



DREAM
A NEW
FUTURE
FOR YOUR LIBRARY!

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ABOUT THIS REPORT

On April 18, 2015, NYCpublic conducted a full-day Community Engagement Lab for Brooklyn Public Library. More than forty Red Hook community members, as well as Councilperson Carlos Menchaca and Assemblymember Felix Ortiz, gathered at PS 15 to consider this question:

*How might Red Hook residents and workers **identify, share and prioritize** the ways in which they want to experience their library and the resources and opportunities housed within it?*

The following report documents the ideas and priorities expressed by the Lab participants. Of course, not every community member has a full day to devote to this work, so it should be understood that the results summarized in this report are part of an ongoing process to gather public input.

About NYCpublic

NYCpublic uses design-thinking protocols and progressive education practices to transform community engagement. Our primary tool is the Community Engagement Lab, a modified charrette that we tailor to address the unique needs and circumstances of a particular organization and a particular community. The term charrette emerges from the fields of architecture and urban planning; it describes a highly collaborative, solutions-focused process intended to bring a diverse group of stakeholders to consensus around a thorny design problem. In our Labs, all participants move through a process of deliberative democracy. Together, they explore different perspectives on a topic or question for which the client seeks input; brainstorm workable solutions; and, at the end of the process, present a selection of their ideas to an audience of decision makers. Once equipped with the authentic community input provided by the Lab, organizations can go on to design programs, facilities, or resources reflective of their constituencies' needs and desires.



Background of the Red Hook Library Capital Project

In 2012, Brooklyn Public Library entered into a partnership with Spaceworks, a 501(c)(3) organization created through the NYC Department of Cultural Affairs (DCA) to develop affordable work space for New York City artists. In addition to space for visual artists at its Williamsburg branch, BPL worked with Spaceworks to develop a plan for the creation of dance studio space at Red Hook Library. Working with the City's Economic Development Corporation, and with approximately \$1.8 million in funding made available in part through DCA and the City Council, BPL embarked on a project to make capital improvements in the branch and create two dance studios that would be available to Spaceworks artists, as well as to the community.

In July 2014, the Library and Spaceworks presented the proposal to Community Board Six. Board members, elected officials, and other members of the community shared a number of concerns about the project, including unease about the loss of library floor space and the prioritization of space for dancers. As a result, BPL agreed to engage in further community discussions before moving forward with the Spaceworks initiative. As it undertook these discussions, BPL recognized the value in fostering a broader dialogue about the future of the branch, leading to the April 2015 Community Engagement Lab. Ultimately, BPL determined that rather than pursue the Spaceworks project, it would leverage the upcoming capital project to prioritize community needs.

Goals of the Red Hook Library Community Engagement Lab

- Get a sense of the community's priorities and wishes so that Brooklyn Public Library allocates the (relatively scant) financial resources it has for the Red Hook Library capital project wisely, in order to improve library service and increase library usage in the neighborhood.
- Receive specific feedback from participants about the kinds of programs, activities and spaces they'd like to see in Red Hook Library.
- Invite the community to participate in an empowering and deliberative process through which ideas are generated, refined and prioritized.

Preparing for the Red Hook Lab (Outreach, Research, Trial Runs)

- Outreach to library staff. NYCpublic interviewed Central Library and Red Hook branch staff to learn about current usage and perceptions of the library and to solicit staffers' ideas for possible changes.
- Outreach to community-based organizations. Along with Naila Rosario of Brooklyn Public Library, NYCpublic met with a broad range of community-based organizations (see Appendix A) to hear their thoughts about Red Hook Library and to inform them of the upcoming lab.
- Research on architecture and design, co-working spaces and library programming trends. NYCpublic interviewed architects with library design experience, studied trends in library programming, canvassed BPL librarians and researched the design principles underlying co-working spaces.
- Trial runs. We conducted two trial runs prior to the actual Lab, one with youth at the branch and one with library staff from throughout Brooklyn. The first trial run gave us a sense of what young people would want to see, do and experience in their library, while the second gave us an opportunity to try out a variety of exercises for the Lab to see which would be most effective, relevant and engaging.

Information gathered from our research, meetings and trial runs contributed to the Lab that was conducted on April 18.



Lab Process

NYCpublic tailored Lab activities to fit both the goals of the Lab and the space occupied by the Red Hook branch. Since Brooklyn Public Library does not have sufficient resources to add a second floor to the branch, for example, we wanted to make sure that the ideas generated through our visioning exercises were appropriate and realistic for a single-story, 6,500-square-foot space.

Much of the day was spent in activities during which participants 1) learned about the types of resources, spaces, programs and experiences a branch library could offer and 2) worked out which of those elements they would most like to have available at Red Hook Library. By day's end, participants had progressed to a place of imaginative ideation and, as a finale, presented specific ideas for discrete spaces within the library that they hoped would positively influence community members' futures.

The following pages include a description of Lab activities. (See Appendix C for complete results and samples of materials used for each activity.)

ACTIVITY #1: THE LIBRARY IN YOUR LIFE

“Back in the 90’s and early 2000’s, I wanted to go to college but could not navigate or afford to go as a single parent. So the Red Hook Library became my liberal arts center.”

“I was 10 and I had to write my first book report. I went to my librarian (Ms. Philomena) and she helped me in a tremendous way. I still have contact with her now that she is retired.”

Sample participant responses, Lab Activity 1.



In pairs, participants briefly interviewed one another regarding their thoughts and experiences as library users. This provided the group with a sense of the roles that libraries can play in community members’ lives.

ACTIVITY #2: IMAGE STUDY

In this activity, participants were presented with images of library spaces from around the world. They were asked to consider why they were attracted to a particular image, what they might do in the space represented by the image, how the space made them feel and how they imagined they might interact (or not) with others in that space. In separate rounds, they were asked to select spaces that were a match for them individually, spaces that would be well suited to children, and spaces that might benefit the community as a whole. (This exercise in multiple perspectives was repeated in many of the day's activities.) The idea behind the activity was to use the images not as models or blueprints per se, but to elicit the qualities (feelings, interactions, etc.) people hoped for in their library.

When participants voted on the type of space they most wanted to see in the library, they overwhelmingly selected "flexible community space." This priority stemmed from the participants' desire for community and cultural programming; evidence of that desire surfaced repeatedly throughout the day's activities.

After community space, participants most wanted to see a discrete teen space incorporated into the branch.

Participants requested that the library have spaces appropriate for conversation, along with accommodations for quiet reading and study.



ACTIVITY #3: LIBRARIES AS SPACES FOR RESPITE, INFORMATION, COMMUNITY CONNECTION AND PARTNERSHIP

In our preparatory research, we learned that during the redesign work for Seattle’s public library system, a panelist at a community meeting described libraries as places of “respite, community connection and information.” These categories jibed with other research we had conducted and reflected the concerns we heard voiced in our pre-Lab conversations with Red Hook residents. To these we added a fourth category, “partnership,” because Red Hook Library staff made it clear that they rely heavily on community partnerships to help them spread the word about library events and resources. For this activity, participants were divided into groups and given Sharpies and chart paper. They brainstormed what features would allow their library to function as an exemplar of one of the four categories. The groups were highly generative and this activity seemed to spark a lot of excitement among participants. Photos of participants’ completed charts are in Appendix C.



ACTIVITY #4: LIBRARY ACTIVITIES/PROGRAMS

Participants were presented with a comprehensive roster of the activities and programs typically offered by library branches. They had the opportunity to add any programs or activities that they thought might be missing. (To formulate the roster, NYCpublic drew on research conducted by SITU, a local architecture firm that participated in the Center for an Urban Future’s branch

library project, and by Sandra Nelson, a library strategic designer. (See complete roster in Appendix C.)

Once participants had reviewed the list, they spoke in small groups about the specific programs or activities that they would most like to see in Red Hook Library. These discussions were followed by a vote. Below are the sections of the roster that garnered the most votes:

I Would Like To Use My Library To: ⁱ	Which Means I May Need These Resources/Programs: ⁱⁱ
Succeed in School	In-person homework help, afterschool classes & programs, dedicated homework computers, space for tutoring, project-based learning opportunities
Know & Be Part of My Community	Community resources and services including bulletin boards (real & virtual), meeting space for community groups
Create Young Readers	Read & Play, Legos, Story Time, Arts & Crafts, Reading Is Fundamental
Celebrate Diversity & Foster Cultural Awareness	Culturally specific programming: films, local artist/writers series, recipe shares

^[i] Sandra Nelson calls these “library service responses.” Her work focuses on library strategic planning and these are the services that she recommends all library systems (not each individual branch) consider offering.

^[ii] SITU compiled much of this list of programs and activities. They created a design prototype that allows a library to use furniture and space flexibly to offer a variety of programs. The list assumes that books and other printed materials would be offered to support library patrons as they explored these activities and interests.

Since many of these priorities are reflected in the branch’s current operations, the participants’ responses are comprised of both requests for new programs and activities and the expansion of existing resources. The priorities identified in this Lab, as well as those indicated in the subsequent survey and via other opportunities for input, can be studied alongside current programs and/or activities that take place at the Red Hook branch, including:

- Read & Play
- After-school Stories
- Library HotSpot Program
- Legos in the Library
- Red Hook Library Teens
- Computer Class for Adults
- Résumé Workshops
- Story Time
- Reading Is Fundamental
- Arts & Crafts



ACTIVITY #5: PRIORITIZING DISCRETE/DESIGNATED SPACES

When seen from the patrons' perspective, Red Hook Library in its current configuration is essentially one large, undivided room. Other rooms are currently designated staff-only, with one small meeting space available to the public. In addition, the branch has outdoor space in the back.

Participants in this activity were provided with a list of discrete or designated spaces that a branch might contain. They then had the opportunity to expand the list by adding other spaces of their own choosing. The results of a vote on the proposed spaces yielded a sense of the participants' priorities for the branch. Throughout the day, participants showed great interest in the possibility of flexible spaces; their priorities could be incorporated into such spaces.

These spaces received the most votes:

- Flexible Community Space
- Teen Space
- Children's Space (0-5 years)
- Language/Lit Center (equipped with the technology, books and other resources needed for learning a language)



ACTIVITY #6: IMAGINING HOW PATRONS WILL USE A SPACE

When designers think about a space, they consider the needs of its users. In this final exercise, groups of participants selected a discrete/designated space to “design” or build out. They thought about which users would most likely be served by such a space, brainstormed about what they might offer in the space to address those users’ needs and concluded by imagining how this redesigned space could contribute to the shaping of its users’ future lives. Each group of participants recorded its thoughts on a template (see Appendix C) which was later shared with the entire group.

Here are some of the outcomes noted by a few of the groups:



If the branch were to include this type of designated/ discrete place:	These benefits would accrue to its users:
Peaceful/quiet space	a sense of relaxation and de-stressing; better quality of life; ability to focus, concentrate, and perform; creativity and imagination stimulated, allowing them to leap from this world into an entirely different one of his or her choice
Senior space	better health, circulation, mental ability, social life
Teen space	doing better in school; having a safe place to go/staying off the streets; getting better jobs

RECOMMENDATIONS: LOOKING AHEAD

Broaden Avenues for, and Increase the Usage of, Community Input

The library should maintain communication with stakeholders (in part through an interactive display of these results at the library) to ensure that the most essential design elements and programming/resources for the space respond to public needs.

The library should create a mechanism for regular teen/youth input. This could be informal or through the creation of a youth advisory board, perhaps as part of the youth advisory plans advocated by Red Hook's Council Member, Carlos Menchaca.

A Friends group has been created at the library, and efforts should be undertaken to ensure that its membership is comprised of residents from a variety of backgrounds. We hope that the presentation of this report and the opening of the exhibit will facilitate the goal of a diverse Friends group.

Meet the Immediate Needs of Young People

The library should consider taking steps such as designating computers specifically for students who want to do homework and making sure that everyone who wants to check out books is able to do so. Many of the young people we met with could not take out books because of lost library cards or excessive fines. The library should consider proactively helping young patrons deal with these circumstances to avoid future problems.

Engage Library Staff

Our interviews with librarians showed that they care deeply about their work and the people they serve. They were important stakeholders in this engagement process and should continue to play a central role as the capital design project moves forward. While Brooklyn Public Library has encountered staffing constraints following years of budget cuts, its operating support from the city increased last year. The library has been able to hire new staff (including at Red Hook Library) and we encourage BPL to offer opportunities for growth and development so that library staff are able to meet the needs of their patrons and serve the community's varied programmatic interests.

Use Community Priorities to Influence Physical Design of the Library Space

The architects/designers who ultimately draft a new vision for Red Hook Library will be thinking about how the community wants to use the branch. So far, it is clear that the community prioritizes flexible spaces where they can come together and learn or collaborate. Patrons want to make sure that teens and children have spaces that inspire them to love reading and to feel playful about, and engaged with, the space that is "theirs." Throughout these results, we can see a need for ample books and resources. Participants report particular interest in the study of their own and other community members' cultures/histories, the history of Red Hook and multilingual materials. These varied interests underscore the need for a flexible design that can accommodate a host of community needs.

Conclusion

Brooklyn Public Library's presence in Red Hook dates back to the opening of the neighborhood's original Carnegie branch in 1915. Generations of patrons have pursued their intellectual interests and achieved their educational and professional goals with help from the branch's free collections and programs. BPL should continue to work closely with the community—residents, community institutions, elected officials, librarians and other stakeholders—to ensure that Red Hook Library meets the needs of the neighborhood in the years to come. All members of the community who value their branch should join in the planning for its future by visiting Red Hook Library and participating in this ongoing dialogue.

APPENDICES

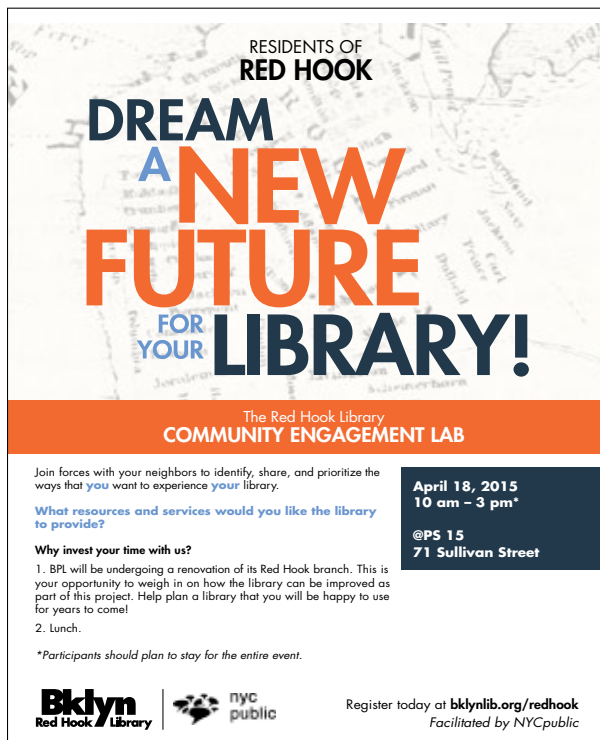
APPENDIX A

In preparation for the Red Hook Library Community Engagement Lab, NYCpublic staff and/or Brooklyn Public Library's Naila Rosario met with area elected officials and representatives of local community-based organizations. We thank the following for their time, expertise and suggestions:

Congresswoman Nydia Velazquez
State Senator Velmanette Montgomery
State Assemblyman Felix Ortiz
City Councilman Carlos Menchaca
Board of NYCHA Red Hook (East)
Community Board 6
Cora Dance
Falconworks Artists Group
Good Shepherd Services
Miccio Cornerstone Community Center
NYCHA Tenant Association (West)
People Urban Films

PS 15 Parent Teacher Association
Red Hook Baseball League
Red Hook Library Staff
Red Hook Civic Association
Red Hook Initiative
Red Hook Rise
Red Hook Star Revue
Red Hook Youth Council
Spaceworks
The Patrick Daly School, PS 15
The Red Hook Neighborhood School, PS 676
Tween/Teen Afternoon Group at Red Hook Library

APPENDIX B



RESIDENTS OF
RED HOOK

**DREAM
A NEW
FUTURE
FOR YOUR LIBRARY!**

The Red Hook Library
COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT LAB

Join forces with your neighbors to identify, share, and prioritize the ways that **you** want to experience **your** library.

What resources and services would you like the library to provide?

Why invest your time with us?

1. BPL will be undergoing a renovation of its Red Hook branch. This is your opportunity to weigh in on how the library can be improved as part of this project. Help plan a library that you will be happy to use for years to come!
2. Lunch.

**Participants should plan to stay for the entire event.*

**April 18, 2015
10 am - 3 pm***

**@PS 15
71 Sullivan Street**

Bklyn Red Hook Library | **nyc public**

Register today at bklynlib.org/redhook
Facilitated by NYCpublic

*Invitation to the April 2015
Community Engagement Lab*

APPENDIX C

The following pages include some of the charts, cards and lists used in various Lab activities. Also included are the results of individual activities, such as votes (where applicable).

Activity #1: The Library in Your Life

Lab participants interviewed each other with these questions.

1. *Can you remember a time that a library made a difference in your life? (Picture that time, but don't talk about it.) In what way were you using that library? How old were you?*
2. *Now we're back in the present. What do you or one of your family members usually do at the library?*
3. *What would you (or one of your family members) like to be able to do at the library that you cannot currently do?*
4. *In an ideal world, what role/s would a branch library play in a community?*

Activity #2: Image Study

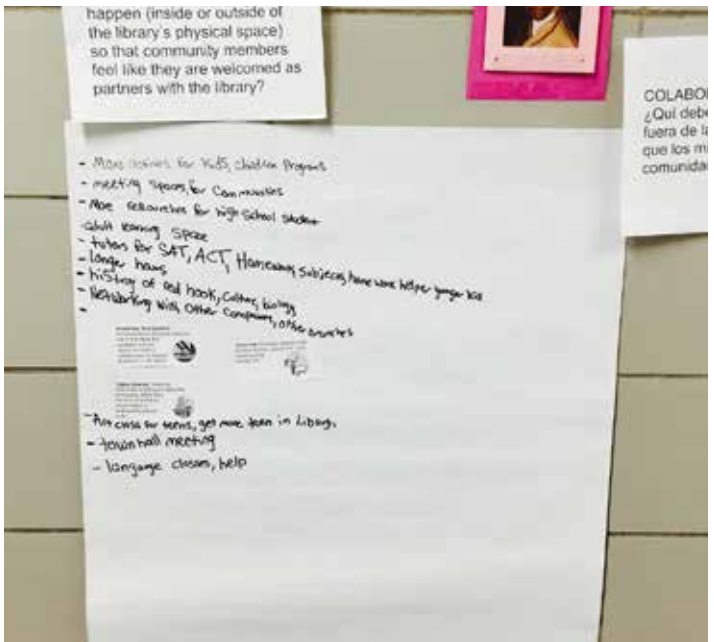
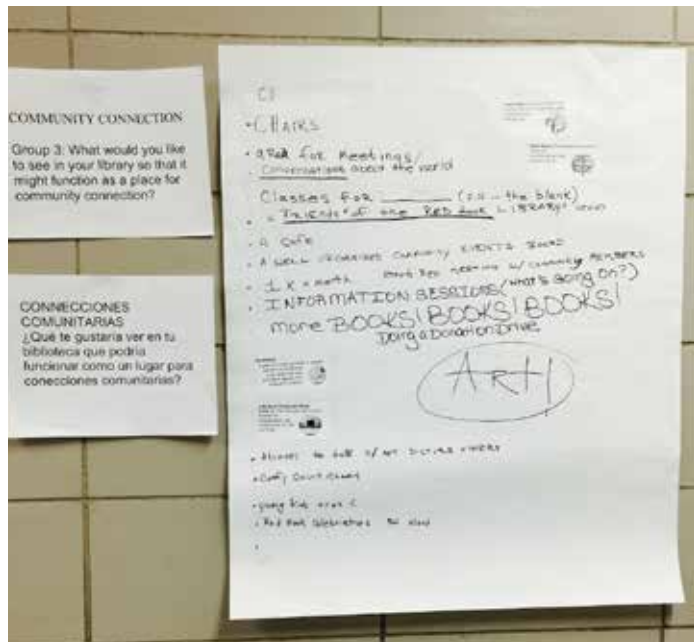
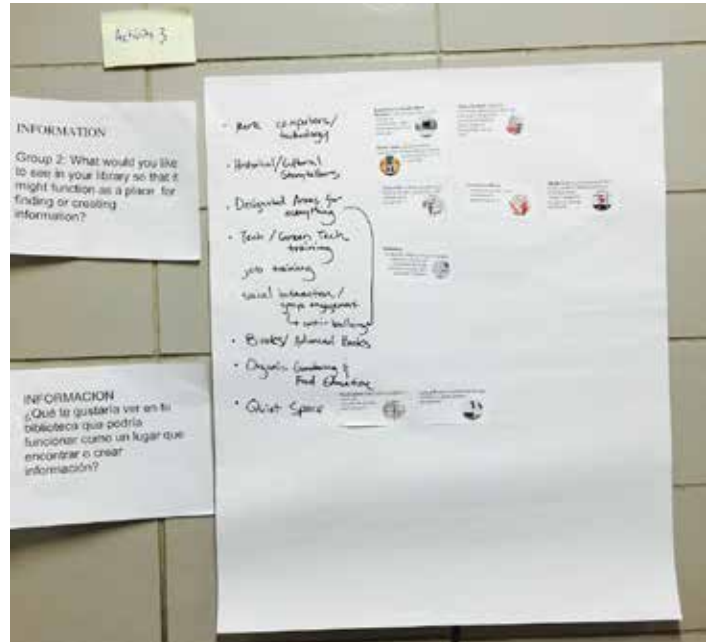
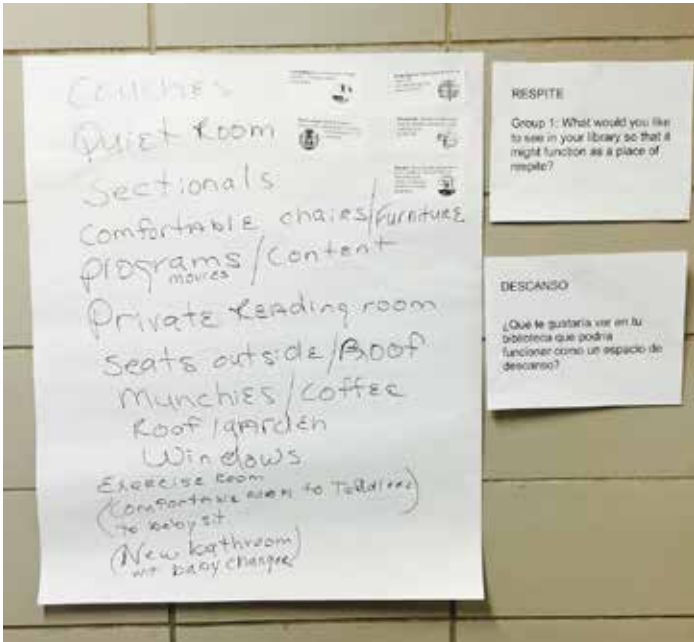
Participants responded to images of library spaces from around the world using this card as a guide. (They chose an individual image and responded from one of the three perspectives listed: ME, NOW; CHILD; COMMUNITY.)

ME, NOW YO, AHORA	CHILD NIÑOS	COMMUNITY COMUNIDAD
<p>What do you like about this image?</p> <p>¿Qué te gusta de esta imagen?</p>	<p>What, if anything, do you imagine doing on your own in this space?</p> <p>¿Qué te imaginas, si hay algo, que estarías haciendo en este lugar?</p>	
<p>How might you interact with others, if at all, in this space?</p> <p>¿Cómo podrías interactuar con otros, si pudieras, en este espacio?</p>	<p>How might this space make you feel?</p> <p>¿Cómo podría hacer sentir este lugar?</p>	

Activity #3:

Libraries as Spaces for Respite, Community Connection, Information and Partnership

Groups of participants brainstormed on chart paper. Here are photos of their completed charts, showing what they thought the branch would need to function as a space for either Respite, Information, Community Connection or Partnership.



Activity #4: Library Activities/Programs

Participants voted for the programs and services that they see as a priority for themselves and/or for the community. See Table below:

Program		Within a larger program category, these specific activities received individual votes
Succeed In School	13	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In-person homework help • Afterschool classes and programs • Dedicated homework computers • Space for tutoring • More SAT, ACT book resources for teens
Know & Be Part of My Community	11	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Meeting space for community groups (5 of the 11 votes)
Create Young Readers	9	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Read and Play • Story Time
Celebrate Diversity & Foster Cultural Awareness	7	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Culturally specific programming: films • Local artist/writers series
Support the Development of Healthy and Wise Teens	4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Youth Council who help determine what type of youth programming is offered • Book Clubs – social interaction around a shared text
Satisfy Curiosity & Stimulate Imagination	4	
Connect to the Online World	4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • More computers and more time to use them • Specific support for older adults
Spend Time As an Older Adult (Seniors)	3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Teaching Social Media (mental health connections)
View, Display, or Participate in Exhibitions & Performances	2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Exhibition Space
Make Informed Decisions re Health, Wealth, and Other Life Issues	1	
Change My Baby Space (bathroom with changing table)	1	
Learn to Read and Write Better or Prepare for High School Equivalency	1	
Express Creativity: Learn & Create	1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Artist and Maker Space

Program Areas that did not Receive Any Votes

- Explore Career Choices, Find a Job, or Build Successful Enterprises
- Understand How to Find, Evaluate, and Use Information
- Access Services for New Immigrants

Activity #5:

Prioritizing Discrete/Designated Spaces

Participants “dot” voted to indicate their preferences for types of discrete or designated spaces within the library. Of course, the number of particular spaces a library can have may be limited by size, but the table below gives you a sense of participants’ priorities. Several of these ideas could be designed to coexist within the modifiable “flexible” space that Lab attendees seemed to favor.




Type of Space	Total Votes	1st Priority	2nd Priority	3rd Priority
Flexible Community Space	9	7	2	
Teen Space	8	2		6
Children’s Space (0-5)	6	1	1	4
A Language/Lit Center (equipped with the technology, books and other resources needed for learning a language)	4		2	3
Older Adult Space	3	2	1	
Children’s Space (for school aged children, 6-12 years old)	3		3	
Job Center/ Co-Working Space	3		3	
Digital Hub (designated access technology and the internet)	3		1	2
Joyful, Reflective Space	2	1		1
Workshop (a space to create)	2	1	1	
Book Stacks	1	1		
Lounge Space	1		1	

Activity #6: Imagining How Patrons Will Use a Space

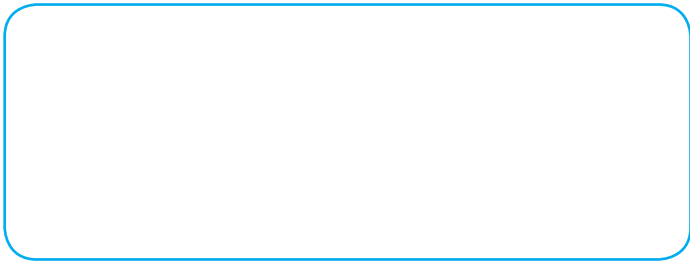
Lab participants used this template to think about how a specific discrete space might be used and affect library patrons.

Type of Space _____

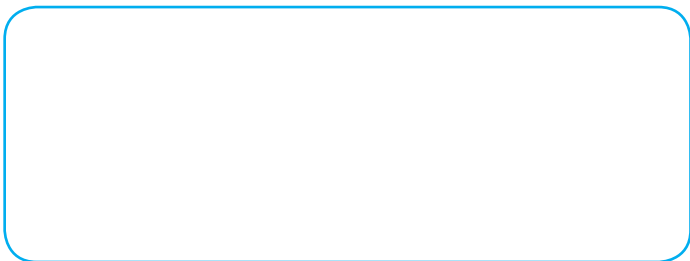
This space will support _____ (target user) whose core needs are:



by offering: (Here you might list specific resources, services, physical set ups, etc.)



and help him or her to have a future where: (Here you could describe the changes or effects the target user undergoes or experiences.)



APPENDIX D

Compendium of All Ideas Generated at the Red Hook Library Community Engagement Lab

In response to various exercises and prompts throughout the day, participants at the Red Hook Library Lab generated dozens of ideas. After the Lab, NYCpublic staff looked across all the day's exercises to cluster the ideas generated into 5 broad categories:

1. Activities/Things to Do (for all library users, or adults in particular)
2. Activities/Things to Do (specifically aimed at youth and families)
3. Specific Spaces/Structures that participants hoped to see in their library
4. Materials/Equipment/Furniture that participants hoped to see in their library
5. How users would like to feel in the library/how they hope the library might look

Within each of these broader categories, we attempted to cluster similar or related ideas.

Activities/Things To Do (Adults and/or General Population)

Collaborating/Networking/Experiencing the Red Hook Community

Meet people
Social interaction/group engagement
Commune with others
Interact
Interact with other residents
Make friends
Bring people together
Community get together
Work together as a community
Conversation
Networking with other companies/branches

Reading/Studying/Solitary Thinking

Read
Read the daily newspaper
Relax
Learn
Study

Meeting in Groups to Study or Discuss

Study group
Book discussion groups
Discussion group
One-to-one discussion

Events/Readings/Talks

Open forum
Hear interesting talks
Town hall meetings
Community conversations
Community programs: culture, black history
Cultural programming/leadership
Historical/cultural storytellers
Red Hook celebrities read aloud
Conversations about the world
Monthly meeting with government official

Courses/Classes/Workshops

Literacy Education
Language classes/help (x2)
Robotics
Job training
Tech/green tech training
Partner w/Kentler Drawing Center
Computer classes for seniors
Organic gardening/food education
Grow foods without GMO seeds
Learn about the constitution/different forms of government
Multitask
Cross-generational programs (seniors & preK)

Activities/Things to Do (Youth and Family Focus)

Kids read, interact, play
Read
Read with family
Historical/cultural storytellers
Cultural arts/youth program
Watch children's movies
Games (computer and analog)
Reading games (on and off computer)
Robotics
Homework helpers
Science and math tutorials
SAT/ACT tutors
Teen art class
Teen internships
Government and politics for youth
Talk with other parents

Specific Spaces/Structures

Space for play
Active space for kids
Space for crafts
Space for arts
Artistic space
Place for teens (cozy, cool, functional for writing)
Space for children to read
Family reading space
Quiet reading space (x2)
Private reading room
Reading room
Language group room
Materials are easily accessible, on low shelves
Adult learning space
Learning space
Areas for conversation
Common work areas
Meeting space
Areas in which folks can commune with
each other without disturbing others
Space for individuals to work
Individual space
Open, lots of space, divided by sections
Walls with public art
Auditorium (x2)
Space with podium (for speaker to address others)
Place to hear interesting talks
Cinema Room
Roof garden
New bathroom w/changing table
Windows

Materials/Equipment/Furniture

More computers
Games (computer and analog)
3D printer
Books related to the waterfront
Books related to flood resiliency
More books (to "enhance their reading + education")
Lots of books
Senior resources
More resources for high school students
Furniture
Comfortable chairs/furniture
Sofa
Sectionals
Couches
Seats outside

Look/Feel

Relaxed
Creative, colorful, imaginative
Fun and educational (x2)
Flexible
Comfort
Bright colors inspire creativity
Open space
Clean
Beautiful
Warm
Inspired (x2)
Large, spacious
Freedom
Movement
Involved (x2)
Excited
Welcoming
Productive
It motivates thinking
Modern



A

High Water
Low Water

Mill Pond

John

Waverly
Front

Hamilton
Tribble

Gold
Charles

Jackson

York

In Prospect
Sandy

High
Nassau

Concord

Firman

Raymond
Smy

Expier
Middleton

Cranberry
Orange

W. Jackson
Pierrepont

Widmore
Adams

Tillot

Jackson
Truce

Constable
Remsen

Clinton

Jackson

Myrtle

Jordeman

Livingston

Scheuerhorn
Garrison

Micks
Henry

Moore

Cornell

District

Been
Bergen
Wickoff

Toll

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