

The Future of the Bloomfield Public Library and the Bloomfield Public Library of the Future: We Want to Hear From You. Community Survey Executive Summary

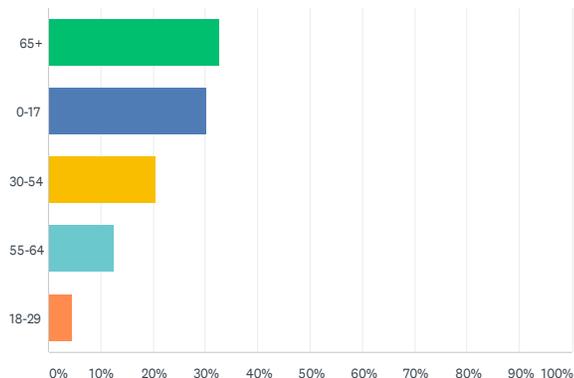
I like the Prosser because it's small and very family oriented. You're bound to run into people you know, and the atmosphere is just cozy. I've been to Prosser on many, many occasions by myself to read magazines or get on the computer for a while. My daughter LOVES to be able to browse the many books from when she was little to now at 12. Glad when things are back to normal from (Pandemic/COVID) so we can go again. McMahon is very convenient because it's right up the street from my house and my daughter and I always walked there.

From January 22nd to March 5th, 2021 a survey was shared with the public. A thoughtful and concerted effort was made to reach as many Bloomfield residents as possible. The initial digital distribution was sent to 5,952 email addresses via the library's email data base and email newsletter. This was followed by digital shares of the newsletter by the library and library partners. The library also extensively promoted the survey through its Facebook and Instagram platforms, on every page of the library website and was promoted through the Bloomfield School District and a PSA by Mayor DeBeatham-Brown. A print copy was mailed to every delivery address (10,000+) in Bloomfield. and to every visitor to the libraries. Incentives were offered to encourage participation.

The purpose of the survey was to learn more about the Bloomfield community's perceptions about the current libraries and their aspirations for the future, in order to inform library planners, which includes the 16-member Bloomfield Library Building Committee, the Town Council and the elected Bloomfield Public Library Board of Trustees. The survey was not intended to serve as a public referendum on any aspect of a future library.

- Completed by more than 1700 people (8.5% of the Bloomfield population)
- 65+ - 33%, teens and children – 30%
- Of those taking the survey, 66% (1,113) had Bloomfield Public Library cards. Another 6% (107) of respondents use cards from area libraries other than Bloomfield, 4% (72) use the library without a card and 10% (165) report that their card has expired
- At least 30% use other libraries – WH, HTFD, WIND, SIMS
- Reasons for using other libraries include easier parking, better browsing, to attend a program, better hours, and to pick up a specific book along with many comments about the preference for more modern and easier to use facilities
- When asked to select features of modern library space that may appeal to them, respondents' leading choices included a café, meeting rooms and group work rooms, group and individual study spaces, and dedicated teen space
- When asked how the libraries could be improved, approximately 756 people offered suggestions for improvements to Prosser, and 410 for McMahon with many indicating the need to improve facilities, technology, meeting space, study and workspace, programs, hours and collections
- When asked what they like most about the Bloomfield Public Libraries, the top reply was about the staff (mentioned over 420 times) Also-hours, locations, programs, engage with other people
- When asked what they liked least about the Bloomfield Libraries, the top responses related to parking, outdated and space constrained facilities, limited technology, insufficient children's space, moldy odors, old bathrooms, lack of outdoor lighting, limited accessibility, and lack of Sunday hours

- When asked about the importance of creating a fun and dynamic space in the libraries where toddlers and children can learn and socialize, 93% of respondents replied that it was somewhat or very important



More than 1,700 people completed the survey by March 7, 2021 (8.5% of the Bloomfield population). The survey was completed 100% with no dropped, or unfinished surveys reported.

What’s been learned

Our family is so grateful to the Prosser Library Staff for getting us through this pandemic in such a positive and helpful manner. We'd like to express our appreciation for your help and professionalism.

We need to think big. This is a worthy investment in the future of our town and our young people who will compete with students from surrounding affluent communities.

The Library Building Outreach Subcommittee should be pleased with the response to the survey. More than 1,700 community members shared their ideas about the future of Bloomfield’s libraries when asked. The Bloomfield Public Library staff and Board of Trustees will also use the survey information as they make decisions about the future of the library. The information from the survey will be used to inform planning for new library space, improve digital and print collections, enhance programming, and ensure that the Town of Bloomfield provides reimagined 21st century libraries to meet the needs of this and future generations.

Community engagement efforts will continue through a series of community meetings, telephone interviews and information sessions about the library project, and ultimately a concept plan for new and expanded libraries that will meet the needs of the community for many years to come.

Alan & Leslie Burger

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