



# AUBURN PUBLIC LIBRARY

## STRATEGIC PLAN 2026-30 INPUT

### TRUSTEES, FRIENDS OF APL BOARD, AND SPAC

### MINI-SURVEY RESULTS SUMMARY REPORT 2025

#### INTRODUCTION

As part of the Auburn Public Library (APL) strategic planning process, members of the **Board of Trustees**, the **Friends of the Auburn Public Library Board**, and the **Strategic Planning Advisory Committee (SPAC)** were invited to complete a brief online survey to share their perspectives on the Library's future. Questions were designed to elicit thoughtful reflection on how the Library might evolve over the next five years, what new programs or services could best serve residents, how its physical spaces might be improved, and what external factors could influence its success. Collectively, the responses provide valuable insight into the priorities and concerns of key stakeholders who play a vital role in supporting the Library's mission and ensuring its continued relevance to the Auburn community.

#### **1. What do you imagine the Library offering five (5) years from now?**

**FEEDBACK OVERVIEW:** Participants envisioned a vibrant, multifaceted community hub with **expanded programming, improved spaces, and stronger community ties**. Respondents showed a strong interest in creating a **Library of Things**, offering **3D printing services**, and **expanding adult learning opportunities**, such as crafting, author talks, and multi-week tech and language classes. They highlighted the importance of **youth engagement** with **dedicated teen and children's areas and more YA programming**. Several stressed the need for **outdoor amenities**, including areas for reading, programs, movies, and showcasing local art. **Enhanced communication and outreach** were common suggestions, including website improvements, diversifying channels beyond Facebook, and boosting community visibility. Other ideas included home delivery for shut-ins, better tech access, and flexible spaces for collaboration and study, reflecting a shared vision for a dynamic and inclusive future for the APL.

#### **KEY THEMES AND HIGHLIGHTS**

- **Expanded Services and Offerings**
  - A **Library of Things** appeared repeatedly. It was the top recurring response.
  - **3D printing and technology lending** (e.g., phone/laptop charging) are mentioned several times.
  - **Genealogy, seed catalog, and gaming** are also cited as ongoing or expanded interests.
- **Adult Learning and Programs**
  - Calls for **more adult programs**, particularly **crafts, author talks, and multi-week training** in computers, languages, and skills.
  - Interest in **adult crafting classes** and other **hands-on workshops**.

- **Youth and Teen Engagement**
  - Requests for **after-school teen space** and **more teen programs**.
  - Specific mention of a **wide range of YA activities**, **staff assigned to YA**, and a **dedicated children's librarian**.
- **Community and Creative Spaces**
  - Strong desire for **displays for local artists** and **art/historic exhibits**.
  - **More space** for individuals to **meet, work, and collaborate** at the Library.
  - Interest in **benches and outdoor reading/program spaces**.
- **Outdoor Programming**
  - Multiple mentions of **outdoor activities, movies, and programming**.
  - Emphasis on **improving outdoor areas** for patron enjoyment.
- **Communication and Technology**
  - Requests for **better communication**, moving beyond Facebook to **Constant Contact** or email tools.
  - Calls for an **enhanced website** and a stronger **social media presence**.
- **Accessibility and Outreach:** Suggestions for **home delivery to shut-ins** and **expanded outreach** to non-traditional users.

**OBSERVATIONS:** The recurring emphasis on a **Library of Things, technology access**, and **maker-style resources**, such as 3D printing, suggests a growing community interest in hands-on, experiential learning opportunities. Implementing these services may require investments in equipment, dedicated space, and staff expertise to support safe and effective use.

The strong focus on **expanded adult and teen programming**, including workshops, author talks, and after-school activities, highlights the importance of developing a robust program calendar that appeals to multiple age groups. Enhanced **outdoor spaces** and **art displays** align with a broader vision of the Library as a vibrant cultural and community hub—an environment that encourages creativity, relaxation, and social interaction.

Participants' feedback regarding **communication and outreach** highlights the need for improved marketing strategies and digital engagement tools, ensuring the Library effectively reaches both active users and non-users. Collectively, these considerations support a planning framework that prioritizes innovation, inclusion, and connection, positioning the Library to respond proactively to the community's evolving needs over the next five years.

**2. Please share up to five (5) ideas for new Library programs, materials, resources, or services that you believe the community would find valuable/interesting.**

**FEEDBACK OVERVIEW:** Respondents emphasized the need to expand educational and technology-focused offerings, including **ESL classes, computer and iPad instruction**,

and **presentations by Town Department Heads**, to strengthen civic connections and promote digital literacy. In addition, several responses highlighted the need for **enhanced spaces and activities for children and teens**, including more **YA programming** and larger **children's areas** to accommodate growth and engagement. Collectively, these ideas highlight the community's interest in striking a balance between learning opportunities and offering inclusive, intergenerational experiences that bring people together.

#### KEY THEMES AND HIGHLIGHTS

- **Educational and Skill-Building Programs:** Strong interest in classes that support lifelong learning, including **ESL instruction, computer training, and iPad workshops**. These suggestions highlight a community desire for both foundational and digital literacy learning opportunities.
- **Civic and Community Connections:** Respondents valued programs that strengthen local ties, such as **presentations by Town Department Heads**, which would help residents better understand municipal services and foster civic engagement.
- **Social and Recreational Opportunities:** Ideas like **movie nights** and **cookbook reading or recipe-sharing groups** suggest a desire for programs that bring people together in informal, enjoyable ways, promoting a sense of community and belonging.
- **Youth and Family Engagement:** Several participants emphasized the importance of **larger spaces for children's activities** and more **young adult (YA) programming**, indicating ongoing support for family-friendly and teen-focused initiatives.

**OBSERVATIONS:** Expanding **educational and technology-based programs** such as ESL, computer, and device instruction may require additional staff training, partnerships with local experts, or scheduling flexibility to accommodate varying skill levels. The emphasis on **community-oriented programming**, including civic presentations and social activities like movie nights and cooking programs, suggests opportunities to strengthen collaborations with Town departments, cultural organizations, and local businesses.

Respondents' focus on **youth and family engagement** underscores the importance of maintaining and potentially enlarging spaces dedicated to children and teens, as well as investing in staff capacity to coordinate age-specific programming. Finally, these suggestions underscore the importance of a **balanced program mix** that combines educational enrichment, social connection, and recreational experiences to ensure the Library continues to meet the diverse interests and learning needs of its community while fostering an inclusive and welcoming environment.

### 3. What could the Library do to improve its space over the next five years?

**FEEDBACK OVERVIEW:** Participants identified several key priorities for improving the Library's facilities. Suggestions included **expanding the Merriam Room** by extending into the adjacent space near the staff dining area and parking lot, as well as **enlarging the Children's Room**, potentially by extending into the parking lot or front lawn area. Respondents emphasized that future improvements should focus not only on expansion but also on **modernization** to create a more contemporary and inviting atmosphere, including updates to décor, lighting, and furnishings. Additionally, participants recommended

developing a **comprehensive plan for additional space**, ensuring that future growth is thoughtfully designed to support the Library's programs, collections, and community activities.

#### KEY THEMES AND HIGHLIGHTS

- **Strategic Expansion:** Support for expanding key areas such as the **Merriam Room** and **Children's Room** to meet growing demand for programs and activities.
- **Modernization:** Desire to **refresh interior design, décor, and furnishings** to make the Library feel more current and welcoming.
- **Comprehensive Space Planning:** Recognition of the need for a **long-term facilities plan** that aligns future expansion and modernization efforts with service goals.

**OBSERVATIONS:** The ideas shared by respondents reinforce the importance of proactive facilities planning. Expanding the **Merriam Room** and **Children's Room** could significantly enhance program capacity and user experience but may also require feasibility studies to evaluate building constraints, parking implications, and cost considerations. The call for **modernization** beyond a physical expansion suggests that aesthetic updates and interior improvements are equally important to maintaining a welcoming and functional space.

Developing a **comprehensive space and facilities plan** would help guide decisions about future investments, ensuring alignment between physical improvements and the Library's strategic priorities. Incorporating flexible, multi-use spaces could also help the Library adapt to changing community needs over time. Together, these insights point toward a balanced approach that integrates thoughtful design, accessibility, and long-term sustainability in future facility planning.

#### 4. **What local, regional, national, and even global issues might impact the Library, positively or negatively, during the Plan's 5-year term (2026-2030)?**

**FEEDBACK OVERVIEW:** Participants expressed concern about **federal and state funding uncertainties**, including potential **reductions in IMLS and federal support for libraries**. Several comments cited the **impact of the national political climate**, noting that shifting priorities during the **2025–2029 presidential administration** could affect library budgets, staffing, and community services. Respondents also referenced the **possibility of economic downturns, tariffs, and financial pressures** that could limit local and municipal resources.

On a broader scale, respondents identified **climate change, demographic shifts in Auburn, and changing attitudes toward diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI)** as social trends with potential local implications. Concerns were also raised about **public mistrust of traditional sources of information**, underscoring the importance of the Library's role as a reliable and neutral source of knowledge. Finally, participants noted local factors such as **town leadership transitions, downtown redevelopment, and the walking path and bridge project**, all of which could influence the Library's visibility, accessibility, and opportunities for collaboration within the community.

## KEY THEMES AND HIGHLIGHTS

- **Economic and Funding Pressures:** Widespread concern about **federal and municipal funding stability**, potential **budget reductions**, and the financial impact of **economic slowdowns or tariffs**.
- **Political and Administrative Changes:** Anticipation of changes tied to the **2025–2029 federal administration** and **local government leadership transitions**, which could affect policy direction and priorities.
- **Social and Demographic Shifts:** Recognition that **Auburn's changing demographics** and evolving **community needs** will require the Library to remain adaptable and inclusive.
- **Trust and Information Integrity:** Concern about **public mistrust of authoritative information** sources, emphasizing the Library's continuing role in promoting credible, balanced, and fact-based resources.
- **Infrastructure and Environmental Factors:** Awareness of **climate impacts**, **downtown redevelopment**, and **public infrastructure projects** that could shape Library planning and visibility.

**OBSERVATIONS:** The issues identified by respondents point to the need for proactive and flexible strategic planning. Ensuring **financial resilience** will be essential, including pursuing diversified funding sources, advocacy for state and federal support, and careful long-term budgeting. The Library may also need to **adapt services and operations** in response to potential economic fluctuations and evolving government priorities.

Addressing **social and demographic changes** will require ongoing attention to inclusivity, representation, and accessibility in programs, materials, and staffing. The Library should continue to position itself as a **trusted information hub**, helping the public navigate misinformation and maintain confidence in reliable sources. Finally, local **development projects and environmental considerations** present opportunities to strengthen community partnerships and enhance the Library's role in civic life. Together, these considerations highlight the importance of an adaptable, well-connected, and mission-driven approach to navigating the next five years.

## CONCLUSION

Respondents' input underscores a shared vision of the Library as a **dynamic, inclusive, and future-focused community resource**. Across all responses, participants emphasized the importance of balancing innovation with accessibility; the need to expand and improve programs, spaces, and technology while maintaining the welcoming environment that defines the Library's identity.

The input will help guide the Library's decisions about programs, facilities, partnerships, and communication strategies. By anticipating future challenges and aligning its services with community priorities, the APL is well-positioned to continue fulfilling its mission of learning, connection, and discovery for all who call Auburn home.