

West Side Plan Halfway Update Report

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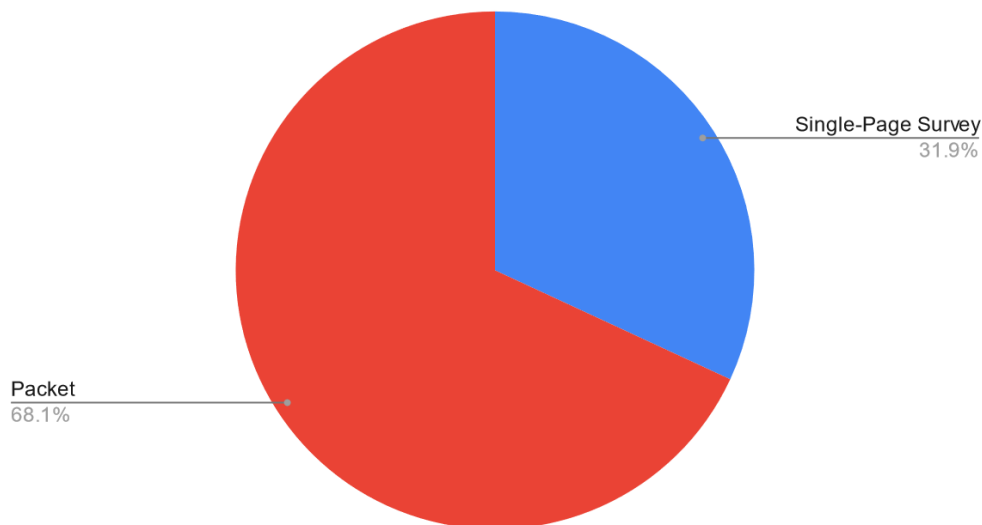
Community Engagement

Since December 2022, 152 people have participated in Tell Us. The data shown here represents the first 143 respondents. I have provided some analysis of the results, but I am happy to answer specific questions you may have about the data as well.

1. Survey Method

Initially, only the small group conversation format was used to collect community feedback. However, in May 2023 a one-page survey format was introduced to make it easier for individuals to offer feedback without having to participate in a group conversation. Additionally, one quarter of responses prior to the one-page survey introduction came from individuals using the Tell Us packet rather than groups, showing a need for an alternative format. The graph below shows that the Tell Us packet is still the primary form of receiving feedback, but the individual survey still constitutes a third of all responses. Both packets and one-page surveys have been distributed to community organizations like Joining Forces for Families and the Meadowood Community Center.

Tell Us Participation Method



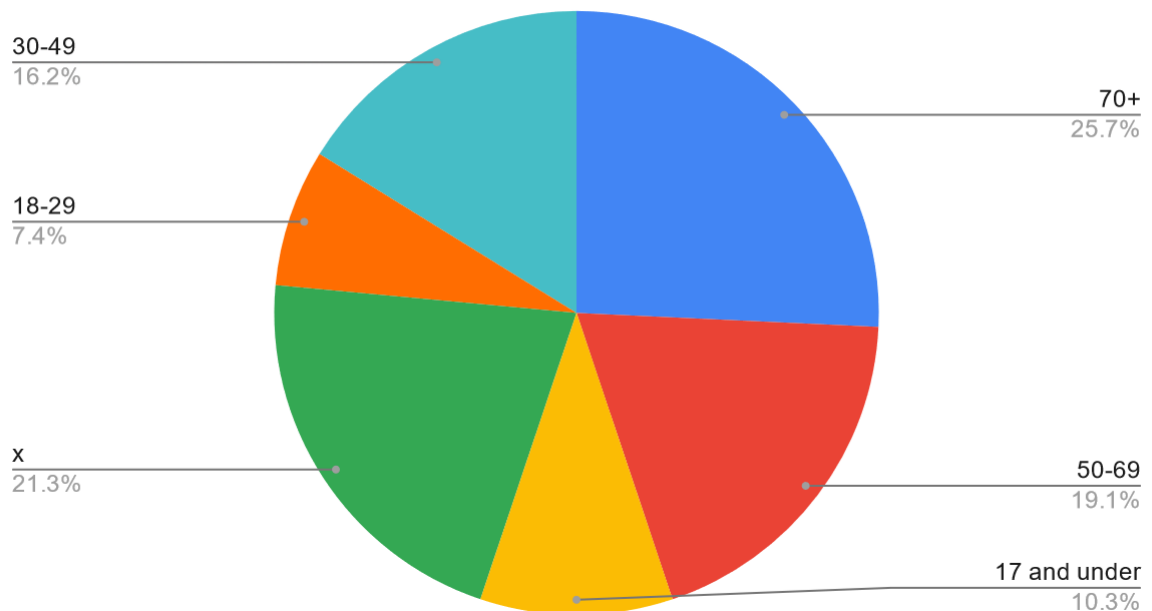
2. Participant Information

Tell Us materials allow participants to share personal information including name, age, gender, race/ethnicity, ZIP code, if they have a library card, and email. In the packet, participants are able to fill in a black space for all of this information except library

cardholder status, which is a Y/N question. Allowing participants to self define aspects of their identity rather than providing them with a list of choices helps the process be more inclusive.

In the one-page survey, everything is the same except the participant can select an age range rather than writing their exact age. This is a common way of formatting age questions among engagement practitioners, as people who are unwilling to share their exact age due to personal preference or social stigma are generally more willing to check a box for the age range they are in. For our purposes, the only statistic we miss by collecting age information this way is the average age of participants. This statistic tells us less than a breakdown of participants by age range, something we would do regardless, so it is not a loss to our analysis. The chart below shows a breakdown of participants by age.

Count of Age

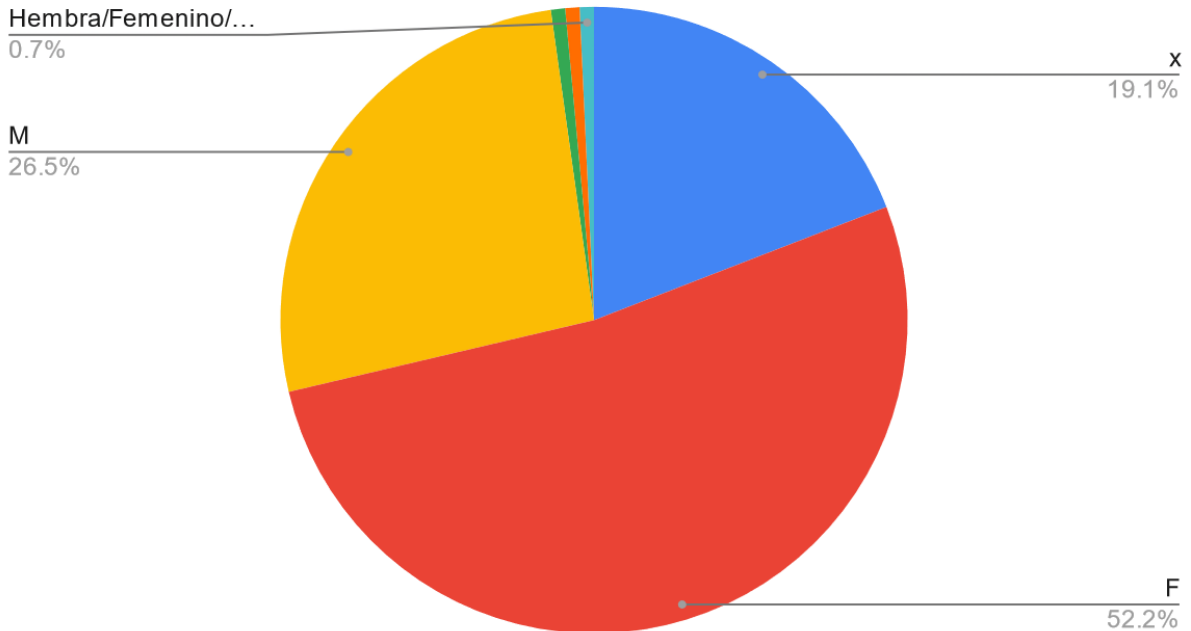


Thus far, participants have skewed toward those 50 and older while people under 50 are underrepresented relative to their proportion of the west side population as a whole. Based on my observations, getting responses from people under 50 is most likely to occur when the engagement is happening at events with food and children's activities. By tabling at every west side Parks Alive event this summer alongside library staff with youth activities, I expect to be able to ameliorate this imbalance.

The next chart shows the participant breakdown based on gender. The chart contains participants' genders as they provided, though female and male have been shortened to F and M respectively. The chart shows a majority of participants have been female/women/girls, with about half as many male/men/boy participants. While I will try to find ways to involve more men and boys in the process, this distribution is consistent

with the East Side Tell Us results. This may indicate something about the tool or the Library in terms of who feels motivated to engage. It also may be reflective of larger social patterns in terms of how men and women engage in civic life and local government, though I have not looked much into the literature on this topic.

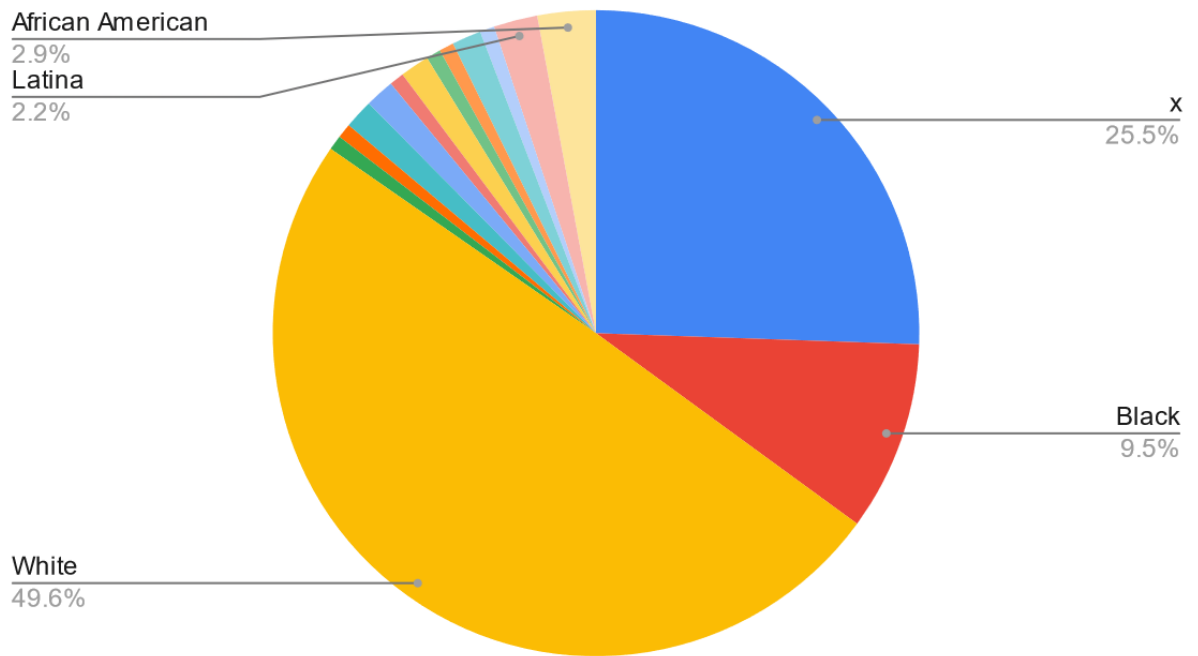
Count of Gender



Thus far, slightly more than 50 percent of participants have been white. About 12 percent have been Black/African American, and a smaller proportion of participants have been Latinx or Asian American. The Spanish language versions of Tell Us materials have seen use, but to my knowledge none of the Hmong or Chinese versions have been used. While I have tried to approach this work using a racial equity lens, the survey results at this point indicate I still have work to do in this regard. I will be working closely with the Civil Rights Department's new community connectors for Latinx, Hmong, and Chinese residents to make sure the engagement is representative of the diverse communities on the west side. The Tell Us one-page survey has also been translated into Arabic, so hopefully we will be able to connect with the Arab community on the west side better than we have so far in this process.

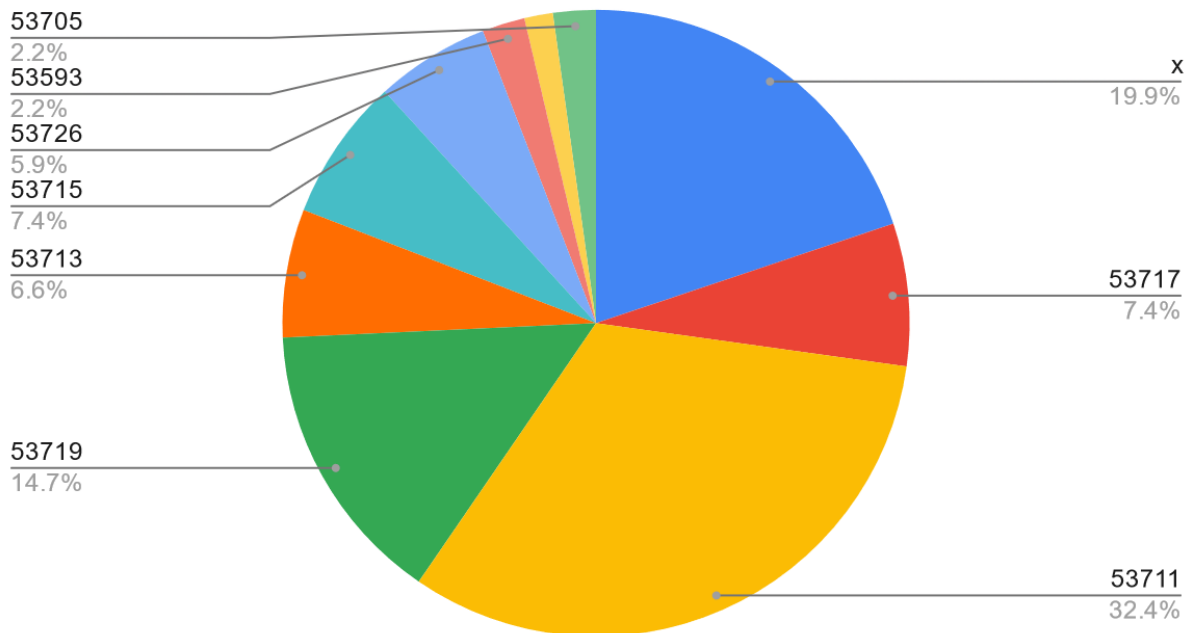
The chart below shows a breakdown of the race/ethnicity of respondents. The many small slices in the pie chart represent the variation of people's answers. In the final plan report, these will be simplified to some extent.

Count of Race/Ethnicity



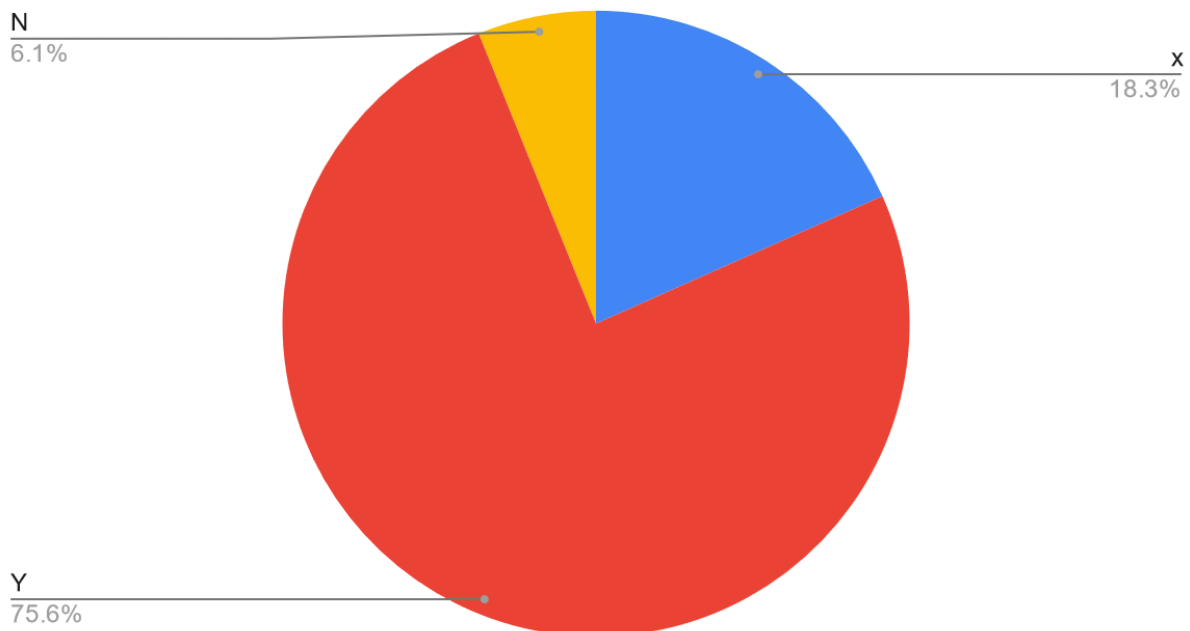
The geographic composition of participants has been somewhat varied. Unsurprisingly, people who live in the 53711 ZIP code represent the largest share of participants at about one third. This ZIP code covers ground in the service areas of four out of the five west side libraries. The ZIP codes of 53717 and 53719 are also well represented. This is encouraging given that hearing from people living in the city's western periphery was a priority identified at the beginning of the engagement process. Finally, these results are fairly representative of where I have spent the most time. Many of the west side's most under-resourced areas fall within these ZIP codes, and I have tried to dedicate more time to connecting with residents in these areas than other parts of the west side.

Count of ZIP



Finally, three quarters of participants have been library cardholders. The majority of responses so far have come from tabling or Tell Us events within one of the west side libraries, so this is unsurprising. My goal for this second half of engagement will be to connect with more non-cardholders by getting out of the libraries.

Library Card Holdership

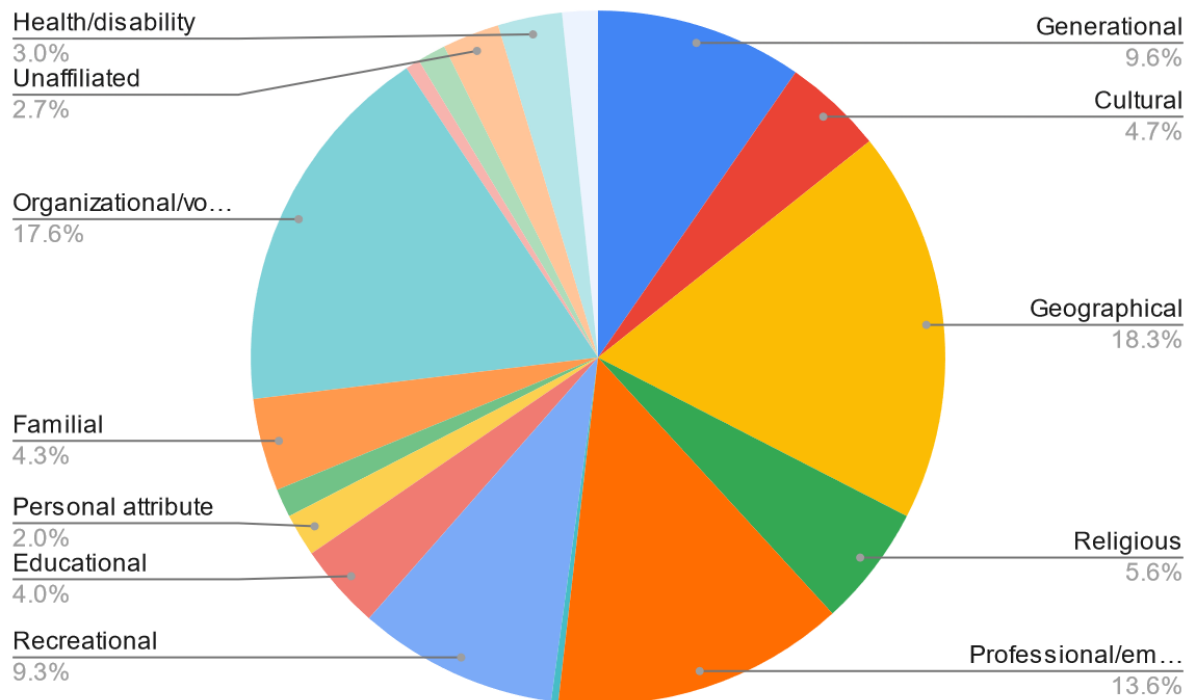


A note about non-responses to personal identity questions: A portion of the lack of response to some of these questions can be attributed to the facilitator not asking for the information, meaning nothing was collected. Some people as well simply choose not to provide any information. As evidenced by the data above, race/ethnicity and age have been omitted at higher rates than other information. As mentioned before, social stigma surrounding age can contribute to a participant's preference to not share this information. Similarly, attitudes about racial/ethnic identity vary from person to person, so some people prefer not to share. There may also be concern among residents of color that their feedback will be taken less seriously if the government knows it is coming from a person of color. All of these questions are optional, and the non-response rate is not worryingly different from that of the East Side plan.

3. **Participant Feedback**

In this section, we will look at how participants have responded to each Tell Us question. Each question has a coding system used to classify responses into an appropriate category, and a response may fall into multiple categories.

Question 1: *What communities are represented in this room? / What communities do you feel part of?* (This question was reworded for the one-page survey to be more appropriate for an individual response.)



This is the first question posed to participants. In group conversations, I pair this

question with introductions in the group to help ease participants into the process. As you can see from the above graph, Geographical affiliations are the most common response followed by Organizational/Volunteer affiliations. Geographical communities were also the most common in the East Side Tell Us conversations, but Organizational/Volunteer affiliations are much more common in the West Side results. Generational affiliations occupy a greater proportion of responses in the West Side results, which can be explained by the current overrepresentation of older adults who named “seniors” or “elders” as a community.

Additionally, East Side Tell Us has 17 classifications. I added two more for the West Side process - Health/Disability and Friends. Responses in these categories were difficult to place in the existing classification system, necessitating their creation.

Question 2: What do you need to feel supported by your community?

Questions 2, 4, and 6 all use the same coding system. There are four classifications (Basic Infrastructure, Social/Emotional, Economic, and Environment) with subclassifications within each one. In the charts below, we can see how common each subclassification was within its primary classification and among responses as a whole in Question 2. The top five subcategories among all responses have been highlighted.

Basic Infrastructure Subcategories	Number of Responses	Percent of Subcategory Responses	Percent of All Responses
Education	22	35.5%	10.2%
Health	6	9.7%	2.8%
Transportation	5	8.1%	2.3%
Food	8	12.9%	3.7%
Shelter	6	9.7%	2.8%
Clothing	0	0.0%	0.0%
Communications	13	21.0%	6.0%
Sanitation	2	3.2%	0.9%
<i>Total</i>	62	x	28.8%

Social/Emotional Subcategories	Number of Responses	Percent of Subcategory Responses	Percent of All Responses
Relationships	37	30.3%	17.2%
Behavior/Attitudes	26	21.3%	12.1%
Culture	5	4.1%	2.3%
Civic	15	12.3%	7.0%
Space	15	12.3%	7.0%
Safety	11	9.0%	5.1%
Art/beauty	1	0.8%	0.5%
Religion	1	0.8%	0.5%
Recreation	11	9.0%	5.1%
<i>Total</i>	122	x	56.7%

Economic Subcategories	Number of Responses	Percent of Subcategory Responses	Percent of All Responses
Jobs	6	28.6%	2.8%
Cost of Living	2	9.5%	0.9%
Consumer Convenience	2	9.5%	0.9%
Wages	7	33.3%	3.3%
Training	4	19.0%	1.9%
<i>Total</i>	21	x	9.8%

Environment Subcategories	Number of Responses	Percent of Subcategory Responses	Percent of All Responses
Environmental Health	4	40%	1.9%
Open Space	6	60%	2.8%
Wildlife	0	0%	0.0%
<i>Total</i>	10	x	4.7%

Social/Emotional responses accounted for the majority of responses to this question, showing the importance of connection to participants. Consequently, four of the five most common subclassifications can be found here. People named relationships to others most commonly as where their sense of support comes from. Having opportunities to socialize with friends and family as well as to meet new people is important to respondents. Behavior/attitude is the second most common response type, meaning participants shared how being supported feels to them. They shared that they know they feel supported if they feel respected, welcomed, and like they belong.

Civic and Space responses both accounted for 7 percent of responses over all. Civic responses in this case primarily refer to efforts to cultivate a strong civic life in the community. Rather than speaking to interpersonal relationships, many respondents shared the importance of living in an engaged community that works together. Some spoke as well to the importance of breaking down social prejudices and systemic discrimination. Space responses referred to comments about libraries as a whole, or specific library spaces like meeting areas. Having public space in general was important to participants.

Basic Infrastructure accounted for 28.8% of responses, with education being the third most common response out of all responses. Education responses largely focused on the importance of the library as well as schools in people's lives.

Question 3: What organizations or groups directly improve your quality of life?

This question helps us learn about the work other organizations are doing to support the community. It also makes us aware of organizations we may not have worked with yet but should. The charts below show the distribution of participant responses based on each coding category.

Personal Networks Subcategories	Number of Responses	Percent of Category Responses	Percent of All Responses
Collegial	0	0.00%	0.00%
Recreational	23	48.94%	11.39%
Family/friends	3	6.38%	1.49%
Cultural	0	0.00%	0.00%
Neighborhood	21	44.68%	10.40%
<i>Total</i>	47	x	23.27%

Private Organizations Subcategories	Number of Responses	Percent of Category Responses	Percent of All Responses
Advocacy/service	51	66.23%	25.25%
Business	12	15.58%	5.94%
Religious	12	15.58%	5.94%
Employers	1	1.30%	0.50%
Private Infrastructure	1	1.30%	0.50%
<i>Total</i>	77	100.00%	38.12%

Public Service Subcategories	Percent of Responses	Percent of Category Responses	Percent of All Responses
Basic infrastructure	2	2.90%	0.99%
Public space	29	42.03%	14.36%
Government	7	10.14%	3.47%
Public safety	3	4.35%	1.49%
Education	28	40.58%	13.86%
<i>Total</i>	69	100.00%	34.16%

Environment Organizations Subcategories	Number of Responses	Percent of Category Responses	Percent of All Responses
Open Space	6	66.67%	2.97%
Wildlife	1	11.11%	0.50%
Environmental Health	2	22.22%	0.99%
<i>Total</i>	9	100.00%	4.46%

The most popular response type was Advocacy/Service organizations, largely made up of nonprofits providing direct service to the community through food pantries, shelters, and counseling, or indirect service through community organizing and political advocacy.

Public Space and Education were the second- and third-most common response types. These two subcategories are what I have used to code responses involving the Library. It is not surprising to see MPL mentioned so often in the surveys given that many people who are motivated to participate in the engagement process do so because of their love for the Library.

Recreational and Neighborhood organizations round out the top five response types. Having activities to do outside of work or school mattered to participants, and the Library was mentioned as a place people go for recreation at times. Neighborhood Organizations represent the importance of neighborhood associations to participants as sources of socializing and community organizing.

The final analysis of this question will include an appraisal of whether MPL has partnered with the organizations mentioned.

Question 4: What are the three biggest issues facing your community?

After Question 1, this question received the most responses. The charts below show the distribution of responses based on coding category.

Social/Emotional	Number of Responses	Percent of Category Responses	Percent of All Responses
Behavior/attitudes	7	7.3%	3.1%
Civic	31	32.3%	13.6%
Safety	24	25.0%	10.5%
Relationships	9	9.4%	3.9%
Culture	0	0.0%	0.0%
Space	14	14.6%	6.1%
Religion	0	0.0%	0.0%
Art/beauty	0	0.0%	0.0%
Recreation	11	11.5%	4.8%
Total	96	x	42.1%

Basic Infrastructure	Number of Responses	Percent of Category Responses	Percent of All Responses
Health	21	20.2%	9.2%
Education	17	16.3%	7.5%
Shelter	25	24.0%	11.0%
Food	7	6.7%	3.1%
Transportation	23	22.1%	10.1%
Clothing	0	0.0%	0.0%
Sanitation	4	3.8%	1.8%
Communications	7	6.7%	3.1%
Total	104	x	45.6%

Economic	Number of Responses	Percent of Category Responses	Percent of All Responses
Jobs	9	39.1%	3.9%
Wages	6	26.1%	2.6%
Cost of living	3	13.0%	1.3%
Consumer convenience	3	13.0%	1.3%
Training	2	8.7%	0.9%
Total	23	x	10.1%

Environment	Number of Responses	Percent of Category Responses	Percent of All Responses
Environmental Health	3	60.0%	1.3%
Wildlife	0	0.0%	0.0%
Open space	2	40.0%	0.9%
Total	5	x	2.2%

The most common response type was Civic, primarily focusing on various forms of systemic discrimination like racism, sexism, ableism, and LGBTQ+ discrimination. Some

responses focused on discriminatory attitudes within the community, such as a neighbor being discriminated against for being Muslim by others in the neighborhood. Others commented on institutional forms of discrimination such as police profiling, a general lack of accessible places for disabled people, and threats of statewide legal discrimination against LGBTQ+ people. That this is the most common response should be a point of reflection for MPL as well. For example, revisiting our ban policy to make it more restorative rather than punitive is something many staff have called for.

The second-most common response type was Shelter. The housing crisis in Madison is well known and felt by many as evidenced in this engagement process. At least a couple people who were unhoused at the time or previously unhoused participated in this survey as well. At first glance it may not be apparent what MPL can do about the housing crisis beyond what we currently do, like connecting people to housing resources and providing a warm/cool space for unsheltered people to spend the day. However, the extent of this response type should prompt a conversation about how we can play a role in improving housing affordability as well.

MPL's generally positive reputation within the community is a strength we could potentially leverage to support affordable housing development. Something I learned in the Monroe Street conversations is that for a number of people their hesitancy about affordable housing can be overshadowed by their love for the Library. We also can see this dynamic at play between the Bartillon shelter and the Imagination Center in which people often express reassurance about the Library's presence both as a resource for unhoused people and a new amenity in their neighborhood.

I believe we can play a greater role in supporting the development of affordable housing and shelters through our library planning. At the very least, the engagement merits a thorough reflection internally about our contributions to the city's housing solutions. Zoning and housing cost analyses to help inform these reflections will be available after the second engagement phase.

Safety ranked third among respondents. The most common concern beyond general safety and crime was gun violence. It is well understood at MPL how valuable our programming and spaces are in providing safe and positive environments for people. They have the dual benefits of providing a safe place for people at risk of violence and a positive alternative to people at risk of committing crime.

That said, we know that some of our libraries have more safety issues than others. Alongside the ban policy review, prioritizing staff training and the ideas they have for making library spaces safer is important to ensure patrons and staff feel secure in our spaces.

Transportation ranked fourth among response types. Comments on transportation largely focused on quality and availability of pedestrian, cycling, and public transit

infrastructure. There were also many comments about road safety around where people live. Only one transportation comment related directly to the Library regarding having bike paths close to library locations. Alicia Ashman stands out as the only library in the system that is not on a frequent bus route. While every other location is on a route with at least 30-minute arrival frequency, the R1 route only stops every 60-80 minutes at Ashman. Comments about Ashman's lack of accessibility due to its location have been offered during the Tell Us process, though the comments were not explicitly related to bus service. Nevertheless, Tell Us participants did mention infrequent bus arrivals generally as a problem. Consequently, it remains important for us to prioritize locating our facilities on frequent transit lines and bike paths. Furthermore, contributing to urban design that pushes against car dependence is something we should continue to do.

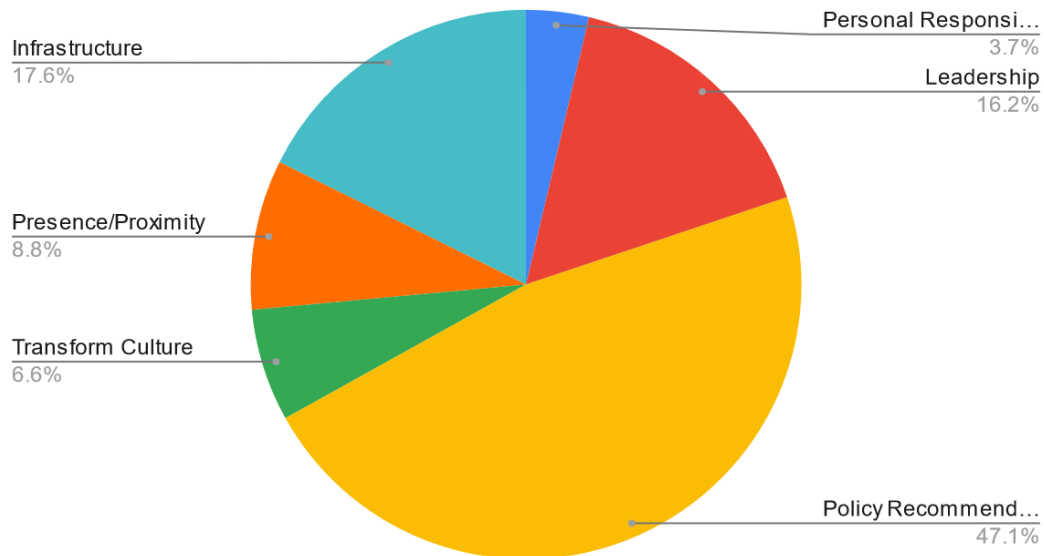
Finally, Health ranked fifth among response types. Covid still loomed as a salient point of conversation among participants. Its effects still reverberate within the community as people try to rebuild their social fabric. Mental health was another common response related to health. Participants expressed a desire to see more mental health resources available in the community. Finally, drug use came up frequently within health-related responses.

The Library is a common place for people facing health challenges to turn whether to find resources or simply a place of respite. We should continue to take seriously our role as a piece of a larger health infrastructure system.

Question 5: What are some ideas to address these issues?

The analysis for this question centers on the kinds of solutions suggested by participants: Personal Responsibility, Leadership, Policy Recommendation, Transform Culture, Presence/Proximity, and Infrastructure. The chart below shows the distribution of solution types offered by participants. For now, we will only consider the type of suggestion rather than the content. I will do a content analysis for the final report.

Number of Responses



A near majority of responses can be categorized as Policy Recommendations. Policy Recommendations refer to suggestions for specific rules, programs, or courses of action. The recommendations call for changes at MPL all the way up to the federal government.

Infrastructure solutions rank second among responses. These solutions call for physical/capital improvements. The most common types of capital improvements included transportation improvements to enhance safety and constructing more affordable housing.

Leadership solutions rank third among responses. These solutions communicate a reliance on, trust in, or mandate for elected officials or community leaders to execute change. Included in this category as well are simple suggestions for improvements that do not imply creation of new policies such as keeping study rooms clean. Many of these suggestions call for better communication both with the community and between organizations.

Question 6: How would you know things have gotten better?

The last question of the survey invites participants to envision a better future. The following charts show the distribution of answers based on their coding category.

Social/Emotional	Number of Responses	Percent of Category Responses	Percent of All Responses
Behavior/attitudes	9	12.0%	6.1%
Civic	14	18.7%	9.5%
Safety	17	22.7%	11.5%
Relationships	12	16.0%	8.1%
Culture	5	6.7%	3.4%
Space	8	10.7%	5.4%
Religion	0	0.0%	0.0%
Art/beauty	1	1.3%	0.7%
Recreation	9	12.0%	6.1%
Total	75	x	50.7%

Basic Infrastructure	Number of Responses	Percent of Category Responses	Percent of All Responses
Health	7	13.0%	4.7%
Education	15	27.8%	10.1%
Shelter	11	20.4%	7.4%
Food	5	9.3%	3.4%
Transportation	6	11.1%	4.1%
Clothing	0	0.0%	0.0%
Sanitation	1	1.9%	0.7%
Communications	9	16.7%	6.1%
Total	54	x	36.5%

Economic	Number of Responses	Percent of Category Responses	Percent of All Responses
Jobs	0	0.0%	0.0%
Wages	2	20.0%	1.4%
Cost of living	4	40.0%	2.7%
Consumer convenience	3	30.0%	2.0%
Training	1	10.0%	0.7%
Total	10	x	6.8%

Environment	Number of Responses	Percent of Category Responses	Percent of All Responses
Environmental Health	5	55.6%	3.4%
Wildlife	0	0.0%	0.0%
Open space	4	44.4%	2.7%
Total	9	x	6.1%

Safety ranked highest among participant responses. The most common safety-related response spoke to a desire to see less crime and violence within the community. However, responses were varied with other participants imagining greater traffic safety or safety from discrimination.

Education responses ranked second among participants. Many of these responses spoke to a desire to see improved quality of life and outcomes for children through improvements to the education system and youth programming. Some of these comments also call for improvements to the libraries such as more programming or facilities changes.

Civic responses ranked third among participants. Most of these responses imagine a future in which everybody is more engaged in solving the problems facing their communities. Breaking down barriers to achieve greater connection between local government and people is also a desire.

Relationships responses ranked fourth among participants, and these responses speak to a similar desire as the Civic responses. Participants hoped for a future in

which it was easier to meet new people and connect through shared interests. A couple comments also spoke to the importance of family stability.

Finally, Shelter responses round out the top five. Again, housing affordability is at the top of mind for many participants.

Next Steps

Having analyzed the first half of Tell Us responses, some themes are becoming more apparent. One through line is the desire for greater connectivity between participants and their communities. They would like to know what is happening in order to meet new people and strengthen interpersonal bonds. This connects to the importance of combating discrimination such that MPL and the city as a whole move forward with the marginalized included and uplifted.

Issues of basic needs like housing and transportation also stand out in participants' minds. Carrying out our mission equitably begins with everybody being able to live in the city without being priced out or forced out due to discrimination. Safe and multimodal access to all our libraries also is a prerequisite to equitably serving the community. Understanding how we as an organization can contribute to the solutions of these problems is an important component of our work.

During the coming months, I will pull together data related to the priorities expressed by participants. This will culminate in an analytical report for internal review.