



ROCKPORT *Maine*

Public Library Research Executive Summary

November 2017



Background

Discussions about a new Rockport Public Library have been ongoing for 5 or 6 years. A recap:

- The Rockport Public Library has been located at 1 Limerock Street since the 1940's on land donated to the Town of Rockport for this purpose (including Memorial Park). The building was constructed in the 1940's and does not retain any architectural significance.
- In June 2015, the Library Building at 1 Limerock was deemed structurally unsound and needed significant improvements to meet code. The Library was forced to move to a temporary location on December 22, 2015, where the collections are currently housed.
- After meetings with municipal planning professionals and discussions with an architect who specializes in library buildings, plans were developed for a larger building at 1 Limerock than what currently exists with future expansion in mind.
- A proposal was presented to Town voters in the election held on Tuesday, November 8, 2016 to approve the design, construction and equipping of a new library building at 1 Limerock Street, including the demolition of the existing building. The proposal includes a financial proposal for taxpayers to undertake a \$2,000,000 bond.
- The proposal failed 1,151 in favor to 1,160 opposed with 83% of voters participating.
- With the issue not resolved, the Town decided to conduct marketing research to obtain a holistic view of specifics about the proposal residents support and oppose.

Research Objectives

- The primary objective of this research is to understand details the majority of Rockport residents would agree to for a new Rockport Public Library proposal or an alternative measure including not supporting a public library for Rockport.
- Specific learning includes:
 - Voting status in November 2016 election, including reasons for voting in favor or in opposition of the library proposal, or for not voting on it at all;
 - Impressions of specific aspects of November 2016 proposal;
 - Specific library offerings that residents desire;
 - Preferred library size, location and design; and
 - Library building project budget tolerances including preferred mix of private and public investment.

Methodology

- Respondent Criteria

Respondents are Rockport taxpayers, property owners, and business owners. The Town of Rockport provided each list.

- Data collection

Mail survey: September 14 - October 20, 2017

Web survey: (URL included with mail survey)

- Respondent Counts

n=1,090, an overall response rate of 32.14% (an adjusted response rate (non-deliverables removed) of 35.82%); n=8 additional responses were not processed due to being received too late to be included.

- Research Caveat

This report includes many useful insights with reasonable insights.

- Questionnaire

Structured mail and web survey containing 23 questions.

Questions covered vote on library proposal in November 2016 election and reasons for vote or lack of vote; impressions of specific aspects of library proposal; access to Rockport Public Library card and average frequency of visits; importance of specific library offerings and additional offerings desired; agreement that Rockport Public Library is important part of community; impressions of proposed parking, building size, style, and locations; acceptable cost to property taxpayers and acceptable total investment; months per year lived in Rockport, age, presence of children in household, level of education, employment status, household income, and gender.

Methodology: Sample Segments

- A random sample size of n=1,074 (*the maximum response to a single subject question*) yields a maximum sampling error of +/- 2.99 percentage points at the 95% level of confidence. That is, if the reported percentage is 50%, one can be 95% confident that the percentage for the entire population would fall within the range of 47.01% and 52.99%. Sample tolerances for smaller subgroups are broader (n=146; +/- 8.11 percentage points).

	<u>Sample Size*</u>
<i>Maximum response to a subject question</i>	(n=1,074)
November 2016 Vote**	
In Favor	n=298
Against	n=514
Did Not Vote	n=206
Rockport Library Card?	
Yes	n=838
No	n=184
Important to Community?	
Agree	n=731
Neutral	n=165
Disagree	n=160
Children in Household?	
Yes	n=341
No	n=630
Age	
18 to 44	n=146
45 to 64	n=355
65 or older	n=365
Income	
Less than \$500,000	n=164

\$500,000 to less than \$100,000	n=281
\$100,000 or more	n=299
Gender	
Female	n=569
Male	n=468

*While the survey received 1,090 responses, no single subject question was answered by all respondents. Sample sizes below are taken from responses to Q1.

****Note:** The data was weighted to reflect the distribution of “Yes” and “No” votes in the election and the level of voter turnout.

Key Findings

- After weighting the data to reflect the votes and voter turnout plus those who preferred not to disclose how they voted the distribution of respondents is: 39.2% voted in favor, 39.5% voted against, 16.1% did not vote and 5.2% preferred not to disclose how they voted, if at all.
- Primary reasons for voting in favor of the library proposal include important for the community, and the Limerock Street location, and to a lesser degree, compromised top move the project forward, need to replace the old building and need more space for the library.
- Reasons for voting against the library proposal primarily focused on the expense being too high. Comments not voiced as broadly, but still communicated by one-quarter of the respondents include prefer RES location and do not need a library. Those who opposed the proposal also mentioned proposed building too large, dislike the building design and better parking at RES location.
- None of the specific aspects of the Library Proposal received positive ratings from at least one-half of respondents in total and across several segments except for the Town obligation of \$2 million, which received positive ratings from 53% of those who voted in favor of the proposal in the November 2016 election.
- Four-fifths of respondents indicated that they or someone in their household has a Rockport Public Library card they can use. One in six said there is not a library card in their household that they can use.
- On average, respondents visit the Rockport Public Library 33.1 times per year, although nearly one-fifth never visit the library.

- The library offerings deemed important by the highest percentages of respondents are the more traditional library services with books to borrow, librarian assistance and children’s area receiving the highest percentage of “important” ratings.

Quiet place, access to the latest technology, reference area and young adult area are the other offerings considered important by at least one-half of respondents.

Additional offerings recorded by respondents individually did not garner many comments.

- Three-quarters of respondents agree that the Rockport Public Library is an important part of the community. One in eight does not agree that the library is an important part of the community.
- Asked to indicate their impressions of a library proposal that includes 14 flat level parking spaces close to the building and dedicate to patrons, nearly two-fifths provided a positive rating, while over one-quarter provided a negative rating.
- Just over one-third of respondents feel the proposed building is about the right size, while just under one-third feels it is too big. One in eight respondents feel the proposed building is too small.
- Over one-half believe the exterior design of the library building should be similar in style to the buildings around it. One in seven believes the building should be a statement to the future and one-fifth do not care about the exterior design of the building.
- The two locations presented in the research, 1 Limerock Street and RES received similar (almost identical) levels of positive, neutral and negative ratings.
- Most respondents find a taxpayer cost of at least \$1 million to under \$2 million acceptable and a total investment of at least \$2 million to less than \$3 million required.

Conclusions & Recommendations

- Rockport should continue to try to find a viable option for supporting the Rockport Public Library since most people:
 - agree the Rockport Public Library is important to the community,
 - have access to a Rockport Public Library card,
 - visit the Rockport Public Library at least occasionally (average of 33.1 times per year), and
 - Believe traditional library offerings are important.
- In order to move forward with a proposal for the Rockport Public Library, people are going to have to compromise on some elements of a proposal.

- Perhaps the most difficult compromise will be settling on the location since the two locations in question, 1 Limerock Street and RES received almost identical positive, neutral and negative ratings from respondents.
 - Parking is also an aspect of any library proposal, that will need to be carefully considered and some people may not get all of the parking they desire.
 - In addition, some of the desire and/or expectations for expansion will have to be pulled back.
- The research indicates that taxpayers are willing to fund at least \$1 million to less than \$2 million of a library project with a total investment of at least \$2 million to less than \$3 million. While the percentage of the cost of the project paid by taxpayers remains at about 50% like the Library Proposal voted on in November 2016, the overall investment level is less, requiring a scaled down project.
 - The exterior design of the Rockport Public Library building needs to be similar in style to the buildings surrounding it.
 - The Rockport Public Library plan should include upgrades to library systems and provide library patrons access to the latest technology available.