders on the New Sunset Park Library project. Engagement has focused on both the design of the new space and the programming within Sunset Park's new library.

PROCESS

Since January 2017, Hester Street, Grain Collective and the Library have hosted 2 large scale public workshops (in multiple languages), 13 meetings with stakeholders, informal patron conversations along major corridors in Sunset Park, and collected about 200 surveys at the branch from library patrons and staff. Additionally, there are four focus groups planned between July and August. During the month of August, display boards featuring outcomes and feedback from these sessions will be on display throughout neighborhood. Residents will be able to read and provide comments on the displayed information.

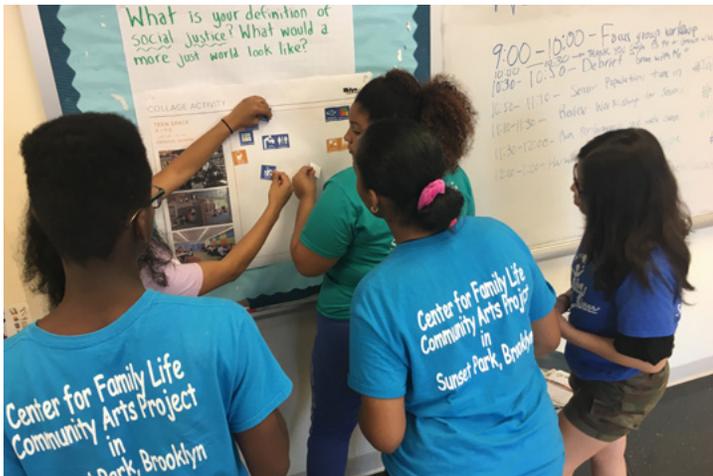
During two public workshops in April and June, about 100 participants (plus about 25 children) gave their opinion on challenges in the current branch, and shared their perspective on the design of space and programs, and overall culture of their new library. About 200 library patrons responded to surveys about their current and new library in English, Chinese, and Spanish.

During the summer, several focus groups were organized to ensure that population groups not present during the large workshops could also engage. Sunset Park stakeholders (CBOs, service providers, and elected officials) provided helpful insights about their constituents' needs and considered how the new bigger and better library could play a part in providing needed neighborhood resources.

Conversations about the new library's space and programming were largely joyful and engaging. Residents of varied ages and backgrounds provided input about the types of spaces, programs and services they rely on, and the program expansions they would like to see in the new library. They also provided ideas about facilities and operations, universal needs, and the overall culture of the library.

FINDINGS

As evidenced from the gathered feedback, the Sunset Park community places as much emphasis on community gathering and programming as they do on library books and materials. Comments reflected the complexity with which the community is using this library and the importance they place on its growth and ability to meet the community's many needs. Though the new library will be much larger, the new space will require flexibility to accommodate many uses.



PROGRAMS



- Sunset Park is a vibrant and diverse immigrant community. Participants identified the need for an even more comprehensive multicultural and multilingual library. Beyond the existing programming, they pointed to services, staffing, wayfinding, and overall design.
- Participants who submitted a survey or attended a workshop recommended an expansion of existing beloved programs and services, such as weekend and family programming, ESL classes, citizenship prep, and homework help. There was also a list of recommended programming such as: introduction to library services training, computer and internet training, yoga for children and youth, and art and culture programming for all ages.
- During the workshops, participants highlighted the need for job and technical training for a variety of ages. They recommended resources such as: employment support services (resume building) and computer and technical training for adults and youth. Participants envisioned potential collaborations with local organizations and/or city agencies and service providers to expand the library's reach.

SPACE



- Participants said there is a need for space separation for specific program/function uses. The existing branch's open-floor design in combination with the popularity of the library make separation of unique programs challenging for patrons and librarians.
- Participants underlined the need for designated loud and quiet reading & work spaces; a children's and toddler space; a teen area and a gallery space that can display local art and provide information about upcoming community events and resources.
- Participants also recommended a robust computer and technology lab that can serve group and individual programming and services. Stakeholders shared the need for a computer lab that could be used for group visits.
- All participants envisioned a library that offers free meeting and classroom space for organizations and individuals. Some participants recommended a large flexible performance space.

FEATURES

- People love their existing library, but recognize that it is no longer able to meet the diverse and ever-expanding needs of the local community. All participants highlighted the need for even more multilingual resources and technology access.
- In the workshops, participants recommended several elements needed for an innovative, creative and community-reflective library. Some of these elements included: books and media available in multiple languages; newspapers and magazines; a community bulletin board; computers; flexible business hours; and ADA accessibility.
- Participants in the second workshop (with a focus on program and space) recommended an increase of restrooms (including family restrooms) and drinking water fountains that encourage re-usable bottles.
- Participants imagine the new library as a technology access point that will serve many needs in the community.
- All participants pointed to the overall lack of internet access and computer use in Sunset Park generally and recommend free Wi-Fi capabilities in and around the new library.

