

# **BUILDING OUR FUTURE**

**2021**

# **A NEW PORTERVILLE LIBRARY**

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Consulting





# A STRONG FOUNDATION

Porterville residents have a rich history of using their public library. The community's first public library was built in 1908 with support from philanthropist Andrew Carnegie. That small building served the community for many decades but was replaced in 1953 with a more modern facility that was later expanded in 1975.

By the turn of the 20th century, the well-loved and well-used Porterville library had many deficiencies. A 2009 study noted: "The facility is now too small to meet the community's library service needs and lacks the infrastructure to support growing service demands," adding that limited seating, a congested layout, and excessive noise all created challenges. Before the old library could be replaced, though, it was lost in a fire in early 2020.

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*"When the new library opens, we'll feel whole again. We'll feel complete again. Right now, you can tell something is missing."*

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# IDENTIFYING PORTERVILLE'S NEEDS

As a first step towards building a new library, the City of Porterville hired consultants Penny Hummel and Carson Block in 2021 to conduct a library needs assessment. The consultants' work included analyzing library operations and community demographics, gathering community input, and applying best practices to establish a detailed vision of the new Porterville library.

The consultants worked with the Library Facility Planning Committee (comprised of community representatives appointed by the City Council) and city and library staff to develop the plan.

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*"I miss the library terribly and cannot wait to walk through its doors again. A town without a library is simply not complete."*

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# LISTENING

The community engagement process for envisioning a new library included numerous information-gathering activities.



## Community Survey

Available in both English and Spanish, the survey attracted over 1,600 responses and hundreds of comments.



## Focus Groups

Ten focus groups gathered input from a variety of community perspectives, including teachers, college students and faculty, seniors, Spanish speakers, and the business community.



## SOAR Exercise

The Library Facility Planning Committee participated in a SOAR (Strengths, Opportunities, Aspirations, Results) exercise as well as in ongoing discussions throughout the assessment process.

# KEY FINDINGS



The following fourteen key findings support the vision for the new library facility, including how the library will address critical community needs through the powerful use of spaces, materials, activities, and more.

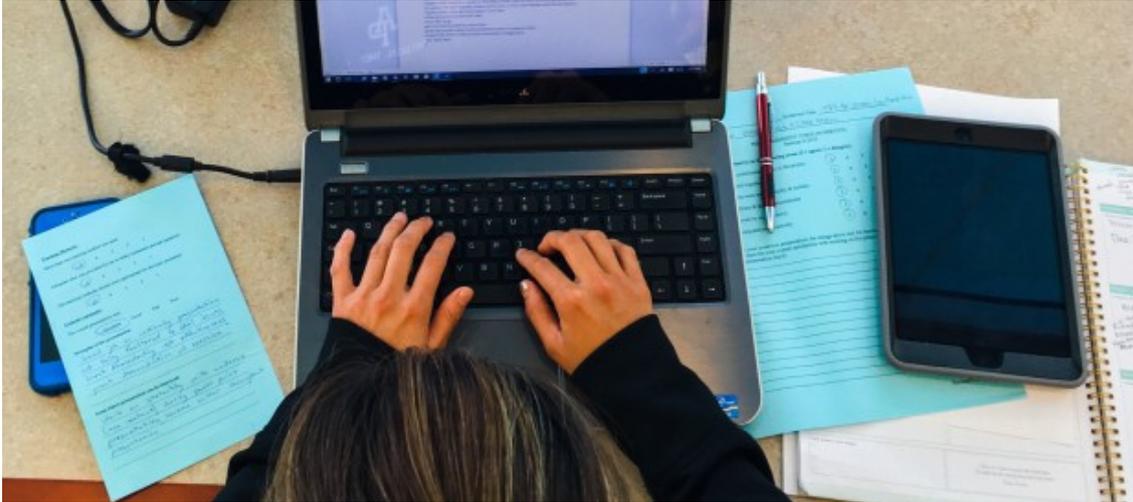
- **Porterville residents have a deep sense of community pride, and the city's unique history, culture, and geography are valued and celebrated.** The community's strength lies in its ethnic and linguistic diversity.
- **Supporting youth development and student success is a core community value.** The library plays a critical role in youth development. With the exception of sports, Porterville currently offers young people relatively few recreational opportunities.
- **There is tremendous community support for a new library.** The old library is dearly missed, and community members are eager to again have access to all the services and amenities that a library provides.
- **Community members would like the new library to include a memorial to the brave firefighters who lost their lives defending the old library.** The sacrifice made by Captain Ramon Figueroa and Firefighter Patrick Lee Jones will not be forgotten.

# KEY FINDINGS

- **Porterville residents want their new library to be inclusive and inspiring.** It should be designed to reflect local culture and should be welcoming to all of the people who make up the Porterville community.
- **Community members want their new library to be convenient and easy to use.** Although most residents reported few barriers to using the library, the minority who expressed concerns cited lack of time, parking, transportation, and range of offerings as barriers.



- **Porterville residents love print books! But they also enjoy reading e-books.** The most popular types of books are bestsellers and books for children and teens.
- **If it's not a book, people prefer to download it.** While CD audiobooks, DVDs and Blu-ray have their supporters, most residents choose downloadable options.
- **While a high-quality library collection is important to residents, they also want all the services and features that a 21st century public library can offer.** Improved seating, meeting rooms, makerspaces and other common features of modern libraries are all of great interest.



- **Community members want quiet spaces at the library to read, study, and gather.** Seating is a huge priority for library users from all walks of life, and many crave quiet seating, whether in a designated area or a small meeting room.
- **Residents expressed strong interest in many types of library programming and dynamic learning opportunities.** These include arts and crafts programs, homework help, storytimes, and help with computer skills and applications.
- **Community members asked for greater technology access and learning for all.** Key needs include Wi-Fi and Internet access, power for recharging, laptops or other mobile devices for checkout and tech learning opportunities.
- **Makerspace activities at the library? Yes, please!** The three makerspace options that attracted the highest level of interest were a tech makerspace, a media lab, and paper crafting.
- **People want to enjoy the outside of the library as much as the inside.** Features such as outdoor seating, a community garden, and programming areas are a great fit for the local climate.

# A VISION FOR THE NEW LIBRARY

Based on the results of the assessment process, the consultants developed a detailed plan for a new 40,000-square-foot Porterville Public Library. While some of the details of the plan may change as the project moves forward, the overall goal will be to create a dynamic community center that supports literacy and learning for all ages. The full plan can be found at [www.ci.porterville.ca.us/depts/Library/](http://www.ci.porterville.ca.us/depts/Library/)

Below is a description of the many facets of the planned new library, accompanied by quotes from community members shared during the assessment process.

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***“Please go big. The new library needs to be a source of community pride and serve our community for 30 - 50 years. Please be forward-looking.”***

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## A SAFE AND WELCOMING ATMOSPHERE

*“The library needs to be inclusive. It needs to be accessible, safe, and the people who work there able to communicate with our community members. Having this be a place where everyone feels valued is key.”*

First and foremost, the new library will have up-to-date safety features, as well as a design that welcomes people of all ages and walks of life. To create a warm and friendly environment, the plan for the new library includes a library café and a Friends of the Library book sale area.

## HONORING LIBRARY HEROES

*“I think there should be a memorial inside the library for the firefighters that lost their lives to the fire that destroyed the last library.”*

The plan for the new facility includes a memorial to Captain Ramon Figueroa and Firefighter Patrick Lee Jones.

## VIBRANT COLLECTIONS

*“The library’s collection should include anything and everything possible.”*

*“Bring in Spanish books for those who want to read but don’t know English. We need to better our community and bring in new resources that interest our children. That way, we set a learning foundation for the real world.”*

The community needs access to a well-balanced collection in both print and digital media formats. The shelving plan for the new library includes capacity for 100,000 books and other physical materials—a 30% increase over the old library. These items will be augmented by over 1.1 million downloadable resources offered by other libraries through the San Joaquin Valley Library System.

With a substantial collection of materials in both English and Spanish, the library will support English language learners and others developing bilingual skills.

## LOCAL HISTORY AND GEOGRAPHY

*"I think this new library should include plenty of our local cultural and historical displays to bring appreciation to the area in which we live."*

The new library will include a local history area to replace the materials lost in the fire, and its design should incorporate materials and elements that connect to the community's unique geography.

## STATE OF THE ART TECHNOLOGY

*"I think people will want to see a high tech, amazingly wonderful library rise from the ashes."*

*"I would like to be able to check out library technology devices (such as laptops, tablets or other mobile computing devices) for use at home."*

Technology is essential for bringing the world to Porterville, and the new library will include desktop computers for adults, teens, and children, laptops, or tablets to check out, self-checkout machines and high-speed Wi-Fi. The library will also include a business center with copier, fax machine and scanner.

## COMFORTABLE AND VERSATILE SEATING

*"I would love for the library to be a place where I can study by myself as well as with groups!"*

The plan for the new library includes a variety of seating options to offer appropriate work/study, collaboration and reading space for the community. These include lounge chairs and a mix of tables for one, two and four people. This seating will be spread throughout the library and in a designated quiet reading area.

The plan also provides additional small meeting rooms and larger programming spaces, which will substantially increase possibilities for community members to gather, study, and learn at the library.

## EARLY CHILDHOOD

*“There are so many kiddos in Porterville and few amenities for them. Would love to see a decked-out kids’ space with daily story time and crafts.”*

*“I am a mother that goes to college and would take my daughter there so she could play while I did my homework.”*

Designed for pre-kindergarten children and their parents/caregivers, the library’s planned Family Space will be a colorful and playful area holding the library’s collection of picture books, board books, and easy readers, as well as seating for toddlers and parents and early learning stations.

## SCHOOL-AGED CHILDREN

*“Our children especially need the library. It’s a safe place for them to go to study and meet with friends and socialize. A place that’s safe when maybe home or their neighborhood isn’t.”*

The Children’s Library will offer books and media for school aged children, as well as computer workstations, table and lounge seating and room for displays.

## A PLACE FOR TEENS

*“I would like there to be space where you can go and study and be alone and quiet and not be distracted. Also, places where you can be loud and interact.”*

*“I’d like to see a hangout spot for teenagers—to bring laptops, have time away from school.”*

The library’s new Teenspace will include the young adult collection of books and media, computer workstations and table and lounge seating.

## ADULT LEARNING CENTER

*"Helping community members develop language skills is vital."*

As currently planned, the Adult Learning Center will be housed with the rest of the library's services, providing space for staff and volunteers, the library's literacy collection and tutoring tables.

## SPACES TO GATHER AND CONNECT

*"I think it is very important to have large meeting areas in the library. The City of Porterville is lacking in venues where non-profit groups can meet."*

The plan for the new library includes a 150-person meeting room that can potentially be divided three ways, offering flexibility for a wide variety of events. Each of the three sections of the meeting room will include flat screen monitors and projectors and a kitchenette to support craft programs and refreshment service. For smaller meetings, the plan includes a 10 -12 person meeting room will also be available and several small meeting rooms for one to four people.

## LIFELONG LEARNING AND CREATIVITY

*"I'm very happy we are going to have a creative space where people can explore new things in our town again!"*

*"Although the library is supposed to be quiet and about reading, having more interesting things to do there will attract more people."*

Community members have expressed a wide range of interests with respect to the kinds of activities they would like to engage in at the library. While many of these activities can utilize the library's meeting rooms, the plan includes areas for several high-interest pursuits, including a tech makerspace, a media lab and a teaching kitchen.

## EFFICIENT STAFF WORKSPACES

*"The library staff is super awesome and that is what really makes a library great. Build whatever you want but make sure the staff are the best around or it won't matter."*

The new library will include adequate and efficient work and support areas for staff, with proximity to public service areas, adequate storage, and capacity for volunteer support.

## CONNECTING TO THE OUTDOORS

*"Porterville is very very HOT, please surround the library with trees and seating areas all around the facility. If there is an outdoor area, include trees with picnic tables underneath, and a kids play area."*

Many community members requested outside amenities to complement what the library holds inside. The plan for the new library notes the desire for seating, a community garden, and areas to hold events.

## SUPPORTING OUR COMMUNITY

*"My concern is the people who don't have access. We need the library to be a resource that can lift people out of poverty and join the American dream."*

Through its collections, services and staff, the new library will provide an essential bridge to information, inspiration and learning for those in need.

***"We loved everything about our old library but look forward to a new chapter in getting our new one up and running."***

# NEXT STEPS

As of mid-2021, the City of Porterville is planning the opening of a temporary 8,000 square-foot library facility in 2022. This temporary facility will provide limited library services until the new library can be designed and built. The library is also currently developing a mobile early literacy outreach program, which will be implemented in the next year.

The Library Facility Planning Committee will continue its work and will be reporting regularly to the Porterville City Council, which will determine next steps, including site selection, hiring an architect and a funding plan.



## LIBRARY FACILITY ADVISORY COMMITTEE

Kelly Carrillo (Chair)

Carol Brown

Natasha Efseaff

Catherine May

Vikki Cervantes

Juliana Glydon

Donnie Moore