Mission

*Evergreen Park Public Library offers resources that encourage lifelong learning and enrich the quality of life in our community.*

Approach to Strategic Planning

The intent of the Evergreen Park Public Library’s Strategic Plan is to define service strategies to accomplish the library’s mission, achievable within the parameters of the library’s resources. The plan is informed by input solicited from the Evergreen Park Public Library Board of Trustees, library staff, the public, and by an analysis of library usage statistics, community demographics, and emerging societal trends that are anticipated to impact library services.
Assessment of the Library
Strengths

The top strengths of the library are a creative, versatile, and patron-focused staff, an involved Library Board of Trustees, established community partnerships, a highly-used renovated facility with a variety of gathering and user-specific spaces, financial and advocacy support from the Evergreen Park Public Library Foundation, and a reputation for innovative programs and memorable experiences.

Over 60% of Evergreen Park residents voluntarily carry library cards and are frequent users of the library. Overall, community opinion of the library is extremely positive. In a 2016 survey, over 90% of respondents rated library services as important or very important to the well-being of our community. The library is a place where parents nurture a love of reading in their children, young people find a safe and supervised refuge, and kindred spirits share interests at library programs.

Evergreen Park Public Library is a community-centered facility that embraces lifelong learning and social inclusion. The library offers meeting space for local agencies, organizations, and businesses. The Children’s department is a welcoming, informal learning space that provides literacy support for young children and their families. The library’s four study rooms are in great demand, providing additional workspace for students, tutors, entrepreneurs, and others. The activity room is a safe, supervised out-of-school learning environment for young people. The computer lab furthers the library’s role as a community technology center—with computers, fax, and scanner—staffed at all times to offer one-to-one assistance to adults whose circumstances limit their access and use of technology. Wireless Internet connectivity is present throughout the building.
Challenges

Evergreen Park Public Library's fiscal year runs from January 1 through December 31. The library’s operating budget has remained steady at about $1.2 M for the last few years. Local property taxes comprise approximately 92% of revenue, supplemented by corporate replacement tax, grants, fines and fees, and bank interest. Although the library is largely dependent on property taxes for its fiscal well-being, it maintains its professional staff, materials, programs, patron services, technology, and building and grounds maintenance on less than 3% of a resident’s annual tax bill. Limited financial resources and space will require board, administration, and staff to be creative with strategies in order to continue to provide quality library services the community has come to expect.

A shift in traditional library usage has occurred. Circulation of print materials, music CDs, and DVDs is steadily decreasing. Circulation of downloadable materials (ebooks and audiobooks) is increasing, but not enough to offset the decline. Facility usage, however, remains high, obligating the Evergreen Park Public Library Board of Trustees to diligent stewardship of the building.

2017 marked the ten-year anniversary of the expansion/renovation project. Many capital items and mechanical systems have reached the midpoint of their expected lifespans, so the Board is challenged to build a reserve to fund maintenance and repair of the building and equipment that will ensure the longevity and uninterrupted use of this important public asset.
Service Strategies

The service strategies listed in this plan direct the allocation of library resources and focused attention for the next three years. Baseline strategies were developed for the library as a whole and then further segmented to address the needs of three distinct user groups:

- Developing and nurturing language and literacy skills in young children.
- Supporting teens and young adults with an out-of-school learning environment.
- Encouraging lifelong learning for adults.

Service strategies for each group were examined from three perspectives: in the library, in the community, and digitally or through the library’s online presence.
Organizational Competencies Necessary to Service Delivery

Staff

Educate library staff in the ideals of confidentiality, privacy, diversity, and intellectual freedom.

Foster a staff culture that possesses a keen appreciation for and understanding of customer service, with a focus on “getting to yes.”

Recruit employees with specialized knowledge in particular areas such as technology, program and collection development, graphic design, or data gathering and analysis.

Cultivate an educated and literate workforce, regularly provided with training and development opportunities to further enrich library services to the community.

Strive for equity, diversity, and inclusion among staff.

Strive for compensation and benefit levels that attract, retain, and reward quality staff within the limits of fiscal responsibility.

Provide staff with a clean, safe, and comfortable work environment with adequate resources to perform quality work.
Collections

Tailor collections to the information and reading enjoyment needs of patrons in the community.

Maintain membership in resource-sharing consortiums such as OCLC, SWAN, and MediaonDemand.

Technology

Provide public access to computer hardware, such as computers, printers, laptops, mobile hotspots, copiers, fax, and scanner.

Provide broadband Internet access in the greatest capacity within the limits of fiscal constraints.

Provide technology that allows staff to communicate with each other, work collaboratively, and easily create and promote new content.

Employ technology to make data-driven decisions that maximize the use of finite resources.
Evaluation Measures

Library staff will develop an evaluation cycle for library programs and services to ensure that they are aligned to strategies. In addition to quantitative circulation, attendance, and usage statistics, the beneficial outcome of library programs and services will be measured and analyzed using the Project Outcome Toolkit (https://www.projectoutcome.org). The toolkit provides survey templates designed to gauge patron satisfaction and measure the qualitative impact of library services for specific user groups. Project Outcome evaluative instruments help measure four key patron outcomes: knowledge, confidence, application and awareness.
Service Strategies for the Library as a Whole

Goal

All people will find a welcoming environment and equitable access to library collections, programs, and services to support their enjoyment of reading and pursuit of lifelong learning.

In the library

Ensure an accessible, equitable, and inclusive environment for users of all ages, abilities, and backgrounds.

Maintain a safe, attractive, and flexible space in which users can pursue their personal, educational, and professional goals.

Serve diverse populations through collections, information, technology, and programs.

Offer educational and community interest programming, including one-to-one learning opportunities.

Provide opportunities for social interaction and civic engagement.

Provide Reader’s Advisory services to readers in all genres and skill levels.
In the community

Form a cross-department engagement team that continuously strengthens or seeks out new ways to interact with the community.

Conduct periodic environmental scans of the community to gather relevant data and trends, determine needs, and realign services as necessary.

Establish and sustain external partnerships with educational and other tax-supported agencies, community organizations, and vested individuals to maximize the effectiveness of library services and further embed the library in the fabric of the community.

Proactively solicit feedback from underserved groups in the community to determine how the library can better meet their needs.

Develop a multi-level and comprehensive marketing approach to expand community awareness of library programs and services in order to increase usage.

Digitally or through the library’s online presence

Offer easy-to-use access to technology, current software, and the Internet.

Offer access to digital collections and services, in-library and remotely when possible.

Meet user expectations of convenient, intuitive interfaces for access to online services, such as mobile reader web services, community interaction on social media, and a navigable, accessible website.

Offer patron instruction in technology, current software, and the Internet.

Investigate ways to apply technology to automate and streamline workflow processes, with the goal of improving patron services, saving money, and redirecting staff time to higher level patron services.

Investigate purposing library space for patron content creation, such as a maker space or media lab.
Service Strategies to Develop and Nurture Language and Literacy Skills in Young Children

Goal

Children from birth through fifth grade will find collections, programs, and services to cultivate literacy, advance early childhood learning, and support the multiple ways children learn.

In the library

Offer emergent and early literacy support so children develop speech and language skills that lead to reading readiness, and out-of-school experiences to maintain and strengthen reading skills.

Provide engaging programs, crafts, and other activities to encourage regular library use by children and their families.

Carefully curate a collection for children of all abilities and reading levels.

Provide personalized reader’s advisory services for young readers and their families.

Creatively market library materials, programs, and services in-library and through print, social media, and online outlets.

Create a fun and supportive environment within the library that encourages children to spend time with library resources and interact with their families and peers.
In the community

Identify existing resources for families in the community and explore ways to connect them to patron needs.

Partner with area schools, agencies, daycare facilities, home-based child caregivers, and homeschoolers in supporting literacy through shared resources, programs, and space.

Implement programming for children with special needs or abilities in partnership with area schools and organizations that serve this population.

Digitally or through the library’s online presence

Integrate technology into traditional library service delivery for deeper engagement with children and their families.

Measuring impact

Traditional library metrics, such as circulation of materials and program attendance.

Utilize Early Childhood Literacy and Education/Lifelong Learning Project Outcome surveys to measure changes in knowledge, confidence, application and awareness.
Service Strategies to Support Teens and Young Adults With an Out-of-School Learning Environment

Goal

Young people from 6th through 12th grade will find collections, programs, and services to engage, educate, and support their healthy development.

In the Library

Create an environment in which teens feel comfortable and disruptions are lessened for other library users.

Offer enrichment programs that are appealing to teens and their families.

Carefully curate library collections for teen appeal, educational value, and usability.

Offer access to computers, Wi-Fi, and other desired technology.

Create opportunities for teens and their families to interact with books.

Implement programming for teens and young adults with special needs or abilities in partnership with area schools and organizations that serve this population.
In the Community

Collaborate with area organizations, particularly schools, on teen programs and events.

Build relationships with local teachers, school counselors, and school librarians to better reach and serve teens and young adults.

Identify existing resources for teens in the community and explore ways to connect those resources with the needs of teen patrons.

Encourage public discourse on topics that matter to teens and invite community leaders and educators to participate.

Digitally, or through the library’s online presence

Maintain currency on Teen page on library web site.

Implement regular communication with students and their families through the schools.

Create social media accounts just for teens and build followers.

Identify partners in the community that would list the library as a resource on their web site.

Measuring impact

Traditional library metrics, such as circulation of materials, and program attendance.

Utilize Civic/Community Engagement and Education/Lifelong Learning Project Outcome surveys to measure changes in knowledge, confidence, application and awareness.
Service Strategies to Encourage Lifelong Learning for Adults

Goal

Adults at all stages of life will find collections, programs, and services to cultivate literacy, personal growth, independent research, and community engagement.

In the library

Provide personalized reference and reader’s services as well as information on specialized topics and government information.

Expand the scope of the library’s collection by utilizing shared catalogs and consortia.

Offer point-of-use technology assistance, software instruction, and one-to-one technology tutoring.

Provide space for community meetings and quiet study.

Offer resources to advance career and professional goals so that individuals can actively participate in the workforce.

Promote the enjoyment of reading as a leisure activity.

Creatively market library materials, programs, and services in-library and through print, social media, and other online outlets in order to increase usage.
In the community

Align and prioritize services and programming to support the aspirations of adult learners.

Provide mobile collections and services that are accessible to patrons outside of the building.

Target market the convenience of services such as Books-by-Mail homebound delivery, SWAN Interlibrary Loan, and MediaonDemand digital books.

Highlight the value of databases, periodicals, and adult education programs.

Identify existing resources for adults in the community and explore ways to connect them to patron needs.

Digitally, or through the library’s online presence

Promote library programs and services through multiple social media and online outlets.

Ensure that library online content is current and correct, with potential for user contribution and interaction.

Evaluate cost-per-use ratio for subscription databases, downloadable materials, and other e-content to maximize effectiveness of collection development dollars.

Measuring impact

Traditional library metrics, such as circulation of materials, program attendance, and building usage.

*Civic/Community Engagement, Digital Learning and Education/Lifelong Learning* Project Outcome surveys to measure changes in knowledge, confidence, application and awareness.
The Evergreen Park Public Library Foundation

In 2003 a group of forward-thinking individuals established the Evergreen Park Public Library Foundation, based on an unshakable belief that private resources make the difference between a good library and a great library. Almost two decades later, this 501(c)3, wholly volunteer organization has provided hundreds of thousands of dollars of diversified support for library programs, community outreach services, materials, technology, and capital improvements.

Through private donations and grants solicited by the Foundation, the Evergreen Park Public Library has been able to offer programs and services and to pursue capital projects that it could not otherwise afford. The Foundation provided funding for the library’s quiet reading room with a fireplace, the aquarium in the Children’s department, and collaborative community art projects. The Foundation provides ongoing support for the free, community-wide summer reading program, the “Evergreen Reads” reading event with Elementary School District 124, internationally-known, bestselling authors, the Books-by-Mail delivery program to homebound residents, and the StoryWalk at Yukich Fields.

The Evergreen Park Public Library Foundation will continue to strive to make the difference between a good library and a great one, and in partnership with the Evergreen Park Public Library, will work toward accomplishing goals that ultimately enrich the quality of life in our community.