

## **COLUMBUS PUBLIC LIBRARY: STRATEGIC PLAN 2017 – 2020**

- **The library's mission statement.**

*Columbus Public Library: Connecting People and Ideas*

- **A community profile.**

The Columbus Public Library serves people living, working, and attending school in the City of Columbus and Platte County, Nebraska. The library's legal service area population is 32,237. Another 6,000 people commute into Columbus each day for work and are eligible for full library services.

Columbus is home to several large manufacturing facilities employing 26 percent of the working population. The manufacturing industry includes companies making diverse products from medical supplies, food stuffs, and track hurdles. The library's service population is diverse in their level of educational attainment, race, and income. Nearly fourteen (13.8) percent of the population is Hispanic. Twenty 20 percent of the population holds a bachelor's degree or higher while 6% percent have earned a graduate or professional degree. Thirty-one percent of families have a household income of less than \$50,000 and 22.6% percent of families have income exceeding \$100,000.

The number of children living in poverty is increasing in Columbus and Platte County. A comprehensive community assessment released last year by East Central District Health Department revealed that the percentage of children younger than 18 living in poverty rose from 9% percent to 16.6% percent between 2000 and 2012. Earnings for people living in the county are comparable to the state and country when looking at median household income, which is \$51,395. The per capita income of \$24,155, though, is about \$2,000 lower than Nebraska's and about \$4,000 less than the national average. The number of students receiving free and reduced lunch varies across the service area. The public elementary schools serving the neighborhoods adjacent to the library are consistently offering 60% of students free and reduced status.

- **An assessment of community needs.**

The following is a general description of community challenges that the library has used for developing action items and goals. In addition a narrative of the community's effort to construct a new library facility is included.

The information and library service needs facing Columbus, Nebraska include: ensuring equitable access to information, expanding early literacy education, teen engagement, services for persons with disabilities, bi-lingual materials and programming (particularly Spanish/English). Additionally, the community has asked the library to increase access to the visual and performing arts, information literacy skills education, internet access for all persons, mobile library services for rural areas, and meaningful connections for aging populations.

Equitable access to information is a key concern for the library. The library is working to expand its ability to serve the Hispanic/Latino population, the elderly, and school aged children. The communities needs have been expressed as, creating a maker space, expanding collections and programs focused on Spanish language and/or English as a second language services, expanding access to technology hardware and software, technology driven education services have been identified as key community challenges that can be met by the library.

A new facility has also been identified as a key community need. Economic development and work force development in Columbus is a driving force behind the development of the Library/Cultural Arts Center project. It has been many years since new development has stimulated downtown Columbus and the surrounding neighborhoods. Columbus regularly has between 500 and 1,000 open jobs at every level of the employment spectrum. The Library/Cultural Arts Center will make the community more attractive to people considering a move to Columbus. The diverse manufacturing employment base in Columbus makes the community a viable place for families of diverse backgrounds to find employment and build wealth. Making Columbus an attractive place for people to move to and remain is a priority for the business community. The market conditions in Columbus make is a good long term investment for many companies. The lack of access to non-athletic based leisure activities for people of all ages has been a detriment in many businesses ability to attract and retain employees.

A lot of the community outreach and discussion surrounding the services and programs or Columbus Public Library have been related to the development of a new facility. The development of a new facility was a priority identified in the 2014 – 2017 strategic plan and considerable progress has been made.

Planning for the Library/Cultural Arts Center (L/CAC) began in 2008 with the completion of a Civic/Municipal Facility Master Plan Workshop. The City of Columbus, Library Board, and the Columbus Arts Council identified the need for a new facility. The Boards worked with City of Columbus leadership to plan funding sources ultimately establishing the goal of a facility funded with grants, donations, a Library Foundation commitment, and sales tax revenue. In 2010 the representatives of the L/CAC project joined with several other organizations needing new facilities to complete a study.

The 2010 Quality of Life study, conducted by HDR Engineering, led to the vision statement, “Create a community that attracts talented people by emotional engagement and intellectual stimulation. Educate and motivate the community to action to collaborate for the creation of a multi-purpose facility that aligns with community and business needs (with pedestrian routes and minimal duplication of facilities).To concentrate all community functions and ideas into a comprehensive collaborative plan. With an eye to the future, make Columbus THE place to live in Nebraska. Within the next four years, develop a center which promotes growth, education, and recreation for youth, adults and seniors.” The sixty page final report identified two quality of life development centers: one at the north edge of Columbus and another downtown. The north quality of life campus has been completed with the successful development of facilities for East Central District Health, Columbus Family YMCA, and Columbus High School. The

Library/Cultural Arts Center is poised to be the downtown anchor for the second quality of life center.

In December of 2013 Clark Enersen Partners conducted a space needs study for the Library/Cultural Arts Center project. Community groups, individuals, and survey respondents were asked to dream big about the future facility. Based on community feedback Clark Enersen Partners determined that library, gallery, and auditorium spaces would require a 60,000 square foot facility covering one half block in downtown Columbus.

With a stated goal of funding half of the project with grants and donations a fundraising feasibility study was conducted. To measure the support and fundraising capacity for a proposed Columbus Library/Cultural Arts Center, the Columbus Library Foundation commissioned Lukas Partners PR/Fundraising Firm to conduct the study in March-April, 2015. The primary objectives of the study were to determine the potential for a fundraising campaign, the sources of support, key leadership and timing for a campaign. More than 100 individuals were invited to participate in personal interviews conducted by Lukas Partners, and 59 individuals participated in the one-on-one interviews. An additional 86 public surveys were submitted by members of the public. Overall, 80 percent of total study respondents representing Columbus and surrounding areas said that they considered a new Library/Cultural Arts Center an important priority for Columbus. In addition, 70 percent of total respondents were personally in favor of the foundation embarking on a capital campaign. The fundraising effort has been very successful with tremendous financial support from local families, businesses, and individuals.

In 2016 Alley Poyner Machietto was brought on board to complete the final design of the Library/Cultural Arts Center. Prior to beginning design work, in March 2016, a second space needs analysis was conducted. With considerable public input efficiencies were identified in the building program and the 60,000 square feet was reduced to 45,000 square feet. In August 2016 Boyd Jones construction was contracted to serve as Construction Manager at Risk. Boyd Jones' initial task was to plan for materials and methods alongside Alley Poyner Machietto in order to control project costs. In early 2017 a cost estimate of \$13.5 million was reached for the Library/Cultural Arts Center project with an additional \$2.5 million needed for non-construction, soft costs bringing the total project budget to \$16 million.

The Library/Cultural Arts Center is a well-planned and well-managed project. The location has been purchased, design has been complete, and the architecture firm is poised to issue construction documents. The project team has solidified working relationships that will serve the people of Columbus well.

- **An analysis of library strengths and weaknesses; and, an analysis of opportunities and threats outside the library.**

#### INTERNAL STRENGTHS

- Staff – willingness to learn, expertise, knows their job, knows what they need to do, willingness to risks, engagement with projects, adapt well, knowledge.
- Collections
- Meeting rooms
- Programming quantity & quality
- Technology
- Bookmobile – remote library service
- Outreach – home bound delivery, adult story time, schools etc.
- Relationship with City Hall
- Hours
- Collection accessibility (online access, hours of operation)
- Gallery
- Public Use Kitchen
- Downtown Location

#### INTERNAL WEAKNESS

- Lack of physical space for programming and collections
- Floor plan
- Age of building
- HVAC System
- Lack of sufficient number of staff for safe coverage of the building during all open hours
- Staff training with maker space – technology
- Number of FTE is too low
- Opportunity for internal professional advancement
- Parking
- Building security
- Marketing

#### EXTERNAL OPPORTUNITIES

- Partnerships
- Outreach
- Public perception
- Bi-lingual programming
- Translation services for building accessibility into programming with language skills
- Media relationships
- Business connections

- Fundraising
- Volunteers
- Boards
- Availability of technology

## EXTERNAL THREATS

- Public Perception (libraries in general) our inability to effectively market and communicate the value of the library
- Library/Cultural Arts Center
  - Understanding of the public finance
  - Auditorium (name, branding)
  - Timing of other community projects (environment)
  - Cost
- Failed Bond Issue
- Funding, especially low salaries for library employees
- Difficult patrons disrupting the library environment (substance abuse, homelessness, mental illness etc.)
- **An analysis of what all this means and where the library can contribute to community progress.**

Columbus Public Library is in a good position to continue making a positive impact on the community. There is also room for improvement. Internally, there are some key items that need to be addressed. The level of compensation for library staff should be addressed. CPL is far below its peer libraries for employee compensation. This dynamic makes recruitment and retention difficult. Training and education will be important for library staff as new programs and services are demanded by the community. It will be important that staff are comfortable using and teaching the makerspace equipment and other education based technology equipment. It will also be important for CPL to encourage, and pay for, staff to have access to foreign language instruction, particularly Spanish language instruction.

Externally the library is facing a world of opportunity. There are partnerships to strengthen and expand. There are organizations to connect with in order to address other community needs. A new facility is only dependent on the City's ability to obtain public financing for the project. Helping their effort succeed through communicating the value of the library's programs, services, and collections will be important.

- **Specific goals with measurable objectives or action plans that provide details including timelines, assignment of responsibility, etc.**

Columbus Public Library's mission statement *Connecting People and Ideas* has been a guiding force in the development of past and future goals. In 2013 Columbus Public Library issued a five year strategic plan. That plan is still informing the work of Columbus Public Library. The social science research, public outreach, and facility design processes have also contributed a great deal of community input regarding library programs, services, and outcomes. The organization serves 35,000 people through the main library in downtown Columbus, Platte County Bookmobile, and online at [cplconnect.us](http://cplconnect.us).

Beyond developing and maintaining access to high quality technology, collections, and digital information, the three year goals beginning in 2017/18 are both ambitious and achievable;

***Goal 1: Develop and implement a marketing plan and process for Columbus Public Library.***

*Make it easy for library staff to project a clear message about library services, programs, and goals. Through online, print, and campaign advertising make it easy for the community to know what Columbus Public Library is providing to improve their quality of life.*

***Goal 2: Establish Columbus Public Library as the place to connect with community information.***

*Make community information about planning, history, and civic discussion widely available through the library's digital repository, community partnerships, websites, and programs.*

***Goal 3: Provide accessible entertainment, and education based programming.***

*Provide regular makerspace hours. Leverage partnerships and the Friends of the Library to provide consistent, free access to educational and entertaining programming.*

- **A plan for evaluation of accomplishment, and a summary of evaluation of previous accomplishments.**

Goal 1 measurement:

Improved marketing will be measured through circulation, program attendance, and passage of a bond issue to fund the Library/Cultural Arts Center

Goal 2 measurement:

Establishing Columbus Public Library as the place to connect with community information will be measured by the successful development and public launch of a website, digital repository, and increased traffic in those spaces. Additionally, being at the center of the action on community issues will translate to increased meeting room usage.

Goal 3 measurement:

Increased partnerships and increased bi-lingual program offerings will be measures of success. Also, public perception and participation in a variety of programs at the library – increased attendance – will be a measure of success for this goal.

**Key goals of the five year strategic plan that have been completed and quantified include;**

- the creation of seating, study and gathering spaces,

The library's collections were shifting opening up significant square footage for seating a gathering spaces. The collection was reduced by 16,000 items.

- increased online collections,

Additional funds were allocated to both the shared Overdrive Collection and the library's Advantage collection. More downloadable items were made available. Also, the library migrated to a new OPAC that allowed eBook records to appear alongside all other items. A major access improvement.

- new materials sections,

New materials sections were added. Circulation may be improved by expanding on the concept in the coming years or in a new facility.

- expanded young adult spaces,

A program has been grown from scratch and includes a large space. The concept is evolving and expanding with the development of the library's makerspace.

- bilingual Spanish language programming,

This goal is underway, programs were offered in the final year of the strategic plan and it remains a goal going forward.

- improved public WiFi connection,

The library moved to a fiber connection, expanded bandwidth, expanded network access to 24/7/365, removed the network's "splash page", and expanded the number of IP addresses that could be leased.

- re-designed online catalog system complete with integrated reviews,

This was a big improvement and included the integration of Novelist Plus.

- Design development and private funding for a new facility,

The library raised \$5.3MM for a new facility and completed the design and development phase of the project.

**There are still areas for improvement identified in 2013 that will carry over into 2018 and beyond;**

- Development of a new facility.
- Improved online access to library collections and services.
- Bi-lingual programming.