



# AUBURN PUBLIC LIBRARY

## STRATEGIC PLAN 2026-30 INPUT

### TEEN FOCUS GROUP SUMMARY REPORT 2025

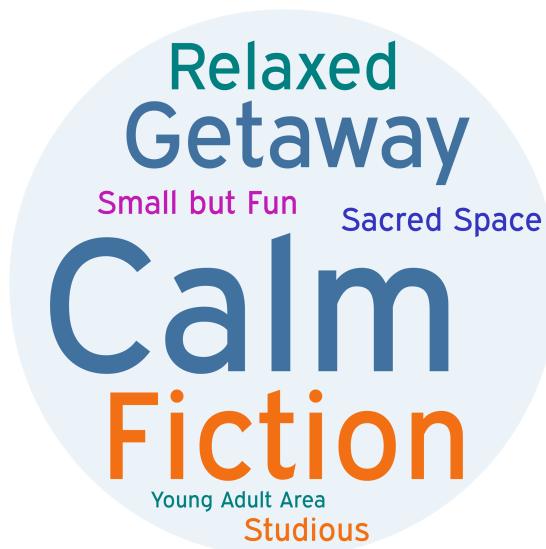
#### INTRODUCTION

As part of the Auburn Public Library (APL) strategic planning process, a **60-minute focus group** with local teens was conducted on **September 11, 2025**, to better understand how the Library can support the needs, interests, and perspectives of young people in the community. **Four teens participated** in the session, which included questions about the Library's Teen Space, resources, programs, volunteer opportunities, and current issues that matter to them. Participants were recruited through Library outreach and volunteered to share their honest impressions and ideas. Their feedback offers valuable insight into how the Library can continue to evolve as a welcoming and engaging space for teens. Below is a summary of the findings from the teen focus group.

#### 1. What are the very first THREE words you think of when you think about the Library's Teen Space?

**FEEDBACK OVERVIEW:** When asked to share the first three words that come to mind about APL's Teen Space, participants emphasized its **calm and relaxing atmosphere**, describing it as a “**getaway**” and even a “**sacred space**” where they can unwind and focus. The space was also associated with **reading and studying**, as reflected in words such as *Fiction*, *Studio*, and *Young Adult Area*, indicating that teens view it as a dedicated and purposeful place for both leisure and learning. While one respondent noted that it is “**small but fun**,” suggesting appreciation for what’s available, this also implies potential interest in a larger or more dynamic space in the future.

**OBSERVATIONS:** Feedback suggests that the Teen Space is valued as a **comfortable, peaceful environment** that meets current needs for relaxation and study. However, the mention of its small size points to an opportunity to explore **enhancements or modest expansion**, adding elements that foster social interaction, creativity, or collaborative activities. Maintaining the **quiet, welcoming tone** while increasing **variety and flexibility** could strengthen its appeal and reinforce teens’ sense of ownership and connection to the Library.



## 2. What could we do to make the Teen Space (and the Library in general) more welcoming to teens?

**FEEDBACK OVERVIEW:** Participants offered practical and thoughtful suggestions for how the Auburn Public Library could make its Teen Space and the Library overall more welcoming to teens.

- **Comfortable Furniture:** Several emphasized the need for **more comfortable seating**, such as bean bags, and **additional tables for quiet work**, underscoring the desire for both relaxation and productivity within the space.
- **Dedicated Space:** A recurring theme was the **importance of a dedicated, teen-only area**. Teens noted that adults using the Teen Space for tutoring can be distracting, suggesting that a clearly defined and exclusive space would make them feel more comfortable and respected as Library users.
- **Visibility and Design Improvements.** Some teens indicated they were unaware of the Teen Space until recently, highlighting the need for **better signage, visibility, and overall appeal**. Participants also shared ideas for **relocating or reconfiguring** the space, including moving it to a room with a TV and writing board, or even **swapping the adult and teen spaces** to create a more inviting and functional layout.
- **Upsize Children's Restroom:** One participant mentioned that **restroom facilities are too small for older children**, signaling a broader facility concern that may impact teen comfort and accessibility.

**OBSERVATIONS:** The feedback suggests opportunities to **enhance comfort, visibility, and ownership** within the Teen Space. Improvements like **flexible seating, clearer signage, and teen-specific design features** could make the area more attractive and better aligned with how teens want to use it. Addressing distractions from adult users and exploring ways to **create a true teen-only environment** would reinforce the Library's commitment to meeting the needs of young adults and encourage greater use and engagement.

## 3. What types of resources should we offer in the Teen Space?

**FEEDBACK OVERVIEW:** Participants emphasized the importance of providing a **broader range of materials and tools** to support both personal interests and academic needs.

- **Collection Variety:** Several participants suggested adding **more variety in book offerings beyond comic books**, specifically mentioning **fantasy and thriller titles** as genres of interest.
- **College and Career Readiness Resources:** Teens also expressed a desire for **college and career readiness resources**, including **information about college preparation and scholarships**, signaling interest in materials that help them plan for their futures.
- **Creative Tools:** Other practical ideas included **adding computers for research and art supplies** to encourage creative expression.
- **Mental Health Resources:** One participant noted the need for **resources on mental health topics**, such as anxiety and depression. This is an important indicator that teens view the Library as not only a place for learning and creativity but also a potential source of emotional support and reliable information.

**OBSERVATIONS:** These responses highlight opportunities for the Library to **expand the diversity of its teen collection** and incorporate **resources that reflect teens' evolving academic, creative, and personal interests**. Strengthening the Teen Space with both **traditional learning tools (such as computers and reference materials)** and **wellness-oriented content** could enhance its role as a trusted and inclusive space for teens. Offering materials that balance **entertainment, self-development, and emotional well-being** will further align the space with the needs and priorities of today's teens.

#### 4. Tell us how you feel about the Library's programs.

**FEEDBACK OVERVIEW:** All participating teens reported attending **Library programs**, with several noting regular participation in **weekly craft programs**, indicating that the Library's existing offerings are both accessible and engaging for some.

- **Quantity of Teen Programming:** Participants stated that there are **fewer programs available for teens** compared to younger children, suggesting a desire for greater balance and more targeted opportunities.
- **Program Ideas:** Teens shared several specific ideas for new and expanded programming, including **a teen book club featuring a range of genres**, a **graphic novel book club** modeled after one at Spencer Library, and a **board game night** to encourage social interaction and community building.
- **Marketing Teen Programs:** While participants were generally positive about current programs, one mentioned **difficulty finding information about events on the website**, signaling a need for clearer online promotion and communication.
- **Teen Volunteer Opportunities:** Another participant highlighted an interest in **volunteering**, suggesting opportunities to engage teens not only as attendees but also as contributors and leaders in program development.

**OBSERVATIONS:** Feedback suggests that teens value Library programming but see room for growth in **variety, visibility, and relevance**. Increasing the number and diversity of teen-focused programs, particularly those that blend creativity, social connection, and personal interests, would strengthen engagement. Improving **promotion and discoverability** of teen programs, both in the Library and online, could also increase participation. Finally, exploring **volunteer and leadership roles for teens** may help foster a deeper connection and a sense of ownership in Library activities.

#### 5. How can we make attending and participating in programs as convenient as possible for you and your friends/families?

**FEEDBACK OVERVIEW:** Participants' responses focused on the timing and format of teen programs.

- **Schedule Preferences:** Teens consistently indicated a preference for **weekday evening programs**, with **Thursday and Friday** identified as the most desirable days. This suggests that school and extracurricular commitments limit availability earlier in the week and that end-of-week scheduling is ideal for maximizing teen participation.

- **Program Format:** Participants also expressed a clear preference for **in-person programs**, valuing the social and interactive aspects of gathering at the Library. However, some noted that **small projects or activities could work well virtually**, and there was **modest interest in live-streamed or recorded programs**, suggesting that hybrid options could complement but not replace in-person experiences.

**OBSERVATIONS:** Scheduling teen programs on **Thursday and Friday evenings** would likely improve accessibility and participation. While in-person engagement remains the top priority, offering **occasional virtual or hybrid options** could provide additional flexibility, especially for creative or self-paced projects. Maintaining a balance between convenience and connection will help ensure that the Library's teen programming continues to meet diverse preferences and schedules.

## 6. What could the Library do to better serve local teens? What advice do you have for us?

**FEEDBACK OVERVIEW:** Participants emphasized the need for **stronger outreach and communication** about the services and programs already available.

- **Increase Awareness:** Teens suggested that the Library “**get the word out better**” to increase awareness and participation among their peers.
- **Multi-Media Communications:** They recommended using **more printed materials** to promote teen programs and resources, including posters, flyers, or bookmarks. They said that not all teens regularly see APL’s online updates.

**OBSERVATIONS:** Feedback indicates that the Library could strengthen its connection with teens through **more visible, multi-channel promotion**. Incorporating **print-based marketing** alongside digital communication could help ensure that information about teen services reaches a broader audience. Developing a **cohesive teen outreach strategy**, possibly incorporating input from teens themselves, would help the Library build awareness, increase participation, and reinforce its role as a welcoming and engaging resource for young people.

## 7. What types of Library volunteer opportunities might interest you?

**FEEDBACK OVERVIEW:** All participating teens expressed **interest in volunteering at the Library**, demonstrating strong enthusiasm for contributing to Library activities and supporting their community.

- **Volunteer Roles:** Teens identified several appealing volunteer roles, including **helping with programs and assisting with general Library tasks**. They also suggested **creating book review videos and social media content**, indicating an interest in roles that combine creativity with digital skills and peer influence.
- **Leadership Opportunities:** Participants proposed **providing peer support during teen craft programs**, indicating a willingness to take on leadership or mentoring roles within Library activities.

**OBSERVATIONS:** This feedback highlights an opportunity to **develop structured teen volunteer pathways** that align with both Library needs and teen interests. Offering roles related to **program assistance, creative media, and peer engagement** could foster leadership, build community, and strengthen teens' connection to the Library. Creating a **teen volunteer program or ambassador initiative** would not only expand staff capacity but also give teens a sense of ownership and pride in contributing to the Library's success.

## 8. What current issues are important to you?

**FEEDBACK OVERVIEW:** When asked about the issues that matter most to them, participants identified a mix of **community, environmental, and personal well-being concerns**.

- **Fundraising Support:** Teens expressed interest in **supporting veterans through fundraisers**, showing awareness of broader social issues, and a desire to contribute to meaningful causes.
- **Sustainability:** **Environmental issues were frequently mentioned**, notably **pollution**. This suggests a strong concern for sustainability and local environmental impact.
- **Mental Health:** Participants emphasized the importance of **mental health and emotional well-being**, recommending **workshops focused on coping strategies and resources for managing anxiety and depression**, such as creating fidget-based coping kits.
- **Teen Input Opportunities:** Teens encouraged the Library to **create more opportunities for teen input**, such as establishing a **Teen Advisory Board**, so their voices could help shape programs, collections, and community initiatives.

**OBSERVATIONS:** This feedback highlights teens' growing interest in **social engagement, advocacy, and mental health awareness**. The Library could strengthen its connection with teens by offering **programs and partnerships** that address these issues, such as environmental action projects, wellness workshops, and community service initiatives. Creating a **Teen Advisory Board or similar leadership group** would provide an avenue for sustained teen involvement and empower young people to contribute ideas that reflect their values and priorities.

## CONCLUSION

Overall, feedback from APL's teen focus group shows **engaged, thoughtful, community-minded teens** who see the Library as a calm, welcoming space for study, creativity, and connection. While they value the existing Teen Space and programs, they see opportunities to make the Library **more visible, comfortable, and responsive to their needs and interests**. They want a **clearly defined teen-only area, a greater variety of programs and materials, and more targeted communication** about Library offerings.

Teens are enthusiastic about volunteering and having a voice in Library decisions, whether through programs, social media, or serving on a Teen Advisory Board. Their interests in **mental health, environmental action, and community service** highlight the importance of positioning the Library as a **safe, inclusive, and empowering space** that reflects their values and supports their growth.