

FOCUS GROUP PARTICIPANTS = 17

- **FOCUS GROUP #1** (1/30/24 2:00-3:30 PM) = 10
- **FOCUS GROUP #2** (1/30/24 6:00-7:30 PM) = 7

1. WHAT ARE THE VERY FIRST THREE WORDS YOU THINK OF WHEN YOU THINK OF THE LIBRARY?



- Accessible (2)
- Architecture
- Books (4)
- Busy
- Children (2)
- Community (7)
- Culture
- Efficient
- Engagement
- Experiential
- Family
- Friendly (2)
- Helpful (4)
- Historic
- Knowledge (2)
- Learning/Education
- Open
- People
- Professional
- Programs (3)
- Resourceful
- Service
- Service-Oriented (2)
- Thought-Provoking
- Tranquility
- Vibrant
- Well Thought Of
- Welcoming (3)
- Well-Resource

2. PLEASE TELL US A LITTLE ABOUT YOURSELF AND THE LIBRARY SERVICES YOU USE (OR DON'T USE).

WHAT ARE YOU LOOKING FOR WHEN YOU COME TO THE LIBRARY?

COLLECTIONS (14)

- **Books and Reading-Related Services/Materials (9):** Books (3) || In search of something to read or watch (3) || Children's Room to research stories for Sunday morning ministry || Reading newspapers from out of town || Researching books to read
- **Research (3):** Historical Resources/Research || Research Resources || Research (non-internet)
- **Misc. (2):** CDs || DVDs

FACILITY (15)

- **Children's Room (8):** Children's Room was a draw/help when kids were younger (4) || Bring grandkids (2) || When kids were young, participant brought them to the Children's Room. Brings grandchildren now (2)
- **Exhibits/Artwork (4)**
- **Misc. (3):** Quiet space to work || Used space to hold college interviews for seniors at Groton-Dunstable || Visits the Historical Room. It's their favorite area in the Library.

PROGRAMS (15)

- **Attend Programs (12):** Programs and events (in-person or via Zoom); one respondent attends almost weekly (9) || Book groups (2) || Activities
- **Misc. (3):** Enjoys history and arts programs || Taught programming as part of a job with town || Volunteer with a therapy dog

SERVICES (5)

- **Assistance from Staff (2):** Get help from Library staff || Help with technology.
- **Misc. (3):** Browse books for sale || Donate magazines for recycling. || Likes to visit the Library to engage with people.

IDEAS (5):

- **Expand Collections (2):** There's a good collection of art books, but fewer and more dated design books. Grow the architectural and visual books collection. || The waitlist for hot titles/new releases is long. Add more to reduce the wait time.
- **Technology (2):** During the pandemic, you could access genealogy programs remotely, which are no longer available. Would like this offsite access again. || Wish there was an easier way to search for books across different platforms so you can identify the shortest wait time.
- **Misc. (1):** Collaborate with Groton Neighbors.

COMMENTS/FEEDBACK (6):

- Doesn't use the Library often. Buys books and finds things to watch directly on TV.
- Participant has a Kindle but misses reading on paper. Lives next door to the Library. Should visit more often but has been lazy about it.
- Library feels like an extension of home.
- Library's positive and welcoming staff is invaluable.
- There are Library resources the participant doesn't need or use, but they recognize the value these materials and services offer other people.
- Visited the Library in the 1960s for a high school research project/required reading. Hasn't been since due to a busy schedule and reading independently. Unaware of all the Library offers.

3. THE LIBRARY OFFERS A WIDE VARIETY OF POPULAR PROGRAMS FOR ALL AGES. DO YOU HAVE ANY SUGGESTIONS ON HOW WE CAN IMPROVE OR EXPAND OUR PROGRAMMING?

- **Offer Programs in Varied Formats (26):** Hybrid programs (on-site and virtual access) are popular (10) || Passive /on-demand recorded programs are convenient. Record Zoom presentations so people can watch them later if they have a schedule conflict. Other libraries have YouTube channels where past programs are available for viewing. (9) || Some participants prefer on-site programs (6) || Depending on the weather and the program's time and day, virtual programs can be convenient.
- **Children's Program Ideas (8):** Participant appreciates that the Library is a destination for middle-schoolers on half-days. Another participant said those days can become chaotic for librarians. Suggested that the library offer programs on school half-days, like structured activities coordinated with the schools. Ensure the programs cater to these kids' varying ages/developmental ranges. (6) || Career development for middle and high schoolers || Currently, GPL offers a LEGO club for kids. Would also like to see Lego instruction with more structure and diversity. Encourage girls to participate.
- **Increase # of Program Collaborations (8):** Both the Library and Prescott Center offer a wide range of programs. Consider potential coordination and co-sponsorship of programs to avoid duplication/competition. Both organizations could offer activities together, meet to discuss program plans for the year, and determine how to cross-promote and support each group's mission. A participant mentioned that the Library's programs are free, and the Prescott Center charges a fee. Need to ensure there are still free offerings for community members. (5) || Enjoyed Zoom-based programs in collaboration with other libraries. It creates more programs and provides access to more voices. || Pre-COVID, Groton Neighbors and GPL collaborated to show movies and documentaries and conducted discussions afterward. Would like them to resume. || The Prescott Center offers structured programs for school-aged children on Fridays. GPL could work with them to avoid duplication of events.
- **Add More Author Programs (2):** Author talks are wonderful. || Enjoys programs with authors who speak about books they've written. Impressed with the variety and quality of invitees.
- **Misc. Program Ideas (6):** New adults (early 20s) who came home during COVID-19 are experiencing social isolation. There's nothing currently targeting them. Offer programs that bring them together. || Financial literacy for different ages (middle school, high school, college) || Instruction on completing forms/paperwork you need during life (college, personal affairs, etc.) || Interested in health and wellness, meditation, and functional medicine topics. Enjoyed a past symposium at the Library on Lyme Disease. Lots of related issues could be addressed. || Interested in talks about history and current events (world/country) || During the winter, offer a series of music programs from Groton Hill.

UNRELATED IDEAS (3):

- **Enhance Car Access and Safety (2):** Driving in and out of the Library's parking lot is difficult. Cars park on the curb. There are access and safety issues on Broadmeadow Road.

- One participant asked if the Library’s front door could be more welcoming on school half-days because so many children use her yard as a cut-through.

COMMENTS/FEEDBACK (8):

- **Program Registration System (7):** The program registration system exceeds participants’ expectations regarding tracking and reminding people. The staff runs this system well.
- Enjoyed past Prescott Center seminars on aging, estate planning, and wellness.

4. HOW CAN WE BE MORE EFFECTIVE WHEN COMMUNICATING LIBRARY SERVICES, RESOURCES, AND PROGRAMS TO GROTON?

- **Hardcopy Library Newsletter (10):** GPL’s catalog/newsletter is extremely well done. Participants enjoy reading it when it comes out. (5) || Several people appreciate the benefits of receiving something physical in the mail. They keep the newsletter on the fridge or dining table for easy reference. They suggested expanding the list of people who receive the GPL newsletter. They’re unsure if it’s a community-wide mailing or just to cardholders. (4) || Browses the newsletter for new discoveries
- **Groton Herald (8):** Each week’s GPL programs presented in the Groton Herald (4) || Groton Herald is useful for older community members. Young people rely less on it for information. (3) || Browses the Groton Herald for new discoveries
- **Email (4):** Email list/reminders (2) || Listserv (2)
- **Facebook (4):** Official Library and community Facebook pages and people in town (2) || Groton Facebook group (2)
- **Online (3):** Goes online to find things they’re looking for (2) || GPL Website
- **Misc. (3):** Groton-Dunstable community newsletter || Love getting texts for holds and overdue reminders. Prefers text messages versus paper slips. || Post signs in the Library. For example, signs on the Library’s landing at the stairs, upcoming events on the screen at the Circulation desk, post signs for art shows, etc.

IDEA (2): Contact the Groton Electric Light Department to discuss including Library mailings in the company’s bills/newsletter. The newsletter reaches everyone in town, regardless of age. Participants briefly discussed the possible cost.

COMMENTS/FEEDBACK (3):

- **Excessive Emails (2):** Participants said their email inboxes are so cluttered that items can be missed. They feel overwhelmed. *[NOTE: The email volume concern relates to the total quantity of email messages they receive. It’s not specific to GPL’s emails.]*
- A participant said GPL’s Facebook posts don’t appear in their feed.

5. HOW CAN THE LIBRARY BETTER SERVE YOU, YOUR FAMILY, AND OUR COMMUNITY?

POTENTIAL COLLABORATIONS (8):

- **Prescott Center and Senior Center (3):** Coordinate programming with the Senior Center and Prescott Center so the organizations are stepping on each other. It can be

overwhelming for staff; we don't want to burn them out. Increase communication and collaboration between the organizations to better serve the entire community. || Coordinate activities with the Visitor Center at Prescott || Collaborate on programming with the Senior Center.

- **Misc. (5):** Groton Reads is a popular annual event—a longstanding tradition. It's a good opportunity to reach out to many people. Support for the event, including financial, is important. (2) || GPL could help drive and support the celebration of the country's upcoming anniversary and the role of Groton residents in 1775. The Library could be a key educational provider and connect this important historical time to our townspeople. The Library can help celebrate other chapters of the story as well. (2) || Reach out to small community groups to make them aware of the Library's meeting rooms, which are great for small groups. No fees!

UNDERSERVED COMMUNITY GROUPS (5):

- **New Residents (2):** New families and immigrants who recently moved to Groton. GPL is a welcoming resource. (2)
- **Misc. (3):** New adults (early 20s) living at home with parents since COVID || Residents without reliable transportation. Have the Library go where they are. Librarians can offer conversation and highlight different materials you can borrow. Strengthen the community outreach program by going where the people are. || Work-from-home population feels isolated post-COVID. Help them make community connections.

COMMENTS/FEEDBACK (5):

- A participant shared ideas with the Library staff, who helped them get off the ground. It's easy to collaborate on that level.
- GPL's doing a great job with seniors (delivering books, registering them for programs, etc.).
- GPL offers many programs and is doing a fabulous job. However, the participant expressed concern with GPL's capacity and how stretched its staff is.
- GPL is heavily used on school half-days, especially by middle schoolers. The Library is a huge resource for families and kids.
- Grateful that homeless people can spend time in the Library to access computers and other resources.

6. HOW IMPORTANT IS IT TO HAVE A GOOD LIBRARY IN OUR COMMUNITY?

VERY IMPORTANT (14):

- GPL draws in young families and parents of young children. It's a good place for people to get to know each other. The Library is a huge resource for families. (3)
- A good Library is very important. It reflects the community's values. It serves as a learning and community center. It's essential to have a strong library in a town like Groton. (2)

- The Library contributes to the town’s civic pride. It’s the heartbeat of the community. (2)
- Appreciates the meaningful message on the Library’s entrance (“Open to All”). (2)
 - Participant Anecdote: GPL was always the first place she visited when her grandson visited. At age five, he noticed the sign that read, “Open to All,” and knew exactly what that meant. Considered GPL “his library.”
- Can’t think of any other place in town that serves all ages and where you can attend intergenerational programs.
- Having an active library is incredibly important. GPL served surrounding towns during the pandemic. It’s a vital part of the community, and it's important to support it financially and in every other way.
- It’s essential to provide access to free spaces and things. A library is available to everyone.
- In our increasingly fractured society, the Library is not partisan. It’s important to have neutral, inclusive spaces.
- Proud that Groton has a vibrant library, especially in an era of book banning that has prompted other libraries to reduce access to resources. It’s essential.

PEER LIBRARY COMPARISONS (4):

- **GPL Facility Compares Well (3):** After GPL’s renovation, other libraries pursuing expansions and renovations visited GPL for ideas and consultation, including college libraries. GPL set a high standard for resources, décor, professionalism, flexibility, and its ability to manage spaces. It’s critical to maintain the facility’s standards as we go forward. || Groton utilizes its space uniquely and is willing to modify it over time as needs change. || Visited the new Littleton library, but still thinks Groton’s library is superior.
- Used other communities’ libraries more frequently when the participant’s kids were younger. GPL has a better foundation of funding outside of town, which allows more programming and is a huge advantage.

IDEA (1): Highlight banned books and explain why book banning is happening.

COMMENTS/FEEDBACK (2):

- GPL is free to all.
- In a past town study, the GPL topped the list of town resources that residents value. The quality of service has always been high.

7. WHAT ISSUES FACING THE TOWN DO YOU THINK COULD IMPACT THE LIBRARY OVER THE NEXT FIVE YEARS?

- **Economic Challenges (3):** Issue of town financing/the Library being at risk if override isn’t passed this year; how to get more revenue to fund both the Library and other town services, and have townspeople understand implications; what it could mean for the

Library: closing on Sundays (one of their busiest days, especially for families), closing an hour earlier every day (impact on adult programming), question of keeping/losing membership in inter-library system (2) || A significant override vote is coming up in town, which will affect the Library. It's important for everyone in the community to be aware of this financial risk.

- **Environmental Issues/Inclement Weather (3):** Climate change and catastrophic weather. Access to the Library is hampered when the road floods. (2) || Broadmeadow Road floods and there are concerns about West Groton being cut off. The Library needs to advocate for a long-term solution.
- **Hyper-Partisanship/Lack of Civil Discourse (3):** Failure of American democracy || It's important for GPL to address controversial topics, even if they result in conflict (e.g., what happened with a past event). Be open to conducting challenging discussions and sponsoring programs that not everyone agrees on. || Issue of hate, just underneath the soil but there. Don't expect the Library to fix the problem, but it can be a place to discuss related issues. GPL can provide facts, resources, and historical insight that enhance the understanding of the issues. GPL can offer opportunities for civil, respectful discourse.
- **Digital/Media Literacy (2):** Library should be at the forefront of helping people identify fake news, fake photos, AI/technology issues, etc. Cultivate media/digital literacy. (2)
- **Changing Demographics (2):** Aging population is growing || Gentrification of town will impact the cost of living/housing. Provide information regarding how this affects tax rates and services. Could develop programs about this issue and facilitate candid discussions with residents.
- **Misc. (3):** GPL could serve as a centrally located information resource for residents to learn about the availability of town programs/resources. For example, there's a program to help residents who are unable to pay their property taxes. It's a current need. However, no one applied for the program. || Maintain Groton's tradition of being a repository of knowledge. It's distinctive to the town. || Upgrading the town's master plan will provide a 10-year look into the future, setting the tone for what can happen in town.

8. CAN YOU THINK OF A NEED OR WANT IN TOWN THAT IS NOT BEING MET? PERHAPS A SERVICE, RESOURCE, OR EVENT NOT PRESENTLY AVAILABLE?

FACILITY IDEAS (3):

- The local work-from-home population (consultants, self-employed, caretakers) has grown. Provide space at the Library for them to work, study, and gather to help ward off social isolation. (2)
- Participant expressed concern about people using the Library's small meeting rooms for for-profit activities. In the past, speech therapists used the rooms, and money was exchanged in the GPL. Unsure if this is still happening, but would rather see these rooms used as small study or work spaces—free collaborative spaces.

MANAGEMENT AND OPERATIONS IDEAS (2): Participant asked if a town-wide emergency plan was in place and suggested that the Library could provide residents with that

information. Another participant said the Police and Fire Departments update an emergency plan every five years. Agreed that it's important that people are aware of it. (2)

MARKETING AND OUTREACH IDEAS (5):

- **Target Underserved Low-Income Residents (2):** Financially vulnerable families' needs are underestimated in town. While Groton is an older, well-endowed town, low-income families don't have the same opportunities as our financially secure residents. Some families may be intimidated by the idea of visiting the Library for passes, etc. Help families understand what the Library offers and how important an asset it is. || Promote the food pantry and resources that meet financially insecure community members' needs. Increase awareness of available local resources and services.
- **Expand Offerings for Children with Neurodiversity:** There's a growing population of children with neurodiversity. Learn more about their needs and determine how to better serve them (e.g., pursue education opportunities, make programs more inclusive).
- **Increase Awareness of COA Transportation Service for Local Seniors:** The Council on Aging van will transport people to the Library for evening programs. This impressive service is often underutilized because people aren't aware of it.
- **Minimize Duplication of Community Activities:** Contact town organizations to complement and support their activities rather than duplicate their offerings.

PROGRAM IDEAS (8):

- **Adult Program Ideas (3):** Adult literacy courses || English classes for non-English speaking residents || Provide wellness classes, especially if the Steward Hospital closes.
- **Climate Change/Sustainability (2):** Help with issues related to climate challenges. For example, Groton is one of five communities participating in a Municipal Vulnerability Preparedness Program grant that seeks to help communities find nature-based solutions at large and small levels. This could be pursued in collaboration with the Library, or the Library could use the concept as a focus for workshops. || Serve as a partner and central repository of town sustainability information for making homes and lives more sustainable. GPL could be a primary source of sustainability information.
- **Misc. (3):** Hold a Groton Families Day sponsored by the Library, like the highly attended July 4th celebration at Town Field. Maybe in the spring. Have sports, music, lectures, tours of the Library, etc. Invite residents to show up like they do on the 4th and celebrate all ages, from kids to grandparents. || Bring people who feel isolated together to discuss shows they share common concerns—analogue to other issues outside of tech. || We need to acknowledge the history of native tribes before white people settled in Groton. Would love for Groton Reads 2025 to choose a book that centers on rebuilding relationships with native tribes that were removed from their land.

TECHNOLOGY IDEAS (2): Offer technology information and support. Help with phone and technology issues. Offer people the opportunity to gather to discuss device and application functionality. Talking as a group can help them avoid feeling embarrassed about asking

basic questions. Conduct a technology-focused program with an agenda. It can be informative and fun. (2)

9. ANY ADDITIONAL ADVICE ON HOW THE LIBRARY COULD PROVIDE EVEN GREATER VALUE TO GROTON?

IDEAS (6):

- **Expand Definition of Our Community (2):** Consider the potential impact of more visitors and tourists visiting Groton. Help them feel more welcome and increase their appreciation of our deep history. Broaden our definition of our community to include visitors. (2)
- **Address Management and Operations Concerns:** Participant expressed concern about the Library maintaining adequate funding and staff. Wants to know how to help the Library serve as an interactive community center.
- **Adjust/Increase Open Hours:** Love the fact that the Library is open on Sunday afternoons in the winter. In an ideal world, we would have Monday hours as well, and the Library would be open every day.
- **Improve Access to the Facility:** Pay attention to the road and access issues related to the Library's location (e.g., Broadmeadow Road). The town should address the issues, but the Library can be influential in pushing for change.
- **Offer Language Learning Opportunities:** Offer educational opportunities to learn other languages.

COMMENTS/FEEDBACK (6):

- **Positive Feedback (6):** GPL is superb; it's doing a great job. Appreciates the librarians who provide book recommendations. Staff members are well-read, know their genres, and take the time to be thoughtful. They are very responsive and provide extraordinary service that isn't forgotten. They consistently go beyond the call of duty. The staff does a fabulous job, including the Children's Room. The Library reaches all ages. (4) | | Amazed by how many people regularly visit GPL from surrounding communities. GPL is doing a fantastic job. It should continue to receive political and financial support. Continue to support the staff and show appreciation for them. (2)