

Highwood Public Library Strategic Plan 2018-2021

Building Community Through Library Service



Executive Summary

The Highwood Public Library is embarking upon its first formal strategic plan at a critical juncture in the library's story. The library was built in 1976 by the community, for the community--"the Highwood Way." The community has changed drastically since that time, becoming a vibrant multi-cultural and culinary destination. The community's base is turning over to welcome new families who seek a walkable, transit-oriented community with a forward-thinking school district offering a dual-language approach to education--as well as a desirable place to live and visit.

What it means to be a library has also changed drastically since 1976, with less of a focus on collections and more of a focus on serving the community's unique education, information and inspiration needs. This plan is focused on creating a library the community needs by *differentiating, not replicating*, library services available in surrounding communities.

In addition to a bilingual community survey, over 30 in-person interviews were held with staff, community, elected officials, library experts, school district representatives, and social service providers. Various authoritative resources provided valuable guidance in understanding the potential of the library in serving the community in the near future in a sustainable and realistic manner.

The goal of this plan is to honor the past, support the current members of the community and ensure the success of future taxpayers. The plan allows the library to redefine "*Highwood Way*" by engaging the community in the process of creating a library that is *transformational* for those it serves.

Information Gathering

Drawing upon community interviews, as well as the community survey, the data revealed the perceived strengths and weaknesses and the opportunities and challenges ahead. The goal is to maximize the strengths and help turn weaknesses into opportunities while addressing threats by executing a strategic plan that is realistic, comprehensive and sustainable.

Recommendations

In 2017 Highwood library cardholders checked out almost as many items from Highland Park Public Library as from Highwood Public Library. This is not necessarily a threat but points to the value of "reciprocity," an Illinois law that is designed to allow people to use the library of their choice. The Highland Park budget is much larger, as is its staff and facility. They can afford to offer great value to Highwood residents and the shared school district offers an opportunity to work closely together in the future, allowing the Highwood Public Library to focus on the unique needs of its residents through the mission and vision articulated in this strategic planning cycle.

Be bold. Rather than hire a degreed library director, consider hiring someone who can:

- Create the library as a social asset/place
- Engage the entire community in the process of change
- Build Programs
- Create and manage new revenue
- Utilize library consultants/coaches for facility design, collection, policy etc.



Vision

The Highwood Public Library is an innovative and collaborative anchor of the community, providing educational support, information needs, engaging services, and inspirational collections.

Mission

The Highwood Public Library is a sustainable resource that enriches, empowers and embraces the community it serves.

Values

The values are guiding principles that will be used when making action plans and measuring outcomes. Focusing on them creates “guide rails” for decision making. Programs/services/action items should be creative, collaborative, communicated effectively, and in the community’s best interests.

Creativity--It will take creativity and ingenuity to re-envision library services for the Highwood Public Library with the limited budget available.

Collaboration--By creating partnerships with other government agencies, social services, local businesses, and philanthropic organizations the library will better understand the challenges facing the community and the best resources, services and programs to offer.

Communication--Communication strategies will focus on engagement, key messaging unique to each segment of the community and word-of-mouth marketing. The library brand will be updated to reflect the ambitious plan to reinvent the library as a community resource and social asset.

Community--It is important to honor the past, be realistic about the present and anticipate the needs of the community in the future. Highwood has a rich cultural past and a multi-cultural present that cannot be ignored and requires focused services. The library seeks to uphold its mission to enrich, empower, educate and embrace the community through the materials and technology it makes accessible and the services and programs it offers.

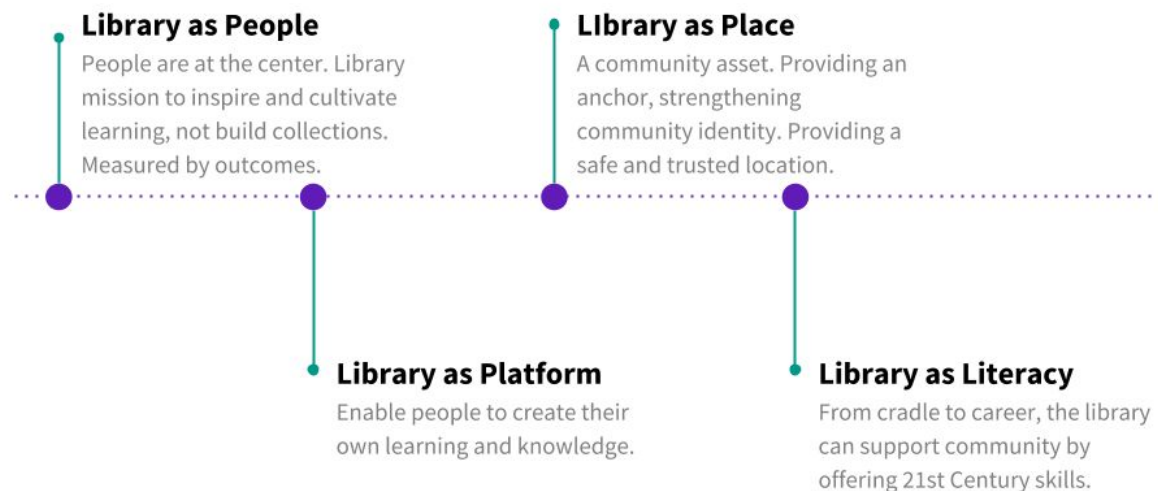
Strategic Priorities

The following Strategic Priorities were adopted based on *The Aspen Institute's Action Guide for Re-Envisioning Your Public Library*. The guide identifies strategies for success to include:

- Align library services in support of community goals.
- Provide access to content in all formats.
- Ensure the long-term sustainability of public libraries.
- Cultivate leadership.

The Board of Trustees has boldly adopted the following priorities to focus on in this three-year cycle that makes the library a social asset connecting the community, both visible and invisible.

Strategic Priorities



Library as People

The focus is on community building, partnerships and becoming an active member of the community. The Board and staff should utilize collaboration, engagement, and communication strategies to ensure the library is a social asset that is culturally relevant and ensures sustainability by building human capital and knowledge networks.

“Bad libraries build collections, good libraries build services, great libraries build communities.”

—R. David Lankes

Strategies

- Develop a new staffing model and hiring strategy that includes hiring a director whose priorities are to engage the community, build programs and manage the transition to a sustainable business model. Hire for past performance and personality rather than focus on degrees/resume. Hire library coaches to ensure library service meets community needs on a sustainable budget.
- Analyze current staff strengths, offer training and networking opportunities to create a strong customer service culture.
- Develop a method to measure outcomes that focus on the community.
- Recruit volunteers to create a community of supporters and extend services.



Library as Place

Today's library is both a physical and virtual location. The first priority is to focus on a facility plan that creates a warm and welcoming space. Size is not as important as ensuring that all community members have access to resources and feel welcome and safe--both in the building and online.

"Without libraries what have we? We have no past and no future."

--Ray Bradbury

Strategies

- **The first priority is to decide upon a facility model--stand-alone or shared community services with the City of Highwood. Once the decision is made, hire a library consultant to develop a floor plan that puts the library first and foremost as the most important asset. Keep the fireplace!**
- The strength of the library is its location and its small-town feeling. Use these concepts when creating a design that propels the library into the 21st Century. Make it the "third space" of the community.
- Utilize architect renderings to develop a fundraising plan to help offset the costs of the building project while also partnering with the city to pay for renovations.
- Create a Collection Strategy that explores outsourcing purchasing and cataloging; use school districts' book lists; purchase Spanish language materials through a bookstore in Pilsen or look to Round Lake Library for a local example; analyze collection statistics to create purchase plan for outsourcing; weed collection to create a relevant collection for the smaller footprint. Differentiate by purchasing specifically for users; don't replicate the local libraries that Highwood residents prefer to use.
- Create a communications strategy that focuses on word-of-mouth methods, utilizes partnerships and creates key messaging to ensure all community members understand and trust the outcomes and the realities the budget presents. Update branding to reflect changing dynamics of the library service model. Include a new website that is bilingual and easily navigable.
- Create a zero-based budget process to support new goals while meeting Illinois State Standards and statutes for small and rural Libraries. Revise all policies and procedures to support this goal.



Library as Platform

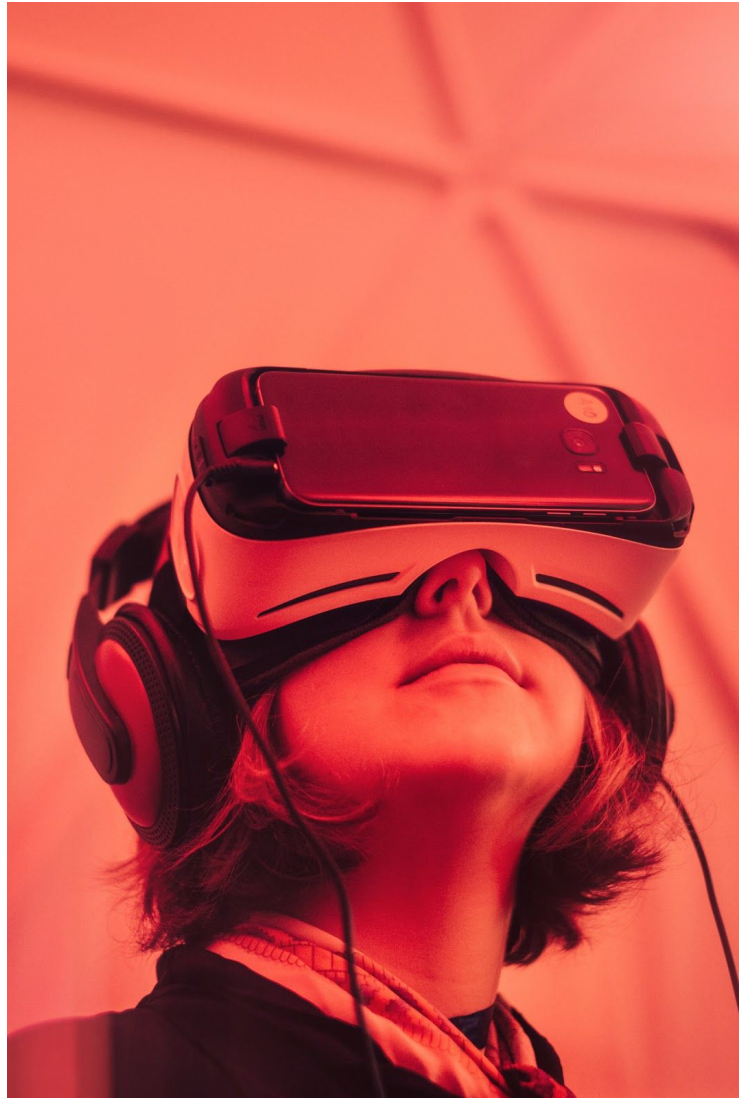
Support the community's ever-changing digital needs, from the digital natives to the digitally naive. Provide access and training for all forms of technology.

"A platform provides resources that lets other people build things."

--David Weinberger

Strategies

- Explore this concept when executing the design for the updated library by creating shared study places and access to the latest technologies--places to talk out loud as well as spaces to be quiet.
- Support the learning goals of the school districts by providing the technology tools and resources for students to be successful outside of the classroom.
- Support "Parent University" goals to educate all parents, in their native language, in understanding the "learn, design and create" model of education.
- Provide the technology and tools needed within the library that meet the current and future needs of the community.
- Build programming driven by the community's needs, not library trends.
- Create the virtual library through a bilingual website that makes downloading and utilizing resources seamless and relevant. This does not mean a literal translation of services, but a site or app focused on opportunities to engage, learn, and grow.
- Identify and fill in gaps in community members' digital knowledge.



Library as Literacy

Create the programs and services the community members need to move up *Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs*." Programs should focus on all forms of literacy including: language, health, financial, cultural, multicultural, civic, and, of course, reading.

"The 21st-Century library is the champion of the literacies needed to navigate information abundance, create knowledge, bolster economic opportunity and make democracy dynamic."

--Action Guide for Re-Envisioning Your Public Library



Strategies

- Build an advisory committee comprised of subject matter experts that represent the Highwood Community that include the school district, social services, business community, and community leaders to build trust, programs, and relationships that result in better service.
- Focus on being inclusive, not exclusive, by respecting and serving the diverse community that makes Highwood unique. Programs should include a bilingual, or native language, approach to support community members in their educational and personal growth.
- Become the community's early learning and resource center for both children and families.
- Partner with the school district to ensure the children of the community are supported after school and during the summer months.
- Support adult literacy in all aspects: language and reading; health and wellness; digital; cultural and multicultural; STEM; and any other gaps in literacy identified through community engagement.
- Develop adult programming that is relevant and measured by outcomes as well as attendance.