

Focus on the Future:

Meeting the Challenges of the 21st Century

A Strategic Plan for the West Des Moines Public Library July, 2011 – June, 2016 Approved by Library Board



A Message from the President of the Library Board of Trustees

Planning for the future of the West Des Moines Library provides an opportunity for the Board of Trustees to hear from many citizens who use library services. Most comments were complimentary and many offered constructive suggestions as we developed the strategic plan. The resulting values, strategic themes and goals reflect what we've learned. Our community places high value on the services and resources our library offers. And we know the direction we'll be heading over the next five years: meeting the needs of our technologically savvy community while maintaining services for the traditional library user, strengthening programs for young readers and much more. The Board of Trustees, along with our dedicated library staff, is committed to address the goals set out in the strategic plan. The library belongs to all of us and we pledge to enhance services and programs to continue to meet the needs of our community. It's **our** library!

- Kay Rosene, President Library Board of Trustees

A Message from the Library Director

Our community is well educated and increasingly diverse, and when it comes to library services and resources, our citizens' expectations are consistently high. West Des Moines is a community where being ordinary is not enough. Providing effective and relevant services is an ongoing challenge, but it is made easier by the citizens' continuing support. The level of public participation in this plan is evidence of the importance of the library to the community.

This is the fifth library plan in the last 20 years, and for every plan the library has sought the opinions of citizens, elected officials, the Library Board, the West Des Moines Library Foundation and library staff. This plan, however, had undoubtedly the greatest citizen involvement. The library had 1,269 people respond to the web survey and 231 to the mail survey. Six public focus groups were held and with a total of 48 attendees. Twenty-two personal interviews were conducted, and fifteen library employees participated in two staff focus groups. That is almost 1,600 people who contributed to this effort!

Thanks to the strong support shown by our citizens, our library has a bright and challenging future.

- Ray Vignovich, Library Director

Appreciation is extended to the following people for their hard work and dedication in creating this plan for the West Des Moines Public Library (WDMPL):

Strategic Planning Committee

Louise Gately, Vice President, Library Board of Trustees
Shirley Houghtaling, Head of Reference and Adult Services (WDMPL)
Katherine Manion, Director, Urbandale Public Library
Cathy Neumann, President (2010), Library Friends Foundation Board
Rick Riley, Member/Past President, Library Board of Trustees
Kay Rosene, President, Library Board of Trustees
Scott Sanders, Finance Director
Don Seibel, Past President (2009), Library Friends Foundation
Ray Vignovich, Director, West Des Moines Public Library

Library Board of Trustees

Kay Rosene, President
Louise Gately, Vice President
Millie Knee, Secretary
John M. Lewis
Mark D. Lowe
Bryan F. Myers
Rick Riley, Past President

The Library also appreciates the following for their ongoing support of the West Des Moines Public Library's facility and services:

West Des Moines Public Library Friends Foundation Officers

Cathy Neumann, President (2010)
Don Seibel, Past President (2009 President)
Dan Werner, President-Elect (2011 President)

West Des Moines Elected Officials

Steven K. Gaer, Mayor
Kevin Trevillyan, Councilmember, First Ward
Charles Schneider, Councilmember, Second Ward
Russ Trimble, Councilmember, Third Ward
James Sandager, Councilmember, At-Large
Ted Ohmart, Councilmember, At-Large

Other City Officials

Jody Smith, Interim City Manager
Scott Sanders, Finance Director
Jeff Pomeranz, Former City Manager

Last, but certainly not least, the Library also wishes to thank the nearly 1,600 West Des Moines residents who participated in the planning process through focus groups, interviews, and surveys.

INTRODUCTION

The City of West Des Moines is justifiably proud of the library facility and services that it offers to its residents. The West Des Moines Public Library (WDMPL) provides a wide range of valued services to the City's growing population from an attractive facility located on the civic campus in the center of the community.



The City of West Des Moines, the Library Board of Trustees, the Library administration and staff and the West Des Moines Library Friends Foundation have worked tirelessly to offer citizens the best possible value for every dollar they invest in the Library. This hasn't been an easy task. As the population has grown, so too has library use.

The United States Census Bureau estimates that the 2009 population of West Des Moines was 56,503, an increase of well over twenty percent (21.8%) since the 2000 U.S. Census. During the same period, the circulation of materials increased by twenty-five percent (25.85%). The Library continues to meet the informational, educational and recreational needs of a community of highly literate and technologically savvy patrons.

Furthermore, the DirectionFinder® Survey conducted for the City has shown an increase of public satisfaction with the Library. In 2002, 88% of citizens polled said they were satisfied with the public library. By 2008, the level of satisfaction had grown to 95%.



Increases in the use of the Library and of public satisfaction are good news indeed. However, projections for substantial, ongoing population growth and the desire of West Des Moines' technologically sophisticated population to have a Library that embraces new mechanisms for the delivery of information content electronically will require a re-doubling of efforts.

It will be very challenging to maintain and retain highly-valued traditional services that are still in high demand while, at the same time, forging ahead into the brave new world of downloadable content,

user-driven services delivered to handheld devices and labor-saving technologies such as radio-frequency identification (RFID) that will enable staff to work even more efficiently will be both challenging and exciting.

In 2009, more than 330,000 people passed through the doors of WDMPL. More than 150,000 people logged on to the Library's public computers. Tens of thousands more visited the Library from computers in their homes, schools and workplaces. Hundreds of pre-school children were introduced to the joy of reading and the world of learning in a positive and fun way that promises to make them lifelong readers and learners. Thousands more school-age children and adults attended library-sponsored programs that spark intellectual curiosity and encourage public discourse.

It is clear that the Library is already an important part of what West Des Moines is and does. It strengthens the community's quality of life and it mirrors the aspirations of its citizens for themselves and for their children. This strategic plan is designed to ensure that the Library is prepared to meet the challenges of the future and that it will continue to play an even more vital role in helping the people of West Des Moines succeed at work, at school and in their daily lives!

THE PLANNING PROCESS

One of the characteristics of exemplary organizations is that they plan for the future. The West Des Moines Public Library has a long history of planning. In fact, this is the Library's fifth plan in the last 20 years. The planning process undertaken in 2010 was designed to be inclusive and to be driven by the people of the community. Nearly 1,500 residents of West Des Moines took advantage of opportunities to participate in the planning effort by attending focus groups, completing a mail survey that was distributed to 1,000 randomly selected households, responding to a web-based survey or by consenting to be interviewed.

A Planning Committee composed of citizens and staff and representing the City, the Library Board of Trustees, the Library Friends Foundation and WDMPL administration and staff worked tirelessly with Himmel & Wilson, Library Consultants, to collect data and information, to analyze it and to determine new directions for the Library that reflect the public's needs and desires. The Planning Committee was delighted to have a regional perspective on public library services represented by the Director of the Urbandale Public Library participating in the process as well. The Planning Committee met four times

(including a six-hour planning retreat) over the course of several months to direct the information/data gathering efforts, to considering the information that was collected and to outline the plan that follows.

THE PLAN

VISION

The West Des Moines Public Library will promote the joy of reading, the love of learning and the sharing of ideas by providing access to information and knowledge for people of all ages.

MISSION

The West Des Moines Public Library is a relevant and integral part of the community. The library enriches the lives of residents by providing convenient and timely access to information and ideas, by offering engaging activities and opportunities for personal and professional growth, by promoting a love of reading and learning and by remaining responsive the changing needs of its users.

VALUES

The West Des Moines Public Library is guided by the following values in everything it does:

EXCELLENT CUSTOMER SERVICES & RESOURCES

- The Library strives to attain excellence in customer service and in the quality of the resources that it provides.

EFFICIENCY, EFFECTIVENESS & INNOVATION

- The Library seeks to identify and implement the best practices, processes and technologies employed by exemplary libraries and businesses to offer the best possible library and information services at a reasonable cost.

INTELLECTUAL FREEDOM

- The Library respects the public's right to explore diverse ideas and strives to provide resources and programs that offer a wide variety of viewpoints on a broad range of topics.

COMMITMENT TO EMPLOYEES, VOLUNTEERS AND FRIENDS

- The Library cares about its employees, volunteers and its Friends as individuals and appreciates their important contributions to the Library's ability to serve the public well.

STEWARDSHIP/INTEGRITY

- The Library recognizes that it belongs to the people of West Des Moines and strives to be an exceptionally good steward of the investment and trust that the public has placed in it.

COOPERATION

- The Library strives to maximize the benefits available to every resident of the City of West Des Moines by working together with non-profit organizations, governmental entities, businesses, individuals and other libraries that share the Library's Vision and Mission.

STRATEGIC THEMES, GOALS AND POTENTIAL STRATEGIES

The **City** of West Des Moines identified six themes in its Strategic Plan. They are:

- Planning and Community Development
- Collaboration
- Sustainability
- Resource Management
- Community Enrichment
- Community Safety

The West Des Moines Public Library has a role to play in all of these strategic themes. For example, the Library is a valuable community asset that supports economic development (Planning and Community Development). It exemplifies collaboration as a premiere "boundary spanning" organization that belongs to the entire community and serves as a place where people and ideas intermingle (Collaboration). As evidenced by the extraordinary productivity of the Library staff, it has managed the resources available to it very well (Resource Management). The Library provides a safe environment in which members of the community can learn and grow (Community Safety). As important as these contributions are, the Library's most important role falls into the "Community Enrichment" category. The Library is a center of community life that contributes

to the strength and vibrancy of the City and offers every resident with opportunities to thrive.

Sustaining the high level of service that West Des Moines residents have come to expect and enjoy presents a considerable challenge. A study conducted in 1992, before the current facility was built and two similar studies conducted since the library opened in 1996 reached similar conclusions. West Des Moines needs approximately 70,000 square feet of public library space to fully meet community needs and contemporary standards for a growing population. The Library, at 51,400 square feet, is short on meeting room space, is nearing its capacity of physical materials and is approaching the limits of the population it can serve effectively. Additional space may be required in the future to fully meet the public's expectations.

Library staff is also under increasing pressure. While the service population and library usage have increased, library staffing has remained unchanged for several years. In the year 2000, each staff member handled an average of 26,866 transactions per person. By 2009, that number exceeded 30,000 transactions per staff member. This compares to a national average of approximately 15,000 transactions per person. Improved technology, more efficient work space and additional staff may be needed if a high level of customer service is going to be maintained. Offering the public access to downloadable resources and providing the public with instantaneous access to information delivered to the electronic device of their choice will also demand staff time and attention.

These are imposing challenges. Yet, they are challenges that must be met if West Des Moines is going to continue to offer its residents an exceptional quality of life.

The Library has identified six strategic themes to guide its efforts in the coming years. They are:

- ***Pursue new technologies that address the needs of sophisticated library users***
- ***Foster a new generation of young readers***
- ***Maintain and enhance services to traditional library users***
- ***Increase operational efficiency to maximize the public's investment in library services***
- ***Enhance the Library's position as a "Center of Community Life"***
- ***Ensure financial stability and ongoing public advocacy for the Library***

Strategic Theme # 1

Pursue new technologies that address the needs of sophisticated library users

Goal 1: *Residents of the West Des Moines area will be offered relevant new resources, services and programs increasingly delivered in non-traditional ways that save a new generation of technologically savvy library users time and money and that contribute to personal success and quality of life.*

Rationale: The Library is already involved in providing a variety of physical materials in digital formats such as CDs and DVDs. The Library also offers access to online information databases and to some downloadable content through its website. However, the residents of West Des Moines indicated in focus groups, interviews and surveys that they want the Library to be very aggressive in facilitating the delivery of downloadable content and in offering access to users of handheld devices. If the Library is going to remain relevant to a new generation of technologically sophisticated “digital natives,” it must take advantage of the technological expertise that exists in the area and must position itself as a technological leader and innovator.

Strategies:

- Work to develop a reputation for the Library as a technological leader and innovator
- Form a high-tech library support/advisory group comprised of representatives of local businesses with exceptional information technology expertise and resources
- Continue to work with other libraries and library organizations such as the West/Central Iowa Libraries Building Online Resources (WILBOR Consortium) to obtain the most advantageous pricing on the licensing and distribution of proprietary content
- Work with other libraries, library organizations and with local businesses to develop and implement applications that provide convenient access to relevant information through handheld devices (iPhones, Blackberries, iPads, etc.)
- Create physical spaces for teens and for adults that highlight new technologies and create environments conducive to using them
- Expand connection to technologically savvy library users through greater use of social media
- Work with City of West Des Moines Information Technology staff to achieve more user-friendly technology applications and services

Strategic Theme # 2

Foster a new generation of young readers

Goal 2: Children from birth to four years of age will have new opportunities to develop pre-literacy and emergent literacy skills that will prepare them to enter school ready and eager to learn and will impart the joy of reading and a pattern of lifelong learning.

Rationale: Our society depends on a literate citizenry. The Library is uniquely positioned to make an invaluable contribution to the development of pre-literacy/emergent literacy skills of the young children in the community. The Library has traditionally been very active in providing pre-school story hours and other programming and has been a leader in early literacy efforts in the West Des Moines area. Working even more collaboratively with the school districts and other agencies involved in childcare and early childhood development will ensure that the children of the West Des Moines area enter school ready and eager to learn.

Strategies:

- Focus greater attention on providing pre-literacy and emergent literacy skills for children from birth to four years of age, their parents and their care-givers
- Continue to work collaboratively with educators to develop a “curriculum” for pre-literacy/emergent literacy services that is coordinated with the schools
- Act as a convener of organizations with a stake in providing early childhood and family literacy skills to develop plans for how to maximize the impact of efforts through coordination and collaboration
- Provide early childhood brain development and pre-literacy skills education and training for all youth services staff members
- Acquire additional resources and tools needed to effectively implement pre-literacy/early literacy programs
- Maintain a focus on making the introduction to books and reading “fun”

Strategic Theme # 3

Maintain and enhance services to traditional library users

Goal 3: *Residents of all ages in the West Des Moines area will continue to have convenient access to a wide range of high-quality traditional library resources, services and programs that contribute to their quality of life and enable them to succeed at work, at school, and in their personal lives.*

Rationale: The West Des Moines Public Library is widely respected in the community. The public recognizes many of the Library's strengths such as its collection, extensive children's programming, and outstanding customer service. While the Library must be innovative in developing new, technology-based mechanisms for the delivery of service, interest in and the use of print resources remains high. Since the taxpayers place a high value on these resources and services, an ongoing effort must be made to preserve and enhance them.

Strategies:

- Continue purchase of traditional/print materials that address public demand and maintain a well-balanced collection
- Improve the "browsability" of library collections through user-friendly/intuitive arrangement of shelving, enhanced displays and better signage
- Implement technologies and applications that provide enhanced access to traditional/print materials
- Explore ways to enhance ongoing funding available for adult informational/cultural programming and to create opportunities for civic engagement
- Increase the number and variety of meeting room spaces
- Explore opportunities for off-site programming at the Jordan Creek Town Center, in the Valley Junction area and at other sites in the community that would benefit from these services.

Strategic Theme # 4

Increase operational efficiency to maximize the public investment in library services

Goal 4: *The people of West Des Moines will continue to enjoy exceptional services as the Library employs new technologies and adopts best practices that enhance its capacity to serve the public.*

Rationale: Library staff has been stretched to the limit as the population and library usage have increased while staffing levels have remained unchanged. While securing additional tax-based funding for library services in the current economic climate will be extremely difficult, new technologies including open-source library automation systems, radio-frequency identification (RFID) and automated materials handling systems (AMHS) are allowing some libraries to increase their efficiency while, at the same time, enhancing public services. While implementing these kinds of technological solutions will undoubtedly require additional public support, one-time capital costs could lead to long-term savings.

Strategies:

- Explore next generation library automation systems (including open-source solutions) to identify potential for increased integration of processes and streamlining of operations
- Conduct a cost analysis to identify benefits and to quantify costs and payback time related to the implementation of Radio Frequency Identification (RFID) technology as well as ancillary technologies such as RFID-based self-check, an RFID-based materials security system and an RFID-based automated materials handling system (AMHS)
- Conduct a space needs/space use analysis that refines future space needs based on new and emerging service delivery models (downloadable content, in-library use of personal computers on the Library's network, etc.) and space needs associated with the implementation of RFID, AMHS and other technologies that may be considered
- Explore reprogramming of existing space to achieve greater efficiency
- Identify and advocate for staffing enhancements and increased hours of operation that will have the greatest impact on service to the public

Strategic Theme # 5

Enhance the Library's position as a "Center of Community Life"

Goal 5: *The vitality of the community will be further enhanced as physical improvements to the library building and opportunities for personal interaction between and among area residents increase.*

Rationale: The Library already serves as an important center of community life in West Des Moines. However, in an age in which communication is increasingly taking place in an online environment, people are seeking new opportunities for substantive face-to-face interactions. Efforts to expand and enhance the physical facility will serve to strengthen the community and to engage citizens in civic discourse.

Strategies:

- Explore the potential for using exterior spaces as extensions of interior library space such as a re-envisioning of the use of the existing terrace area in front of the Library as café space and the development of exterior programming space(s)
- Create physical spaces for teens and for adults that highlight new technologies and create environments conducive to using them
- Integrate elements of the Dahlquist Art Plan into efforts to enhance the Library's physical spaces
- Explore ways to enhance ongoing funding available for adult informational/cultural programming and to create opportunities for civic engagement
- Conduct a space needs/space use analysis that refines future space needs based on new and emerging service delivery models (downloadable content, in-library use of personal computers on the Library's network, etc.), need for public meeting space and potential reprogramming of existing space to make it more user-friendly

Strategic Theme # 6

Ensure financial stability and ongoing public advocacy for the Library

Goal 6: *The Library will continue to have the financial resources it needs to offer the residents of West Des Moines high-quality library and information services that enhance the quality of life in the City.*

Rationale: The citizens of West Des Moines are frugal; however, they have also demonstrated that they are responsive to efforts that enhance quality of life in the community. Quality library services are not free. The Library Board of Trustees and the Library Friends Foundation must continue their efforts to secure both public and private funds that will ensure that West Des Moines enjoys fine library and information services for many years to come.

Strategies:

- Continue to work closely with City of West Des Moines officials to make sure that they fully understand the degree to which the public values and depends on library services
- Pursue corporate sponsorships/partnerships in the development of technology-based library services and pre-literacy/early literacy efforts
- Explore the feasibility of a library levy (already allowed by Iowa law and employed by some other communities)
- Work with the Library Friends Foundation to explore ways to enhance fund development efforts that will generate ongoing financial support