

June 2026

NEW New Utrecht Library and Affordable Housing

Community Visioning Report

Bklyn
Public Library

NYC
Housing Preservation
& Development
Office of Neighborhood
Strategies

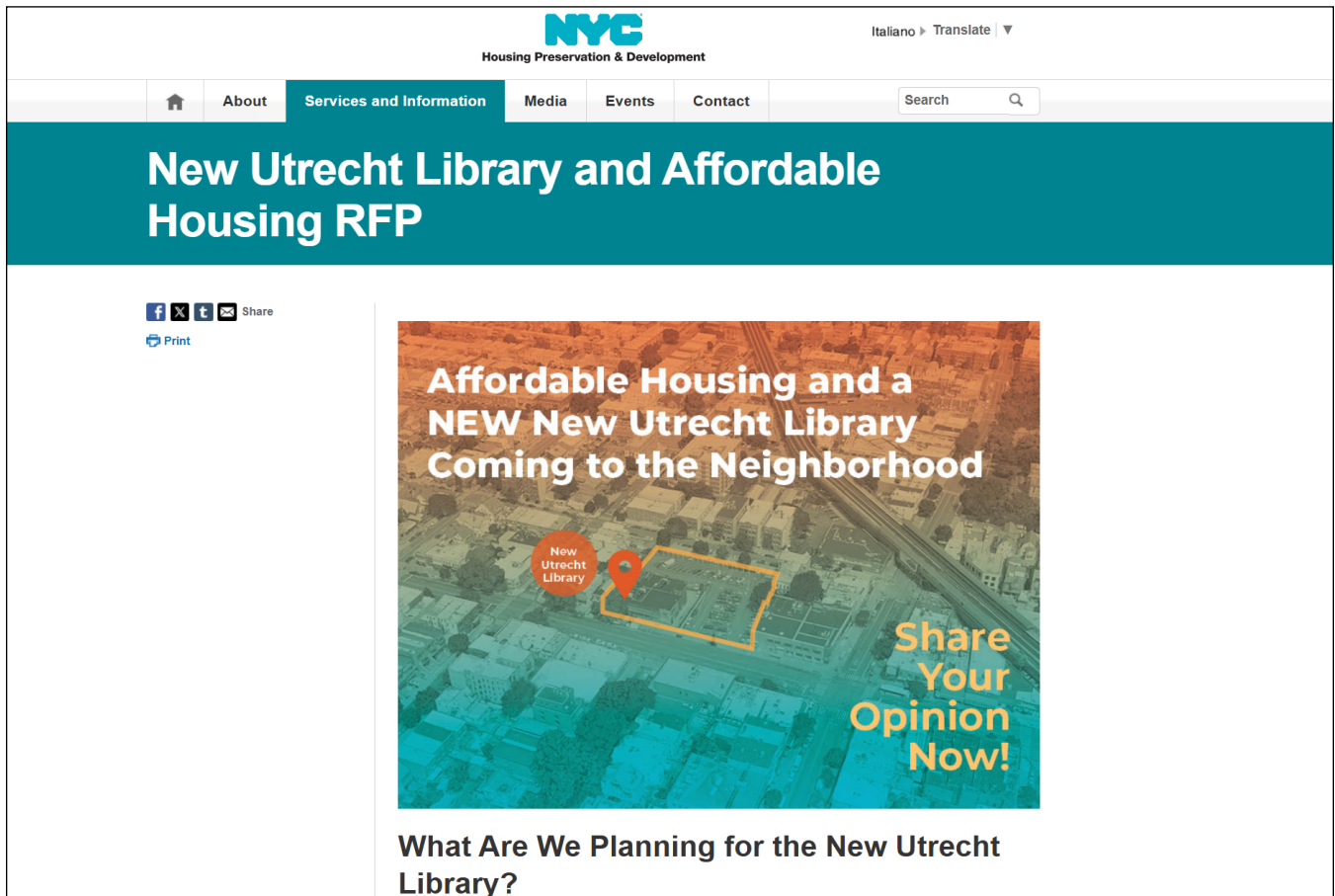
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The NYC Department of Housing Preservation and Development (HPD) and the Brooklyn Public Library (BPL) conducted community outreach from June 2025 through March 2026 to gather input on the redevelopment of New Utrecht Library and the adjacent Department of Transportation (DOT) municipal parking lot with a new state-of-the-art library alongside 100% affordable housing and community amenities.

The goal of the outreach was to identify priorities for the library and housing from community members who have an intimate understanding of neighborhood conditions and needs as well as New Yorkers at large. This report summarizes the results of HPD and BPL's engagement process and is available on the project website at www.nyc.gov/newutrechtlibrary.

The report will also be attached to the Request for Proposals (RFP) issued for the site. Development teams responding to the RFP are strongly encouraged to consult this report and thoughtfully respond in their proposals. HPD and BPL will evaluate how well development teams incorporate the community vision from this report in their submissions.



Project Website

Where?

The Site

The existing New Utrecht Library, which is owned by the City, has served the surrounding neighborhood for over 70 years. The library is located on 86th Street in Bensonhurst, Brooklyn.

The future development site also includes the adjacent City-owned municipal parking lot, which fronts 85th and 86th streets between Bay 16th Street and 18th Avenue.



New Utrecht Library



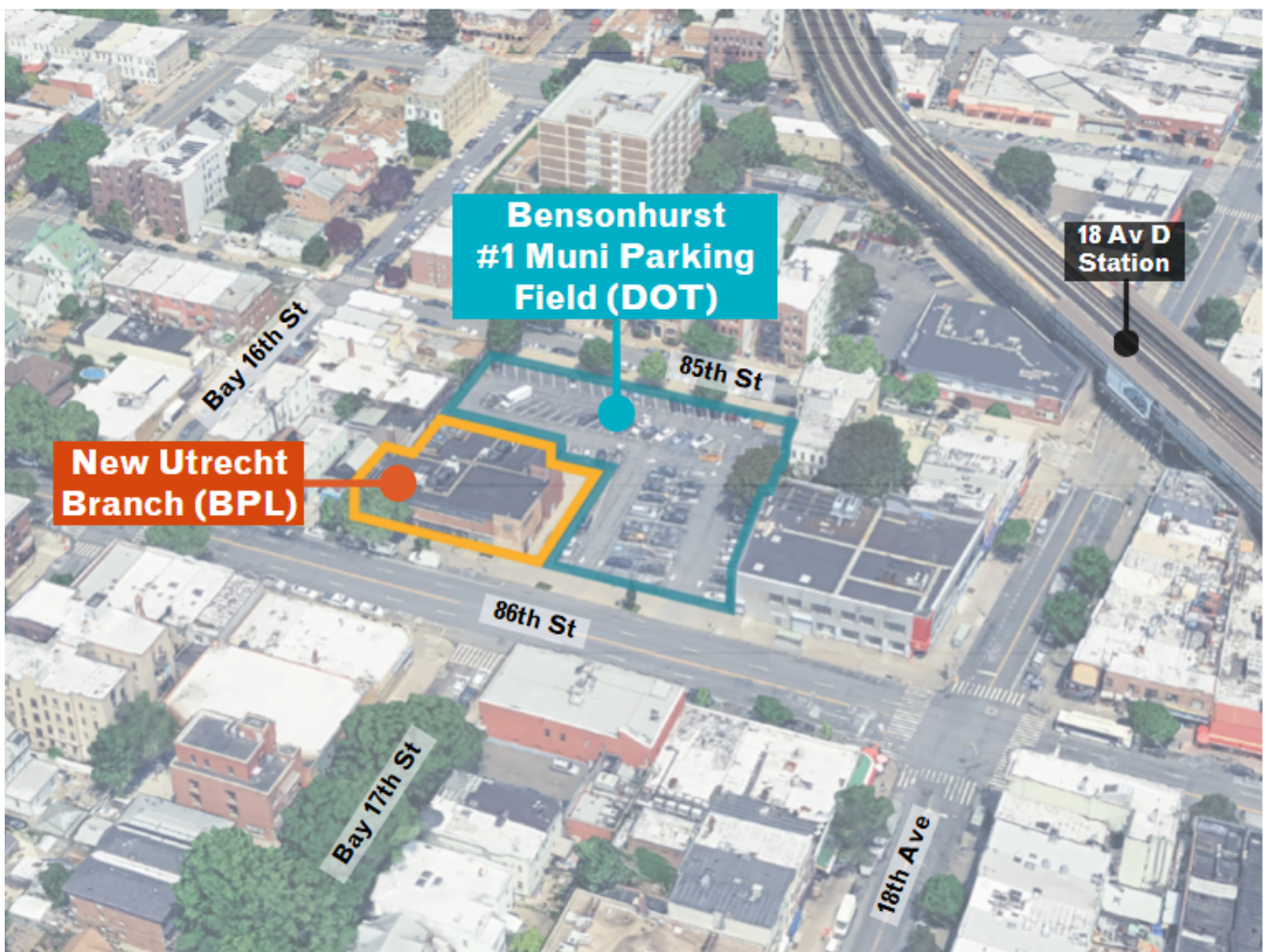
Photo by Gregg Richards, BPL

The Context

The existing New Utrecht Library is located in Brooklyn Community District 11, on the border of Bensonhurst and Bath Beach.

The library is one block from the 18th Avenue D train station and has direct access to the B1 and B8 buses. The surrounding neighborhood is characterized by predominantly low- to mid-rise buildings. The site fronts 86th Street and is near 18th Avenue, both of which are active commercial corridors and home to many local businesses, services, and community amenities. P.S. 163, P.S. 748, and The Federation of Italian American Organizations of Brooklyn (FIAO) Il Centro Community Center are located nearby.

The library serves a culturally rich and diverse community, with several different languages spoken in the surrounding neighborhood including multiple Chinese dialects, Spanish, Russian, Arabic, and more.



Site Aerial View

Community Engagement Strategies

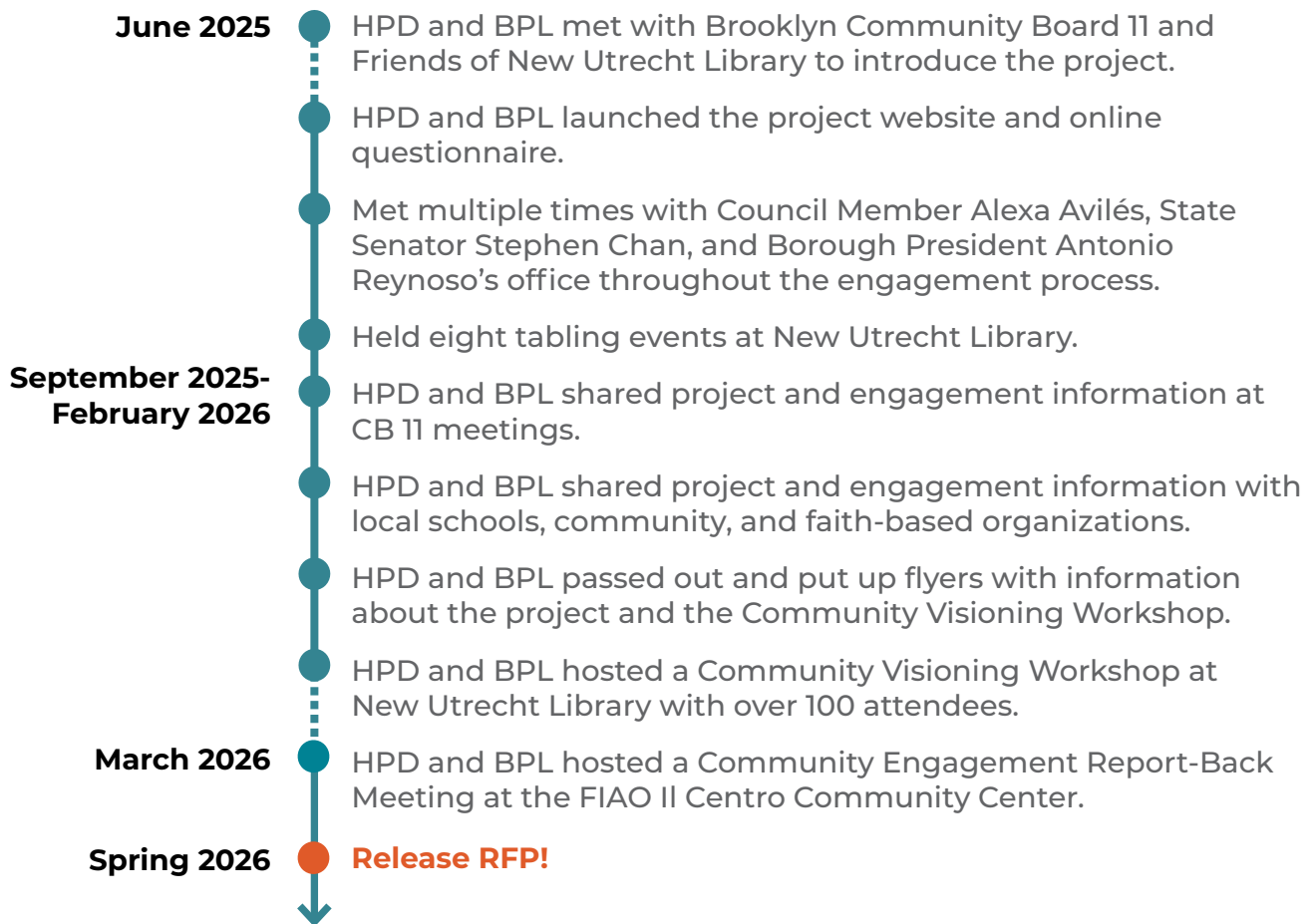
How?

HPD and BPL organized over a dozen meetings and community engagement events over the course of ten months to provide various ways for community members to provide their input. These events are listed in the **Engagement Events Timeline** below.

The community engagement included:

- Presenting to Brooklyn Community Board 11 and attending multiple meetings to share project announcements.
- Tabling events at the library and flying throughout the neighborhood.
- A Community Visioning Workshop held at the library.
- A Community Engagement Report-Back Meeting held at the FIAO II Centro Community Center.
- Council Member Alexa Avilés, State Senator Stephen Chan, and State Assemblymember William Colton attended public events for the project.

Engagement Events Timeline



Outreach Strategies

In addition to the individual events listed in the **Engagement Events Timeline** on page 6, HPD and BPL promoted the project in the following ways:

- Maintained and promoted a project website and a questionnaire that was available online and in-person.
- Conducted targeted outreach to Community Board 11, nearby schools, local institutions and community-based organizations.
- Sent several email blasts to the HPD project email list of over 300 subscribers and the BPL New Utrecht Library patron list of over 30,000 subscribers.
- Promoted the project on social media (X/Twitter, Instagram, Facebook).
- Posted project flyers in the library and throughout the neighborhood.
- Translated engagement materials to Chinese, Spanish, Russian, and Arabic to accommodate the languages spoken in the community.



Instagram Advertising



Email Blast



Banner at New Utrecht Library

Community Visioning Workshop

The workshop was held on November 18, 2025 at the New Utrecht Library. Over 100 community members participated in activities and discussions about four topics:

1. The affordable housing in the new development.
2. Library spaces and programming in the new building.
3. Other community services and amenities in addition to the library.
4. The design of the future buildings and the potential for a rezoning of the site.



Community Visioning Workshop at New Utrecht Library, November 18, 2025



Tabling at New Utrecht Library, Fall 2025



Community Engagement Report-Back Meeting at FIAO II Centro Community Center, March 3, 2026

Summary

Participants communicated many different visions for the site, and certain themes emerged as priorities. In total, HPD and BPL received **327 questionnaire responses**, reflecting a wide variety of backgrounds and ideas.

The findings in this section are organized by topic from the questionnaire. However, the written takeaways are reflective of the various ways HPD and BPL engaged the community, including conversations at tabling events and at the workshop, community-based organization outreach, email correspondence from the public, and more.

The main takeaways are described below.

AFFORDABLE HOUSING

- **Housing for all groups, especially through programs that Bensonhurst residents and community members are eligible for, including seniors and households with children.**
- **Housing for a range of incomes. Preference for lower incomes that reflect the surrounding community.**

LIBRARY PROGRAMMING AND SERVICES

- **New Utrecht Library is not meeting the current demand: inefficient spaces and outdated infrastructure.**
- **Strong support for increasing library hours, programs, and book collections.**
- **Desire for flexible spaces.**
- **Concerns about the impact of construction on library programs and services.**

OTHER COMMUNITY SERVICES AND AMENITIES

- **No majority consensus on other potential non-residential uses; commercial uses are lower priority.**
- **Ensure other uses are not duplicative of library programs and services.**
- **Interest in outdoor green space, indoor recreation, arts and culture.**
- **Concerns about losing public parking.**

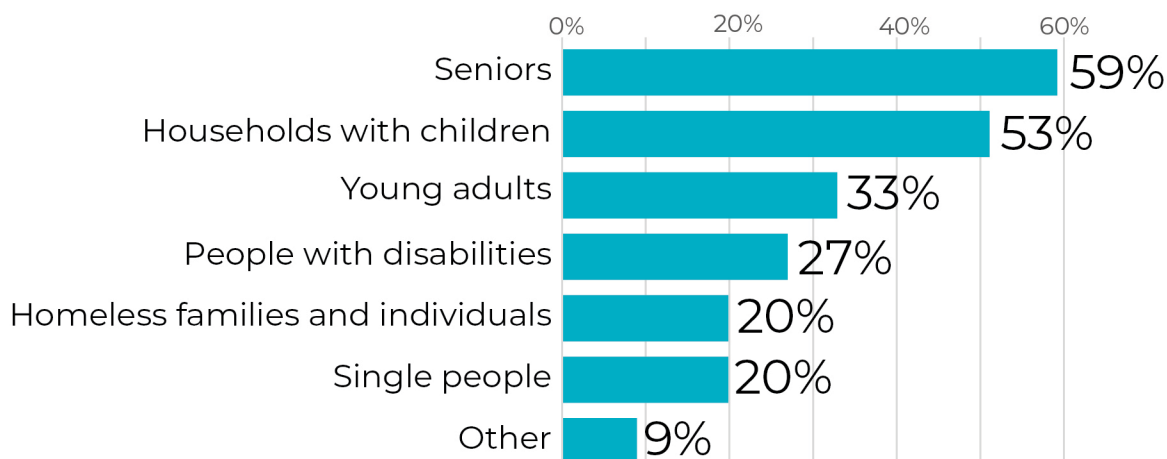
BUILDING FORM AND DESIGN

- **Concerns about neighborhood impacts.**
- **Advocacy for a lower-density rezoning option that is more responsive to existing neighborhood scale.**
- **Larger building on 86th Street, shorter on 85th Street.**

Affordable Housing

HPD asked respondents about who faces barriers to accessing and keeping housing in the neighborhood to better understand which populations need affordable housing the most.

1. WHO NEEDS AFFORDABLE HOUSING THE MOST AT THE NEW UTRECHT LIBRARY SITE? SELECT UP TO 2



95% of respondents answered this question.

A majority of questionnaire respondents stated that **seniors** and/or **households with children** are most in need of affordable housing at the New Utrecht Library site. Housing programs should prioritize local residents and community members.

Veterans were identified by some community members as a group who could benefit from supportive housing units with social services in the new development.

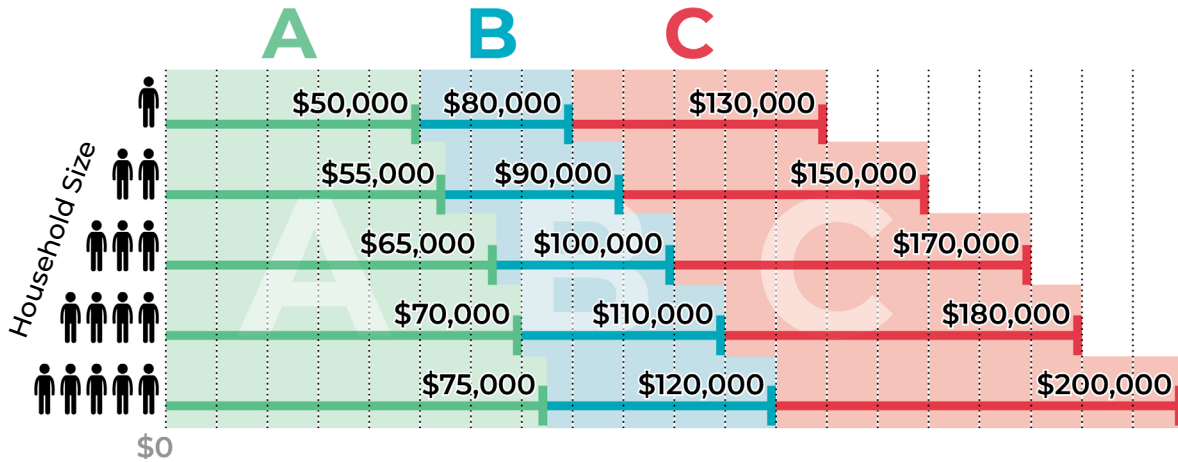
“Literally everyone needs affordable housing.”

“Military veterans”

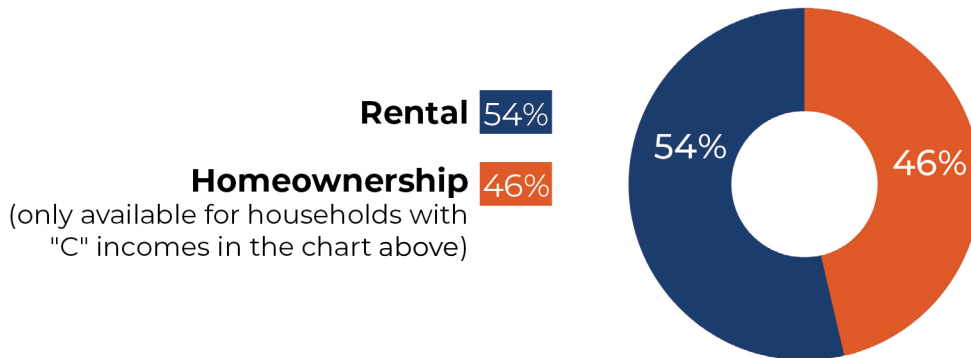
“Local residents, with a reasonable AMI [Area Median Income] qualifier.”

QUESTIONS 2 AND 3:

HPD builds affordable housing where units are reserved for households in specified income ranges or with specific needs. The table below shows the range of incomes that qualify for HPD’s affordable housing. The table is divided into income ranges (A, B, and C) by household size that approximate 0-50%, 50-80%, and 80-120% of the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) Income Limits, or Area Median Income (AMI), for 2025.



2. WHAT KIND OF AFFORDABLE HOUSING DO YOU THINK IS MOST NEEDED IN THE NEIGHBORHOOD AROUND THE NEW UTRECHT LIBRARY BRANCH?
 HOMEOWNERSHIP IS ONLY AVAILABLE FOR HOUSEHOLDS WITH “C” INCOMES IN THE TABLE ABOVE.



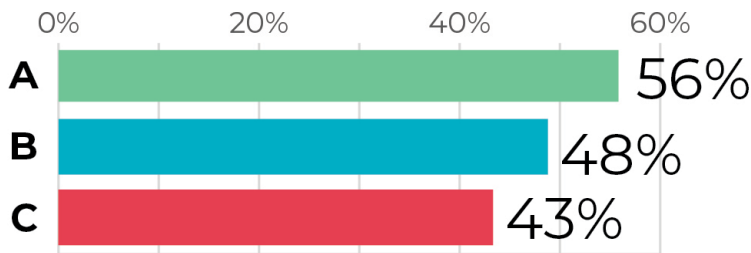
94% of respondents answered this question.

A majority of questionnaire respondents felt **rental housing** is most needed in the neighborhood around the library.

A significant share of respondents and Community Visioning Workshop attendees also expressed interest in homeownership, but many noted that limiting it to “C” income households would not reflect local incomes and stressed the importance of ensuring the housing is truly affordable for people who live in the community.

3. WHAT INCOMES SHOULD THE NEW HOUSING BE AFFORDABLE FOR?

USE THE INCOME TABLE ON PAGE 11 AND SELECT ALL THAT APPLY:



93% of respondents answered this question.

The majority of respondents (56%) felt the new housing should be affordable for households with “A” incomes. 48% of respondents felt the new housing should be affordable for households with “B” incomes, and 43% of respondents for households with “C” incomes.

Many community members felt this neighborhood is more affordable compared to other parts of the city, and housing that serves household incomes in “B” and “C” brackets would not be attainable for existing residents.

In general, respondents commented that while they are supportive of this development serving a mix of incomes and populations, the development should prioritize the lower incomes shown to reflect what members of this community can afford.

“Make it actually affordable to working class New Yorkers.”

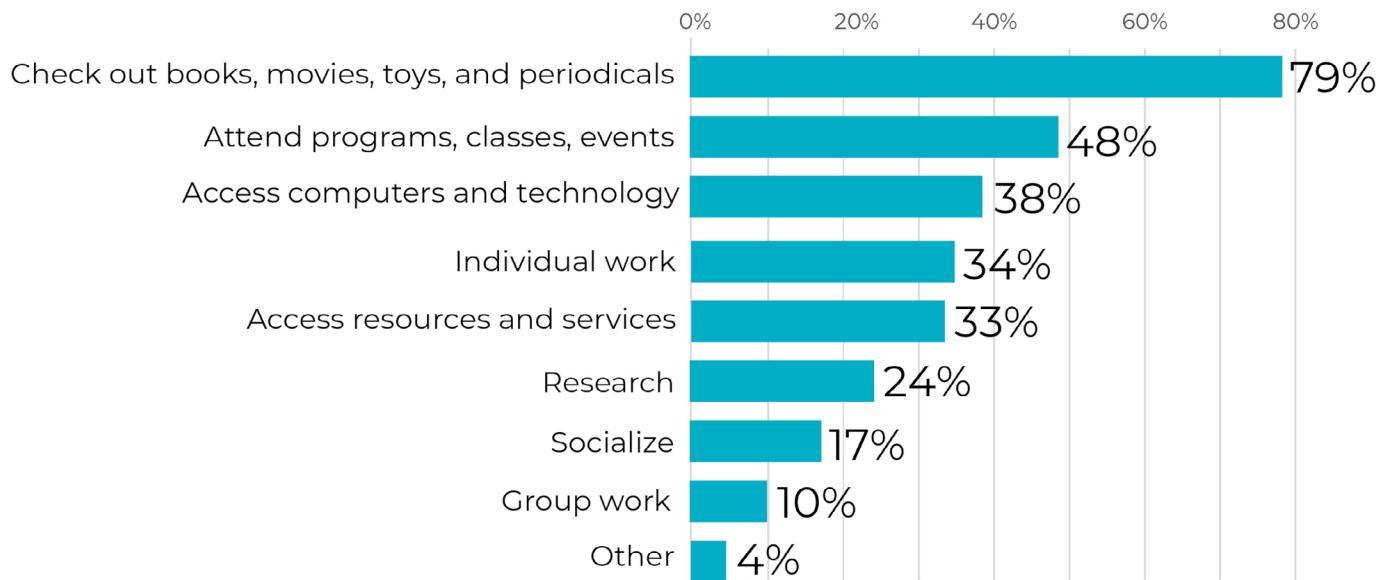
“There is a significant demand for affordable housing in the Bensonhurst community. This is an acute need for low-income families in the neighborhood.”

Library Spaces and Programming

BPL asked respondents about programming and services for the new library.

4. WHEN YOU VISIT THE LIBRARY WHAT DO YOU TYPICALLY DO?

SELECT ALL THAT APPLY:

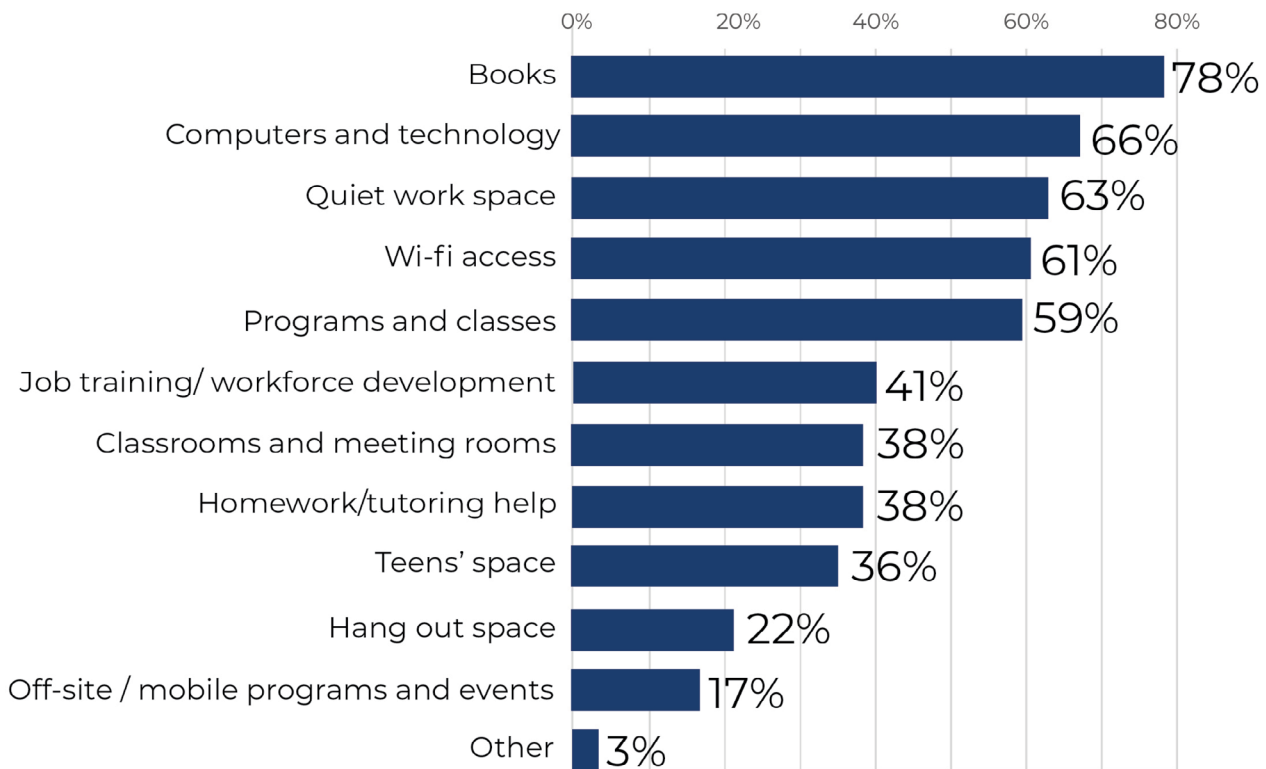


97% of respondents answered this question.

79% of respondents “check out books, movies, toys, and periodicals” when they visit the library. Themes identified include accessing book collections, library programming, computer use, and quiet time.

5. AS PART OF THIS REDEVELOPMENT, NEW UTRECHT LIBRARY WILL BE REDESIGNED. WHEN DESIGNING THE NEW LIBRARY, WHAT TYPES OF PROGRAMS, SERVICES AND SPACES DO YOU THINK ARE MOST IMPORTANT TO INCLUDE?

SELECT ALL THAT APPLY:



98% of respondents answered this question.

Similar to the previous question, books, computers and technology, quiet work space, Wi-fi access, and programs and classes were selected by the majority of respondents as priorities for the new branch.

The importance of books and other materials collections was a common theme during engagement. The location and accessibility of these collections and services should remain prominent even as the new branch embraces new technology and digital trends.

6. WHAT IS SOMETHING YOU WISH YOU COULD CHANGE ABOUT YOUR LIBRARY?

64% of respondents filled out this open-ended question.

Respondents suggested several ways they would improve New Utrecht Library, which can be summarized by the following themes:

- **The library is deeply valued, but it is inefficiently laid out.** There is overcrowding, limited seating, long bathroom waits, and competition for quiet space.
- **More programming** – especially for adults, teens, and families outside school hours – and longer hours of operation.
- **Expand and modernize library spaces** to include flexible, patron areas and improve safety and maintenance.
- **Bathrooms, water fountains and basic infrastructure need significant improvement** to support heavy daily use.

“A better community room with AV technology” ...“that is available for neighborhood gatherings.”

“Seats get taken up fast as there are many students who live in this neighborhood.”

“The bathrooms are super old, need more than two.”

“Better spaces to work quietly as an individual.”

“More play spaces for kids.”

“The library is in need of more natural light.”

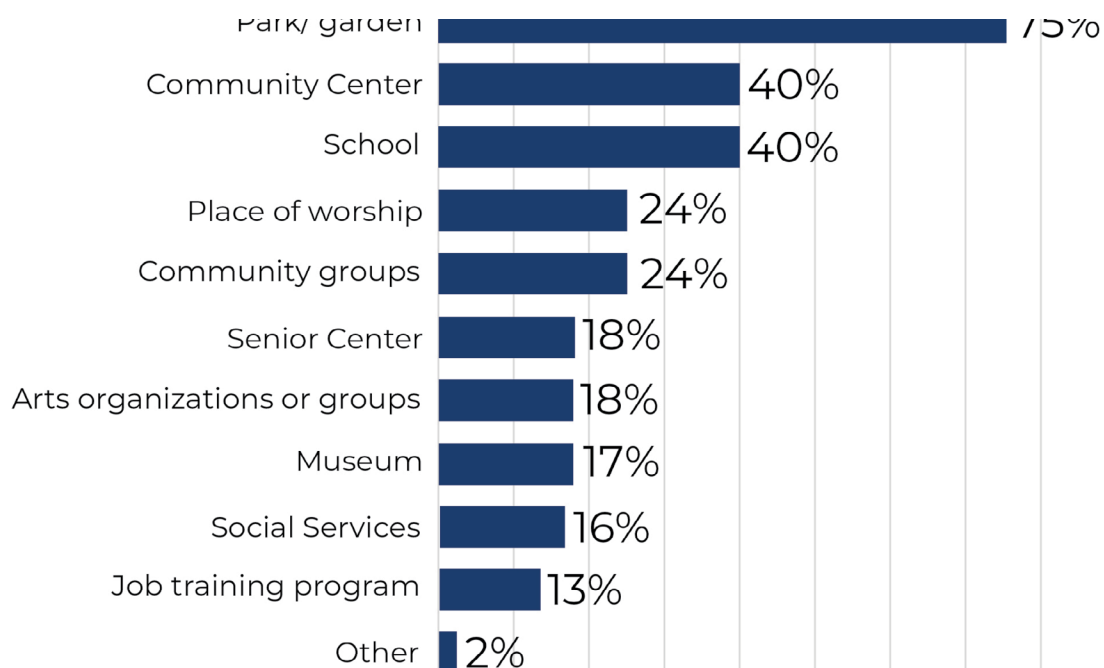
“Larger community room.”

Other Community Services and Amenities

Respondents were asked to select categories of potential community spaces/services and retail uses that would benefit the neighborhood.

7. OTHER THAN THE LIBRARY, WHAT GROUPS AND SERVICES DO YOU USE IN YOUR NEIGHBORHOOD?

SELECT ALL THAT APPLY:

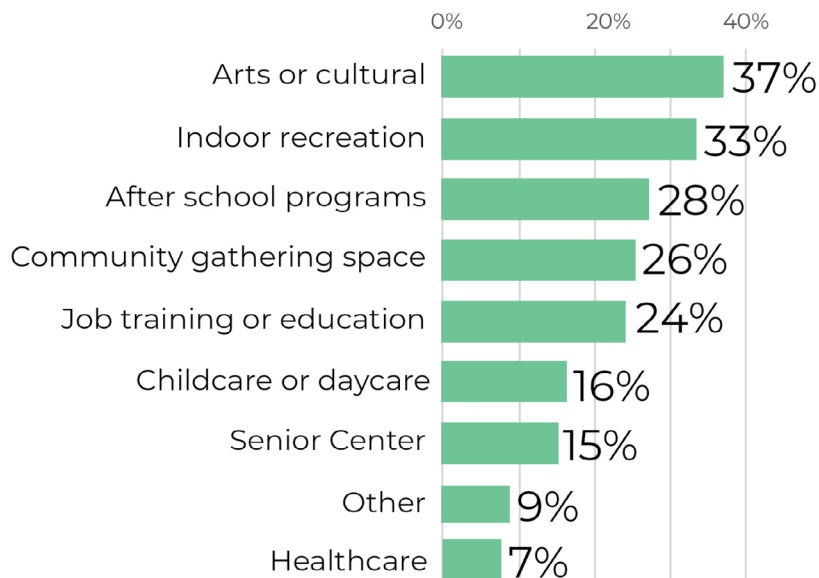


95% of respondents answered this question.

Parks and gardens, community centers, and schools were the groups and services most selected by respondents as services used in the neighborhood.

8. IN ADDITION TO THE LIBRARY, WHAT TYPE OF COMMUNITY SPACE DOES THIS AREA NEED?

SELECT UP TO 2.

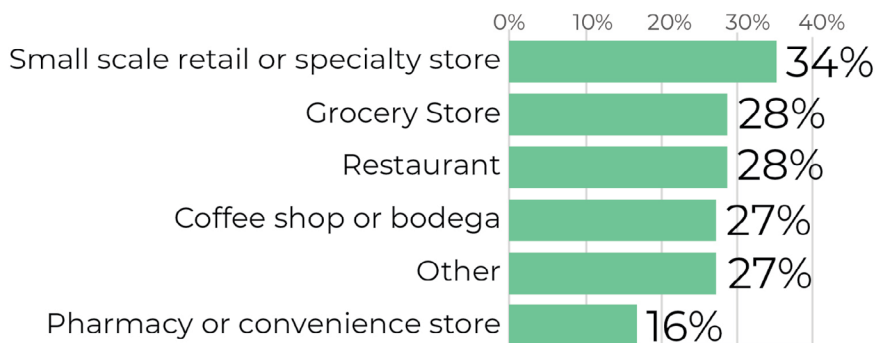


“We need an indoor recreational area like in Sunset Park and Red Hook Park pool recreation! A indoor gym. We need bike parking! And English classes for the thousands of non English speakers in this area.”

91% of respondents answered this question.

9. WHAT TYPE OF COMMERCIAL OR RETAIL SERVICES DOES THIS AREA NEED?

SELECT UP TO 2.



“New up to date affordable gym.”

84% of respondents answered this question.

For questions 8 and 9, there was no majority consensus on other potential non-residential uses; the general sentiment was that a lot of commercial spaces already exist on 86th Street and 18th Avenue, so community spaces and services could be a higher priority.

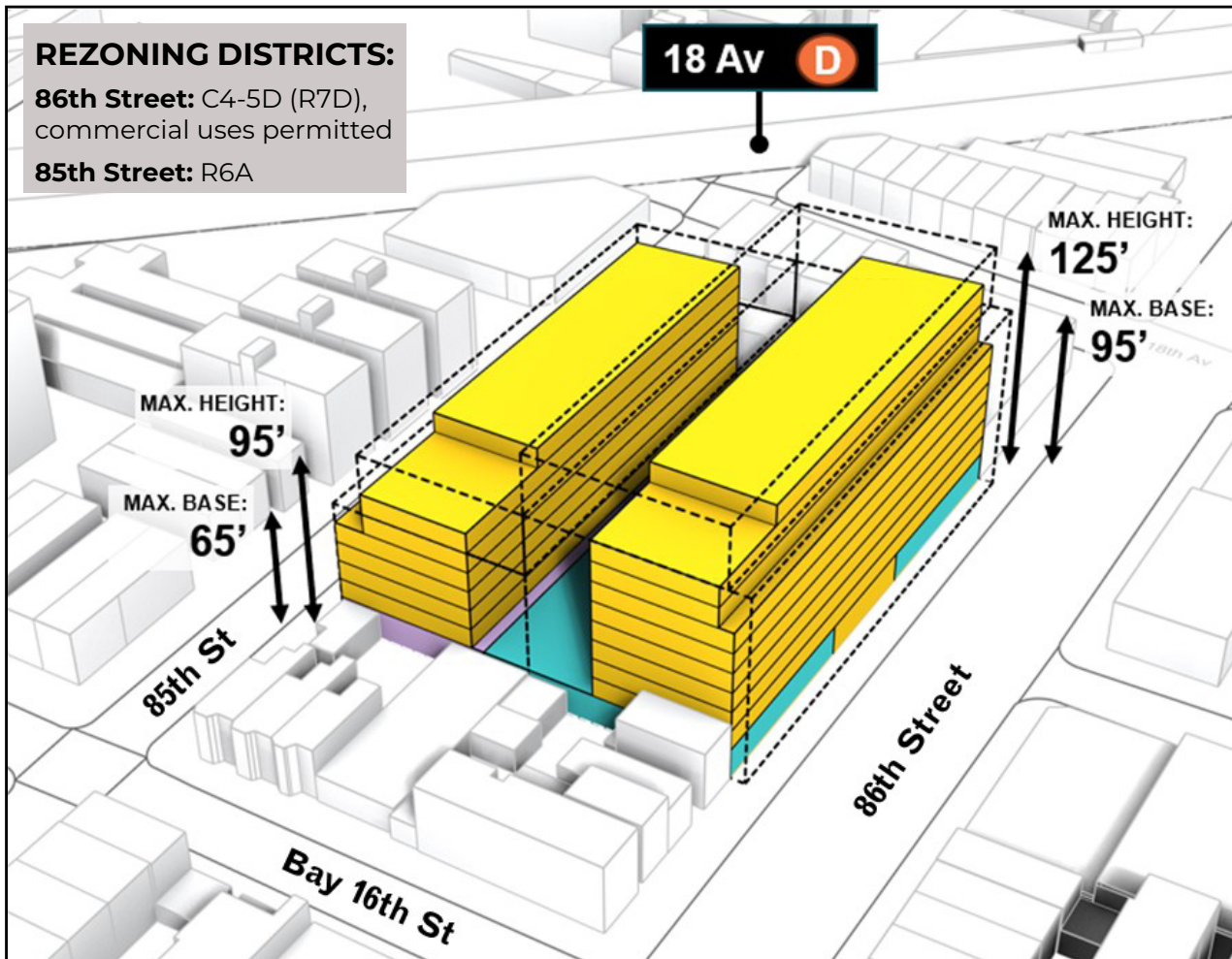
In this section and throughout the questionnaire, community members expressed the need for more accessible outdoor green space, indoor recreation, arts and culture, and third spaces in the neighborhood.

Building Form and Design

HPD and BPL asked respondents about the size, shape, and height of the new building(s).

At the Community Visioning Workshop on November 18, 2025, HPD presented “high density” and “medium density” rezoning options to inform the discussion, which can be found on the project website. In response to community feedback, HPD presented an updated rezoning proposal (shown below) at the Community Engagement Report-Back Meeting on March 3, 2026.

Updated rezoning illustration shown at Community Engagement Report-Back Meeting on March 3, 2026:



LEGEND:

- Housing
- New Library
- Other Community Amenities
- Zoning Envelope that buildings will fit within.

NOTE:

This illustration shows one example of what could be built under the proposed zoning. The final design could change in shape, height, and where the library is placed, but it would remain within the dotted lines.

The new development will include new building(s) along 85th Street and 86th Street. The buildings will be several stories tall in order to fit the new library and maximize the amount of affordable housing that can be built, while ensuring the new development is contextual to the surrounding neighborhood.

10. WHAT ARE YOUR THOUGHTS ABOUT THE SIZE, SHAPE, AND HEIGHT OF THE NEW BUILDINGS?

72% of respondents filled out this open-ended question.

Questionnaire respondents and participants at the public workshop, tabling events, and other public forums shared a range of opinions about the size and heights of the new buildings.

Community members expressed concerns about the development's impact on the surrounding properties, existing services, and infrastructure, especially the potential loss of public parking.

There was consensus that height and density in the new development should be concentrated along 86th Street, with a smaller building or lower heights along 85th Street. The rezoning proposal reflects this preference.

"I understand the desire for this building to fit into the surrounding neighborhood, but I think this city is one that is always changing... So if we have a new, tall building on the library lot, as long as the housing is affordable I don't care how big it is."

"It needs to consider sunlight, the shortcut walking path currently through the parking lot, sidewalk space, managing foot traffic in an already congested area."

"Where are the people going to park?"

"As long as it's accessible inside and out, the shape doesn't matter."

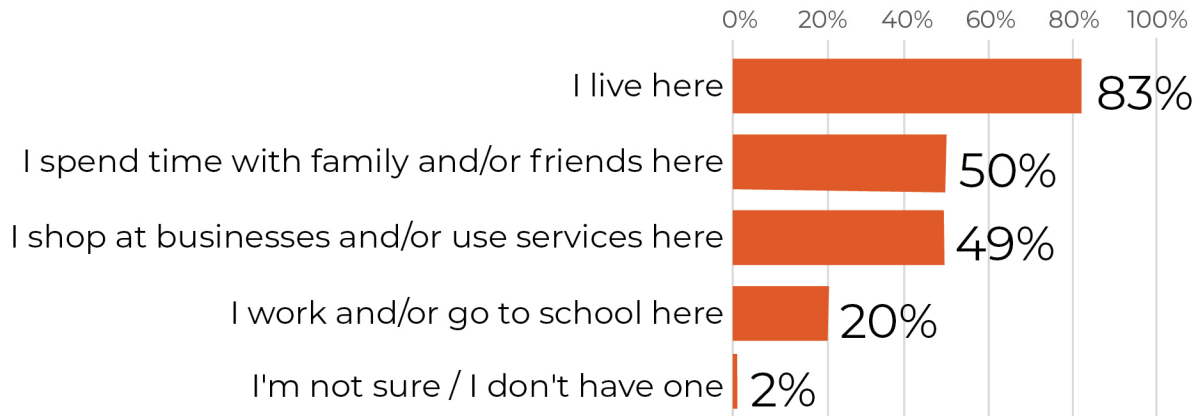
"I have concerns about the impact on our already densely populated neighborhood."

Profile of Respondents

A. WHAT IS YOUR CONNECTION TO NEW UTRECHT LIBRARY AND THE SURROUNDING NEIGHBORHOOD?

SELECT ALL THAT APPLY.

83% respondents live in the neighborhood around the library.
98% of respondents have a connection to the neighborhood.

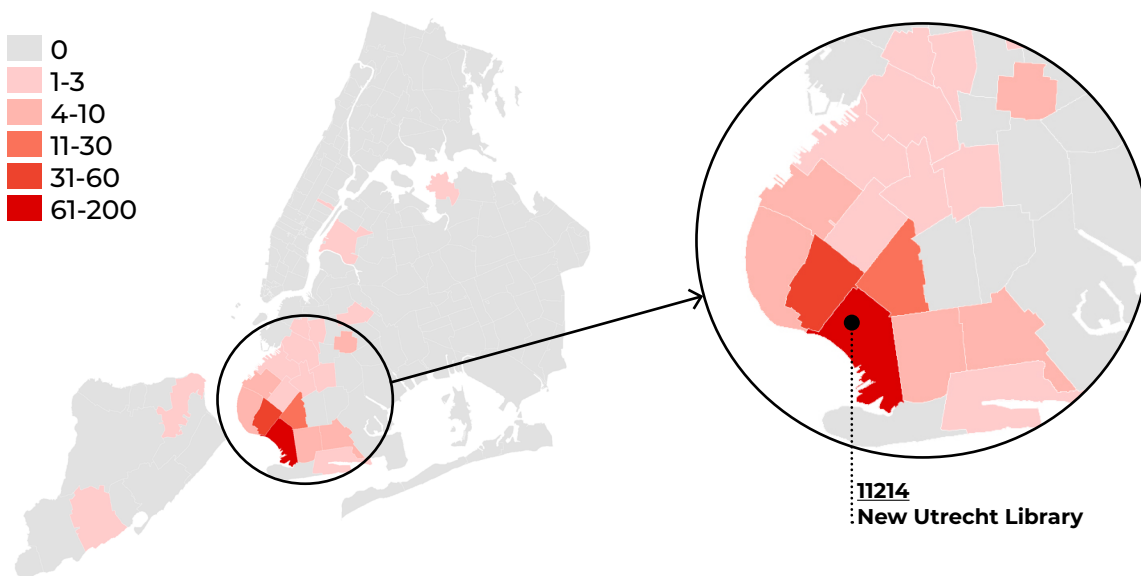


99% of respondents answered this question.

B. NEIGHBORHOOD OF RESIDENCE:

New Utrecht Library is located in the 11214 ZIP code.

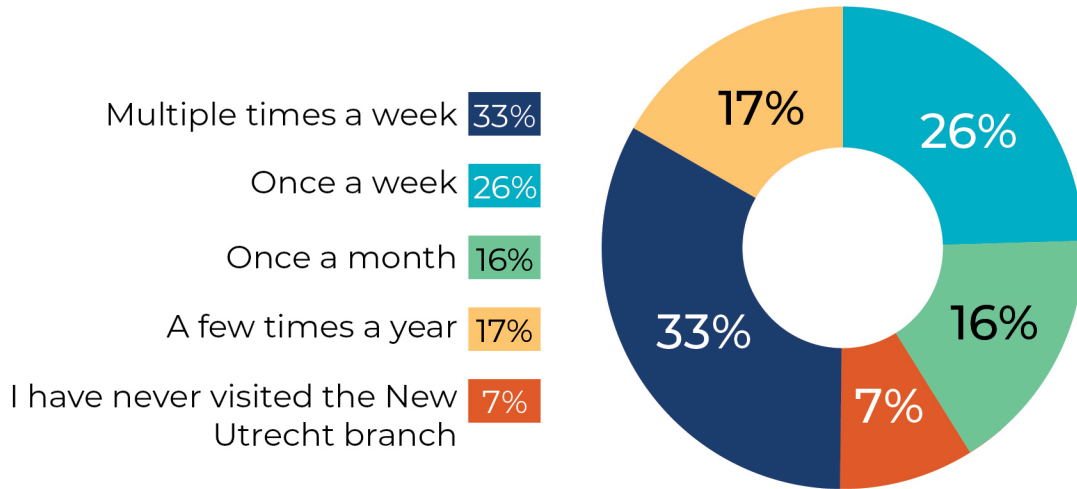
88% of respondents live in 11214 or a ZIP code directly adjacent to the library, including 11204 and 11228. Additionally, 98% of respondents live in Brooklyn, and 100% of respondents live in New York City.



98% of respondents answered this question.

C. ON AVERAGE, HOW OFTEN DO YOU VISIT NEW UTRECHT LIBRARY?

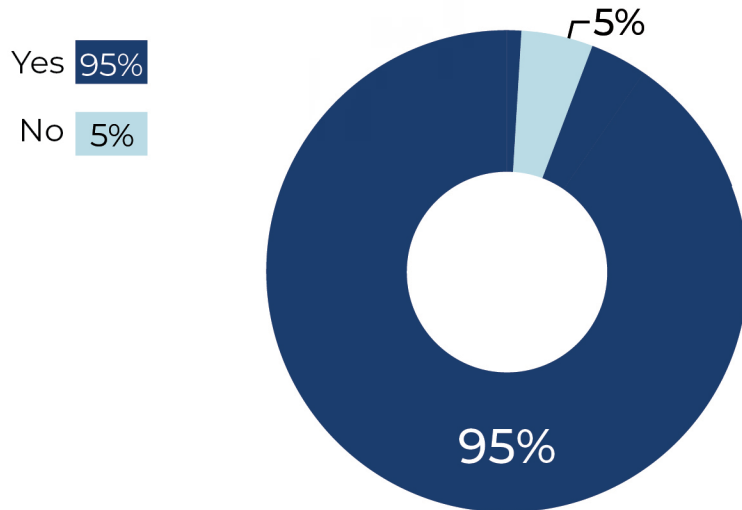
75% of respondents visit the library at least once a month, and 33% of respondents visit multiple times a week.



99% of respondents answered this question.

D. ARE YOU A LIBRARY CARD HOLDER?

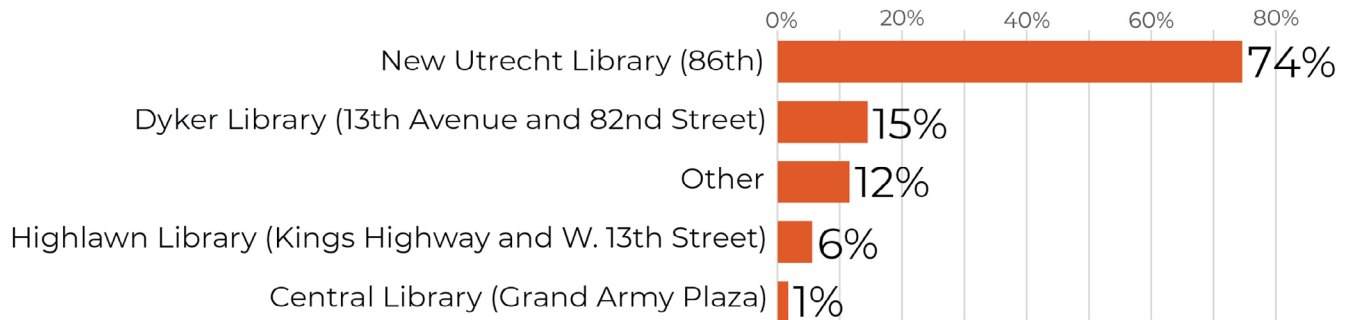
95% of respondents have a library card.



98% of respondents answered this question.

E. WHICH BPL BRANCH IS CLOSEST TO WHERE YOU LIVE?

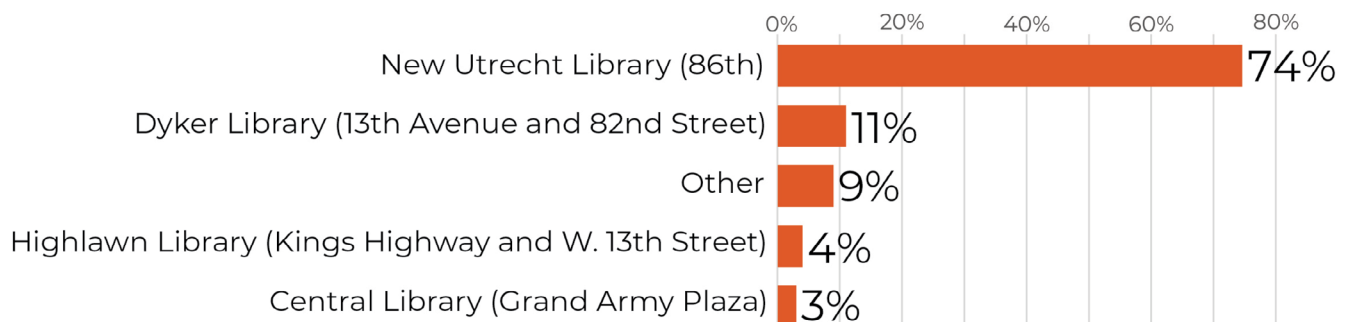
74% of respondents live closest to New Utrecht Library compared to other BPL branches.



98% of respondents answered this question.

F. WHICH BPL BRANCH DO YOU VISIT MORE OFTEN?

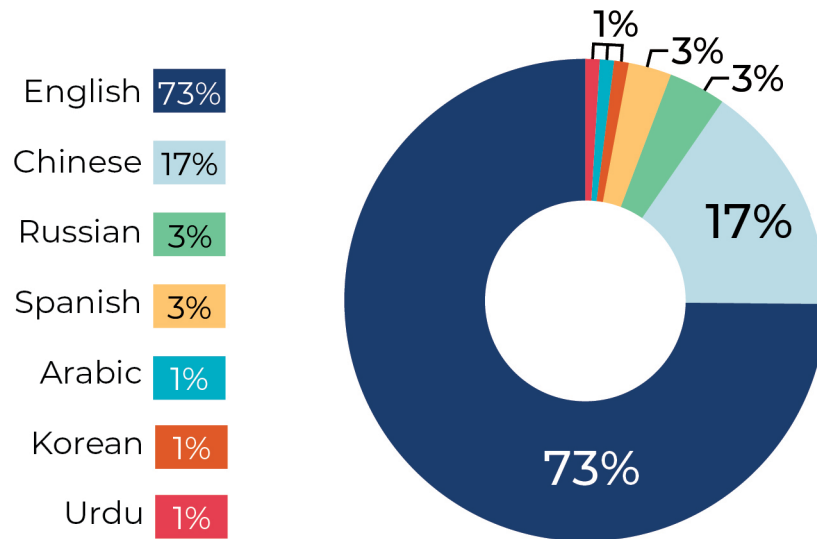
74% of respondents identified New Utrecht Library as their most visited branch.



98% of respondents answered this question.

G. WHAT IS YOUR PREFERRED LANGUAGE?

English is the preferred language of 73% of respondents, and a Chinese dialect is the preferred language of 17% of respondents.

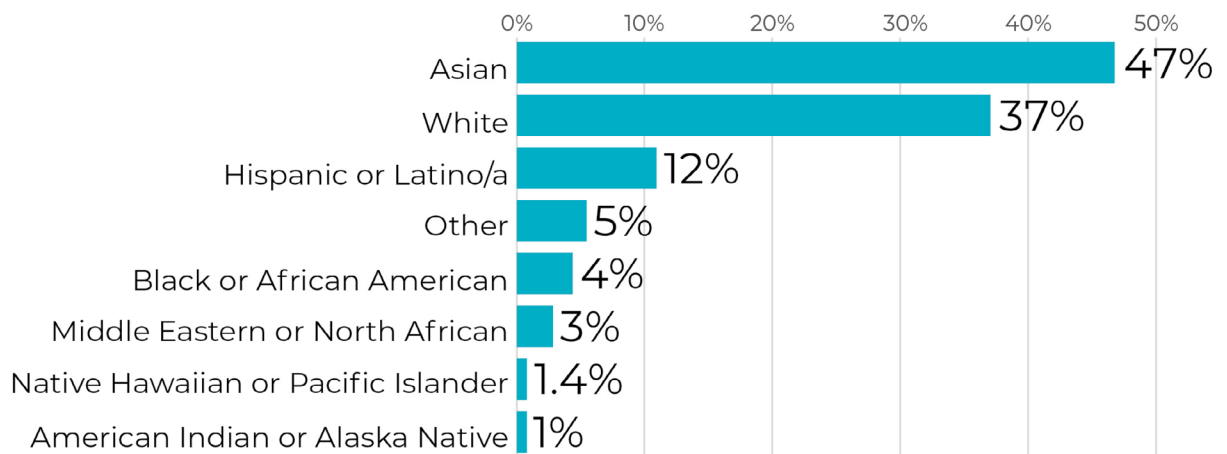


85% of respondents answered this question.

H. RACE AND ETHNICITY

Respondents selected as many races and ethnicities as were applicable to them.

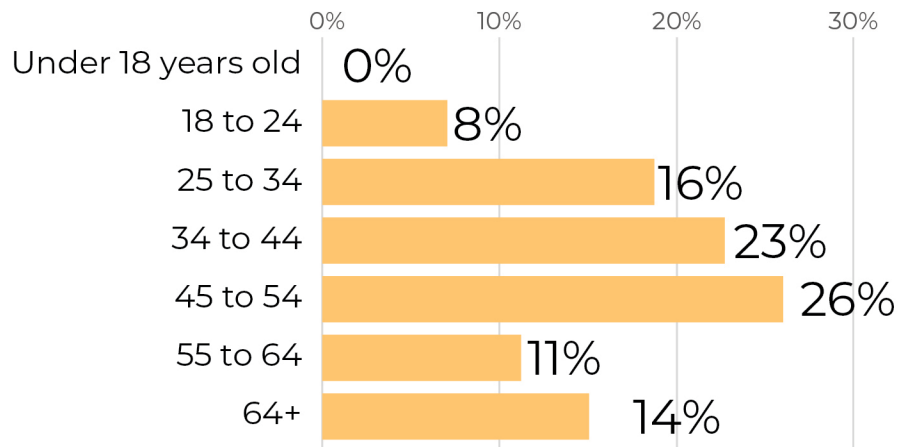
Asian (47%) and White (37%) were the two most common identities selected. 6% of respondents selected two or more racial/ethnic groups and/or selected Other.



86% of respondents answered this question.

I. AGE

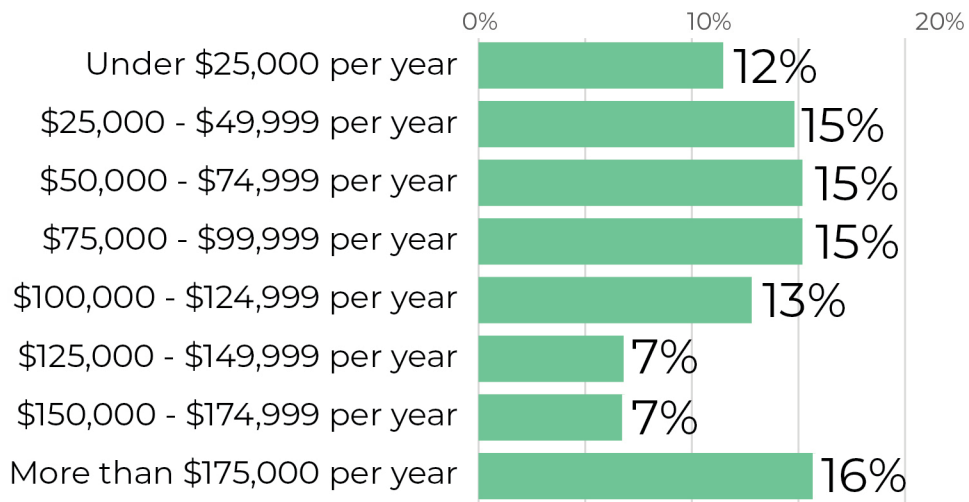
The median age range of respondents is 45-54 years old.



86% of respondents answered this question.

J. HOUSEHOLD INCOME

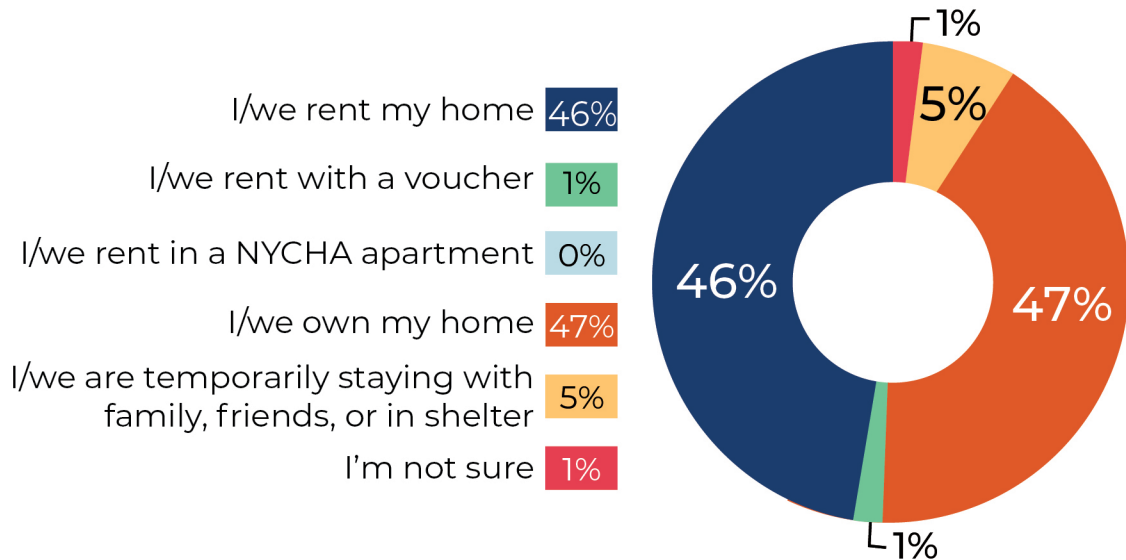
Over half of respondents have household incomes below \$100,000 per year. 26% of respondents have household incomes below \$50,000, and 23% of respondents have household incomes above \$150,000.



86% of respondents answered this question.

K. HOUSING DESCRIPTION

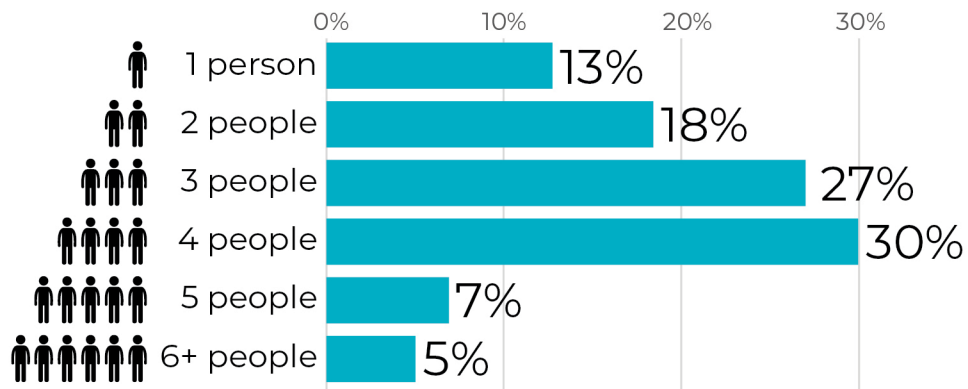
Equal proportions of respondents rent their homes, including with a voucher (47%), and own their homes (47%). 5% of respondents are temporarily staying with family, friends, or in shelter.



94% of respondents answered this question.

L. HOUSEHOLD SIZE

The median household size of respondents is three people.



85% of respondents answered this question.

Email:
NewUtrechtLibrary@hpd.nyc.gov

Project website:
www.nyc.gov/newutrechtlibrary

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