

Polk City Community Library Strategic Plan

January 9, 2023

Overview of the Strategic Planning Process

Library boards continuously guide, shape, and build library services for their community as they make decisions about money, buildings, programs, technology and staff. The challenge is to make these decisions based on a carefully considered written plan. Planning is one of the major roles of a library board. A good plan is a road map and assists the board and the director in making decisions that are the best ones for the community being served. It also publicizes the library's priorities and its vision of the future. (Iowa Library Trustee's Handbook 2021, Chapter 7)

Planning is the decision making process for what will be happening at the Polk City Community Library over the next three years. A public library is an organizational resource for and of the community it serves. The strategic plan, therefore, must be created to be responsive to its community's needs.

Board of Trustees Guided the Effort

The Board of Trustees consisted of the Polk City Community Library Board of Trustees:

Lisa Mart, President
Angela Conley, Secretary
Corey Hoodjer
Rodney Bergren
Sara Olson

Library Director Jamie Noack

After months of planning, the Polk City Community Library submitted a newly developed strategic plan in February 2020. The strategic plan, compiled from the results of a community survey, focused on three main areas: facilities, programming and marketing. One month later, on March 16, an emergency proclamation by the Mayor of Polk City was issued that closed the library due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The library did not resume normal operating hours or programming until April 5, 2021. As a result, there are many items from the 2020 strategic plan that were not fully achieved and remain in our 2023 plan. Despite the impact of the pandemic, the Polk City Community proudly continued to serve the community. The library may have physically closed to the public at noon on March 16, 2020, but the library was never shuttered. We began offering a curbside pickup option at noon that same day, and we were offering online programming by the end of the month. Through online reserves and curbside pickup, the library staff was provided a rare opportunity to view the library's entire collection through the eyes of a patron. As a result, we improved how board books and beginning reader books were organized. We also added series identification to the spine labels of books making series titles and series

order easier to identify. We learned how to offer remote programming and continue to provide remote options for almost all programs. As we continue to recover from the impact of the pandemic, we are looking ahead and looking forward to continuing to achieve the goals we set in 2020.

On October 3, 2022 the Board of Trustees of the Polk City Community Library had a strategic planning work session. The Board reviewed the updated demographic information for the city of Polk City, Iowa and reviewed what goals were met from the 2020 strategic plan. The Board then discussed new goals that could be added to the updated 2023 strategic plan.

Demographic Information:

Polk City is located in Polk County in central Iowa. The population of Polk City is rapidly increasing. The 2020 census population was 5,543 which was an increase of nearly 62% from 2010. The residents of Polk City are mainly caucasian. English is the predominant language spoken in the community. Over 65% of the residents in Polk City have a college degree. The median household income is \$127,226. The largest age group in Polk City is 50-54 years of age and the predominant age of children is 5-14 years of age.

Library Compared with Other Libraries of Similar Size

(2021 State Library of

Iowa-https://www.statelibraryofiowa.gov/application/files/4816/5886/9299/IOWA_PUBLIC_LIBRARY_STATISTICS_big_book_fy21_final_26JUL22.pdf)

The Polk City Community Library is a size “E” classification which incorporates cities with a population of 5,000-9,999. It is important to note that most “E” libraries are located in rural areas and are often county seats. In fiscal year 2021, there were 41 size “E” libraries in Iowa. When a library is located in a predominantly metro area, as is the Polk City Community Library, some comparisons become less reflective of the actual situation. Based on fiscal year 2021 statistics, when compared with other E-sized libraries, Polk City Community Library has the following:

- A population of 5,543 is below the average 6,811
- Square footage 6,000 is below the average 14,549
- Our staff of 7 (3.5 FTE), 3 full-time and 4 part-time employees is below the average 11 (6.26 FTE)
- Physical and digital collection 112,643 below the average 133,846
- Circulation 37,333 below the average 55,489
- Hours open 54 is above the average 48
- Visits 6,174 is below the average 24,589-significantly impacted by Covid closure.
- Programs and Attendance
 - Youth: 110 in-person programs is above the average 101 and attendance 2,481 is above the average 2,311
 - Adult: 236 in-person programs is above the average 51 and attendance 1,394 is above the average 747

- Virtual Programs: 111 on-line programs is above the average 27 and attendance 4,080 is above the average 907

Survey Questions

The Board of Trustees referred back to the following results of the 2019 community survey while assessing the progress made from the 2020 strategic plan and determining future goals for the library.

- Overall, respondents were very pleased with library services. Our average satisfaction rating was 4.49 out of 5.
- Of the individuals who responded that they did NOT use the library,
 - 40% did not know the library offered DVD's & Blu-rays
 - 56% did not know the library offered copy/fax/scanning services
 - 72% did not know the library offered free notary services
 - 89% did not know the library offered Adventure Passes
 - 44% did not know the library offered downloadable audio and ebooks
 - 61% did not know the library offered cake pans
 - 78% did not know the library offered mobile hotspots
 - 50% did not know the library offered adult programming
 - 39% did not know the library offered youth programming.
- Respondents preferred to learn about library programs/services through email (68%), Facebook (48%), and the library's website (47%). Other responses included:
 - Text messages (30%)
 - In-Library Advertisement (24%)
 - Print Publications (12%)
 - Instagram (10%)
- When asked, "In the past year, about how many times have you or other household members visited the Polk City Community Library (online or in person) for each of the following purposes", the following responses were for at least twice a month
 - Check out materials (57.63%)
 - Attend a youth/teen program (7.31%)
 - Attend an adult program (4.18%)
 - Attend a meeting (2.8%)
 - Use a public computer (3.2%)
 - Download audiobook and/or ebook from Bridges (16.56%)
 - Use an online database (2.4%)
- When given an opportunity to list enhancements/improvements 209 respondents recommended the following:
 - 37 left positive comments
 - 33 indicated a need for larger facilities
 - 41 indicated a need for a larger collection (which would require a larger facility)
 - 15 indicated a need for expanded weekday hours and/or Sunday hours
 - Other comments included

- Slowing down handicap access door so they stay open longer
- Desire to borrow books from other libraries (unaware of ILL)
- Improved communication of programs/services
- More access to ebooks/audiobooks

Mission Statement

The Polk City Community Library provides a place where all can meet, learn and grow.

FACILITIES

GOAL 1: Community will benefit from improved accessibility within library facilities.

- **Objective 1: Improve existing library facilities for the community by 2026.**
 - Utilize library community survey and/or other assessments to determine accessibility concerns within the Library structure and evaluate the feasibility of addressing those issues.
 - Measurement-Completion of proposed activities will serve as effective measurement of successes.
 - **From 2020 Strategic Plan:**
 - In April 2020, a book drop was constructed inside the library that is lower in height than the outdoor book drop allowing greater accessibility. The library staff will continue to evaluate accessibility issues within the facility.

- **Objective 2: Use results of space needs assessment completed in 2020 to plan for future library needs.**
 - Create Foundation to address growing needs of the community and Library.
 - Library staff will visit a minimum of three libraries annually to develop ideas for potential future enhancements.
 - Library director & board members will visit other libraries who have recently completed building projects.
 - Measurement - Review the results of space needs assessment and evaluate options for current space usage as a standing library board meeting agenda item.
 - Measurement-Implementation of a Foundation will indicate successful completion of this task.
 - Measurement-Staff and board will participate in training options regarding proposed friend/foundation organizations by June 2023.

- The Library Director and Board Members will actively research solutions to space issues that will continue to increase while the library remains in its current location.
 - The Library Board will create a task force to evaluate library space usage and develop ways to improve functionality.
- **From 2020 Strategic Plan:**
 - The library had 2 space utilization studies completed between 2020 and 2021. The library applied for and received a facilities assessment grant from the State Library of Iowa. Shana Stuart was contracted to complete the assessment and the results were shared with the library board of trustees in November 2020. In 2021, the City of Polk City completed a facilities assessment for all municipal buildings. Both assessments determined that the library was significantly undersized.
 - The library became a passport acceptance facility in January 2021. The goal is for revenue generated from passports be used to start a building fund.

SERVICES

Goal 2: The community will receive enhanced library services to meet community needs.

- **Objective 1: Adults will be offered programming that best suits their needs and interests by Winter 2023.**
 - Research community interest for adult residents through various means including social media, hard copy and electronic questionnaires.
 - Partner with community organizations to develop adult programming.
 - Measurement -Offer an average of five adult educational programs per month
 - Measurement - Maintain attendance counts and evaluate additional steps necessary for publicity, continuation, etc.
 - Measurement-Periodically have program participants complete surveys of the program
 - **From 2020 Strategic Plan:**
 - Consider after-hours programming options: The library was considering offering our senior fitness programs at 9:00 am which was before the opening hours of 10:00. Ultimately, the library ended up adjusting hours based on patron feedback during a trial period in the summer of 2021. The library now opens at 9:00 am. The programs have moved to 9:00 and have a larger attendance.

- **Objective 2: Tweens and Teens will have more options for group programming by Fall 2023.**
 - Explore possibility of developing partnership with the school.
 - Explore possibility of offering Mom & Me programs.
 - Talk with other librarians about successful tween/teen programming.
 - Explore possibility of partnering with other teen organizations for programming.
 - Measurement - Offer five tween/teen programs per year.
 - Measure attendance counts and evaluate additional steps necessary for publicity, continuation, etc.
 - Periodically have program participants complete surveys of the program
 - **From 2020 Strategic Plan:**
 - We offered nearly one teen program per month, but many were canceled when no individuals registered for the program.
- **Objective 3: The Library will explore the feasibility of offering additional digital services including Hoopla, Kanopy, etc.**
 - Library director will visit with similar-sized libraries offering above services to determine annual usage.
 - Library director will visit with vendors regarding price structures of services prior to FY25 budget process.
 - Measurement-Availability of digital services will determine whether the goal was met.
- **Objective 4: The Library will ensure continuity of services to meet the expanding population of the community by January 2025.**
 - Determine need for additional staff when the Library is open to the public.
 - Research feasibility of additional hours of operation.
 - Survey the community to determine what programs and services they would like to see the library provide by September 2024.
 - Measurement - Develop an annual plan for specific areas of board training and include Board training at six board meetings annually.
 - Measurement - Based on comments from the library community survey and social media surveys, consider a trial extension to daily/weekend hours.
 - Measurement - Review staffing needs at a minimum semi-annually.

COMMUNICATION/EDUCATION

Goal 3: Residents will become more familiar with the library's services and programs through enhanced communication.

- **Objective 1: The Library will improve communication with the public to ensure patrons have up-to-date information regarding Library programming, calendar, and updates by Fall 2023.**
 - Research frequently asked questions and find ways to continually increase communication with patrons.
 - Create a library app to make finding library information and services easier to locate.
 - The library board will bring in marketing professionals to educate staff on how to best market library programs and services by December 2023.
 - Investigate how to reach the public to inform the community of Library programming and services to reach all demographics.
 - Maintain statistics on Internet clicks, as well as emails/phone calls/ direct information requests.
 - Measure number of social media responses and develop ways to see a 3% increase in responses.
 - Collect data from program attendees about how they learned of the program. Use to determine the most effective means of communication.
 - **From 2020 Strategic Plan:**
 - Investigate Library website functionality and consider adapting the website to be more user-friendly and accessible.-When the city upgraded to a CivicPlus website, the library elected to purchase a subsite which has significantly improved the quality and usage of our website.
 - Investigate how to reach the public to inform the community of Library programming and services to reach all demographics.-The library began using WENS, the newly acquired city messaging platform, to notify patrons of upcoming events.
 - Maintain statistics on Internet clicks, as well as emails/phone calls/ direct information requests.-The library is currently tracking website visits and Facebook statistics.

Approval of the Plan

At its January 9, 2023 meeting, the Polk City Community Library Board of Trustees reviewed and approved the Strategic Plan 2023. The plan was subsequently submitted to the State Library of Iowa.

The Polk City Community Board of Trustees will review the plan quarterly to monitor progress toward meeting the goals and objectives.