

Strategic Plan 2024-2026
Wood County District Public Library
Adopted by the Board of Trustees November 20, 2023

Process & Timeline:

The previous WCDPL Strategic Plan covering 2019-2021 was adopted by the Board of Trustees in October 2018. Much of the planned work was delayed by the pandemic, turnover, etc.

The COVID pandemic began in March 2020. The library did not return to a full-schedule of open building hours until September 2021. Remote and outdoor programs were a focus in late 2020 and all of 2021. Jail library and bookmobile services, as well as in-person indoor programs, resumed near the end of 2021. Foot traffic and program attendance began to rebound in 2022.

In May 2022, the Board held a retreat to discuss a new strategic plan. This discussion included:

- Reviewing the new 2020 Census numbers for Bowling Green, Walbridge, and Wood County to see how the county has changed over the past 10 years.
 - Growth is in northern Wood County, in many areas outside of our legal service district. However, WCDPL's legal service district population has increased by 4.14%.
- Trends in public libraries across the US, including how COVID has impacted libraries long-term.
- The formal, comprehensive community survey led by Dr. Shannon Orr from BGSU's MPA program in 2018 serves WCDPL planning for up to 10 years, thus a new plan will not need a new survey nor focus groups.
- Reviewing the prior Strategic Plan 2019-2021. Out of this review, the Board determined that the new plan will:
 - Continue with the same Vision, Mission, Values, and Services (with a few minor edits).
 - Follow the same format, with our Six Beliefs remaining.
 - The Board will determine some higher-level directions and ask the staff to propose action steps in support of the Six Beliefs.
- Finally, the Board again reviewed the updated BG Master Plan (Good, Better, Best-North, and the just released Best-East option).
 - With Best-North off the table due to the City Building project, Best-East being far too expensive, and the other two options with questionable ROI, any major renovation is likely off the table. Questions to consider include:
 - Do we truly need to add more square footage to the BG building?
 - What is WCDPL's role in providing public meeting space?
 - Is it cheaper to rent other venues for library events instead of building our own?
 - Do we need to move part of the operation out of the BG building?
 - What, if any, opportunities will the new property next to the Carter House provide (beyond building a simple "Carriage House Garage" for storage) that might impact the needs within the BG facility?
 - The Board will allow the Director and Admin Team time to consider alternatives.

Throughout the summer and fall of 2022, the Admin Team considered the draft Strategic Plan as well as the draft BG Master Plan.

The enclosed Strategic Plan draft, as well as a Master Plan Executive Summary to be published separately, reflect that work.

Vision: Deemed an essential asset by the community, WCDPL strives to engage everyone with learning opportunities and creative experiences.

Mission: WCDPL encourages lifelong learning and advances knowledge through literature, information, and exploration.

Core Values:

- Accountability
We take responsibility for our resources, actions, services, materials, and facilities.
- Expertise
We deliver quality, user-focused library services & materials through a skilled staff.
- Freedom
We are free and open to all. We support the freedom of ideas and the free exchange of knowledge.
- Innovation
We explore new ways of doing things and new things to do.
- Passion
We love our communities and the role libraries can serve in them.
- Respect
We treat everyone with dignity.
- Relationships
We celebrate our diverse experience. We build connections & trust with everyone.

Core Services:

- We offer traditional and virtual library services to our entire legal service district.
 - We provide quality, in-demand, diverse materials to meet the needs of our diverse communities.
 - We deliver materials and experiences for babies, preschoolers, and families to build early literacy skills.
 - We collect and share the history, genealogy, and stories of our service district.
 - We link our patrons to our materials with learning, literary, and cultural opportunities.
 - We provide welcoming community gathering spaces.
 - We offer entertainment in a variety of formats and through partnerships.
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Key findings from the Community Survey and the Focus Groups that we must remember are:

1. There is a high degree of satisfaction with, and trust of, WCDPL by the community.
2. The community simply wants MORE... collections, services, programs and events, and spaces to gather.
3. The importance of being able to borrow items is crucial, as is meeting lifelong learning needs (the catalog, research help, study space, pleasure reading, and youth activities).
4. Keeping the facilities fresh and welcoming for all.
5. Quality customer service and partnerships in the community.
6. Stable public funding with continuing growth is crucial, as is the role of private fundraising to support library operations.
7. Development of staff skills and abilities, as well as retention.

Therefore, WCDPL will engage in the following...

Because we believe in the importance of learning something new every day and that the library's role in lifelong learning remains vital, we will:

- Deliver quality, inviting, diverse collections of popular and classical items to meet the lifelong learning needs of patrons of all ages and backgrounds. Explore new formats and delivery methods (i.e. streaming, podcasts, pre-loaded devices, locally-hosted databases, etc.).
 - Increase circulation of materials by 5% annually over the 2022 baseline.
- Maintain a customer-centered mindset, helping patrons one-on-one to meet needs related to information queries, accessing & successfully using technology, and reading for pleasure.
- Promote the importance of digital literacy and evaluation of information, serving as a community resource, including speaking to community groups.
 - Participate in PLA's new Super Searchers initiative and offer this training to patrons.
- Deliver programs for adults (i.e. the Creative Series & Winter Reads), offering patrons the opportunity to connect with the library and each other meaningfully.
 - Increase program attendance by 5% annually.
- Support workforce development and support of small businesses.
 - Continue partnership with Job & Family Services (including quarterly meetings).
 - Use and promote digital learning services such as LinkedIn Learning and NorthStar.
 - Expand and promote regular GED classes & technology training (classes and 1-on-1).
- Curate an in-depth local history collection that documents our shared community story.
 - Offer an easy way for patrons to record their own story and share them with us.
 - Work with BG Independent, The Morning Show, and the Sentinel-Tribune to ensure long-term access to the stories they are collecting daily.
 - In 2025, share the story of WCDPL's 150 years through programs and marketing.

Because we believe that reading and learning are particularly important in the earliest stages of life, we will:

- Continue our vast array of community partnerships to provide meaningful, family-centered, interactive learning opportunities to promote cognitive, social, behavioral, and emotional skills foundational for both school success and lifelong productivity.
- Connect caregivers with resources, positive strategies, and evidence-based practices to raise readers, including through 1,000 Books Before Kindergarten Reading Challenge, the Dolly Parton Imagination Library, the Friend's Books for Babies program with Wood County Hospital, and Every Child Ready to Read initiatives.
- Maintain our focus on book-based library programs for youth to reinforce connections between their experiences, their curiosity, and books.
 - Increase program attendance by 5% annually.
- Expand number of visiting authors & illustrators, leveraging relationships with BGSU In The Round and the Mazza Museum.
- Expand outreach efforts to daycares and preschools throughout our service district to give every child access to books and stories.

Because we believe that the library's role as a gathering space is important, we will:

- Identify and implement minor alterations to the BG building to maximize use of existing space, including renovating the west entrance.
- Keep our facilities and grounds looking fresh, inviting, and safe by making regular investments:
 - 2024 – deploy new bookmobile in April; design and bid construction of Carriage House structure; add door from Children's Place to greenway; replace BG heating plant; modify Meeting Room C into a learning lab and teaching space for patrons and staff.
 - 2025 – new paint, carpet, and furnishings for 150th anniversary; refresh BG front gardens, Carter House parking lot landscaping, and Walbridge landscaping.
- Improve the patron experience as one enters the BG library and Checkout area, removing service barriers. Liberate staff at the desks from working on backroom tasks so that patrons can be their focus. Investigate consolidation of service desks.
- Re-evaluate meeting room policies and the role of public meeting spaces at the library.

Because we believe that the library must adapt to remain relevant to our community, we will:

- Create new outreach opportunities in all areas of our service district.
 - Regularly participate in Northwood Business Association lunch series.
 - Establish new - and maintain existing - partnerships with BG (1BookBG participation; e-cards), Lake (delivery of materials; e-cards), and Northwood Schools (bookmobile service; e-cards) to promote reading progress and proficiency.
 - Investigate mailing books to outreach patrons and remote book drops, particularly in more distant areas of our legal service district.
- Expand availability of daily free tutoring and homework help for K-8 students at both buildings.
- With the Foundation Board, undertake a comprehensive endowment campaign to expand annual support of general library operations as well as bringing in authors/speakers, purchasing more new materials, and expanding youth-focused programs and services.
- Working with the Friends Board, expand membership in the group, increase financial support to the library, and increase volunteer service at library events.
- Embed more staff within select community organizations in order to promote library awareness.

Because we believe in maintaining the public's trust with the resources entrusted to us, we will:

- Prepare for the November 2026 levy:
 - The Board of Trustees will identify the type (renewal, etc.) and term (6 years, 8 years, etc.) that will be needed in early 2026 after a careful review of the library's fiscal position.
 - The campaign will be run by the Citizens in Support of Our Library levy committee, which will reconstitute itself in early 2026.
- Advocate for continued stability and continuing growth in the State's Public Library Fund.
 - Build and maintain relationships with our Ohio Senate and House members at all times so they understand and value the library and its role in serving our communities.
- Continue operating with an average 7-month reserve so we can respond to sudden changes as they come up (i.e. purchasing a new bookmobile 18-months earlier than anticipated).
- Set funds aside into a capital repair account when possible, and follow the maintenance schedule to properly care for the buildings entrusted to us by the taxpayer.
- Continue increased investments in public relations, marketing, and advertising in order to ensure reaching as many as possible because transparency with our community is vital.
- Continue our positive collaboration with the seven other Woodlink libraries in maximizing services to patrons across the entire county.

Because we believe that the single most important library asset in serving our community is our staff, we will:

- Maintain pay and benefits to remain competitive and support recruitment and retention.
- Follow general budget guidelines for tax revenues (Public Library Fund as well as Operating Levy) of 65% for personnel, 14% for new materials, and 21% for all other operations.
- Plan for several "near" retirements (those possible within 5 years) and utilize succession planning when possible.
- Reorganize staff to provide a nimble staffing plan, breaking down traditional departmental silos.
- Devote a full 1% of appropriated funds for staff training each year.
- Ensure that all staff are provided CE opportunities to help them in their current job and to prepare them for new opportunities with a focus on safety, research in the digital age, customer service, and enhancing technology skills.