Our Process

The Library utilized the following data collection and evaluation process to thoughtfully prepare the next version of our strategic plan. To determine priorities and needs we, as a team of Board and staff:

- Conducted in-person and zoom focus groups to talk directly to our patrons
- Distributed a carefully crafted survey online and in-person in the Library
- Engaged the community and promoted our survey by visiting local community group gatherings, school board meetings, Village Meetings, etc. to promote the need for feedback and our local survey
- Cross communicated the survey and focus group opportunities on social media and partner social media
- Garnered the expertise of the Library Director and Board
- Considered the outcomes of the prior strategic plan, and modified goals that need to move forward with the new version.

The data and narratives were documented, and discussed in a full SWOT analysis led by Harriet Parker of the Waubonsee Community College small business center. A collaborative team synthesized what was most important into five core goals for our next three years.

As our Library is extensively underfunded, prioritization of directing resources is critical. A key determination made from the data collection is that patrons need more information about how the Library is organized, funded, as the citizen's responsibility to care for the community institution. As such, we will include informative data that is easy to interpret as a companion to our strategic plan document.

Goal I: Convey the Library's Value
The Library will engage in information initiatives to strengthen community knowledge about the Library.

A. We will focus on sharing factual and inspirational information about the impact of the Library
    1. Ongoing messaging with innovative tactics; factoids in the foyer, web page question and answer.
    2. Share patron narratives about Library impact.
    3. Thoughtfully respond to suggestions and inquiry.

B. Develop Library promotional strategies.
    1. Develop Library Ambassadors for grassroots marketing.
    2. Companion and embed with partner organizations to cross promote activities, resources, and values.

C. Promote the "return on investment" concept with accurate supporting information.
    1. Develop fact sheet and information pieces to promote the cultural and community impact of supporting Library operations.
    2. Enhance research to share Library impact; specific and factual data will be shared.

D. Develop a **NOWlearn** series to strengthen the civic dialogue about the Library.
    1. See NOWlearn programming initiatives (attachment A).
    2. Develop Library orientation supporting programs to engage patrons and encourage use of resources.

E. Facilitate partnerships with supporting organizations; develop donor strategies in partnership with the Foundation
    1. Encourage community partnerships for large scale programming initiatives, utilizing Groovin' in the Grove as a model.
    2. Engage with other entities for partnerships and collaborations.

F. Carefully crafted messaging to detail the Library's genuine limitations due to lack of funding; limited staff resources a key factor in effective operations.
    1. Respond to survey responses that would like more resources and services than the Library is currently funded for in a factual manner.
    2. Thoughtfully share the human resource limitations, as well as excellent performance of current programs and initiatives.
    3. Share benchmark data to illustrate comparison to peer libraries.
    4. Convey the need for adequate staffing, as well as the tools needed to be a steward to employees.

G. Utilize social media and marketing tactics to promote the Library.
    1. Newsletters, social media and Library ambassador initiatives.
    2. Use digital outreach strategies and social media tools; begin new media initiatives such as Tik-Tok and reels to reach various demographics.

Goal II: Be Innovation Ambassadors
The Library will support patron needs through staff initiatives, development and training

A. We will develop a list of digital competencies which will be used to train staff members.
    1. Staff will have core competencies such a digital book downloads, flyers and marketing pieces that are departmentally appropriate.
    2. All staff will be expected to develop skills as to respond to patron inquiry for e-books, downloads and basic computer functions.

B. We will update customer service training to include more specific strategies staff can use when working with diverse groups.
    1. Equity, diversity and inclusion training will be provided, with the core values of the Library conveyed to support diversity.
    2. Staff will receive training on the Code of Ethics, mission/vision of the public Library as part of regular development and onboarding of new employees.
    3. EDI initiatives will be developed; staff development, collection development and companion marketing pieces.
    4. Clear protocols will be developed for workplace dynamics as to ensure staff comfort in the workplace in tumultuous times; guidelines for patron interactions as ensure consistent and gracious service to all patrons.

C. Staff development initiatives will be scheduled as a priority.
    1. Staff development days will be incorporated into the yearly schedule.
    2. More opportunities for engaging as a full Library will be explored.
    3. Webinars and training will be regularly assigned.

D. Redevelopment of personnel manual and refresh staff policies and job descriptions to ensure consistent, excellent standards.
    1. Job descriptions will be evaluated and/or rewritten to meet contemporary needs of the Library.
    2. Assessments be revitalized to meet the associated changes.
    3. Cross training will be both promoted, and expected of employees; hybrid positions may be developed to respond to the dynamics of limited staff resources.

Goal III: Facility Adaptations and Enhancements
The Library will be a steward to the facility to maintain the community investment; update and upgrade as needed.

A. The NOWspace will continue to grow and develop with resources and services
1. The Library will enhance the area as funds are available, and patron interest determines growth.
2. ADA updates will be a first priority when considering additions or expansions.
3. Flexible space for patrons will be a priority to encourage civic use of the facility.

B. Increased focus on facility and grounds updates in the second decade of building life; stewardship to the existing resources a priority.
1. Facility assessment, mechanical structures, growth needs will be determined for a long range plan.
2. Long range physical plant document developed; associated costs attached.

C. External programming possibilities and structures will be explored.
1. Exploration of permanent structures for cultural and recreation.
2. Development of grounds rental policy and fee structure.
3. Partnership opportunities explored with other governmental entities.

D. Add to underdeveloped areas when financially feasible.
1. Additional lighting for bathrooms and children's department.
2. Patio furniture and outdoor gathering points enhanced and maintained.

E. Promote the Library as a destination while also honoring remote access possibilities and digital "wing" of the Library for 24/7 access.
1. Continue to develop digital resources; promote resource sharing capabilities through virtual means.

Goal IV: Develop and pivot the Library's collection and resources for community needs
The Library will strengthen the collection connections according to patron needs in traditional and digital resources

A. Ongoing growth and promotion of digital materials and resources; training programs to strengthen patron access.
1. Utilize the NOWlearn resources to promote engagement.
2. Develop and/or promote existing online tutorials as a companion to printed materials.

B. Focus on popular materials growth to meet patron demands.
1. Donate a "bestseller" wish list.
2. Research and write grants for materials development.

3. Promote SWAN for resource sharing; highlight the wide array of resources available through collaborative sharing in both traditional and digital formats.

C. Reader's advisory initiatives and collection connections strengthened.
1. Promote staff knowledge, expertise and eagerness to assist readers.
2. Promote staff booktalks through online mediums.

D. Assist the community in a post-pandemic/endemic climate in recovery and revitalization.
1. Resume operations for programming, civic utilization of spaces and staff connections.
2. Develop initiatives that directly connect Library resources to community needs; examples may include civic connection groups, meeting room waivers in post-pandemic recovery periods.
3. Connect via partnerships with the Chamber of Commerce and other local business to develop local small business support resources.

Goal V: Referendum Readiness and Financial Stability

A. The Library will analyze data necessary to ensure future stability.
1. Underfunding will be explored against capital needs, ongoing wage mandates, patron requests for enhancement of services and resources.
2. Assessments by qualified professional resources will be engaged to better plan for the future.

B. A long term list of facility needs will be developed; 20 year timeplan for necessary updates and end of life expectations for major equipment.
1. Work with an architect/engineer for facilities and mechanical plan.
2. Benchmark data of facilities plan with Library financial resources.
3. Staff expertise as well as consultants will be utilized.

C. A clear message of the financial standing of the Library will be developed for informational purposes; mindful and factual communication will be shared.

D. Outreach communication will be strengthened; partnerships with the Foundation or developing a citizen's advocacy team will provide support.
1. Staff education on Library facts provided in order to better respond to citizen inquiry.
2. Trustee training and Library facts will be explored in order to respond to constituents.

E. The Library plans to explore and engage in ballot initiatives as bonds are paid off in 2024; a zero impact tax increase to adequately fund the Library is necessary for future stability may be considered.

F. The Library will respond to the feedback presented by patrons with requests for "more" with the resources needed to provide as such.   If additional funding is not secured, the Library will respond to the limitations given by the community.

Goals approved 12/15/21