



Executive Summary

As a result of the Small Group Work Activity
Thursday, Nov. 6, 2025 • Together O'Fallon Community Workshop #1

OVERVIEW

On November 6, 2025, nearly 60 community members participated in the first Together O'Fallon Community Workshop at the O'Fallon Knights of Columbus. The session was led by co-chairs Todd Reichelt and Lexi Baysinger, with an overview of the O'Fallon Public Library delivered by Library Director Ryan Johnson.

Based on a charge from the Library Board, the presentation and workshop activities were designed to:

- Engage the community in planning for the library's future
- Provide information about current facility conditions, program capacity, and service needs
- Gather authentic feedback from stakeholders to help shape long-term facility and program improvements

Following the presentation, participants worked together in eight small groups to complete two tasks:

Task #1: Key Insights and Engagement

Groups responded to questions about what surprised them, what they value and find challenging about the current library ("roses" and "thorns"), desired services and programs, levels of use, awareness of services, perceptions of the library tax rate, and barriers to access.

Task #2: Key Questions

Groups identified and prioritized issues or topics for further discussion, categorized them as High, Medium, or Low importance, and then developed key questions or comments in each priority area for future community conversations.

Activity #1: What We Heard, What We Learned

Key Insights and Engagement

Across tables, participants expressed surprise at the breadth and depth of library services and programming, particularly:

- The number and variety of programs for children, teens, and adults

- The extent of community and civic services, including technology, digital access, and unique offerings (for example, telescope, fishing kits, eclipse-related activities)
- The high level of use, including the large number of cardholders and frequent users
- The fact that space is already a limiting factor: there is not enough room for current programs, and demand often exceeds capacity

Roses: Current Strengths

Groups consistently highlighted several strengths of the current O'Fallon Public Library:

- Staff and Service Culture
 - Friendly, helpful, and knowledgeable staff
 - Strong sense of belonging and the library as “one of the last free public spaces”
- Programs and Offerings
 - Diverse range of children and teen programs, book clubs, yoga, craft events, and cultural activities
 - Access to digital materials, including e-books, Libby, Hoopla, and other online services
 - Variety of no-cost or low-cost programs that support the whole community
- Facility and Technology
 - A beautiful building that is well-kept and clean
 - Availability of technology and multimedia resources, including computers and printers
 - Interlibrary loan and shared system resources, which greatly expand access to materials

Thorns: Current Challenges

Participants also identified several “thorns” or challenges related to the current library:

- Space and Capacity
 - Limited space for programs, meetings, and study rooms
 - Events filling quickly, especially children’s programs, leaving many on waitlists
 - Inadequate space for larger groups and public gatherings
- Hours, Access, and Location
 - Library hours, especially on Sundays and evenings, are not always sufficient
 - The existing facility is hard to find or “hidden,” with concerns about parking, visibility, and ease of access
 - Traffic and transportation issues can make it difficult to reach the library, particularly for those without convenient transit options
- Facilities and Layout
 - Layout is viewed as inefficient, with limited flexibility in current spaces
 - Concerns about accessibility and the number of self-checkout stations
- Awareness and Communication
 - Not all participants were aware of the full range of services before the workshop
 - Some noted that information about events and offerings can be siloed or hard to find, and that they often learn about programs too late

Desired Services, Programs, and Amenities

When asked what they would like to see at the library, participants identified many potential enhancements, including:

- Space and Facilities
 - More multipurpose rooms and larger meeting spaces for groups of varying sizes
 - More study and work spaces, including tech-equipped study rooms and comfortable seating areas

- Dedicated areas for children and teens, potentially on separate floors or in separate zones
- Outdoor learning and event spaces
- Programs and Services
 - More senior adult programming
 - Expanded children and teen programming, including more sessions of popular events
 - More cultural events, speaker series, and enrichment opportunities such as history topics and crafting
 - Workforce support services such as career help, job search assistance, and skills development
 - Practical services such as banking, mailing services, and Amazon return drop-offs
 - A café or coffee shop to support longer visits and social interaction
- Technology and Access
 - More computers and technology for public use
 - More self-checkouts and digital access options
 - Tech support and education to help patrons learn how to use library resources effectively

Library Use, Awareness, and Barriers

Most tables included a mix of frequent users, often weekly or monthly, and less frequent users who use the library primarily online or not at all. Reasons for use included:

- Borrowing physical and digital materials
- Using study spaces, technology, or meeting rooms
- Attending programs and events

Common barriers included:

- Limited hours, especially for those who work standard business hours
- Space constraints, with programs or rooms booked up quickly
- Transportation and location challenges, including traffic, visibility, and walkability
- Scheduling conflicts, such as senior programming, are offered at times that are difficult for working adults
- Technological hurdles for some patrons, and limited awareness of everything the library offers

Questions Participants Still Have

Many of the questions generated in Task #1 focused on several key areas:

Facilities and Location

- Why was this location selected for the new library, and were more central or accessible sites considered?
- What is the future plan for the existing library building, including potential reuse?

Funding and Taxes

- How will the new or expanded library be funded, and what will be the tax impact on a median-value home?
- What roles will grants, fundraising, and partnerships play in the overall funding plan?

Services versus Building

- Are community needs and library services driving the building design, or is the building determining the services?
- How will programs, community needs, and partnerships shape the final facility plan?

Collaboration and District Boundaries

- How will the library collaborate with schools, Parks and Recreation, and nearby communities such as Shiloh?

- Could the library district boundaries or service area expand, and how would that affect services and funding?

Access, Equity, and Awareness

- How will transportation, accessibility, and hours be structured so that all residents can use the library?
- How will the library improve communication and outreach so more residents are aware of services and programs?

Overall, participants expressed a strong interest in understanding how space, funding, location, and services fit together in a long-term vision for the library as a central community hub.

Activity #2: Key Questions for the Together O’Fallon Process

During the second activity, small groups identified and prioritized topics they want the Together O’Fallon process to explore more deeply. Responses were grouped into themes based on the frequency and emphasis of comments across all eight tables.

Facilities, Space, and Location

Nearly all groups identified space and facilities as high-priority topics:

- Need for More and Flexible Space
 - More multipurpose rooms for programs, meetings, and public use
 - Additional study and work spaces, including small and medium-sized meeting rooms
 - Dedicated spaces for youth, adults, and seniors
 - Outdoor areas for learning, events, and community gatherings
- Location, Visibility, and Access
 - Questions about how the new site location was selected and whether alternatives were considered
 - Concerns about visibility, traffic, and walkability at the new and current locations
 - Interest in making the library easier to find and reach, physically and via public or shared transportation
- Existing Building and Potential Branches
 - What will happen to the current library building if a new facility is built
 - Could the existing building be repurposed or used as a branch or annex, especially for children’s services or community programming

Programs, Services, and Community Role

Many tables emphasized the importance of the library’s programming and community function:

- Program Expansion
 - More programming for seniors, including options at times accessible to working adults
 - Additional children and teen events, offered in multiple sessions to reduce waitlists
 - Expanded cultural events, crafting classes, and speaker series
- Support Services
 - Workforce support such as job searching, resume help, and skills training
 - Practical services such as notary, mailing and package services, and other offerings that bring in residents who might not otherwise visit
- Community Hub

- The library as a central public space for social connection, civic engagement, and lifelong learning
- Questions about how services and program priorities will influence facility design and long-term planning

Technology, Digital Access, and Innovation

More than half of the groups raised questions related to technology:

- Ensuring technology access for all patrons, including more computers and improved digital resources
- Integrating technology into all rooms and spaces, so even small study rooms support presentations and collaboration
- Providing tech support and education to help community members effectively use digital tools and online services
- Exploring innovative offerings such as live online classes and hybrid programs to reach those who cannot always attend in person

Funding, Governance, and Long-Term Sustainability

Funding and long-term financial planning emerged as a major area of interest:

- Cost and Who Pays
 - How will a new or expanded facility be funded, and what will be the tax impact
 - How will the library balance operating costs, including staffing and energy needs, with community expectations for services and hours
- Funding Sources
 - What roles will grants, fundraising, partnerships, and sponsorships play
 - How will potential expansion of the library district or incorporation of neighboring areas such as Shiloh affect resources and governance
- Transparency and Communication
 - Participants want clear, accessible information about costs, funding options, and trade-offs, particularly before any tax or ballot decisions are made

Access, Inclusion, and Transportation

Several groups highlighted the importance of making the library accessible to all residents:

- Hours and Scheduling
 - Library hours that accommodate working adults, families with young children, and seniors
 - Program schedules that reduce conflicts and enhance access for different age groups
- Transportation and Physical Access
 - Interest in bus stops or other transit connections
 - Concerns about traffic, parking, and ease of entry at current and future sites
- Inclusive Services
 - Providing targeted support to lower-income residents and those who may face barriers to using the library
 - Ensuring accessible technology, signage, and wayfinding

Collaboration, Partnerships, and District Relationships

Groups also raised questions about how the library collaborates with other organizations:

- Partnerships

- Opportunities to partner with schools, Parks and Recreation, nearby municipalities, and community organizations
- Shared spaces and coordinated programming with other city facilities, such as community centers
- Service Alignment
 - How to ensure that library services complement, rather than duplicate, other community offerings
 - Clarifying the library's unique role and strengths within the broader network of community resources

Consensus Points

Points of general agreement from the small group work activity include:

- **Space and Facilities Are Central to the Future.**
The community agrees that the library needs more and more flexible space, indoors and outdoors, to support current demand and future growth in programs and services.
- **Location, Access, and Visibility Matter.**
Participants want a library that is easy to find, easy to reach, and welcoming to all, with careful consideration of traffic, transportation, and neighborhood impacts.
- **Programs and Services Are Highly Valued and Should Grow.**
Residents value the library's diverse programming and want expanded opportunities for children, teens, adults, and seniors, including cultural events, workforce support, and practical everyday services.
- **Staff and Service Culture Are Major Strengths.**
The professionalism, kindness, and responsiveness of the library staff are core assets that the community wants to preserve and support through future planning.
- **Funding and Long-Term Sustainability Require Clear Communication.**
Participants want transparent, accessible information about how new facilities and expanded services will be funded, what the tax implications will be, and how outside funding sources and partnerships will be used.
- **Access, Inclusion, and Equity Are Ongoing Priorities.**
Community members want the library to remain a welcoming, free, and inclusive space, with attention to hours, transportation, technology access, and targeted support for those who might otherwise be left out.
- **Collaboration and Community Engagement Should Continue.**
The Together O'Fallon process itself is valued. Participants want continued opportunities to learn, ask questions, and shape decisions, particularly around facilities, funding, location, and long-term service priorities.

For a complete listing of all responses, please see the Together O'Fallon Community Workshop #1 Verbatim Response Document.