



Public Library of Cincinnati and Hamilton County Walnut Hills Focus Group Summary

Summary

The following groups from the Walnut Hills area were engaged:

- Seniors and Residents with Limited Mobility
- Evanston Residents

Format and Questions:

- Approximately 60-90 minutes long
- Target group size: 4-6 participants
- Facilitated Q&A with visual activities
- Facilitated by one moderator (Design Impact) and one notetaker (library staff)
- After each focus group, the facilitator and notetaker transcribed responses and discussed observations and insights

Questions

Facilitators asked the following questions (or variations of these questions) to each group.

- Community Views and Needs:
 - Where do you feel most welcome in your community?
 - What are you most proud of in your community?
 - What kinds of places and programs would help your community thrive?
- Current Views and Usage of Library:
 - What do you like about your library?
 - What would you change or improve about your library?
 - Which library branches do you use?
- Library Vision:
 - What do you wish your library had?
 - What kind of place do you want the library to be?



Focus Group Details

Seniors and Residents with Limited Mobility

Date and Time: Monday, April 29, 2019, 12:00-1:30 PM

Location: The Alexandra Apartments, 921 William Howard Taft Rd., Cincinnati, OH 45206

Facilitated by: Caitlin Behle, Design Impact (moderator) + Kendall Kidder-Goshorn, PLCH - Walnut Hills Branch Manager (notetaker)

Group Description:

- Five women participated
- All participants are residents of The Alexandra (located behind the Walnut Hills branch)
- One participant is wheelchair bound, 1 participant is wheelchair bound for about half the day. To live in the Alexandra you must either be 55+ or have a disability.

Evanston Residents

Date + Location: July 17, 2019, 6:00 PM - 7:30 PM at Evanston Recreation Center, 3204 Woodburn Ave., Cincinnati, OH, 45207

Facilitated by: Caitlin Behle, Design Impact (moderator) + Kendall Kidder-Goshorn, PLCH - Walnut Hills Branch Manager (notetaker)

Group Description:

- Three women participated
- Focus group started about 45 minutes late to wait for other participants - one resident arrived 75 minutes after original start time because of family obligations
- Two participants identified as Evanston residents; one lifelong resident and one resident who has lived in Evanston 40+ years. Third participant lived in Mt. Auburn and was invited by one of the participants.



Insights

The following insights were sorted into four primary categories: physical space and facilities, programs and services, marketing and communications, and miscellaneous.

PHYSICAL SPACE AND FACILITIES

How might we make the library a comfortable and accessible space for all patrons?

ADA / physical accessibility

Customers can't use some parts of the building because the space is not ADA-accessible. Participants want to see:

- Ramp or entrance for people with wheelchairs or walkers
- Hand railings to help seniors get around
- Elevator or a way to access the basement floor - currently too hard to get to the bathrooms in the basement
- Lower shelves; books and other resources can be hard to reach, especially for people with shoulder issues

Parking

One participant shared that most Evanston residents have cars and do not rely on public transportation; they don't use the Walnut Hills branch because of its lack of parking.

- Want large parking lot to increase the number of parking spaces available
- *"Evanston residents can't walk to the library so there needs to be more parking."*

Spaces to get together

Customers want spaces to meet, host events, and socialize, especially since their neighborhood lacks free community spaces.

- More meeting spaces where people can get together and host meetings
- Flexible areas for hands-on creative activities (sewing, knitting)
- Separate areas for kids and adults
- Outdoor areas for gardening and relaxing (with benches that can be used to take a break from a long walk)

Safe, secure spaces

People want to feel safe and welcome at the library. However, large groups congregating in and around the library can create safety concerns, and in some cases, make people avoid the library all together.

- Security cameras, including ones at the back of the building
- Police presence at the library branch
- *"I do not like visiting places where there are a lot of people congregating for no specific purpose, it makes me feel nervous and uncomfortable."*



PROGRAMS AND SERVICES

How might we provide programs and services that tap into patrons' passions and interests and serve their needs?

Programs to meet a variety of needs

Residents shared several programming ideas that spanned demographics, needs:

- Intergenerational programming
- Life skills classes (home economics, cooking, parenting classes) - classes no longer offered in school
- Programming to support teen and/or single parents
- Community events (health fairs, movie nights)
- More programs for seniors e.g., computer assistance classes

Social services

Walnut Hills and Evanston are experiencing rapid development that displaces both residents and community resources. Residents saw the library's potential to fill that gap.

- Walnut Hills and parts of Evanston are considered food deserts
- Library of the future would have: food pantry, grocery store, community garden

Convenience and service

People appreciate the ease, convenience, and customer service of the Walnut Hills branch, but saw opportunities to expand services to meet more people's lifestyles.

- Residents wondered if 2nd and 3rd shift workers could utilize the library because they were asleep during open hours
- Love the ability to hold materials and easily pick up at Walnut Hills
- Library of the future: 24/7 hold lockers and vending machines to "tap what you want"
- Like Walnut Hills because it's "in and out" versus hassle of downtown parking
- Residents who had cars were more likely to use multiple branches, including the Norwood and Main branches

Spaces and programs for youth

As Evanston and Walnut Hills attract more young families and the youth population grows, the area will need more ways to engage youth. Walnut Hills is already seeing the need for safe, positive resources for youth.

- Need for "safe haven" for youth
- More literacy programs
- Better supervision of kids

MARKETING AND COMMUNICATIONS

How might the library increase community awareness about their programs and services?

Community Relations and Outreach

Residents see the library as a place built on connections: a place that can work with and be part of the neighborhood. However, without consistent outreach and engagement, it's difficult for the library to foster meaningful relationships and experiences with the community.

- "The library provides a place where I can run into people I know; it provides a sense of community."



- Value of in-person outreach: how can residents hear about the library's programs if they can't use a computer?
- Organizing focus groups in Evanston was challenging because the library lacked relationships with Evanston groups
- Even though the Alexandra apartments are located behind the Walnut Hills library, its tenants were mostly unaware of what the Walnut Hills library offered. After the focus group, 3 out of the 5 participants became regular customers.

MISCELLANEOUS

Caregiver/grandparent experience

The library is a place that has something for everyone; helping parents, grandparents, and caregivers support their child to learn and grow while they do the same.

- Grandparents are motivated by their grandkids to use the library
- People want a place that has resources available for them and their child
 - Example: coming 6 days a week during the school year for the child to do homework research while they read or listen to a book on tape

Increased youth supervision

Participants shared their concerns and frustrations with unsupervised youth at the library, while also recognizing it's not the library's responsibility to manage kids and teens.

- Youth loitering in front of the library was a common complaint among Alexandra tenants; doesn't feel like there are enough opportunities to engage youth at library
- Find ways to support and train staff to supervise kids and teens
- Want to see more youth programming

