



Annual President's Report for FY 2024
May 2023 to April 2024

Library Board of Trustees

Committee Chairs of the standing committees prepare annual reports which outline their specific activities for the year, Building & Grounds, Finance, Personnel, Policy, and Technology.

Trustee Lorena Victorica was unable to continue to volunteer her time and resigned in October 2023. Nancy Pastroff was appointed in November 2023. Two trustee terms expired, and they are seeking re-appointment. There is one open position. The board will benefit from a trustee with a legal or information technology background.

Trustee Name	Email	Term Expiration
Nora Loredó	treasurer@Highwoodlibrary.org	May-26
Jason Muelver	trustee6@highwoodlibrary.org	May-26
Nancy Pastroff	trustee3@highwoodlibrary.org	May-26
Lucy Hospodarsky	president@highwoodlibrary.org	May-25
Bertha Chavez	trustee1@highwoodlibrary.org	May-25
Paul Martinez	trustee5@highwoodlibrary.org	May-25
Catherine Regalado	secretary@highwoodlibrary.org	May-24
Janell Cleland	vicepresident@highwoodlibrary.org	May-24
Open	trustee4@highwoodlibrary.org	May-24

Financial Summary and Fundraising for Programming

Highlights are presented below. For more details, refer to the Finance Annual Report.

Tax Levy for FY24

In October 2023, we requested a 10% increase over our FY23 tax levy request and received the approval from the City Council for this increase.

Our tax levy request of \$321,750 was fully realized, with about \$250 additional property tax receipts. We received the budgeted amount for the Per Capita Grant from the Illinois State Library. Personal Property Replacement Tax (PPRT) from the State of Illinois came in about \$1,400 more than budgeted. Tax revenues (the levy and PPRT) along with the Per Capita Grant, interest income, and photocopy revenues support core library operations and some staff. We continue to receive miscellaneous donations directly from patrons (outside of the Friends of the Highwood Library) which helps supplement the other revenue sources.

Most of our expenses for programming and the staff needed to run the programs are supported via specific program grants obtained from private foundations and non-profit organizations. Additionally, we successfully raised additional non-program specific private donations through our Campaign for Impact & Sustainability.



The Reserve Account and Capital Improvement fund balances at IMET remained untouched with balances of approximately \$22,000 and \$4,000 respectively. The IMET accounts generate our interest income which was higher than budgeted due to positive market factors.

Strategic Plan Update

All items in the FY21-24 Strategic Plan were successfully completed. This includes:

Library as Community Strategies • Grew community partnerships and created a new staffing model to support programmatic growth and sustainability. Developed an Impact & Sustainability fund to support staffing model. Now have a team that is bilingual, and a multi-faceted marketing strategy.

Library as Place Strategies • Completed the building renovation project and rebranded the building as the Highwood Library & Community Center to reflect the new services and programming that have been under development since 2019. Added exterior signage to increase visibility and create a facility that is accessible to all. Have made the library the “third space” of the community.

Library as Platform Strategies • Installed the technology and tools needed within the library that meet the needs of students, and the current and future needs of the community.

Library as Literacy Strategies • Built strong partnerships and programs to support the literacy needs of the community. Have become the community’s early learning and resource center for both children and families. Partnered with the school district to ensure the children of the community are supported after school and during the summer months. Grew programming significantly to support adult literacy in all aspects: language and reading; health and wellness; digital; cultural and multicultural and STEM-based programming.

Our current 3-year plan is scheduled for an update in FY2025. The Board has started the discussion of undergoing this strategic planning process.

Operations

The Executive Director and her staff continue to enlist the support of volunteers to better execute literacy focused programs such as Learning Partners, Homework Help, adult literacy programming, and more.

We continued our operations during the building renovation project in our “mini-library” by using the East Building programming room. Most of our programming took place offsite, and we are grateful to our partners who made space available for us (Church of the Redeemer, North Shore School District 112 allowed use of Oak Terrace School, Giggles Play, and Christ our Hope Parish-St. James Site). Staff quarters were tight, having relocated everyone to the back storage room which also contained much of our collection. On May 1st, we closed the mini-library and re-instituted curbside pick-up for the remainder of the building renovation. We officially re-opened on December 9, 2023.

Our grand re-opening gave us the opportunity to launch our new logo and a rebranding as the Highwood Library & Community Center. Our legal name continues to be the Highwood Public Library.

Renovation Project Completed

We officially broke ground for the library renovation project in November 2022. The project was managed by the design build firm WB Olsen, and successfully completed in December 2023. Our grand opening celebration, organized by the Friends of the Highwood Library, was well attended, and the new space was very well received by our patrons, our community partners, the City of Highwood, and our generous donors.



The event featured a program with speakers sharing their thoughts and thanks to all that made the renovation possible. Board President Lucy Hospodarsky kicked off the event, followed by former Executive Director Carmen Patlan, who was instrumental in the vision and the fundraising efforts for the project. Carmen shared her journey and our vision to make this library as asset to the community and presented an appreciation award to former Friends of the Library President Andy Hamilton. Mayor Pecaro spoke about the pride the city has for its library and presented Carmen and Lucy each with a resolution from the City of Highwood in recognition of their contributions to the library's project and for the remarkable transformation of the library's programming and its relevance and importance to the community. Executive Director Laura Ramirez gave a heartwarming speech on the impact the library programming has on our patrons, and presented a volunteer appreciation award to David Wigodner, who devoted countless hours over two years, acting in a capacity of building project manager. Senator Julie Morrison, responsible for helping us secure a \$2M state grant, also spoke. And finally, [Pedro Reyes shared his story of how the library impacted his family's life.

Our Donor Wall recognizes our major contributors, for whom we are forever grateful, for without their financial contribution, the state matching grant would not have been possible.

Programming & Services

The Highwood Library & Community Center experienced a bit of a slowdown during the renovation period, and naturally saw a resurgence once the library re-opened.

Our new Computer Classroom enables staff to effectively deliver computer training and other educational programs/events.

Our Health Equity Program, funded by a grant from Endeavor Health (formerly, NorthShore University Health System Community Investment Fund), continues to be very successful and has a meaningful impact for our patrons. This program seeks to bring mental health care education and services to our underserved community members. Our new library includes rooms used by our staff to deliver these services.

Our maker space is a truly wonderful new addition to our library, enabling our teens to gather and be creative and explore many aspects of the world of STEAM (Science, Technology, Engineering, the Arts, and Mathematics).

For information on other programming, refer to the Director's Annual Report.

Personnel Items and Outside Contractors

Executive Director (ED) Carmen Patlan concluded her tenure as ED in July 2024, and we implemented the succession plan by promoting Associate Director Laura Ramirez to the role of Executive Director. The Associate Director position will not be filled, as it was temporarily created as part of the ED succession planning. We also added a business manager to our staff due to the increase in grant bookkeeping required by our successful fundraising efforts.

We ended FY24 with 9 full time staff, one 28 hour per week staff, and three 18 hour per week staff.

We continue our relationship with our IT consultant.

Building and Grounds

Refer to the Committee's annual report.



Community Outreach

The Executive Director continued to strengthen the partnerships already secured with community organizations, the two school districts, and potential private donors, and continues to make new connections. Laura is familiar with the community and attends as many local events as she is able as a means of networking (i.e., Highwood Chamber of Commerce, Highland Park Community Foundation events).

Staff regularly promote programming on social media (Facebook, Instagram) and circulate an electronic newsletter every month.

Friends of the Highwood Public Library

The Friends' Executive Board is comprised of four members. The Friends planned the entire grand opening event from securing bright flowers, delicious food, and beautiful cookies, to supplying beverages. They volunteered on the day of the event to ensure the event ran smoothly. Their focus now is on re-connecting with donors and planning for an end-of-year pledge drive.