

# Community Survey Results for Petoskey District Library

Survey Dates: March 25 - May 10, 2024

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# Executive Summary:

## “You’re Great, More of Everything You Do, Please”

This report contains the results of a survey conducted March 25-May 10, 2024, with 975 responses, primarily from active patrons, out of an estimated service population of 20,057, for an overall response rate of 4.86%. Analysis was conducted by the Post-Pandemic Public Library Project at the University of Michigan School of Information. Overall, respondents indicate extremely strong support for the library, its location and building, its staff, its leadership, and its collection. To quote one respondent, “You're great, more of everything you do please.”

Key findings include:

- An extremely positive response from respondents about library staff, its role for and in the community, its programs and services, and the physical location.
- A small minority of respondents expressing concern about library materials and displays.
- Repeated community concern for the area’s economic inequities, the ability for local and year-round residents to find housing and stable employment, and for revitalization of downtown.
- When prompted to suggest one change the library could make, the top category of responses was people saying that they loved the library as is and had no suggestions. Other suggestions overwhelmingly pointed to desires for even more materials and programs.

A detailed analysis follows. For more information about this project, contact [nextlevelleadership@umich.edu](mailto:nextlevelleadership@umich.edu).

# Introduction

Contemporary public libraries have a dual mission in their community: to provide information and access for all while also customizing those services to meet the needs and preferences of their local community. It is important for public libraries to regularly check in with their service population about where the library is thriving and where there may be new or previously unmet needs.

As part of the Petoskey District Library's participation in the Post-Pandemic Public Library project, the Library participated in a survey administered and analyzed by the University of Michigan School of Information in Spring 2024. The survey endeavored to gain a succinct snapshot of the users, library services, and community and library wishes of the community.

This report summarizes the findings of that survey and finds that overall, respondents were very enthusiastic about the library overall, though they had ideas about how the library could expand its services and programs. The respondents also indicated that economic strain, a need for local housing, a broad range of socioeconomic statuses, and underlying tensions about civility and civic engagement challenge the Petoskey community. Throughout this report, we lean heavily into the exact words of various community members, reprinting responses as received, rather than overrelying on summarizations that would dilute the power and import of individual responses.

The original data is available in [Google Drive](#); for more information, please contact [nextlevelleadership@umich.edu](mailto:nextlevelleadership@umich.edu).

# Methods

The survey was available to patrons in English or Spanish, both as an online survey via the Qualtrics.com platform and in paper format. All responses received were in English. Survey questions were designed by the University of Michigan School of Information (UMSI) team in consultation with similar surveys from other Michigan and U.S. public libraries. The survey was open from March 25th-May 10th. A total of 975 responses were received.

The library was charged with the distribution of the survey via the library's online presence and social media channels and making paper copies available to patrons visiting the physical library.

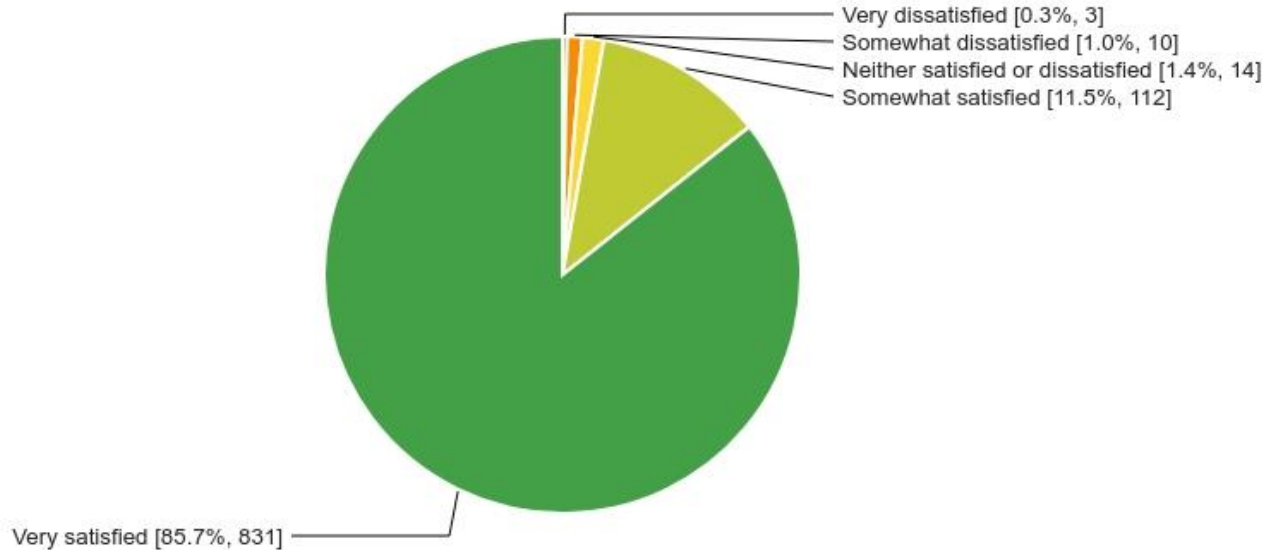
Paper survey data was manually added to Qualtrics.com platform. Analysis was conducted by the UMSI team from May to July, 2024. Analysis of quantitative data was completed automatically within the Qualtrics platform and are represented in Part I of this report. Four questions called for open-ended responses, known as qualitative data. These responses were imported into the Dedoose.com platform and analyzed first with thematic analysis to identify overarching patterns and then via content analysis to determine patterns or trends in responses and are represented in Part II of this report.

[A copy of the original data is available via Google Drive.](#)

# Part I: Quantitative Analysis

# High Overall Satisfaction with the Library

Responses to the question, "On a scale of 1 (not at all satisfied) to 5 (very satisfied), how satisfied are you with the library overall?"



Total responses: 970

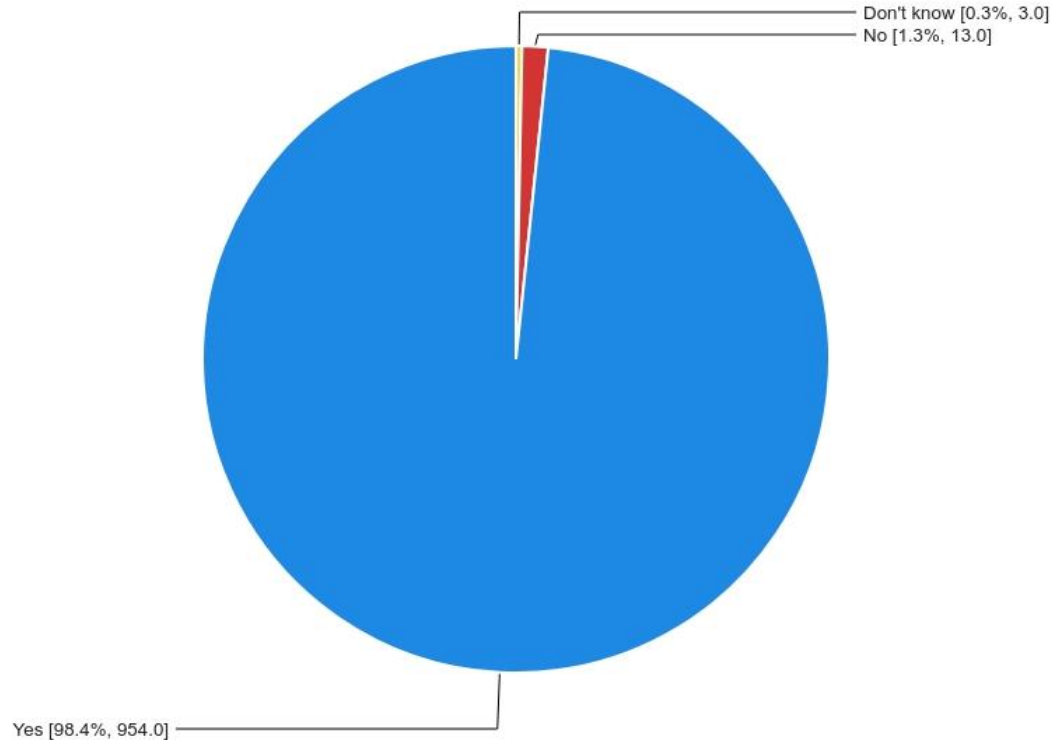
## Observations:

A resounding 97.2% of patrons reported feeling "somewhat satisfied" or "very satisfied" with the library.



# Majority of Respondents Have Library Cards

Responses to the question, "Do you have a library card?"



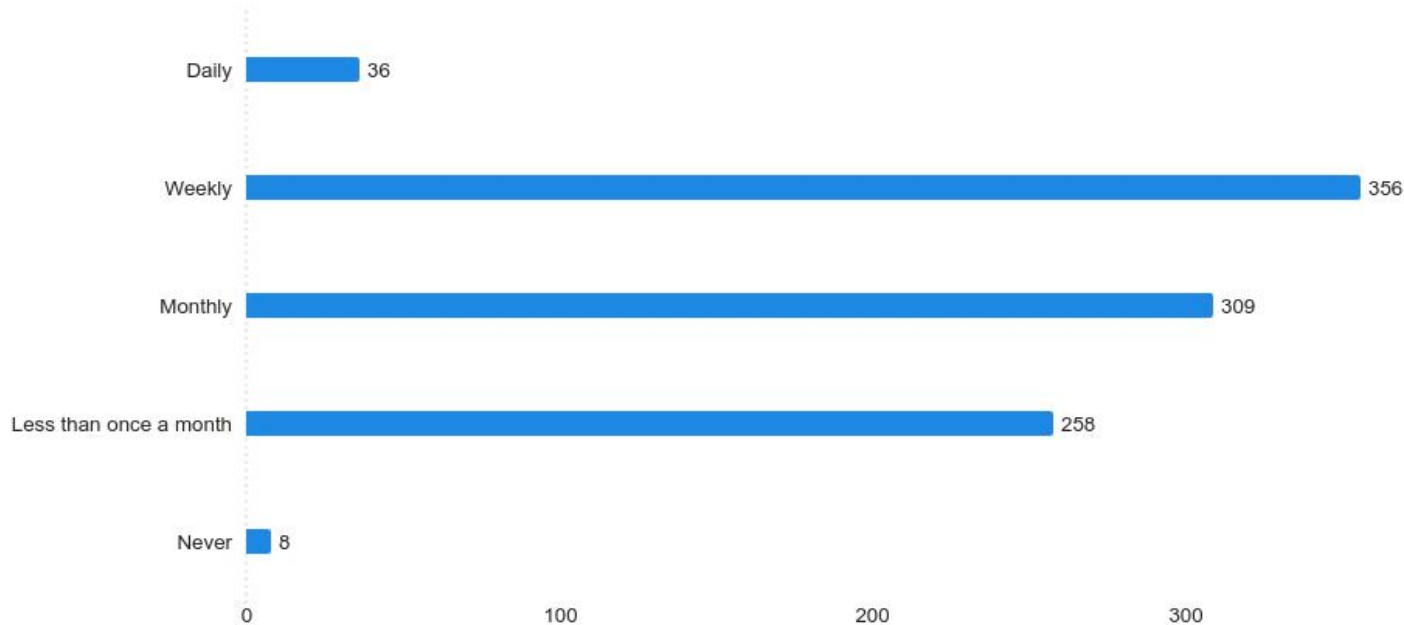
Total responses: 970

## Heads-Up:

Note that over 98% of those who responded hold library cards. This means that survey data skews toward responses from those who already use the library. One should not assume that the responses presented here are representative of the broader community. More research is needed to uncover the views of those who do not currently use the library.

# Respondents' Visit Frequency Varies

Responses to the question, "How often do you visit the library, check out materials, use its online resources, or attend library events?"

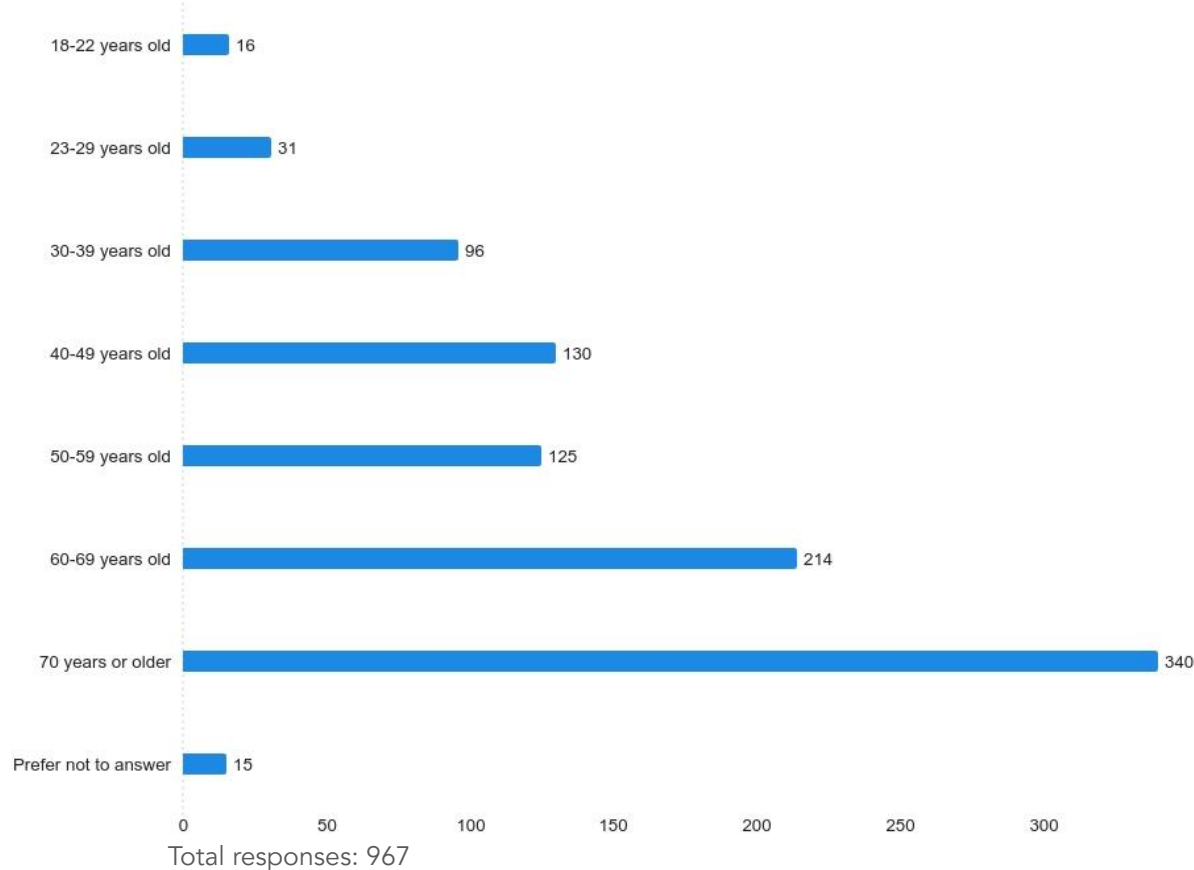


## Pro Tip:

Note that you received a good mix of weekly, monthly, and less than monthly visitors. Because they are a bit less than a third of respondents, the perspectives of less-regular or seasonal visitors may be underrepresented in these findings.

# Ages of Respondents Skew Older

Responses to the question, "What is your age?"



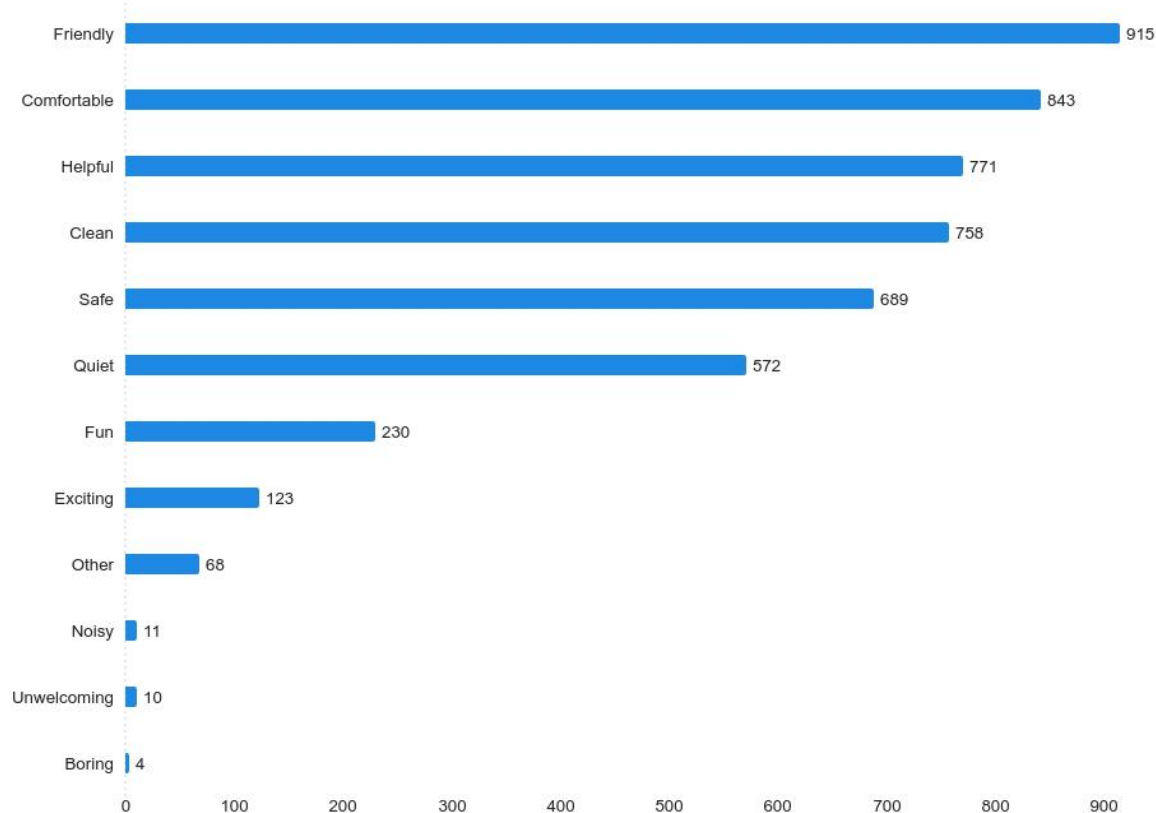
## Notes:

The survey was only to be taken by those 18 years of age or older.

Note that over half of respondents are aged 60+, which may skew results.

# Friendly and Comfortable Atmosphere

Responses to the prompt, "Check all that describe the library's atmosphere."



Total responses: 964; respondents could choose more than one answer.

**67 people marked  
"Other," adding the  
comments on the  
following pages.**

# Positive Comments for Those Responding "Other" When Asked to Describe Library Atmosphere (1 of 2)

Most of the 67 comments responded with positive descriptions of the library environment; they are listed in their entirety below and on the next page. Comments that appeared multiple times are listed once, with the number of times it was repeated noted in parentheses.

## Overall Positive Feeling (21)

- "Aesthetically pleasing"
- "Charming"
- "UNBELIEVABLE (LIKE, ITS ACTUALLY HARD TO BELIEVE A COMMUNITY RESOURCE COULD OFFER SO MUCH)"
- "A jewel in our community!"
- "Beautiful" (2)
- "Diverse"
- "Interesting" (3)
- "Cozy"
- "Useful"

*Continued in next column*

## Overall Positive Feeling (cont'd)

- "Pleasant"
- "Joyful"
- "Inspiring"
- "WONDERFUL"
- "Multi generational"
- "Enjoyable"
- "Calming"
- "Peaceful"
- "As a summer resident I am so grateful to have access to this beautiful library."

## Staff (12)

- "Good staff"
- "Great staff!"
- "Beautiful people"
- "Professional, courteous, and helpful staff"
- "All the librarians and helpers are very genuine and extremely nice."
- "Very welcoming and knowledgeable staff"
- "Helpful"
- "Service oriented"
- "Professional"
- "They do an amazing job!"
- "The Library stays uptodate with current events locally and nationally (sic)"
- "Involved in community access and education"

## Welcoming (7)

- "Very welcoming, offering programs, classes- although haven't been to as many as I would like due to timing or myself forgetting."
- "Welcoming to all"
- "Accommodating"
- "pleasing amd welcomimg (sic)"
- "Inclusive"
- "Welcoming!"
- "Welcoming"

# Positive Comments for Those Responding “Other” When Asked to Describe Library Atmosphere (2 of 2)

(continued from previous page)

## Innovative & Up-to-Date (8)

- “Innovative” (3)
- “Always up to date and innovative.”
- “Resource-full”
- “Over the top creative”
- “Creative- loan of unusual things, ukelele, fishing pole, etc”
- “Impressive”

## Youth-Oriented (5)

- Mr. Owl in children’s section!
- “Welcoming children”
- “Children's area is well stocked and arranged”
- “Fun for my 6 year old granddaughter”
- “Kid friendly”

## Online Use (5)

- “I almost exclusively use on line services”
- “On line”
- “Use online”
- “When I was able to go.”
- “Online use only”

# Critical Comments for Those Responding “Other” When Asked to Describe Library Atmosphere

10 of the 67 comments criticized the library; they are listed in their entirety below.

## Noise (3)

- It can be noisy though in the front lobby check out area, invading the periodical reading space :( “
- “Usually quiet but some infants carrying on while parent is busy”
- “It can be noisy sometimes but they have a lot of activities going on”

## Perception of Bias (5)

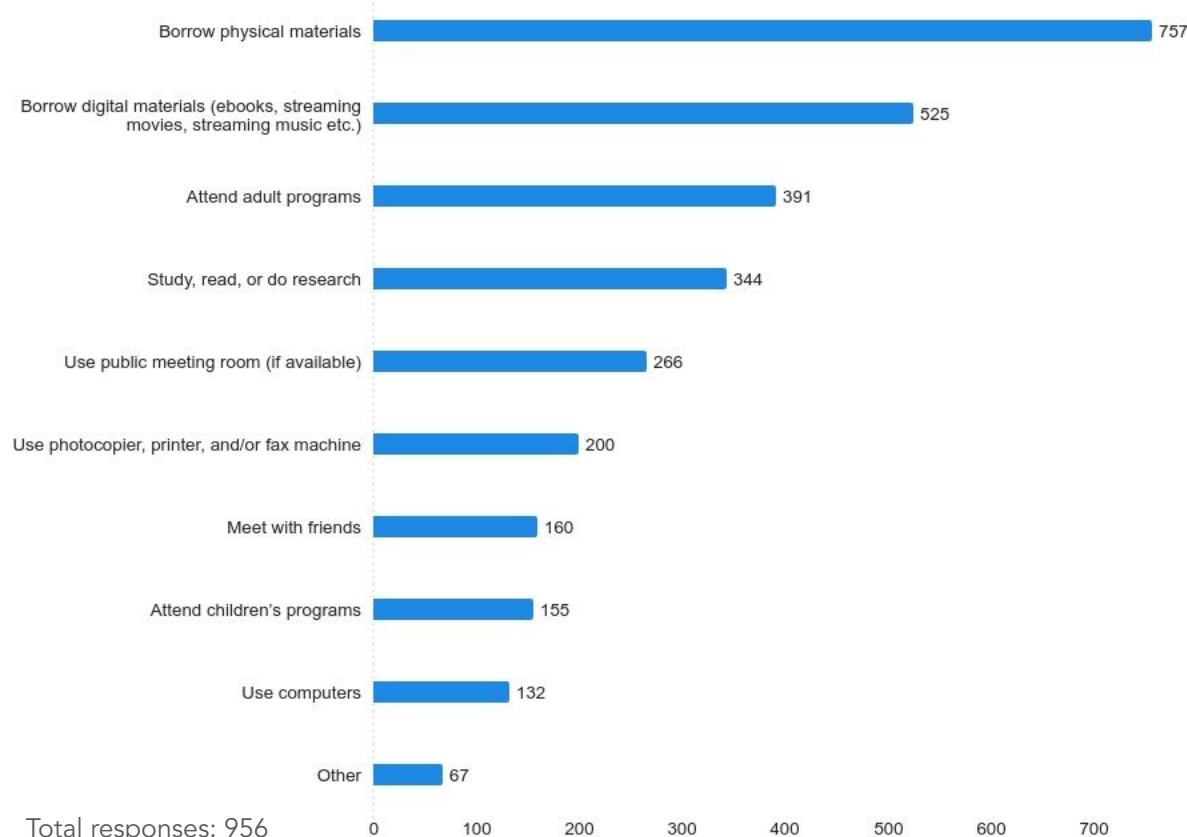
- “Culturally Marxist”
- “Inappropriate children’s section”
- “She makes decisions that should be voted on by the public the people that pay for the Public Library through taxes. Before she implements ideas that should go through the parents first.”
- “The usual self-righteous left-wing ugliness”
- “Far left and uninclusive”

## Critical: Other (2)

- “Not pet friendly”
- “”Empty”

# Both Physical and Digital Items Matter

Responses to the question, "What do you, or would you like to, use the library for?"



**67 people marked "Other,"  
adding the comments on  
the following pages.**



# Comments for Those Responding "Other" When Asked to Describe Library Use (1 of 3)

Responses are sorted by category; all responses are included here. Comments that appeared multiple times are listed once, with the number of times it was repeated noted in parentheses.

## Used Book Store / Puzzle Exchange (18)

- "Book sales" (2)
- "Buy used books"
- "Book sales trades"
- "Book sale room"
- "Use Friends book sale"
- "Visit the bookstore"
- "[B]rowse and buy at the Friends bookstore"
- "Book sale" (2)
- "[B]uy books"

## (Continued from Column 1)

- "Book sale/puzzle exchange"
- "Annual book sale, movies"
- "[S]hop at the used book store"
- "[S]hop at the book sale in the lower level"
- "Books for sale section"
- "Puzzle sharing"
- "Great Book sale"

## Youth/Teen Activities (10)

- "Kid activities"
- "Bring my grandson"
- "Communicate with Teen Staff to support PMS"
- "Use children's play space"
- "Tutor"
- "[A]ttend teen programs"
- "Kids use the Children's section"
- "Play and spend time in children's section"

*Continued in next column*

## (Continued from Column 3)

- "We love the youth resources too (3D printer, board games, jewelry, etc. Nice to have safe entertainment for teens to have independent activities"
- "[T]een area used daily by my teenagers - their favorite place! thank you!"

*Continued in next column*

# Comments for Those Responding "Other" When Asked to Describe Library Use (2 of 3)

Continued from previous page

## Library Programs and Events

(9)

- "Group classes"
- "Ukulele group"
- "Adult programming"
- "Play mahjong" (2)
- "Great Decisions" series
- "Exhibits"
- "Movie nights& other community related programs"
- "Attend events"

## Work, Read, and Research (8)

- "Research archives"
- "Hang out, read, explore ..."
- "Read periodicals"
- "Reference Valueline database and find it extremely valuable"
- "Work"
- "I work Remotely there"
- Connect with Wifi; read magazines
- "Read conservative newspaper"

## Find Materials (8)

- "Take out books"
- "Check out books"
- "[B]orrow audio books"
- "Movies"
- "More E-Books on Hoopla instead of 4"
- "I have also made use of the MeL catalog and loans through this livrary (sic)"
- "Library of stuff is awesome"
- "I rent movies and video games a lot!"

## Non-Traditional Services (5)

- 3D printing
- "Notary services"
- "Notary use"
- "Pick up tax forms"
- "Not to be overwhelmed with feminine products when I enter the library."

# Comments for Those Responding “Other” When Asked to Describe Library Use (3 of 3)

Continued from previous page

## Remote Services (3)

- “It would be great for shut-ins if the Friends program Friends at the Carnegie could be broadcast on ZOOM or recorded and offered on YouTube.”
- “Would like the Friends of the Library to put their “Friends at the Carnegie” programs on ZOOM or make available online after the event so shut ins can also enjoy (sic) them.”
- ““Book Buddies’ visits me”

## Tech Help (2)

- “Help w/ipad”
- “Have obtained computer assistance and would like to check out some of the crafting tools”

## Other (3)

- “At times, all of the above”
- “Consult with staff”
- “Ask librarians resource questions”

## Part II: Quality Ratings

# High Marks for the Quality of the Physical Collection

Responses to, "On a scale of 1 (poor) to 5 (excellent), how do you rate the quality of the following library services: Physical library collections (books, movies, video games, etc.)."

# 4.5

Average Score Out of 5

	1 = poor	2 = fair	3 = good	4 = very good	5 = Excellent
Percent	0.7%	0.9%	6.2%	29.1%	63.1%
Number Count (out of 937)	7	8	58	273	591

## Observations:

- 92.2 % of respondents described the quality of our physical collection as "very good" or "excellent."
- 98.4% of respondents described the collection as good or above.

# Mostly High Marks for the Quality of the Digital Collection

Responses to, "On a scale of 1 (poor) to 5 (excellent), how do you rate the quality of the following library services: Digital library collections (eBooks, streaming video, streaming music, etc.)."

# 4.3

Average Score Out of 5

	1 = poor	2 = fair	3 = good	4 = very good	5 = Excellent
Percent	1.4%	1.3%	14.2%	36.8%	46.3%
Number Count (out of 767)	11	10	109	282	355

## Observations:

- 83.1% gave scores of 4 or 5 to the digital collections, whereas 92.2% gave physical collections a score of 4 or 5.
- Fewer respondents rated digital collections than physical collections, which could suggest fewer patrons are familiar or comfortable with your digital offerings. For future research, consider asking more questions about desired digital materials and barriers to use.

# Over Half Rank Technology as Excellent

Responses to, "On a scale of 1 (poor) to 5 (excellent), how do you rate the quality of the following library services: Technology (computers, printers, scan, and fax)."

4.4

Average Score Out of 5

	1 = poor	2 = fair	3 = good	4 = very good	5 = Excellent
Percent	0.9%	1.1%	10.3%	33.7%	54.1%
Number Count (out of 662)	6	7	68	223	358

## Observations:

- 87.8% of respondents gave scores of 4 or 5 to technology.
- Technology received the fewest number of ratings from survey respondents. In further surveys or patron conversations, it may be useful to further delve into how scores could be improved and satisfaction raised.

# Nearly 60% Rate Library Programs and Events as Excellent

Responses to, "On a scale of 1 (poor) to 5 (excellent), how do you rate the quality of the following library services: Library events & programs."



	1 = poor	2 = fair	3 = good	4 = very good	5 = Excellent
Percent	1.5%	2.7%	8.7%	27.8%	59.3%
Number Count (out of 805)	12	22	70	224	477

**Observations:**

- 87.1% of respondents gave scores of 4 or 5 to library programs and events. In future research or conversations with patrons, it may be useful to gather more information about perceived programming needs, availability, hours, and topics. For more feedback on library programs, services, and events, see Part III.



# Staff's Customer Service is Outstanding

Responses to, "On a scale of 1 (poor) to 5 (excellent), how do you rate the quality of the following library services: Staff's customer service."

# 4.8

Average Score Out of 5

	1 = poor	2 = fair	3 = good	4 = very good	5 = Excellent
Percent	1.5%	0.6%	2.2%	9.1%	86.6%
Number Count (out of 927)	14	6	20	84	803

## Observations:

- 86.6% of respondents rated customer service as "excellent," and 95.7% of respondents rated customer service as "very good" or "excellent."
- 97.9% of respondents rated customer service as "good" or above.
- This was your highest rated service area. This suggests that patrons enjoy interacting with your staff and appreciate the service they provide the community.

# High Trust in Staff's Selection of Materials

Responses to, "On a scale of 1 (poor) to 5 (excellent), how do you rate the quality of the following library services: Staff's ability to select materials to include in the library collection."

# 4.5

Average Score Out of 5

	1 = poor	2 = fair	3 = good	4 = very good	5 = Excellent
Percent	1.5%	1.4%	6.3%	22.9%	67.9%
Number Count (out of 798)	12	11	50	183	542

## Observations:

- At a time when library collections have been criticized at a national level, an average score of 4.5 should be seen as a sign that the library's collection decision-making correlates strongly with community wants and needs.
- 90.8% of respondents reported that the staff's ability to select materials was "very good" or "excellent."
- More than 2/3 of respondents described the staff's ability to select materials as excellent.

# Building Facility Is Excellent

Responses to, “On a scale of 1 (poor) to 5 (excellent), how do you rate the quality of the following library services: Building facility and maintenance.”

4.7

Average Score Out of 5

	1 = poor	2 = fair	3 = good	4 = very good	5 = Excellent
Percent	1.3%	0.7%	2.6%	14.3%	81.1%
Number Count (out of 910)	12	6	24	130	738

**Observations:**

- More than 80% of respondents rated library building and facilities as “excellent.”
- 95.4% of respondents rated library building and facilities as “very good” or “excellent.”
- This was your second highest rated service area. This suggest that your patrons enjoy spending time in the library’s physical environment. Additional information about the library facility is available in Part III.

## Part III: Qualitative Analysis

# Goals of Open-Ended Questions

The survey asked four open-ended questions (see Appendix A). 782 people responded to at least one of these questions.

The first two open-ended questions focused on community needs and desires:

- Complete the sentence: The biggest challenge my community is facing right now is...
- Complete the sentence: One thing that would make my community an even more amazing place to live would be...

These questions, while not specifically focused on the library, were designed to elicit responses to help the library inform its collections, services, and programs. The responses in the following pages should not be seen as a library's to-do list; the library leadership and board may find that some articulated needs are outside the scope, mission, budget, or capability of the institution. However, there may be some community wishes or needs that can be addressed, at least in part, by making changes to library collections, services, or programs.

The second pair of questions did focus directly on libraries:

- What is the best thing about your community's library?
- If you could change one thing about your community's library, what would it be?

These questions were intended to surface the everyday positives that occur in Petoskey's library. Positive responses can be excerpted in social media posts, shared with staff and board at meetings to boost morale, and as an acknowledgement of the overall good work of the institution. The final question gives patrons a chance to suggest a change that would improve the library for them.

Major themes are shared, with accompanying quotes, in the pages that follow. Our intent in this section is to show concepts/topics that recurred repeatedly in the responses, not to list out each response. Thus, a complete set of all open-ended responses can be found in the full spreadsheet linked at the end of this document.

# Community Challenges: Major Themes

Responses to, “Complete the sentence: The biggest challenge my community is facing right now is...”

This open-ended response provided a wide range of responses; for this report, we will discuss the top 8 themes in respondents’ perceptions of the key challenge facing the Petoskey area:

1. Affordable Housing
2. Economic Concerns
3. Politics and Divisiveness
4. Business Needs: Downtown Development, Parking, and Desired Businesses
5. Child Care
6. Community Cohesion
7. Calls to Remove Library Books
8. Community Access to Reliable Information and Local Journalism

On the next pages, we will unpack each theme. Note that while we had 665 people respond to at this open-ended question, they sometimes provided more than one answer, so the total number of responses across themes may exceed the total number of respondents.

# Community Challenge #1: Affordable Housing

385 of the 655 respondents (58.9%) named affordable housing as the top community challenge. Respondents cited access to convenient, affordable permanent and rental housing, particularly for young families, low-wage workers, year-round residents and support and service workers (e.g., hospital staff, service workers, fire fighters, etc.) who otherwise travel long distances. Some resentment about unchecked growth, and the impact of AirBnB and other rental properties on availability of affordable housing for locals, also surfaced in responses. Representative quotes include:

- “[A] housing crisis. A microcosm of the America (sic), our local leaders are older and do not have their pulse on the issues affecting younger voters.”
- “[A]ffordable housing for those who are attempting to work and live in the community.”
- “[T]he high cost of housing and general inflation while wealthy non-community members buy and develop land.”
- “Housing and community cohesiveness”
- “[A]ffordable housing...too many vacation homes and rentals.”

## Community Challenge #2: Economic Concerns

96 of 655 respondents (14.7%) respondents named the economy as Petoskey's key challenge, raising concerns about wages, affordability, inflation, rapid growth, the impact of climate and weather changes, community amenities priced for wealthier tourists than less-wealthy locals, and discomfort with seasonal fluctuations in employment and income. Representative quotes include:

- "Shortage of affordable housing and income inequality."
- "[O]ver building of hotel's (sic) & condominiums"
- "[S]ocial and economic disparities"
- "[S]tagnation of growth and an inability/unwillingness to attract full time residents"
- "Price of living, buying goods, etc."
- "Financial challenges for young, working families"
- "Winter commerce. The lack of precipitation in the winter months is causing the region to lose a significant amount of income."
- "Lack of help and loosing (sic) stores that I loved."
- " The consolidation of wealth among a small proportion of residents in a popular tourist destination, leading the wealthy to treat housing as part of an investment portfolio rather than an inalienable human right and squeezing people with fewer economic resources right out of their homes. It should be criminal to treat shelter as just another investment."



## Community Challenge #3: Politics and Divisiveness

47 of the 655 respondents (7.2%) named politics and divisiveness as Petoskey's key challenge. Both left-leaning (23% of responses) and right-leaning comments (11%) were shared, though the predominant response (66%) was merely to note that politics and division broadly are large community concerns. Representative quotes include:

### No Political Stance Shared: (31 of 47 responses)

- "How to navigate divisive ideals"
- "Lack of respect/compassion, political divisiveness"
- "The failure of balance on some topics. Climate change is NOT settled science it is a discussion of trade offs in a world that needs reliable energy and a healthy environment. Polarized screamers seldom find balance or solutions. Abortion, God, Statists vs. Libertarians, etc. I'd love to see more respectful dialogue on hot topics. Not to change minds; but to build skills in respectful dialogue."
- "[M]isinformation coming from common internet places that people use"
- "Certain groups trying to infringe their thoughts on to others. Groups not being respectful to others different from them."

### Left-Leaning Response Samples (11 of 47 responses)

- "[T]oo many Trump supporters"
- "Political divisiveness and distrust of educated professionals"

### Right-Leaning Response Samples (5 of 47 responses)

- "Political - too woke."
- "Controlled demolition of Western society through means of leftist dystopianism"

## Community Challenge #4: Business Needs: Downtown Development, Parking, and Desired Businesses

35 respondents (5.3%) raised the state of downtown Petoskey as the top community challenge, seeking occupied storefronts, a solution to “The Hole,” and a request for particular businesses or business types. The most common concern (14 respondents) was a call to improve parking, including a small number who suggested elimination of parking meters. Representative quotes include:

- “Parking downtown and the big ugly hole in the entrance to our beautiful town !”
- “Parking, keeping businesses in downtown and consistency between store hours for businesses downtown”
- “Lack of help and loosing (sic) stores that I loved”
- “One person with a huge grudge against the city for not getting his way in developing ‘the hole’”
- “Dealing with many vacant stores downtown”
- “[P]ush for rezoning impacting the quaintness of the city”
- “Need a department store like Pennys or Target”
- “[P]arking meters in Petoskey”
- “Parking, keeping businesses in downtown and consistency between store hours for businesses downtown”
- “[H]aving sufficient parking for patrans (sic) of the library as many people use the library parking spaces who are not going to the library!”

## Community Challenge #5: Child Care

31 respondents (4.7%) named child care or day care as Petoskey's leading challenge. Most responses merely stated "Child care" without adding elaborating details. Interestingly, no respondent mentioned eldercare as a key community challenge. Calls for child care were often given in combination with other economic needs, such as good jobs, affordable housing, and general affordability. Representative quotes include:

- "Lack of affordable child care. (More a personal issue, but community desperately needs this)."
- "Affordable housing, more childcare options, more transparency and help towards job finding and seasonality"
- "Daycare for young families."
- "Childcare/early child programs and affordable housing"

## Community Challenge #6: Community Cohesion

24 respondents (3.7%) raised concerns about a reduced sense of community. These comments sometimes – but did not always – overlap with political sentiments and sometimes alluded to societal and economic tensions between tourists, vacation homeowners, and year-round locals. Representative quotes include:

- “Deteriorating respect for family life, for neighbors/others, and for community.”
- Providing a friendly feel as far as the actual town goes. It seems that local people, especially ones who do not have as much money, are alienated at best, and the town governing bodies seems to be more interested in the wealthy and the transient vacationers than actual community focused, this is not specifically to the library but more so as a political governing field of the town in general”
- “[B]uilding community connections”
- “[I]solation”
- “Engaging peopled (sic) all ages to spend time in town”
- “Disconnect from each other. We are all so tied to our phones and we are quickly losing sight of the things and connections that genuinely matter”
- “Finding ways to deal with the influx of tourists and short-term renters while continuing to feel like a community”
- “Not enough people talking face to face”
- “[L]earning how to truly listen and hear one another.”

## Community Challenge #7: Calls to Remove Library Books

18 respondents (2.7%) identified book challenges or calls for books to be removed from the library as the community's key challenge. (Note: Respondents who argue in favor of limiting the contours of the collection are discussed later in this report, and their perspective was not identified as a major theme for this question.) Representative quotes include:

- "A minority of a few people who want LGBTQ materials hidden"
- "People challenging the books offered and the programs the library presents that focus on underserved communities"
- "A political change that would defund public programs or limit free access to written materials/[p]rograms"
- "Ensuing we have access to all diverse subjects and that zero books are banned. Let parents filter that out."
- "As far as the library goes, pressures from a small but vocal minority to impose their views and so-called (sic) values on the library collection and on librarians."
- "Book banning"
- "Please do no (sic) ban books!"
- "[R]esisting the urge to place restrictions on library materials (ie: book banning, world events and inclusivity). We need to make sure that all remains available at the library."
- "Extremists trying to destroy our communities, like public schools and libraries. They don't want other views expressed, nor to they want to pay taxes for government services."
- "Residents threatening to restrict or ban books"

## Community Challenge #8: Community Access to Reliable Information and Local Journalism

14 respondents (2.1%) expressed concern about how the loss of local journalism, access to inappropriate materials, misinformation, or lack of knowledge was impacting the quality of decisionmaking in the Petoskey community. Representative quotes include:

- "Protecting children from woke and inappropriate talk, publications, and media."
- "I'm not sure, but I think it's a lack of knowledge of what is really happening to our state and country."
- "Being able to think critically and decipher truth apart from opinions."
- "Staying steady through the storm of disinformation from extremists due to the lack of local papers and media bias."
- "Political misinformation"
- "No local newspaper"
- "Access to accurate, factual information."
- "Lack of awareness of world problems."
- "Ubiquitous ignorance"
- "[M]isinformation coming from common internet places that people use"

## Wishes for the Community: Major Themes

The second open-ended question asked participants to, “Complete the sentence: One thing that would make my community an even more amazing place to live would be ...” Many of the responses echoed responses given to the earlier question of the greatest community challenge; for example, many who identified housing as the key community challenge identified housing as the key way to improve their community. But some respondents used this space to identify specific desired businesses, programs, or services, as well as community “vibes” such as more support for diversity and inclusivity and overall commitment to community. 562 people responded to this question; the top 8 themes are outlined below and will be explored in the next section.

1. Affordable Housing
2. More To Do, Especially Cultural Activities
3. Economic Improvements
4. Desired Businesses
5. Diversity / Inclusivity
6. Improvements to Downtown (tie)  
Parking (tie)  
Civility and Tolerance (tie)

## Desired Community Change #1: Affordable Housing

Echoing responses to the first open-ended question, 126 respondents (22.4% of all responses) felt that more affordable housing would be the most important change the community could make to become “more amazing.” We also notice the need for affordable housing surface in two minor themes: need for better local transportation (23 respondents) and more affordable child care (16 respondents) as affordable housing becomes further and further away from downtown amenities and daily time away from family increases. Representative quotes include:

- “Housing and transportation”
- “Adequate housing and opportunities for all”
- “If there were enough affordable, quality places to live for the people who work here year-round”
- “[A]ffordable housing for staff like nurses who drive an hour each way to work”
- “More investment in the working poor: Public transit, affordable housing, subsidized day care.”
- “If there was more affordable housing available and more, as well as affordable daycare options”
- “More income base (sic) housing to focus on the people who live here year round and not just the seasonal/ tourist who visit here who can afford the higher price housing.”
- “Affordable housing, more childcare options, more transparency and help towards job finding and seasonality”
- “Public transportation for those who don't have. Also for worker to be able to have jobs in the downtown area and not be targeted by the parking meter people.”
- “Convenient transportation from outlying townships to the downtown.”



## Desired Community Change #2: More to Do, Particularly Cultural Events (1 of 2)

92 respondents (16.4%) said that more community-based programs would make Petoskey an even more amazing place to live, displaying eagerness for more activities and things to do, manifesting in the number of responses requesting additional community programs or events (70 responses), especially cultural activities (22 responses) such as concerts, movies, or art displays. Of particular interest was non-alcohol-based activities and spaces for young adults (aged 18-22-ish). Representative quotes include:

- “[O]pportunities to connect in a meaningful way”
- “Free classes and learning programs”
- “more events for DINKWADs” [dual-income couples with dogs, no children]
- “More activities for families in the winter. An indoor playground, roller rink, trampoline park, a small children's museum. Something that would allow children to run around and have fun while parents can mingle. The field house doesn't open until noon and is prohibitively expensive.”
- “More art and culture. Bring back community events that have gone (spring open house, art walk, Petoskey Rocks).”
- “Beyond work and home there's no where else to go. Im 20 and can't go to bars to meet people or other "adult" meetings. There's no where to exist that isn't our own home or work, again diminishing meaningful experiences and connections”
- “more programming for young adults (ages 20-40). There's a lot for older adults and kids, but young adults can be quite isolated.”

For specific cultural event requests, please see the following page.

## Desired Community Change #2: More to Do, Particularly Cultural Events (2 of 2)

Desired cultural events included the following suggestions:

- "[L]ive music on the weekends"
- "Christian concerts"
- "Public indoor/outdoor dance events where easy dances are taught"
- "Greater emphasis on the arts"
- "Children's museum"
- "[M]ore music and free art involvement ezperiences (sic)"
- "Theater downtown"
- "Have some art exhibits at the library and curate art for that"

## Desired Community Change #3: Economic Improvements

Echoing responses to the first open-ended question, 100 respondents (17.8%) hoped for economic improvements on the personal and community level, with 16 of those focusing on child care. Concern about seasonality of jobs, hiring, and the viability of raising families on incomes from available jobs wove throughout these responses, as did recommendations for specific businesses. Representative quotes include:

- “Better economic opportunity or cheaper options”
- “[N]arrowing the gap between the haves and the have-nots”
- “More reasons for younger (unmarried without children) people to feel drawn to stay or come settle here. It’s a fantastic place to raise a family if you have already met your partner!”
- “A well-thought out growth plan based upon the expressed desires of the whole community.”
- “Livable wages”
- “If things were affordable for the local working class and not just tourists.”
- “Affordable housing, more childcare options, more transparency and help towards job finding and seasonality”
- “[L]ess of an extreme disparity with socioeconomic status”

## Desired Community Change #4: Desired Businesses

58 respondents (10.3% of all responses) identified specific business names or types of businesses as something that would make their community an even greater place to live. This includes 20 people who specifically asked for a community recreation center (e.g., YMCA or similar).

### Desired Amenities:

- "More quality retail we have enough big box stores"
- "Affordable amenities for locals"
- "Downtown Convention Center"

### Community Recreation Center

- "More family friendly attractions playgrounds, splash pads, outdoor amusement and indoor options to allow children to play"
- "Dog park"
- "Someplace like a YMCA with a pool and indoor recreation and affordable programs for all ages."
- "[I]f it had a state-of-the-art swimming facility available for students and the community."

### Restaurants

- "A great sushi restaurant"
- "Getting JC Penny's back and more stores filled up."
- "A Mexican restaurant across the street from the library"
- "A Qdoba's restaurant"
- "[G]ood Chinese restaurant"
- "Fewer bars / pubs / opportunities to consume alcohol (sic)"
- "Chick Fil A"
- "Family restaurants"

### Stores

- "Trader Joe's"
- "Whole Foods"
- "An independent art supply store"
- "Movie theater"
- "Better shopping...clothing,furniture, specialtiy (sic) shops, men's retail"

## Desired Community Change #5: Community of Care

36 respondents (6.4%) shared that they believed the community would be a better place to live if it embraced more perspectives and demonstrated acceptance for others. Diversity and inclusion were defined widely, including welcoming younger families, those of other religions, and stories from groups whose stories may not be widely known. Representative quotes include:

- "A meeting of minds a sense of community and caring for each other a sense of purpose to create a better environment for everyone."
- "[G]reater acceptance of others, regardless of race, color, sexual orientation, religious beliefs"
- "Celebrations of our community members/groups that are underserved"
- "[A] more inclusive sense of community"
- "Diversity of thought and background"
- "Inclusive opportunities"
- "Caring community"
- "Diversity" (2)
- "More diversity" (3)
- "Acceptance of different (sic)"
- "[M]ore diversity and inclusion"
- "More acceptance of science and diversity"
- "More young families and greater ethnic diversity"
- "Greater diversity"
- "More diversity exposure"
- "[D]iversity and inclusivity"

## Desired Community Change #6 (tie): Downtown Development

Three categories (downtown development, parking, and the tenor of community engagement) tied as the sixth most amazing change community members hope for, with 28 respondents (5%) noting each topic. Key issues involve questions of absentee landlords, development of “the hole,” and affordability/access.\* Representative quotes include:

- “[D]owntown development and business diversification and the development of a large vacant property at the entrance to the downtown.”
- “[M]aintaining building height restrictions - keeping small town atmosphere”
- “a more vibrant downtown by eliminating empty storefronts”
- “Downtown business properties owned by local landlords or owners.”
- “Getting JC Penny's back and more stores filled up.”
- “ Fewer absentee landlords who do not take care of their buildings and let them sit vacant.”
- “Green open space in ‘the pit’”
- “Complete the eyesore development of the real estate making the big hole at Lake and Petoskey Streets.”
- “If all of the store fronts in downtown could be rented, and the frenzy to turn everything into condos or rentals could be curbed.”

\* Note that desired changes to parking and hopes for specific businesses are recorded elsewhere in this section.

## Desired Community Change #6 (tie): Parking

Parking emerges not only here but throughout the open-ended responses as a key concern of respondents, both in community-focused and library-focused questions. 28 respondents (5%) specifically drew out parking policy as a means of improving Petoskey in responding to this question, either advocating for additional parking or by removing parking meters. A very small number of respondents (not a number significant enough to emerge as a major theme) advocated for a less car-centric community. Representative quotes include:

- "Remove parking meters from downtown"
- "[A] welcoming and friendly field as far as parking and the parking ambassador energy goes"
- "[F]ree parking, and if not free parking for everyone, at least for locals, year around. (With some kind of a pass we could buy annually and leave on our dash, for instance). It's pretty ridiculous we can't park for free at the library (a friend just got an expensive ticket at the 15 minute spot for being a few minutes behind schedule)"
- "Free or less expensive parking downtown."
- "[G]etting rid of the parking meters which makes our community look cheap compared to others"
- "More parking without the meters!"

## Desired Community Change #6 (tie): Civility and Tolerance

28 respondents (5%) expressed a desire for more community connectedness, civility, discourse, and discussion. Sometimes, the respondents identified particular groups, but more often they expressed a general desire for more community grace and listening. Representative quotes include:

- "Mindfulness of others."
- "Grace"
- "Listening to each and showing care for each other"
- "A true civic, and civil dialogue on current issues. Far less aggression from people aligned with MAGA."
- "[I]f there was less division and more unity behind a common righteous goal"
- "Acceptance, civility and less polarizing rhetoric"
- "[I]f people would be more polite and kind to each other."
- "More community building"
- "A meeting of minds a sense of community and caring for each other a sense of purpose to create a better environment for everyone."
- "A better understanding of what it means to come together to help those less fortunate."
- "Ways to bring people Together"
- "[G]reater acceptance of others, regardless of race, color, sexual orientation, religious beliefs"
- "More community involvement in our local governments"
- "Less wealth disparity, less dependence on tourism, more village-ing one another, more centering of local gifts and skills."



## Best Aspects of the Library: Major Themes

The third open-ended question asked participants, “What is the best thing about your community’s library?” The goal of this question was to discover what was already working well in the library that community members value most. It is clear from the data that the respondents deeply value many aspects of the library, from its collection to its historic building to the people who staff it. Despite being asked to share *the best thing*, we found that many respondents shared multiple favorite aspects of the library. Based on 702 responses, the top 8 themes are outlined below and will be explored in the next section:

1. Staff
2. Facility
3. Collection
4. Services and Programs
5. General Atmosphere
6. Ease of Access and Use
7. Library’s Role in the Community
8. Library’s Support for Youth

## Best Aspect of the Library #1: Staff

288 respondents (41% of all responses) described the staff, including director Val Meyerson, as the best part of the library. Those surveyed complimented the staff's expertise, innovation, leadership, customer service, and demeanor, consistent with the average customer service rating of 4.8 out of 5 described in Part I of this report. Representative quotes include:

- "Customer Service! The entire staff is extremely helpful and friendly!"
- "It's such a lovely, inviting space with bountiful resources. The first time I visited -- after moving to Petoskey from a smaller town with a dinky, musty library and cranky head librarian -- I was unexpectedly moved to tears because it fed such a deep-seated hunger. The space and the staff were so welcoming."
- "The indefatigable leadership of Val Meyerson!"
- "I call them my personal shopper. If I'm looking for a book, all I have to do is get online and reserve it. Or if they don't have it, they will get it for me."
- "I love the Petoskey library. It's a refuge. The staff are so friendly and the place genuinely feels so well run."
- "Friendly, helpful staff everywhere..."
- "The Director and Staff! Always smiling, ready to help you find something in the library. And if they can't, they at least give you suggestions of other places to investigate."
- "The super-helpful and friendly librarians I encounter at the main desk."

## Best Aspect of the Library #2: Facility

197 respondents (28.1%) felt the facility, its downtown location, its historic architecture, and its cleanliness were the best part of the library. 27 specifically referenced the youth area. Representative quotes include:

- "The building is beautiful and the children's and teen sections are great"
- "The different floors that offer specific things! I was encouraged to explore the library as a child, and nothing entices a child more than a brightly lit, welcoming space full of interesting things."
- "It is great and local and in our downtown area and can walk to."
- "The children's area is a great spot to meet up with friends or meet new friends. My toddlers enjoy the easy access to board books and toys that rotate out."
- "It is beautiful, clean, accessible, great location, I need to use it more."
- "The teen zone is pretty epic"
- "Welcomes everyone. Located right down town and is beautiful to look at"
- "My kids use it all the time - sometimes it's to hang out or study after school and many times it's for a teen activity"
- "It's a safe, quiet place for people of all ages to find a book or to study. As a parent of teenagers who like to meet with friends to study at the library, I feel very comfortable with them there alone."
- "[E]verything! I love that it has multiple floors, it's nice and spacious, tons of selection"
- "There are many great things about the library, including but not limited to the cleanliness, natural lighting, friendly helpful customer service and selection of materials."

## Best Aspect of the Library #3: Collection

158 respondents (22.5%) identified the collection – physical items, digital materials, and things to interact with in the library – as the best part of the library. In addition, we found 30 times in which respondents valued the materials available to them from other libraries via inter-library loan (the statewide MelCat system). Representative quotes include:

- “Plenty of stuff for the kids to do while I look for books. The librarians are all knowledgeable. Quality educational materials and resources.”
- “Selection and convenience”
- “Great selection of books! The staff is friendly and I like reading reviews of books on the Petoskey District Library site”
- “Accessibility and quality of materials”
- “I love going to the library.....I love books of all kinds and they always have what I am looking for.”
- “The up to date resources/books they have or get.”
- “If I cannot get the book I need in one location, the interlibrary loan works very fast and easy.”

## Best Aspect of the Library #4: Services and Programs

130 respondents (18.5%) identified the library's services (e.g., community outreach) and programs (e.g., events and activities) as the best part of the library. Representative quotes include:

- "They have great events/classes/activities for all ages. They do a great job with the children's program. Their staff is trained in CPR."
- "[N]ice free evening educational programs offered from friends of library (sic)"
- "Programs and events. Recently, the solar eclipse event and activities"
- "The teen program, my child was there often during his high school years and the staff is very supportive, accepting and understanding."
- "I am amazed at the level of technology and the programs available for all age ranges."
- "The interesting and informative programs they present on-site and at the Carnegie Building, combined with the high quality, friendly, helpful staff."
- "Diverse programs"
- "It continues to strive to improve. It provides opportunities for customers to share ideas and concerns. Caring staff make adjustments when needed and create amazing opportunities for visitors."

## Best Aspect of the Library #5: General Atmosphere

63 responses (9.0%) pointed out that the general atmosphere of the library is its strong suit. Sometimes, these responses did overlap with assessments of the staff's friendliness and the overall experience of being in the building. Notably, we observed that 27 respondents referred to the library using the words "welcome" or "welcoming" and 13 referred to the space as "safe." Representative quotes include:

- "Sense of community and belonging when you are there."
- "It is a peaceful place to go and browse."
- "It's a welcoming, friendly, and comfortable environment"
- "It's a great place to get lost in thoughts, misc. collections, and connect w. the outside world (from local community to the World)."
- "A very pleasant place to visit and hang out"
- "Well, it's a beautiful space to behold with super friendly people and interesting activities, also it seems like a safe place for people."
- "The staff is always friendly and helpful and genuinely happy to be there. The atmosphere is everything one wants in a space—safe, accessible, catered to lots of different wants/needs."
- "Safe, calming environment with beautiful nature lighting which is welcoming"
- "[S]mall town atmosphere where everyone is treated with compassion and dignity"
- "Let's (sic) me connect with friends and provides a quiet place to study and work"

## Best Aspect of the Library #6: Ease of Access and Use

53 responses (7.5%) identified ease of use and accessibility as the best aspect of the library. Many respondents found that including and beyond its downtown location, the library systems were easy and convenient to navigate and use. Note that there was little elaboration on the answers, with most respondents using only a few words. Representative quotes include:

- "Being able to check out a book & have it sent to another location. Returning a borrowed book to any location. No late fees! Being able to extend a loaned book by text!"
- "Selection and convenience"
- "Easy access"
- "Access to materials"
- "[V]ariety of resources & access to them"
- "Convenient"
- "How easy it is to use and the wealth of materials that can be borrowed"
- "It is easy to access and use"
- "That I have the ability to order books online"
- " I appreciate the library and ability to check out books for both my children and I. But I most often use the online resources because it's so convenient and easy."
- "It is there! It is open! Pmease (sic) keep it there and open."

## Best Aspect of the Library #7: Library's Role in the Community

35 respondents (5.0%) identified the library's role within the community as its best trait. Overall, these respondents expressed pleasure that the library is so aware of and responsive to community needs, that the library is visible within the community, and that the community is better because of the library.

Representative quotes include:

- "What an amazing resource for those of us without and for those of us who want a rich community!"
- "It is an amazing community resource with excellent staff, programming (tutoring, etc), a staff that is friendly, directorship that understands how a library serves the community, a lovely building located in a part of town convenient to all. What a treasure!"
- "That it is adaptive and community-minded"
- "Community engagement"
- " Its involvement in so many community programs and events"
- "They are a part of the community, offering many services beyond book borrowing."
- "It focuses on the community"
- "A can do spirit thinking broadly about our community interests and needs."
- "I believe they are proactive in the community and trying to instill a sense of community in Petoskey"
- "I love how the library serves as a community hub for such a diverse array of events."
- "It is just a great, beloved, outgoing community institution!"
- "Has become a community center/hub"
- "Their mission and engagement with the community. Also the staff!"



## Best Aspect of the Library #8: Contribution to Youth

27 respondents (3.8%) identified services and resources for youth as the best part of the library. Representative quotes include:

- "The children's area. I appreciate them changing the games and activities out regularly"
- " Solid Children's programming"
- "The children's programs."
- "The children's area is a great spot to meet up with friends or meet new friends. My toddlers enjoy the easy access to board books and toys that rotate out."
- "The Book Buddy program"
- "The Growing Readers Together program!"
- "My family and I are summer visitors to Bay View and the Petoskey Library is always an important and vibrant part of our summer experience. We love this library (the staff, the collections, the availability of computers, the programs - both children and adults, the July book sale, the labyrinth and more!) We have fond memories of their awesome Harry Potter event, walking the labyrinth with my mother-in-law, childrens programs with my daughter, and the great collection of print books that I've checked out through the years, even participating in their summer reading bingo and helping at the book sale. The staff is always welcoming and helpful and even though we are not part of the permanent community they have always made us feel welcome and supported. I'm a former public librarian from MD and I give the Petoskey an A+++++++"
- "It is so family oriented. The programs and events to support children of all ages are wonderful."

# Suggestions for Library Improvement: Major Themes

The fourth and final open-ended question asked participants, “If you could change one thing about your community’s library, what would it be?” The goal of this question was to surface areas where the library could refine or customize services to better support the broad needs of its community. Surprisingly, the top theme that emerged was patrons telling the library that they liked it as is and nothing needed to change! Based on 506 responses, the top 8 themes are outlined below and will be explored in the next section:

1. Nothing!
2. Collection Growth, Especially Digital Materials
3. More Programs At More Hours
4. Refinements to the Library Facility (tie)  
Library Parking (tie)
6. Perceptions that the Library is Biased
7. Refinements to Library Technology

# Library Improvement #1: Nothing!

146 respondents (26.1% of responses) offered that they found the library met their needs already, that they could think of nothing to change, or that no changes were needed. This is a strong indication that the library's leadership is taking action that benefits the majority of its patrons. Representative quotes include:

- "I have no suggestions. I am nothing but grateful."
- "Not sure at this time I could think of something."
- "Can't think of a thing"
- " I can't think of anything off the top of my head."
- "Nothing. But staff should remain open and curious to programs other library systems in other locations/states offer, and partner with them when possible and cost-effective."
- "Nothing. Petoskey public library is exemplary."
- "Not sure. I am happy the way it is."
- "We love the library. I don't have an idea to change"
- "Nothing. You are doing an outstanding job. Well done and congratulations."
- "I can't think of anything. They are way out ahead of my expectations!"
- "Nothing, it serves its purpose as is."
- "There's nothing I would change. They understand our community and listen to it's needs."
- " It meets my needs so I cannot imagine it falling short for anyone else in this community."

## Library Improvement #2: Collection Growth, Especially Digital Materials (1 of 2)

122 respondents (21.4%) hoped for the collection to be expanded. The tenor of majority the responses is, “More, please!” with some exceptions. (Further exceptions will be explored later in this section.) 60 of those respondents hoping for expanded digital offerings, which will be discussed on the following page. Representative quotes include:

### Formats and Content (General)

- “Keep wholesome reading material”
- “Acquiring quality literature”
- “More selections on health and wellness”
- “More new best sellers”
- “That it would have every book in a series.”
- “Maybe a section with classic books. Or a better understanding on my part to find them”
- “Add the book *When Harry Became Sally: Responding to the Transgender Moment* by Ryan T. Anderson.”
- “More graphic novels and manga”

### Formats and Content (General), continued

- “More fantasy (non-romance)”
- “Two *Wall Street Journal(s)* available”
- “Don’t feature children’s books that have inappropriate Content (sic), such as transgender, same-sex, couples, gay, or lesbian content, etc. If you are going to have these, don’t feature them. If you are going to have these, put a label on them and put them in a section off to the side so that parents don’t have to censor everything from the public library. I never thought I would have to censor books that my children wanted to check out from the library. We used to use the library twice a week, now We almost never go.”

Comments about digital collection growth are found on the next slide.

## Library Improvement #2: Collection Growth, Especially Digital Materials (2 of 2)

60 of the 122 collection-themed responses referenced collection development suggestions specifically about the digital collection, usually requesting a broader eBook selection, longer circulation periods, or longer check-out periods. Representative quotes include:

### Digital Needs

- "More physical books, and more Hoopla borrows. If you want to watch a season of a show, you have no chance of completing it, and you have to give up your book and audiobook borrows."
- "[M]ore new releases for digital books ...longer check out time for digital books (21 days would be ideal)"
- "Continue to expand e-book and audio selections"
- "Better selection of audiobooks from Hoopla. It is very limited."
- "I would like to have more variety and availability for digital books and audio books."
- "As an avid reader of ebooks, a bigger selection of books on Libby"
- "A more extensive collection of e-books that could be renewed."
- "I would add more audiobooks to the online selection (there's a good selection now - but occasionally there's something I'm interested in that isn't available)."
- "Wider variety or more copies of digital materials."

## Library Improvement #3: More Programs at More Hours

73 respondents (13%) shared thoughts about library programs. The general tenor of the responses is that existing programs are well-liked and appreciated and that more programs for all ages would be appreciated. We note a tension between those desiring day and working adults and families who prefer evening programs. We encourage the Library to weigh this feedback against existing attendance statistics to further illuminate the types of sessions people actually attend and to see the impact of time of day on attendance. Representative quotes include:

### General

- "[C]reative/artistic spaces"
- "Organizing groups to go into community and help people."
- "More community events and education"

### Youth

- "More engaging options for kids (not computers)"
- "More children's events on the weekends and after school. All children's events seem to be during school hours."
- "We would love to see more infant/toddler/preschool classes/ groups that meet on weekends. It seems that the story time groups and music groups on meet during weekdays during working hours."
- "NEVER, EVER even think about having a drag queen story hour."

### Young Adults

- "I feel like as a 20 yr old there is still an age discrepancy where I'm not young enough for the teen/tween events and I'm not old enough for the adult events. I've struggled finding like people in the community because there is no space for these young adults to really exist in my opinion, I think more programs that focus on the early adult groups would be extremely beneficial."
- "More events like, crochet classes, art classes, unique hobby events focused for young adults"
- "Something like the teen program but for young adults over 18"

### Senior Citizens

- "[A]dd an exercise class for senior women"
- ""Activities for Senior Citizens"

### Adult

- "More adult programming"
- "More evening adult offerings"
- "Offer night hours as sober events for those in recovery"
- "Bringing more diverse speakers/classes on a more frequent basis"
- "More adult programs especially outside of typical working hours. Events are typically catered to children or retirees"
- "Ukulele group should offer another time in addition to the one offered for this who work"
- "[M]ore evening adult programs... they are mostly targeting seniors and those who don't work during the day (i.e. ukulele, etc)."
- "I wish they would offer services for adults who want to learn to read"

# Library Improvement #4 (tie): Refinements to the Library Facility

Tied for fourth place were suggestions to improve the library facility, with 62 responses (11.1%). Note that the Library facility was also the #2 category of responses when respondents were asked to describe their favorite part of the library, so overall, people have a positive feeling about the library environment. Representative quotes include:

## Youth/Tween/Teen

- "Clean the carpet - lol! My crawling toddler was filthy after crawling around."
- "I really love the work that went in to making a tween area but I feel they will outgrow it quickly."
- "The children section. The new library doesn't seem very nice in the children section. Also I love to see more activities for the children section."
- "More creative children's area with secret nooks to read in"
- "Larger children's area"
- "[B]ig kid's play room with sound proof (sic)"
- "A more robust children's area with more activities toys, Duplo, puppets, blocks, dinosaurs, trains, etc"
- "This is very small, but more places for parents to sit in the children's section"
- "I'd like to see less fluorescent lighting, especially in the kids and teens area. I think this kind of lighting is abrasive."
- "I would change the library staff's visible endorsement of progressive values in areas designated for children and young people."

## Seeking Private Spaces

- "[B]etter places to sit and study"
- "[M]ore study spaces where I can work with one of my kids while keeping an eye on my other kids, but not in the center of the children's section where there is nothing but distractions with everyone walking by us or a study room where it is very boring for the other kids and I cannot keep an eye on them if they go to the children's section."
- "A cozier adult lounge"
- "More quiet reading areas"
- "Study cubes"
- "One room with quiet music"
- "More or larger meeting spaces"
- "More available private work space, it is often time reserved for after school programs"
- "[E]vent room for larger get together"

## Comfortable Seating

- "More seating area for adult readers"
- "Maybe some comfier seating but the chairs are already pretty great."
- "Not enough comfortable seating to spend the day reading or doing projects."
- "More comfortable seating for groups or individuals to meet, talk, read or crafts"
- "Maybe add a few benches in the outside space instead of only picnic tables to sit at. It would be nice to have seating that has back support."

## Other

- "You/we could really use a second set of public restrooms; e.g. on the upper level. This could even be a handicap-accessible & Unisex facility."
- "Restrooms on the main floor"
- "[T]hey would receive appropriate funding to address significant maintenance issues"
- "Not so many stairs!"
- "[D]rive through pick-up for books"
- "Turn the heat up in the winter"

## Library Improvement #4 (tie): Library Parking

62 respondents (11.1%) offered that greater parking ease would be their top suggestion for improving the library. This is consistent with concerns overall about limited parking available downtown expressed earlier in the report and in spite of overwhelming enthusiasm elsewhere for the library's central location. These results indicate that there may be some lack of awareness of what dedicated library parking is available currently. Representative quotes include:

- "Free parking" (numerous)
- "Close, free parking"
- "Somehow have more convenient parking, especially for wintertime"
- "More dedicated parking"
- "[S]olve parking"
- "More free parking close to the library"
- "Better parking"
- "The library has worked hard to address the parking issue with the lot next to the Presbyterian Church lot. The composition of the front steps causes some ice on the top step (which maintenance always attempts to address.) Fortunately, use of the access ramp is a good option during icy weather."
- "Buy the AT&T bldg. and make it into an attractive parking area for patrons and staff."
- "Parking can be hard to find during busy times. Not a deal breaker. Walking is healthy."
- "Parking. However, this is a problem that requires city government action."
- "Safer parking"
- "More parking for disabled"
- "Maybe a pedestrian controlled light allowing patrons to more safely cross Mitchel Street from the free library parking lot to the library...?"
- "Parking! Parking in downtown Petoskey is terrible as is, but trying to find a spot nearby is nearly impossible, not to mention you have to pay to park."
- "Have its own parking lot"



# Library Improvement #6: Library Perceived as Biased

While the majority of the survey data reveals strong support and comfort for the library, and many express enthusiasm for a welcoming, diverse atmosphere in both the library and community, 31 respondents (5.5%) indicated discomfort with the presence, location, and/or content of some materials and displays in the library collection, specifically those about human sexuality or LGBTQ+ patrons.\* Some equate sexual identity as a political issue. Representative quotes include:

## Perceptions of Library Bias

- "Less liberal oriented"
- "See above" (the comment above this response read, "[That] The Bolsheviks that are currently in power would cease to exist")
- "Make it more neutral, politically."
- "I am disappointed in the library's decision to promote political and social topics. As a public service using public tax dollars, one ideology or another should not be promoted. I used to go to the library frequently but have stopped because of this. (Which is really sad to me because I LOVED the library). I would be a proud patron and supporter if the library would remain neutral when it comes to these topics. (Not having displays or events to promote one side or the other). Thank you for all you do for the community. I am pleased with the majority of the library's services."
- "Get rid of it's woekness"

*\*Note: the [2023 amendment](#) to Michigan's 1976 Elliott-Larsen Civil Rights Act bans places of public accommodation, including public libraries, from limiting services based on a patron's sex or gender identity. Removing LGBTQ+ materials from the library might put the library at legal risk; consult with an attorney before removing books based on sexual identity or orientation from the collection.*

## Perceptions of Library Bias, continued

- "Stop taking political/cultural sides in public debates. The public library, while protecting everyone's right to free speech and a free press, should be completely agnostic. I work with non-profits that have chosen not to seek partnerships with the library due to your seemingly politically motivated actions and programming. You've corrupted a safe haven of imagination and information."
- "You have ideas don't put them right in the middle of the entrance when you first walk into the Public Library."
- "Get rid of the pronouns on the name tags. Not necessary. No one cares what you identify as. It's a scientific and biological fact we are created male or female."

## Inappropriate displays or materials

- "I would like them to know that boys are boys and girls are girls"
- "Less pushing of the alternative lifestyle agendas"

## Requests for Removal

- "Remove sexual how to books and material from the Teen wing"
- "Eliminate pedophilic materials"
- "Stop promoting sex books to under age children"

# Library Improvement #7: Refinements to Library Technology

15 respondents (2.7%) identified desired changes to library technology, particularly regarding check-out periods or circulation barriers. Representative quotes include:

## Youth

- "Computers in the children area moved to the back or have restricted times."
- "[T]o be able to block my child's access to the internet at the library."

## Adult

- "More digital classes for elders!"
- "Add classes on computers for summertime residents."

## Computers, Hotspots, and Printing

- "I like it [the library] the way it is. Free printing?"
- "Better technology available to rent or use"
- "[H]ave internet devices for check out"
- "More hotspots/longer loan time"

## Library Management Software (App, Catalog, and Circulation)

- "The online app for finding and reserving books could be more user-friendly. It's a little clunky and not intuitive."
- "I cannot Login and have asked for help. They can't figure it out"
- "Allow 21 days for a loan rather than 14"
- "I wish I could extend my hold via my account somehow. I occasionally just miss the 7 day hold by 1 day due and it would have been nice to have that option"

## Other

- "That it stops pushing in agenda buys more books and spends less money on programs and technology."
- ""Change website to allow users to opt out of unnecessary cookies. Major pet peeve."

# Quotables

Additional high-impact quotes from open-ended responses that you may find useful in social media, reports, newsletters, or board presentations (not found elsewhere in this report):

- "They are so welcoming and have just the right programs for the kids to get them interested in being life long learners."
- "The librarians and staff. They are outstanding. Great customer service, friendly, courteous, professional, knowledgeable"
- "There's something for everyone"
- "I do feel that the library provides a diverse selection of offerings to all of the people that are in town, local and not local as well as those with veering amounts of money. I am grateful for the library."
- "The Petoskey Library is a safe harbor for many."
- "The combination of physical comfort, engagement with a variety of subjects and groups for all ages. It's the perfect "town center"."
- "I love so much about our library! The building is beautiful, there's a great selection of resources and community programs, and the people that work there are kind and helpful."
- "It's a great place to go and feel comfortable and motivated to learn"
- "It is a safe beacon for many youth in the community."
- "I am amazed at the level of technology and the programs available for all age ranges."
- "It is a wonderful place with very friendly staff willing to help in any way they can, and their interest in the community at large."

# Summary

The staff and board of the Petoskey District Library are to be congratulated for the outstanding response that their community made to this call for public opinion. Clearly, the library is an institution that elicits strong and mostly-positive feelings from its community, and that is a sign of the library staff and board's commitment to reaching out to a wide range of community and patron wants, needs, and aspirations. We also note that this community's library received nearly twice as many responses as any of the 60+ libraries we surveyed in 2024 and had the largest response rate per capita of any of those libraries. We also note with appreciation the thoughtfulness respondents gave to the open-ended questions; we received many long and detailed responses to our survey questions, a sign of the clear passion this community has for its library and its wellbeing. A small number of respondents are concerned about LGBTQ+ representation in library collections and displays, the removal of which could pose legal challenges for the library (see footnote on slide 64).

As in many Michigan communities surveyed by our U-M program, respondents told us that they both love Petoskey and that the community struggles with economic vitality for all and, like many resort towns, with an extremely broad range of financial, cultural, social, and everyday needs, as well as competing needs between generations and seasonal versus year-round employees. Respondents hope for a more affordable lifestyle, a dynamic downtown with easier parking, more opportunities to learn and engage, and for less divisiveness among residents.

The U-M team is happy to speak with library trustees or personnel to brainstorm potential action steps related to these survey results, with the understanding that this report shows how effectively the library already meets the needs and ambitions of a majority of those surveyed.

# Limitations of Study

All studies have limitations, and professional research acknowledges those limitations. In layman's terms, this means that no single survey can answer every question about libraries. In this case, the response rate of 5.6% is good, but respondents were predominantly existing library patrons. Perspectives of seasonal residents or non-users might surface different and/or distinct results.

# Potential Areas for Future Research

It is clear that the library is in continual dialogue with community partners and individual patrons about how the library can continue to provide excellent service to the local area.

A survey can deliver a wide breadth of responses, but should the library wish to pursue deep 1:1 interviews with community members, the University of Michigan School of Information may be able to help as part of its students' class-based real-world community needs practice. Learn more at <https://www.si.umich.edu/employers/client-opportunities> or email [umsi.client.engagement@umich.edu](mailto:umsi.client.engagement@umich.edu).

# Appendix A: Survey Questions as Formatted for Print Survey

This survey – for adults over age 18 only - is being conducted to help your public library make better-informed decisions. Participation in this survey is voluntary. You may skip questions you do not feel comfortable answering. Return your survey to your library or mail to K. Fontichiaro, U-M School of Information, 4427 North Quad, 105 S. State St., Ann Arbor, MI 48109-1285. Questions: nextlevelleadership@umich.edu.

**What library (system) do you most often use?**

**Some libraries have more than one location (branch). If this is the case, which branch do you visit most regularly?**

**How often do you visit the library, check out materials, use its online resources, or attend library events?** *(Please cross one)*

- ☐ Daily
 ☐ Weekly
 ☐ Monthly
 ☐ Less than once a month
 ☐ Never

**Do you have a library card?**

- ☐ Yes
 ☐ No
 ☐ Don't know

**What is your age?**

- ☐ 18-22 years old
 ☐ 23-29 years old
 ☐ 30-39 years old  
☐ 40-49 years old
 ☐ 50-59 years old
 ☐ 60-69 years old  
☐ 70 years or older
 ☐ Prefer not to answer

**On a scale of 1 (not at all satisfied) to 5 (very satisfied), how satisfied are you with the library overall?** *(Please cross one)*

- ☐ 1
 ☐ 2
 ☐ 3
 ☐ 4
 ☐ 5

**Check all that describe the library's atmosphere.**

- ☐ Friendly
 ☐ Noisy
 ☐ Safe
 ☐ Comfortable
 ☐ Unwelcoming  
☐ Fun
 ☐ Helpful
 ☐ Quiet
 ☐ Boring
 ☐ Exciting  
☐ Clean
 Other

**What do you, or would you like to, use the library for?**

- ☐ Borrow physical materials
 ☐ Borrow digital materials (ebooks, streaming movies, streaming music etc.)  
☐ Use public meeting room (if available)
 ☐ Meet with friends  
☐ Study, read, or do research
 ☐ Use computers  
☐ Attend adult programs
 ☐ Attend children's programs  
☐ Use photocopier, printer, and/or fax machine
 ☐ None of the above

Other

**On a scale of 1 (poor) to 5 (excellent), how do you rate the quality of the following library services?**

	1 (poor)	2	3	4	5 (excellent)
Physical library collections (books, movies, video games, etc.)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Digital library collections (eBooks, streaming video, streaming music, etc.)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Technology (computers, printers, scan, & fax)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Library events & programs	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Staff's customer service	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Staff's ability to select materials to include in the library collection	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Building facility and maintenance	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

**Complete the sentence: The biggest challenge my community is facing right now is...**

**Complete the sentence: One thing that would make my community an even more amazing place to live would be...**

**What is the best thing about your community's library?**

**If you could change one thing about your community's library, what would it be?**



To respond ☒ or ☐



RB01 0001



EV2\_1

To respond ☒ or ☐



RB01 0002



Appendix B:  
Original Dataset Is Available Online ([link](#))