



Harrison Memorial Library Centennial Restoration Community Workshop 1

Tuesday, August 26, 2025 from 5 pm to 6:30 pm

Location: Carpenter Hall at Sunset Center, Carmel

COMMUNITY INPUT SUMMARY

September 11, 2025

moore ruble yudell
architects & planners

Executive Summary

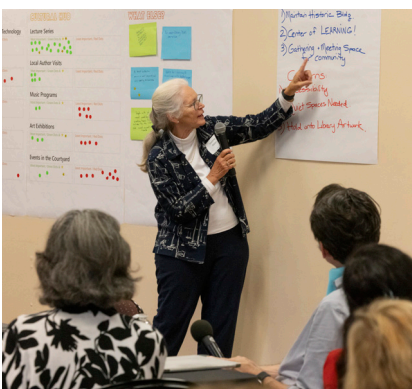
On August 26, 2025, Carmel-by-the-Sea's passionate library community gathered to help shape the future of the Harrison Memorial Library. More than sixty dedicated residents and stakeholders joined together in a highly participatory community workshop. The workshop was sponsored by the City of Carmel-by-the-Sea, the Carmel Public Library, and the Carmel Public Library Foundation, to provide critical input for the library's Centennial Restoration Project. The project, funded through donations, will provide much-needed seismic, infrastructure, and accessibility improvements to the historic library, enabling the library to continue its vital role as a center for the community for the next 100-years.

The workshop introduced the community to the restoration project and shared the strategic priorities and principles for the work. A primary goal of the workshop was to hear the community's ideas about the library and gather input which will assist the city, library, and foundation to prioritize aspirational enhancements with necessary physical improvements. All of this must be completed within an achievable budget and timeline as part of this once-in-a-century opportunity.

To start things off, workshop participants were asked to identify the characteristics, ideas, and services of the library that were most important to them personally. Next, participants were seated at tables, to work in small groups to share ideas, encourage conversation, and identify their shared aspirations and concerns for the restoration project. These were then presented by each group to the workshop participants.

There were many key areas of **convergence** that were reinforced by the community participants throughout the 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.



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 - Library Themes

Historic Character

The library's historic character, and its identity within the Carmel community, were dominant and recurring themes throughout the workshop. The restoration and improvement work should be sensitive to and maintain this character. The community takes great pride in the Harrison Library building, and many people have fond memories of how they have used and interacted with the library over the years.

Accessibility

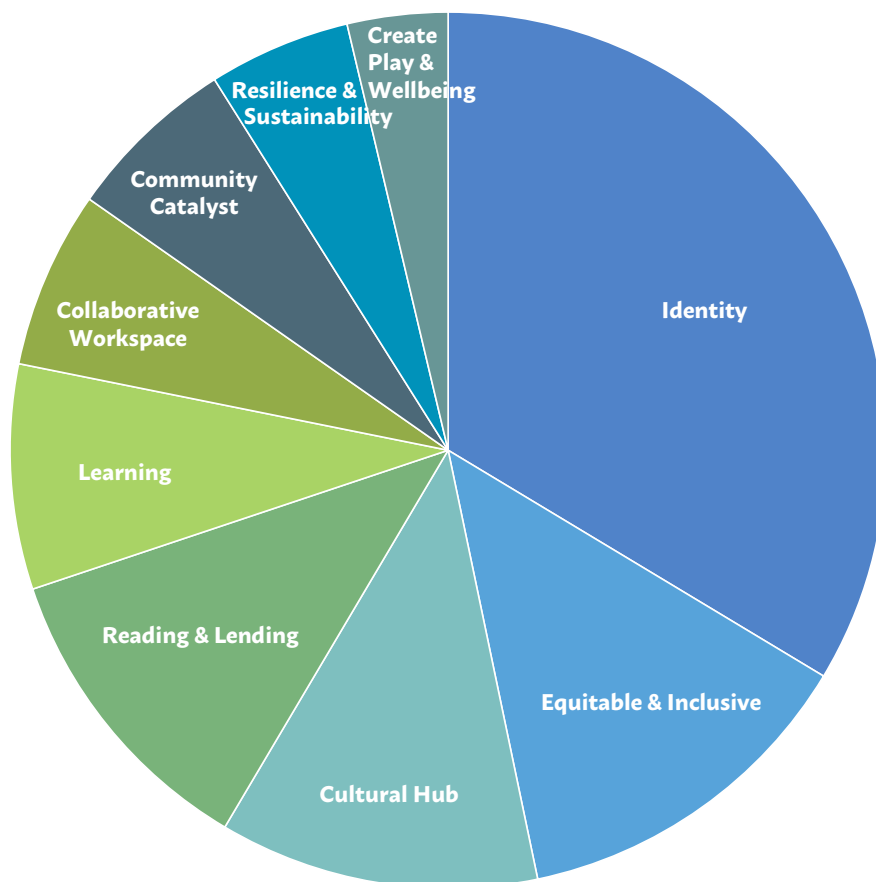
Accessibility and ideas of inclusiveness for people of all ages and stages of life were similarly important themes. In addition to physical access into and throughout the building, availability of inclusive media and access to computers and the internet were important considerations for the participants.

Library Services

Traditional library services for reading, lending, research, and learning remain crucial to the community participants and the mission of the library. The participants reinforced the important role the library plays as a social and cultural center for the community, with robust arts, music, and lecture programs on most Thursdays. Flexible spaces and furnishings were seen as important ways to maintain these great programs while simultaneously providing for a broad range of activities at the library.

New Technology

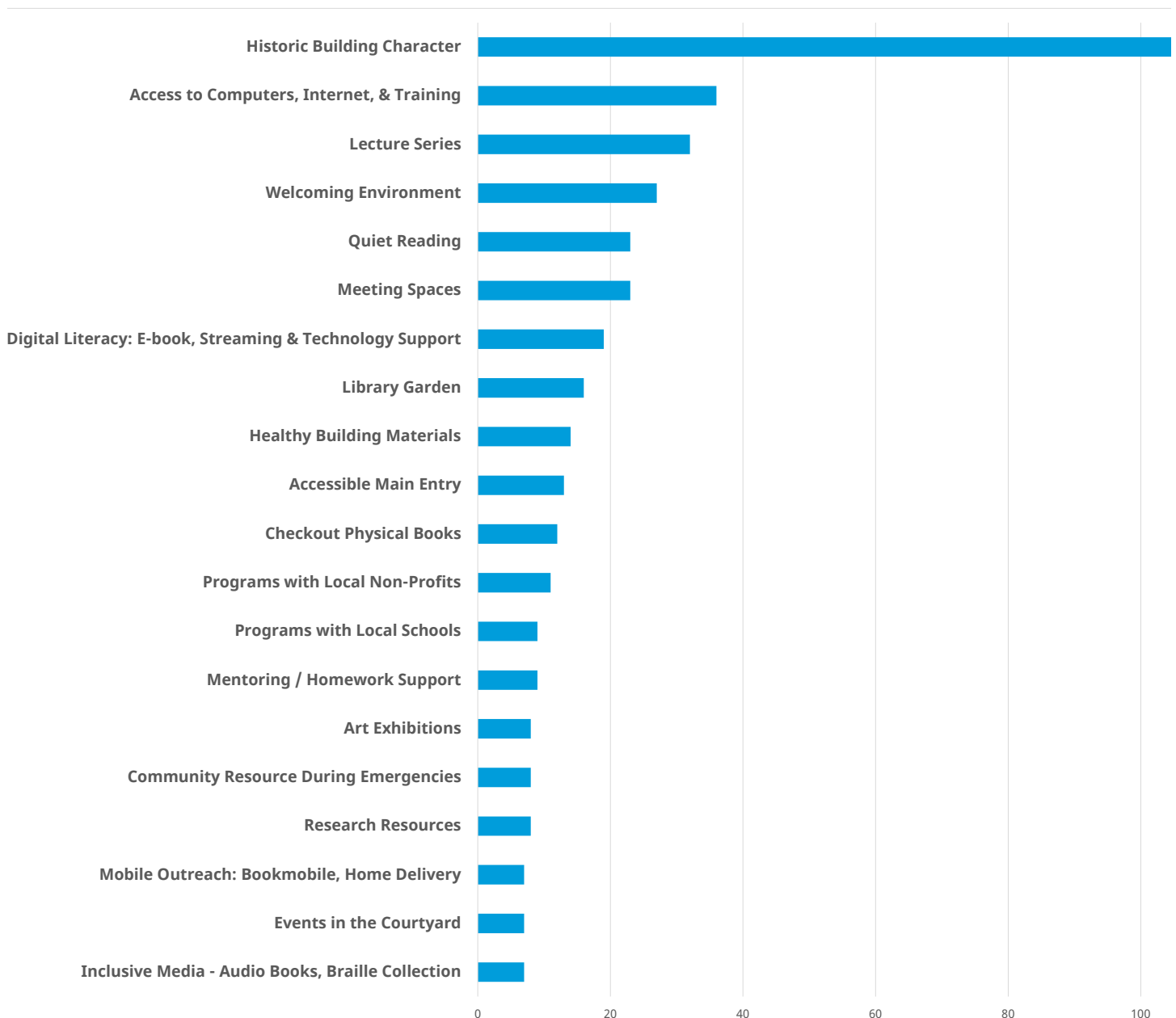
The inclusion of new technologies, including streaming and e-books, along with resources to support digital literacy were highlighted as important additions to traditional library services.



What We Heard - Library Characteristics, Uses, and Services

The community participants highlighted specific characteristics of the library that are most important to them, both now and for the future, including key priorities, features, and services. The top twenty characteristics are illustrated in the graph below.

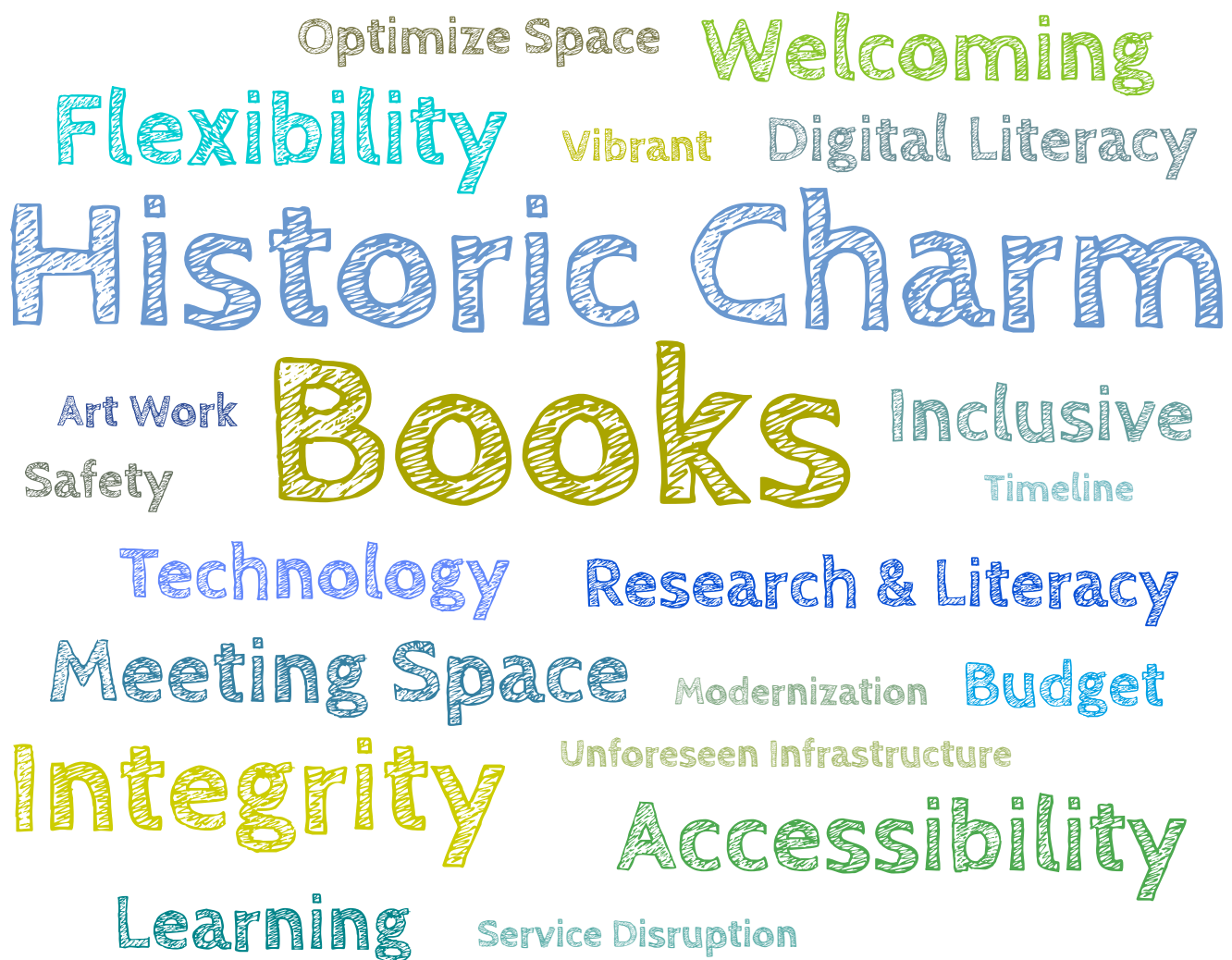
The ideas closely mirror the broader themes noted previously, with a focus on maintaining the building's historic character and enhancing the programs and services currently offered. There was a broad desire to have a variety of spaces suitable for reading, meeting, and gathering. Access to digital resources, digital media, and training for digital literacy, were also seen as increasingly important aspects of the library's services.



What We Heard - Aspirations & Concerns

The small group conversations highlighted a broad range of the participant's aspirations and concerns for the future of the library.

- Preserve the library's historic charm and the building's integrity.
- Maintain the critical importance of physical books, while adding and integrating increased digital media and services.
- Improve the accessibility of the building.
- Provide flexible spaces to accommodate meeting, gathering, reading, and research.
- Be a welcoming place for all.



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

Harrison Memorial Library

Ashlee Wright, Library Director
Mary Jo Williams, Library Board of Trustees President
Renee Martine
Katie O'Connell

Carmel Public Library Foundation

Marci Meaux, President
Alexandra Fallon, CEO
Anita Mitchell, Development Associate
Steve Aitchison, Project Representative
Ilana Bofford Entin, BluePrint Communications

