



More than 80 community members attended the first FOCUS Community Engagement Session on March 10, 2016. The meeting began with FOCUS Facilitating Team Co-chair Robert Reisenbuechler, welcoming the community and sharing the Team's commitment to facilitate a positive conversation and collaborative process. Kathryn I. Martens, Library Director, then presented "Why Today? Challenges for Tomorrow," a presentation outlining the scope of the Library's current services and challenges. Following Ms. Martens' presentation, participants were invited to work at their tables to complete a Small Group Work Activity.

The following is an Executive Summary of the Small Group Work Activity and reflects the comments from those at the 12 participating tables. The results below do not include feedback from the FOCUS Facilitating Team or Library Board members, who did not engage in these exercises. The verbatim responses to the following can be found on the FOCUS website at <http://focus.clpl.org>.

TASK #1: CELEBRATE • SURPRISE • CONCERN

CELEBRATE

Participants at the first FOCUS Community Engagement Session identified several items they believe are sources of pride for the Crystal Lake Public Library (CLPL). Each group shared a high level of overall satisfaction with the Library in key areas including programs and resources. Groups recorded phrases like the following to indicate pride in Crystal Lake Public Library: "Friendliness and knowledge of staff;" "CLPL is always looking towards the future."

Above anything else, the **high quality staff** was noted by a majority of FOCUS groups. Groups also listed the variety of programming, services provided to the community and technology access such as online resources as points of celebration.

BIGGEST SURPRISE

Ideas related to Crystal Lake Public Library's varied **program selection and media available** surprised several groups. Groups also mentioned ideas related to available space or site issues of the current building site of the Library. Members in one group stated they were surprised to learn "how much of materials were in storage." Another common surprise among the groups was the high number of daily patrons and that CLPL is the "busiest library in the county."

GREATEST CONCERN

Without question the top area of concern from FOCUS participants centered on the **limited space available** in the current library facility. Some issues listed related to space limitations include meeting space, study rooms, quiet areas, as well as enough room for materials.

Another area of concern for several participants was the accessibility of the current library facility. One group mentioned, "...ramp is on street side – not on parking lot side," while another group mentioned, "Lack of access for people with disabilities/elderly." About half of the groups also mentioned concerns related to the cost of a new library and/or dealing with deficiencies.

TASK #2: STRATEGIC TOPIC AREAS - QUESTIONS • ISSUES • OPPORTUNITIES

ARE WE FUTURE READY?

Many of the questions presented by the various groups related to what the projected needs will be for the Library. Participants shared questions about the trends of state of the art libraries and “what other libraries are doing that we don’t/can’t.” One group listed a need to “look 20-25 years out” while another group said they “want a library that exceeds minimum standards.”

Other questions related to the idea of future ready centered on the site/location of the Library. FOCUS participants wondered if there is “enough room or stability for the Library to grow in the way it needs” as well as if the “location is right”, while another group questioned if it is “better for future to maintain aging building or to start with new?”

OUR FACILITY: DOES FORM FOLLOW FUNCTION?

Most frequently groups mentioned issues and questions related to space use of the current facility. One group asked, “How many square feet is existing facility & how being used. What is need (size) for each area (storage, books, meeting, etc.)” Another group suggested that the current space available be set up to be more flexible. Another group wondered how other libraries are using their space as well.

WHAT ABOUT THE MONEY?

FOCUS groups listed varied questions and ideas related to this topic area. Some groups wondered if fundraising is a possibility while others asked questions related to the impact on taxes. One group stated, “Maximize dollars while still provid[ing] a quality facility.” Another group commented, “A new fully functional library would cost a lot. But, the cost of not upgrading would be a greater expense to our community literacy in terms of technology, education, outreach, and bringing public services to all.” Other groups mentioned the need to be practical and explore costs for all options.

TASK #3: OTHER SUGGESTIONS

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At the end of the workshop, participants were asked to share additional suggestions for the FOCUS community engagement program. One-third of the groups offered ideas to consider. One group suggested that CLPL continue to be transparent and communicate. Other groups asked questions such as, “What is plan ‘b’ if the money cannot be raised for plan ‘a’?” and “Does staff have a proposed plan – conceptual plan?”

For more information please visit the FOCUS website at <http://focus.clpl.org>.