Public Library of Cincinnati and Hamilton County Madisonville Focus Group Summary

Summary

The following groups from Madisonville were engaged:
- Parents
- Kids and Teens

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? What do you imagine is possible?

Focus Group Details

<u>Madisonville Parents</u>
Date + Location: May 20, 2019, 11:00 am-12:30 pm at Madisonville Branch Library
Facilitators: Caitlin Behle, Design Impact (Facilitator), Terry Barnum, PLCH, Madisonville Branch Manager (Notetaker)
Group Description:
- 4 participants, all women
- All 4 participants were mothers - 3 out of 4 mothers had kids under 18
- 2 people use the library regularly; 1 person said her family uses the library regularly but not her specifically
- All 4 participants have lived in Madisonville from between 10 to 30 years

<u>Kids and Teens in Madisonville</u>
Date + Location: May 22, 2019, 5:00-6:15 pm at Madisonville Branch Library
Facilitators: Michelle Sucher, Design Impact (Facilitator),Terry Barnum, PLCH, Madisonville Branch Manager (Notetaker)
Group Description:
- 7 participants, 5 boys and 2 girls; students ranged in grade-levels from 6th grade through 11th grade
- Participants attend a variety of schools in the Greater Cincinnati area (both private and public)
- Participants mentioned using the Madisonville branch either frequently (everyday or several days a week) or occasionally (1-2 times a month)
- One participant used the Hyde Park branch more frequently because of the quiet and academic support that was available there

Insights

The following insights were heard across both focus groups and sorted into four primary categories: *physical space*, *programs and services*, *marketing and communications*, and *miscellaneous*.

PHYSICAL SPACE

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

<u>Preserving the historic architecture</u>
Participants recognize that the library needs more space to meet growing needs, but they don't want to lose the existing building in the process. Participants suggested two options:
- Create an additional building for primary library use and use the current library for other programming
- Use the current library for other purposes (e.g. as a museum or to hold historic records)

<u>Separate, designated spaces</u>
Customers want designated spaces that are designed for their specific age group or noise level needs.
- Unstructured, open spaces to socialize or play where kids and teens can make some noise
- Movie room or a place to watch new movie releases and trailers
- Mounted TV on that is located in a permanent place for video gaming

- Designate quiet spaces that are conducive to studying and concentration

<u>ADA / physical accessibility</u>
Customers currently can't utilize some parts of the building because the space is not ADA-accessible.
- Ramp or enterance for people with wheelchairs or walkers
- Elevator or a way to access the basement floor

<u>Amenities and Facilities</u>
Focus group participants shared several ideas for how to enhance the space for a better customer experience.
- Bigger restroom that is located on the first floor
- Brighter lighting to ensure the space is less dim
- Phone and electronic device charging stations (through a main power outlet, not a computer's USB port)
  - This needs to be secure (locked) or conveniently located in a place where people can stay close to their device
- Flexible, comfortable furniture that's easy to move around and rearrange

<u>Safe Space</u>
People want the library to remain a safe space to visit. Currently, the limited parking and inability to keep an eye on a parked bike create some challenges and reduce safety.
- Create or locate bike racks that can be seen from inside the library
- Increase parking options to reduce the need for crossing a busy road or finding street parking
- Ensure the library remains in a place that is easily walkable

<u>Beyond four walls</u>
A number of people shared their desire for the library to expand beyond the four walls and extend to create more outdoor spaces, like a courtyard. Currently, any outdoor programming feels disconnected from the library's main space and entrance.
- Outdoor spaces that are an extension to compliment library's indoor space

PROGRAMS AND SERVICES

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

<u>Programs and events to meet the neighborhood</u>
- Potlucks and book clubs to learn about other cultures
- Block parties to meet your neighbors

<u>Spaces to make and create</u>
The Makerspace is a valuable resource for both young people and adults - people regularly utilize the downtown branch's Makerspace and would like to see something similar in Madisonville.
- Kids wanted to see another recording studio.

<u>Friendly customer service</u>
Customers praised Madisonville's customer service; residents appreciated that Madisonville's staff greet you and know them by name.

<u>More spaces and programming for kids</u>
Residents may live in one neighborhood but go to schools, community centers in other neighborhoods; library could offer affordable alternatives to expensive enrichment classes and after school programs.
- Enrichment programs (dance class, Zumba, robotics)

<u>Work & School Resources</u>
Residents often don't have computers and printers because of a lack of space, personal preference, and financial limitations. Many people are moving away from desktop computers and even laptops and switching to tablets, but schools often require laptops for school or work.
- Textbooks for homework help
- Computers and laptops to check out
  - Laptops are preferable over desktop computers - allows people to move from room to room
- Free Wifi
  - Kids were enthusiastic about the free WiFi - kids will even sit outside on the steps after hours to use the WiFi until the WiFi shuts off
- More computers
  - People often experience long wait times to use the computer for work/school because they're competing with people who use computers for recreational use

MARKETING AND COMMUNICATIONS

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

Branch-Specific Promotion
Customers who actively use the library felt uninformed or were unaware of many of the programs and services available at their local branch.
- Off-hour programming - Madisonville offers programming (storytime) during closed branch hours; since the program is primarily promoted through word-of-mouth, new customers may not be aware or comfortable using it.
- Branch-specific social media would help people stay informed about events and programs at their specific library.

MISCELLANEOUS

How might we celebrate the rich history and community's love of Madisonville?

Madisonville's Rich History
Residents see the library as an opportunity to showcase Madisonville's rich history and its community's racial and socioeconomic diversity through programs, services, and art. Current residents also worry that as more affluent families move in, the library will focus its programming on new residents' needs.
- Leverage a neighborhood-based artist to create an art installation (wall mural, signage, etc.) that showcases the history of the neighborhood
- Kids' programming to teach videography and editing skills to create a "living history" documentary series
- Spaces and programs to learn about one another's cultures and stories
- A balance of programs for both new residents/potential customers and current/legacy residents to ensure all residents feel equally valued

Neighborhood Values

Madisonville community members are passionate about a variety of topics and issues, many of which could be explored through programming and services at the library.

- Civic engagement or volunteer opportunities to neighborhood residents
- Spaces for people to enjoy time outside while still utilizing library resources and amenities
- Spaces to encourages physical fitness (walkable, bikeable)