

Burbank Public Library Planning Process

Information-gathering phase August 2022-February 2023

As part of its strategic planning efforts, Burbank Public Library staff gathered information from community members, library users, and Library staff over the course of several months in 2022-23. The elements of the information gathering effort were:

- Community Conversations: A series of several facilitated events with target audiences to ensure diverse voices are represented in the planning process.
- User Survey: A paper and online survey asking three open-ended questions about priorities for the Library.
- Accomplishments and Statistical Trends: Review of statistics, programs and existing services, including comparison of Burbank to regional peer libraries.
- Trends Research: Evaluation of national trends in libraries and larger trends affecting libraries, highlighting areas of relevance to Burbank.
- Staff Input: A survey and appreciative interviews highlighting staff desires, followed by activities at February 2023 All-Staff Day.

This document outlines the results of that research.

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Key information about the City of Burbank and Burbank Public Library

To understand the current state and future opportunities for Burbank Public Library, it is important to place the discussion into context. Information in this section is drawn from the US Census, the City of Burbank, Burbank Unified School District, and Burbank Public Library.

About Burbank

- The current population estimate is about 107,000. This represents a slight increase after having been stagnant for many years. Population increases are expected to accelerate with a City Council commitment to add 12,000 housing units over the next 10-12 years.
- The daily workforce is about 140,000. Almost a quarter of the workforce is in the media industry, with Warner Bros. and Disney as the top employers, followed by Providence St. Joseph Medical Center and the Hollywood Burbank Airport. Whereas Burbank used to be dominated by stable manufacturing work, the workforce of today and the future are more likely to work on contract and require advanced education and technology skills.
- The median age is about 42, older than the median age in the rest of Los Angeles County, and the population in Burbank is expected to continue to age. About 92 percent of residents have an educational level of high school or better, a higher rate than the region. The median household income in Burbank is about \$81,000, comparable to the region.
- The median home value in Burbank in 2023 is about \$940,000, an increase of about 12 percent in three years and 25 percent above the Los Angeles County median value. Vacancy rates for rentals are low, and there is a shortage of affordable housing. A majority of housing units are occupied by renters, at 55 percent.
- Just under 10 percent of families live below the poverty line, a rate that is higher for older adults than for children.
- Just under one-third of the population is foreign-born. About 55 percent of residents speak only English. Major languages besides English include Spanish and Armenian. While Spanish is still the dominant non-English language, in the Burbank Unified School District, Armenian has become the major secondary language group. School district reports indicate other language groups with a growing presence include Arabic, Russian, Tagalog, and Korean.
- 24 percent of the population is Hispanic or Latino of any race. The non-Hispanic white population is 56 percent, which has remained steady in recent years. The Asian (13 percent) and Black (2.6 percent) populations have increased in the past decade but not in the last few years.
- Burbank has widespread broadband adoption, with 93 percent of households owning a computer and 88 percent having a broadband internet subscription.
- Burbank Unified School District enrolls 14,300 students annually; like many others, the district saw an enrollment decline due to the pandemic.
- Major nonprofits include: Burbank Temporary Aid Center, the Family Services Agency, the Boys & Girls Club, the YMCA, Home Again Los Angeles, and the Burbank Arts and Education Foundation.
- The City of Burbank employs about 1,500 people.

About Burbank Public Library

Burbank Public Library was founded in 1913 and has three locations: Central, Buena Vista and Northwest.

Major services include:

- Circulation of books, audiobooks, DVDs, and eMaterials
- Access to online resources, internet-connected PCs, and wifi
- Programming for all ages, offered onsite and offsite. Programs range from early literacy programs to summer reading to cultural offerings to technology training
- An adult literacy program funded by the state through California Library Literacy Services
- The Spark! Digital Media Lab at the Central Library, offering access to equipment and software for content creation and media productions
- Job Connect, part of the Verdugo Workforce Development Board, that connects job seekers with employment opportunities
- An on-site social worker, serving patrons of the libraries and senior centers
- A volunteer program for teens and adults, who completed 5,300 service hours in FY2022-23
- A Friends of the Library group, founded in 1980, who staff two used bookstore and host book sales and other fundraisers
- Coordination of the Burbank Sister City program

In 2022-23, Burbank Public Library:

- Was open 155 hours per week at three sites
- Had 89 employees, 42 full-time and 47 part-time (64 full-time equivalent positions)
- Had an operating budget of \$8.5 million, 75% of which was devoted to salaries and benefits
- Offered a collection of about 350,000 physical items and over 1 million downloadable items
- Hosted 450,000 in-person visitors at its three locations, along with 350,000 visitors to burbanklibrary.org
- Circulated more than 625,000 physical items and 100,000 electronic items
- Had almost 17,000 attendees at 700 programs
- Recorded about 55,000 requests for information assistance
- Supported 47,000 public computer sessions and about 17,000 wifi sessions

User Survey

A user survey was conducted between October 13 and November 14, 2022. Most responses were gathered online, but people could obtain paper surveys at all Library sites in English, Spanish, or Armenian. There were 1,567 responses. Of the respondents, 75% lived in Burbank and 95% had used Burbank Public Library in the past three years. The ages of respondents broke down as follows:

Under age 14: 1.5%	Age 35-49: 36.7%
Age 14-18: 0.8%	Age 50-64: 21.3%
Age 19-34: 17.5%	Age 65 and older: 22.2%

The question, “How would you rate your most recent experience?” resulted in the following responses:

- Met my expectations: 48.0%
- Exceeded my expectations: 49.1%
- Failed to meet my expectations: 2.9%

The survey asked respondents to select from a list of services or programs to identify what currently offered by the Library was most important to them. Respondents could select multiple categories.

Question 1: What services or programs currently offered by the Library are the most important to you?

In order of most to least responses:

- Checking out books or movies: 86.2%
- eBooks or streaming video: 50%
- Space to meet, study or sit: 40.7%
- Children’s programs: 35%
- Staff assistance: 32%
- Adult programs: 27.5%
- Public computers and wifi: 26.7%
- Online and print research resources: 26.5%
- Teen programs: 14.9%
- Social services: 12.5%
- Employment services: 12.5%
- Spark! Digital Media Lab: 9.8%
- Other: 9.4%

Responses falling under other included the Friends of the Library bookstores, voting, TAP cards, air conditioning, and volunteer opportunities.

Two open-ended questions aimed to draw feedback on new services or programs as well as general ideas for improvement.

Question 2: What new services or programs would you like to see the Library offer in the future?

Overall, responses fell into the following categories:

- Programs: 59.5%
- Physical collection: 10.3%
- eCollection: 8.7%
- Public technology/Spark! Lab: 7%
- Space (meeting rooms, seating, accessibility): 6.9%
- Social services (providing them/accessing them): 2.9%
- Job Connect: 2.1%
- Hours: 1.8%
- Other: 0.8%

Select comments and suggestions included:

- For children’s and teen programs: more of existing offerings; more varied days, times and locations; homework help; STEM programs
- For adult programs: Language lessons, life skills and career classes, author visits, book clubs, media industry focus, nature focus, film screenings
- For the collection: ability to borrow tools, hobby supplies, tablets, hotspots, national park passes
- For the eCollection: broader range of materials, shorter wait lists
- For public technology and Spark!: more classes, poster printing, additional software
- For space: more study and meeting rooms, seating, café, improved accessibility
- Other categories: lockers, increased security, more social services outreach, more Sunday hours, job fairs, housing assistance, cleanliness

Question 3: Do you have any other ideas about how the Library can improve?

Responses to this question had significant overlap with the previous question. Overall, responses fell into the following categories:

- Space: 21.8%
- Social services: 19.9%
- Programs: 18.2%
- Physical collection: 13.8%
- eCollection: 10.2%
- Hours: 7.2%
- Staff/staff assistance: 5.8%

Public technology/Spark! Lab: 2.2%

Other: 0.8%

Select additional highlights included:

- Continued work on responses to the presence of people experiencing homelessness
- Improvements to the décor, lighting, restrooms, and overall Central Library space
- More hours for Library locations and the Spark! Lab
- Continued options for in-person or online programs
- Creation of outdoor reading areas
- Increased diversity and inclusion in collection and programs

Community Conversations

While the user survey obtained broad information from a large number of people, the technique of Community Conversations was utilized in order to dig deeper into the perspective of key community groups. Library staff facilitated three community conversations targeted at the following populations: older adults, teens, and Armenian speakers.

The Community Conversations were based on methodology from the Harwood Institute for Public Innovation, using techniques designed to understand what participants feel are key attributes of the Burbank community, why those attributes matter, and where there is need for improvement. Participants had the opportunity to suggest library activities that could support or improve community strength.

Overwhelmingly, people across all populations identify common attributes to the City of Burbank:

- The small town feel (welcoming, family-oriented, easy to get around, safe, clean, City officials are accessible)
- Amenities (good schools, good libraries, parks and senior centers, lots of recreation and entertainment options, access to larger Los Angeles resources)
- Strong economy (unique shopping neighborhoods, high-paying jobs, pride in association with the media industry)

Notable characteristics with room for improvement included:

- Lack of diversity, including diversity of viewpoints that are included in decision-making
- Need for more community events, local businesses
- Challenges related to being part of a large urban area: high cost of living, traffic, crime, presence of people experiencing homelessness
- Inadequate transportation options

Suggested activities the Library could undertake in response:

- Provide diverse collections and programs, including materials in other languages; welcoming spaces and activities for all ethnic, racial, sexual, and gender identities
- Improved spaces, including cafes and room for art displays
- Continued improvement of connections with schools and possible programs held onsite at schools
- More programs for all ages, notably teens and older adults
- More promotion of services and events

Accomplishments and Statistical Trends

2020-2023 Strategic Plan

Burbank Public Library's second strategic plan covered 2020-23. Notably, this plan was in draft form at the start of the COVID-19 pandemic, which proved to have a significant and lasting impact on Library operations. It contained five major objectives:

1. **Strengthen community** by connecting users with resources to meet their needs
2. **Support individuals and families** by providing programs and services that support reading and learning throughout the lifespan
3. **Improve opportunity and equity** by expanding services for workforce development, entrepreneurship and technology access
4. **Build resilience** in the community and in the staff
5. **Demonstrate value** in space, operations and resources

Major accomplishments during this time period included:

- Elimination of overdue fines for Library materials in July 2021, increasing equity and removing a barrier to access.
- Agile adaptation to service disruptions caused by the pandemic, including development of curbside checkout services and online programs. Library staff served as the central information hub for City-wide information during the early months of the pandemic and supported the Emergency Operations Center.
- Creation of a social worker position, co-located in Burbank libraries and senior centers, to provide outreach and service to those experiencing homelessness or other needs. Burbank is one of only a handful of libraries in Los Angeles County to have this position.
- Transition of Job Connect, the City's service for job seekers, from the Management Services Department to the Library, providing expanded access.
- Formation of the Justice, Equity, Diversity and Inclusion (JEDI) Committee and subcommittees focused on staff learning and training; collection diversity; inclusive programs; inclusive customer service; and recruitment. The Library was the first City department to initiate this work.
- Development of the Spark! Digital Media Lab, which opened in early 2020, to include a regular roster of hands-on programs helping individuals develop media industry skills; addition of a sound booth for public use.
- Expansion of the BConnectED partnership with Burbank Unified School District that provides seamless Library access to all students; the program covered all grades as of the 2020-21 academic year.
- Return of the Burbank Reads program to encourage community discussion and learning on important issues through the shared act of reading.
- Expansion of online collections to meet increased demands for remote use
- Addition of outdoor wifi access points to provide 24/7 internet access even when libraries were closed.

Statistical trends over the past three years:

The pandemic had a significant impact on Library usage, which was not unique to Burbank.

- Despite a strong recovery since libraries fully reopened in May 2021, circulation of physical materials remains lower than pre-pandemic. In the last fiscal year before the pandemic (2018-19), the Library circulated 852,400 physical items, while in FY2022-23, the Library circulated 626,350 physical items, a drop of 27 percent.
- Circulation of eMaterials increased in the beginning of the pandemic and then leveled off. eCirculation in 2018-19 was just under 45,000, rising to 100,000 in FY2022-23. Circulation of eMaterial circulation now represents 14 percent of total circulation, up from about 5 percent four years prior.
- Total staffing has remained stable. The new social worker position was added, and an Administrative Analyst II joined the staff as part of the Job Connect service moving to the Library.
- The pandemic resulted in an immediate shutdown of libraries in March 2020, with curbside service launching in June 2020. Libraries remained closed – with only curbside services, online programs, and phone or online reference and research assistance – through March 2021, with full hours restored in May 2021.
- In-person Library visits have also not recovered to pre-pandemic levels. In FY2018-19, 721,000 individuals visited libraries in person. In 2022-24, that number dropped to 447,300. The Buena Vista Library continues to have the highest usage, representing 59% of total system visits and 53% of physical circulation in FY2022-23. These percentages increased slightly since FY2018-19.
- Local funding is unchanged. Increases to the Library departmental budget have been limited to funds to cover unfunded pension liability and other costs related to negotiated salaries and benefits.
- Due to increasing costs of benefits, the percent of the Library Services Department's budget that goes to materials, supplies and services has decreased slightly. Within the discretionary portion of the Library budget, funds have been shifted to eMaterials in the past three years.
- The primary eBook provider, OverDrive, continues to be popular in Burbank. New services added in the past three years include: OverDrive magazines; Kanopy (streaming video); and ABCMouse (early literacy games). Burbank residents have benefited from an increase in online resources funded by the California State Library, including LinkedIn Learning, Coursera, and HelpNow.
- Programming has evolved, with fewer programs overall but more focus on high impact programs and underserved populations. During the pandemic, staff quickly adapted to produce interactive online programs via Zoom and pre-recorded online programs via Youtube. Outdoor programs have become popular, especially for children.
- Public computer use and use of the Library website have declined, while wifi use has increased with the addition of outdoor wifi access points.

Compared to other libraries in the region (Glendale, Pasadena, Santa Clarita, Santa Monica, Thousand Oaks, Torrance):

- Burbank is heavily used by in-person visitors. Both relative to its square feet and relative to its population, Burbank has the second highest use, after Torrance. Burbank is low on space (ranks 5 of 7 at .75 square feet per capita, with Santa Clarita and Torrance lower).
- Has strong circulation relative to population, lower than Santa Monica and comparable to Pasadena.
- Burbank is second in the group in several areas:
 - Staffing per 1,000 residents, second to Pasadena
 - Program attendance per capita, second to Pasadena
 - Items in collection per capita, second to Santa Monica
 - Public computer usage per capita, second to Santa Monica
- Burbank falls in mid-range in a few areas:
 - Ranked 4 of 7 for percent of residents with a library card
 - Ranked 3 of 7 for local operating income per capita
 - Ranked 3 of 7 for operating hours per capita

Trends Research

A team of staff members reviewed library and non-library publications to identify relevant trends related to their division of the Library:

- Community Connections, including children's, teen, and adult services
- Digital Services, including collection access and public technology
- User Experience, including service points, inclusion, and wayfinding
- Administration: Workforce and social services, marketing, personnel

This research revealed the following major trends and issues that will affect Burbank and other public libraries in the coming years:

- Justice, equity, diversity, and inclusion: culturally sensitive subject headings in catalog records; inclusive programs – broad and targeted; diversity in marketing materials
- Social services, housing insecurity, and homelessness: growth of mental health challenges in adults and children; libraries as safe havens; libraries as connectors; information needs around civic engagement, financial literacy; challenges of balancing rights and professional values with safety concerns
- Marketing and measurement: generational differences in communication; growth of short-form video formats; data inadequacies of traditional systems; outputs vs. outcomes and impacts
- Technology: memory labs; access to digital media tools; use of technology to increase sustainability; artificial intelligence in customer service
- Sustainability: plastic alternatives for 3D printing; educational programs about climate and resilience; Sustainable Libraries Initiative; sustainability in new or renovated buildings
- Youth services: early literacy and student support; childcare costs and lack of adequate spaces; social-emotional learning; increase in homeschooling; youth mental health and wellness; racial literacy
- Adult services: life stressors (housing/cost of living, climate change, mental health, physical health); targeted programming for specific audiences; creative and hands-on programs
- Customer service and collection: single service point/one-desk model; elimination of fines; personalized information/research assistance; Library of Things; alternative delivery models (book vending machines, lockers, Zip Books)
- Staff: turnover and retention challenges; morale; post-pandemic burnout; vocational awe; workplace trauma; communication; training

Staff Input

All staff participated in an appreciative interview activity in fall 2022. In teams of two, staff interviewed each other about times when they felt their skills were valued and their work had impact. Each staff member also had the chance to express three wishes that would help Burbank Public Library achieve more of these positive moments in the future. In addition, staff responded to an anonymous survey in fall 2022, covering their overall feelings about the organization, areas of success, and areas for improvement.

Key responses:

Buildings, spaces, staffing & funding

- New Central Library; modern setup; natural light; air circulation; temperature control; accessibility
- Safe and welcoming spaces; security improvements; more security staff
- Support for difficult situations; consistent rules enforcement
- Improved benefits for staff; consistent full staffing
- More staff; more desk coverage; more time off desk; more flexibility with desk hours
- More schedule and remote work flexibility; more staff onsite
- Teen spaces with walls; dedicated teen spaces
- Cleaner and tidier facilities; water bottle filling stations
- Bookmobile; more little free libraries
- More seating; more study rooms; online study room booking
- Shelve less on highest and lowest shelves
- Outdoor spaces; walking paths; library garden
- A quiet room
- More funding for spaces, staff positions, programs

Programs, collections, technology & services

- Patron-centered programming decisions; programs and services to help people come together
- Social services; additional social worker; psychiatric team
- Bigger book budget and collection; timely availability of new releases; bigger eBook collection
- Tutoring and homework help
- Multilingual programs and collections; inclusive programs and collections
- Café; free snacks, hygiene kits, etc.
- More programs: films, author visits, life skills; children's offerings, especially for babies
- More partnerships; stronger connections with media industry
- Charging stations; public phones
- Different volunteer recruitment options
- Staff book recommendation displays at all locations; personalized book recommendations
- Library of Things (tools, devices, laptops, hotspots etc.)

- Technology help; technology cheat sheets for patrons for simple tasks
- More opportunities to participate in community events

Internal culture/staff development

- Improved communication; fewer communication streams
- More listening and channels for input; ability for staff at all levels to express ideas and be heard
- Staff on the same page about the mission and work; more discussion about the Library's direction
- Cross-training; working beyond job description; job shadowing
- Relaxation workshops for staff; focus on wellness
- Greater autonomy; less bureaucracy; more or fewer opportunities to work at different branches
- Focus on development in current position as well as opportunities for advancement
- More respect from other City departments
- More training on justice, diversity, equity, and inclusion
- More efficient and consistent core training
- More recognition at all levels; staff being kinder to each other

Customer service

- Putting the patrons first
- Signage in different languages
- More outreach and publicity so everyone is aware of services
- More one-on-one help for patrons; conversation with patrons
- Consistency of user experience, policies, and procedures at all branches
- Library tours or orientations in multiple languages
- Single service point for all patron needs; roving staff assistance

Staff Survey Key Results

- Staff overall felt things were going well (average score 6.8 on a scale of 1-10) and felt optimistic about the future (average score 7.2 on a scale of 1-10)
- Positive developments over the past few years included: eliminating fines; hiring social worker; JEDI work; Spark! Lab; Job Connect; fun staff meetings and activities; pandemic response.
- Pressure points included: presence of people experiencing homelessness and mental health issues; safety for staff and patrons; workload and staffing levels; demanding patrons; parking; bureaucracy and paperwork; personal responsibility among staff; communication.
- Internal areas for focus in the next few years: Training on a variety of subjects; teambuilding; communication; safety; staff diversity; appreciation; morale building activities; hiring and retention; flexibility; transparency; clear expectations.
- External areas for focus in the next few years: Programs for all ages; marketing and outreach; social workers and homelessness solutions; sustainability; technology help; diverse collections and programs; progress on new Central Library; updated equipment; more multilingual support; Library of Things; community engagement; seamless and consistent customer service.