



Harrison Memorial Library Centennial Restoration Community Workshop 2

Wednesday, October 1, 2025 from 5 pm to 6:30 pm

Location: Carpenter Hall at Sunset Center, Carmel

COMMUNITY INPUT SUMMARY

October 21, 2025

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architects & planners

Executive Summary

On October 1, 2025, Carmel-by-the-Sea's dedicated library community gathered for the second in a series of highly participatory community workshops focused on the Harrison Memorial Library. The workshop was sponsored by the City of Carmel-by-the-Sea, the Carmel Public Library, and the Carmel Public Library Foundation, to provide critical input for the library's Centennial Restoration Project. The project is being funded through private donations raised through a Carmel Public Library Foundation capital campaign. It will provide much needed improvements to the historic building, enabling the library to continue its vital role as a center for the community for the next 100-years.

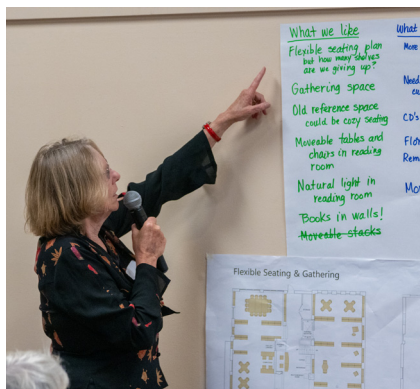
The goal of the workshop was to keep the community informed on the progress of the project and solicit input on the evolution of preliminary conceptual approaches to the project.

The workshop began with a summary of key themes, aspirations, and concerns that emerged from the first workshop,

- the importance of the library's historic charm and character,
- the need for an accessible, inclusive, and welcoming environment
- the critical nature of books and research as core to the library experience,
- the library as a community and cultural center,
- and the desire for flexibility to accommodate changing needs and new technology.

The concurrent technical and historic evaluations of the Harrison Memorial Library highlighted the accessibility challenges of the current building along with key elements of the original 1928 design that significantly contribute to the historic charm and character of the building.

- rooms lined with perimeter bookshelves built into the walls
- simple and flexible spaces with ample daylight, high ceilings, and free of excess clutter



Executive Summary (cont'd)

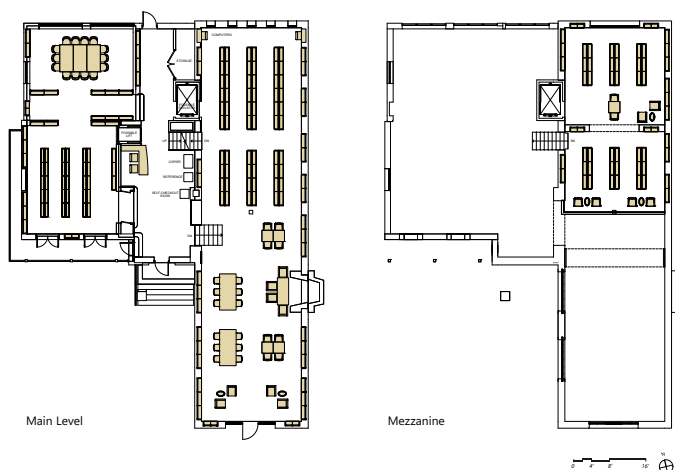
Two approaches to the development of the restoration were shared with the workshop participants. These were crafted from the project's original principles and the broader community's aspirations shared at the first workshop; to address both the preservation of the library's historic charm and the evolving needs for the future of libraries, all balanced within an achievable budget and timeline for the project.

The intentionally diverse approaches to conceptual planning illustrated a range of opportunities from optimizing the library for shelving to providing more flexibility for seating and gathering. Workshop participants were asked to work together in groups to review the approaches and provide feedback on what they liked about the potential spaces, how they might use these, and what they felt could be improved.

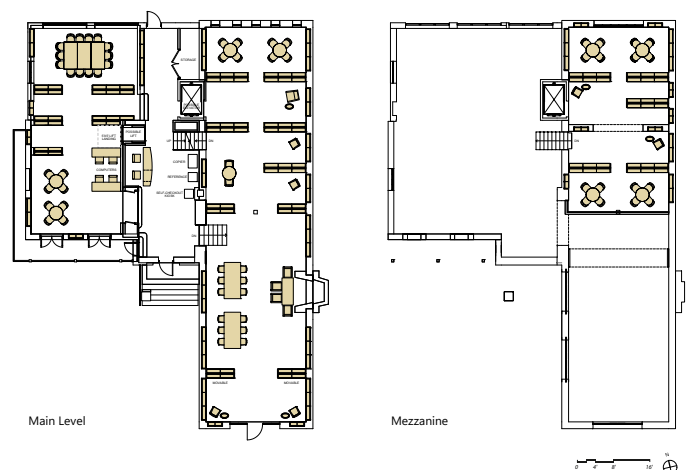
There were many key areas of convergence shared by the community at the culmination of the workshop.

- **Preserve the feeling of a traditional library** with in-wall shelving throughout
- Leverage the best features of both approaches to **maintain books while increasing the range of seating and gathering spaces**
- Provide **open, flexible, and reconfigurable spaces** to support multiple programs and future library needs
- **Restore the original character** of the library, declutter, replace fluorescent lighting, and highlight original architectural features
- **Integrate technology** to support the community's needs, including smaller technology enhanced rooms and virtual services

Optimize Shelving



Flexible Seating & Gathering



Two approaches

Project Principles

- Preserve the library's historic integrity and presence
- Plan the future of the library for Carmel
- Be a welcoming center for learning, community gathering, and social connection
- Enhance operational excellence and service to the community
- Support equitable and inclusive access to library services, programs, and resources
- Prioritize implementation within budget
- Incorporate sustainable and resilient design
- Elevate the poetry of experience



What We Heard - Key Themes

Hybrid Approach

A combined plan leveraging the best features of both approaches was widely favored.

Preservation of Books & Feel of Traditional Library

Maintaining a strong presence of books with in-wall shelving is essential to preserve the feel of traditional library.

Flexible, Open Spaces

Participants supported open layouts and movable furniture to accommodate gatherings, events, and diverse user needs.

Natural Light & Historical Ambiance

Improving lighting, removing fluorescent fixtures, and highlighting the original architectural elements to honor the library's historic identity were seen as priorities.

Technology Integration

Dedicated areas for emerging technologies and virtual programming (e.g., Zoom-accessible events) were recommended.

Outdoor & Community Areas

Optimizing outdoor spaces for gatherings and events was a recurring suggestion.



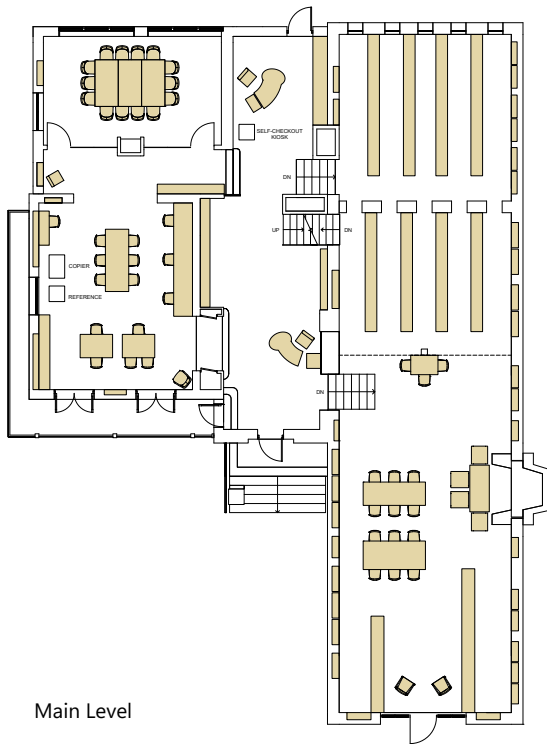
Restoring Character



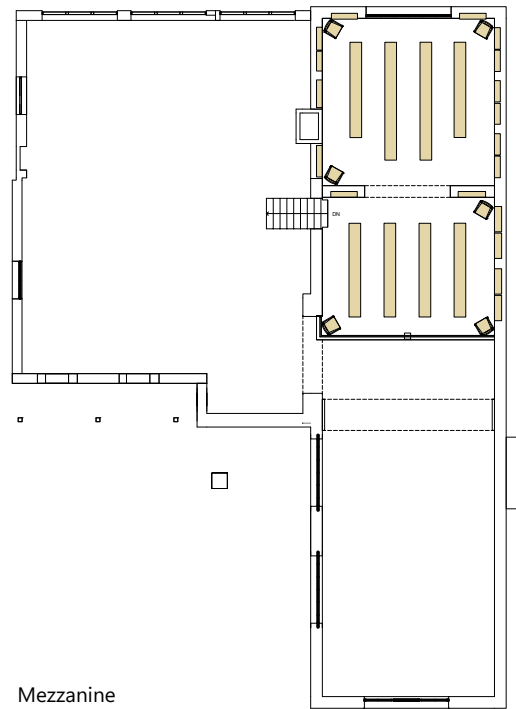
Original Reading Room

Group Activity - Review Space and Configuration Approaches

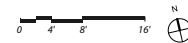
Existing Plans



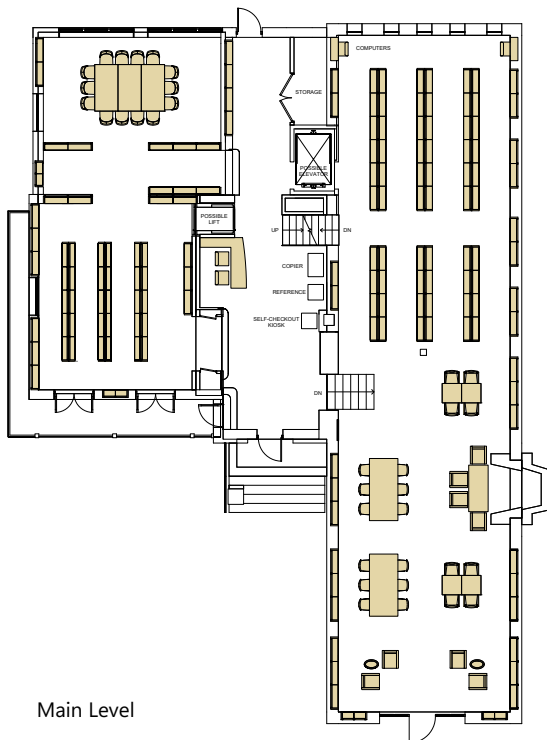
Main Level



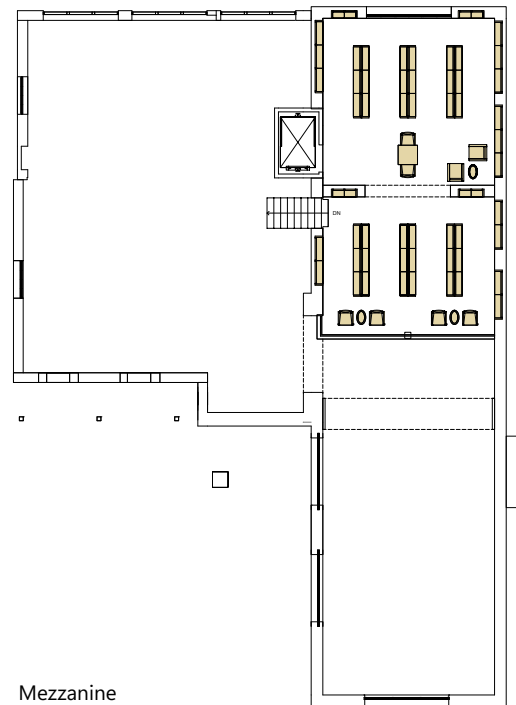
Mezzanine



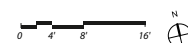
Optimize Shelving



Main Level

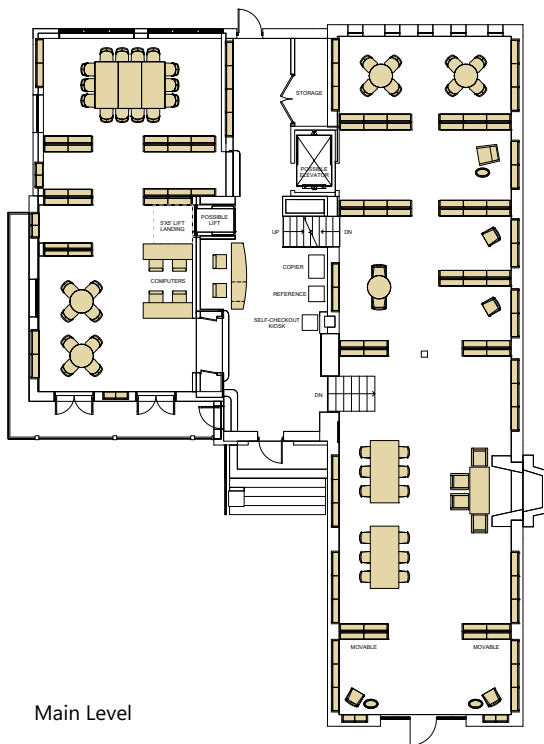


Mezzanine

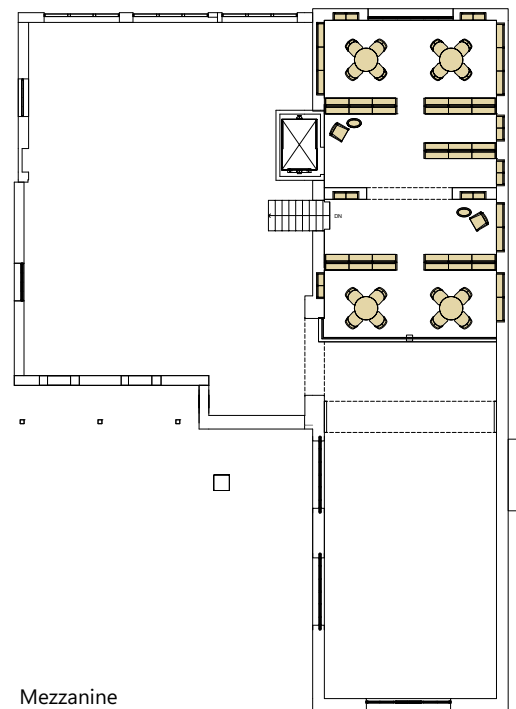


Group Activity - Review Space and Configuration Approaches

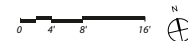
Flexible Seating & Gathering



Main Level



Mezzanine



What Participants Liked

- Flexible and a variety of seating and movable furniture
- In-wall bookshelves
- Movable bookshelves
- Maintaining fireplace and cozy areas
- Enhancing natural light and open feel
- Openness of lobby space
- Sense of belonging and welcoming atmosphere

Main Concerns

- Reduction of bookshelves
- Maneuverability and accessibility (multiple main levels)
- Limited group spaces—requests for additional small meeting rooms

Additional Improvement Ideas from Participants

During the group discussions, various innovative ideas emerged to enhance the project and reinforce the project goals. Further studies are needed to validate the feasibility of these emerging ideas.

- Increase restroom capacity, including gender-neutral facilities
- Remove tall shelving in reading rooms to enhance openness and meet current code
- Incorporate renewable energy solutions
- Relocate older media (DVDs) to free up space
- Excavate and expand the lower-level area
- Use electronically movable compact shelving to increase the book capacity
- Optimize use of all spaces
- Explore opportunities to enhance connection between both libraries.

Acknowledgments

We wish to convey our thanks and appreciation to all the workshop participants, and extend special thanks to the City of Carmel-by-the-Sea, the Sunset Center, the Carmel Public Library, and the Carmel Public Library Foundation for their support and efforts to make this essential community workshop possible.

City of Carmel-by-the-Sea

Dale Byrne, Mayor
Bob Delves, Mayor Pro Tem
Brandon Swanson, Assistant City Administrator

Carmel Public Library Foundation

Marci Meaux, President
Alexandra Fallon, CEO
Anita Mitchell, Development Associate
Nancy Middleton, Programs Manager
Steve Aitchison, Project Representative
Ilana Bofford Entin, Communications Manager
Richard Green Photography

Harrison Memorial Library

Melinda Cervantes, Interim Library Director
Mary Jo Williams, Library Board of Trustees President
Katie O’Connell, Acting Library Director
Renee Martine
Jeanette Campbell

