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 Evergreen Park Public Library’s strategic plan has defined goals and objectives that will guide the Library in achieving its mission and continuing to maintain the Library’s status as a cornerstone of the community. The plan was formed heavily by feedback from the Evergreen Park community through a community survey and focus group. The plan also received input and guidance from the Evergreen Park Public Library Board of Trustees and Library staff.

Assessment of the Library

It is important to note that there are several similarities as it pertains to the strengths and challenges as found in the previous strategic plan. There are still factors that existed three years ago that continue to influence the Library today. These challenges remain due to the continued evolution of public library services in the modern world. The strengths and challenges listed below reflect the feedback received from the Library’s community survey and focus group.

Strengths

Community support and library usage continue to remain strong as the community and world recovers from the pandemic. Library usage, trending toward a return to pre-pandemic levels, continues to grow. Over 76% of survey respondents say they visit the Library multiple times a month, and visitor counts continue to increase every month. Currently, more than 55% of Evergreen Park residents have an active library card.

Creative staff and friendly customer service was a prominent response from the community survey and focus group and a major reason why people visit the Library. At least 88% of survey respondents believe library staff are helpful, available, and knowledgeable. The friendly staff have developed a welcoming environment as over 97% of survey participants feel welcomed.

Engaging programming focused on lifelong learning for all ages was identified as another strength. 90% of survey participants believe it is somewhat to very important that the Library offer a variety of programs and events. From children’s storytimes to author visits to chair yoga for older adults, the Library provides a variety of educational and entertaining activities and events for all ages.

The Library strives to engage people of all ages through education, recreation, and creativity.
Challenges

There is an ongoing shift in traditional library usage. Circulation of print materials (especially DVDs, CDs, and magazines) is steadily decreasing, while circulation of downloadable materials (eBooks and audiobooks) is increasing. Demand for access to additional digital materials is high. Over 62% of participants would like access to a video streaming platform, while 37% would like to use a music streaming service through the Library.

The traditional library space is also evolving. Survey respondents expressed interest in having a VHS-to-DVD converter, sewing machines, demo kitchen, large format printer, 3D printer, and vinyl cutter. Respondents also expressed a desire for new library spaces, such as a job/career center, ESL/new citizen corner, larger interactive area for children, a makerspace, and more study rooms. The Library has listened and has provided access to a 3D printer and vinyl cutter, but limited space is an issue. In order to meet demand for these resources, board, administration, and staff will need to be creative with solutions that meet the needs of its community.

The Library’s operating budget has increased over the past few years to 1.4 million. Local property taxes comprise approximately 91% of revenue, supplemented by corporate replacement tax, grants, fines, and bank interest. Although the Library is largely dependent on property taxes for its fiscal well-being, it maintains a professional staff, materials, building maintenance, programs, patron services, and technology on roughly 3% of a resident’s annual tax bill. While funding has improved, additional financial support is needed to ensure the Library can continue to evolve and provide its patrons access to the resources, services, materials, and spaces they have come to expect from their Library.
Goal 1: Continue to build the Library’s place as the community cornerstone for educational, informational, and cultural lifelong learning.

Objectives

1. Offer individuals of all ages classes and events that will assist them through their journey of lifelong learning.
2. Provide exceptional customer service focused on reference, reader’s services, and specialized information, such as technology, business, job assistance, and more.
3. Explore new services and resources that improve the patron experience and meet the needs of the community.
4. Stay at the forefront of new trends and technology and become a community leader in technology offerings by continuing to build upon the current offerings.
5. Consider options to expand and minimize barriers to access library service.

Strategies

• Promote the enjoyment of reading and literacy.
• Expand computer/technology classes.
• Utilize Book-a-Librarian sessions to educate emerging tech users.
• Be at the forefront of introducing relevant technology to the community; i.e., 3D printing, Wi-Fi hotspots, streaming services.
• Provide space for community to collaborate and share ideas as well as quiet places for study and reflection.
• Offer classes and resources to advance professional and academic goals.
• Consider auto-renewals and fine free.
Goal 2: Strengthen our current community partnerships and seek new ones.

Objectives

1. Work with local schools to promote library resources and services and ensure both student and teachers have access to the resources vital to academic success.
2. Continue to grow community partnerships with Village organizations, like the Office of Citizen Services, Recreation Department, and Historical Commission.
3. Seek out new, creative partnerships with the local business community through the Evergreen Park Chamber of Commerce.
4. Increase outreach opportunities and engagement outside of the physical library building.
5. Look to partner with the local community experts (artists, musicians, chefs, and more) to showcase their skills and talents.

Strategies

- Collaborate with Districts 124 and 231 to provide every student and teacher a library card and work with local private schools to promote access to library resources.
- Continue involvement as a community partner, representing the Library at various local events, school outings, and more.
- Incorporate more community partners to educate and inform through programs or presentations.
- Work with the Evergreen Park Historical Commission to host a lecture series on the history of Evergreen Park.
Goal 3: Market the Library to the 21st century user and explore ways to engage non-users.

Objectives

1. Continue the creative marketing of library materials, programs, and services in-house and through print, social media, and other avenues to increase Library awareness and usage.
2. Explore community partnerships to share the promotion of Library events, resources, and materials.
3. Utilize demographic resources and emerging GIS technology to maintain awareness of the Evergreen Park community and engage new users.

Strategies

- Continue the use of Instagram and TikTok while exploring other online or social media avenues of promotion.
- Work with Village organizations to cross promote all activities.
- Increase in-person advertising opportunities.
- Identify the places (physical, virtual, online) where people are and pursue ways to increase visibility of Library marketing.
- Utilize the GIS mapping technology coming from SWAN to target new users.
- Create an EPPL app or promote the SWAN app.

The Library is the place to build skills such as information and technology literacy, critical thinking, problem solving, innovation, and civic literacy.
Goal 4: Maintain a safe and welcoming space for the entire community.

Objectives

1. Continue to ensure an accessible, equitable, and inclusive environment for users of all ages, abilities, and backgrounds.
2. Explore new library spaces (career center, ESL corner, makerspace, coffee bar, interactive children’s area) based on feedback from the community survey.
3. Provide service to a diverse population through an accessible collection that represents the entire community.
4. Continue to work with community groups to promote the social and emotional learning needs of all community members.

Strategies

- Provide staff training on dealing with topics like home insecurity, financial distress, and bullying, and ways to handle patrons in these situations.
- Explore ways to improve or streamline signage and wayfinding signs.
- Identify and explore costs related to updating furniture.
- Add monitors and dry erase boards to each study room.
- Investigate ways to improve customer service by the addition of new service points for all patrons.
- Continue to engage underserved populations, including but not limited to older adults, veterans, and teens.
Goal 5: Continue to foster a collaborative workplace centered around leadership, professionalism, and creativity.

Objectives

1. Explore additional hiring strategies to ensure equity and quality in candidate pools.
2. Formalize the onboarding process.
3. Research ways to improve the overall worker experience, from exploring ways to streamline workflows to upgrades in equipment.
4. Explore creative incentives for staff.
5. Continue to offer training and professional development opportunities that challenge and promote growth.

Strategies

- Create a staff wellness team to organize training and to promote staff engagement, participation, and inclusion.
- Develop a cross-training program to improve the skill sets of each employee and improve the patron experience.
- Collaborate with other Village departments for Village tours for new employees to help familiarize them with the community.
- Consider membership to Evergreen Park Sports Complex as staff benefit.

Evaluation Tools

Library staff will develop an evaluation chart that will document the strategies (services, programs, resources) that have been added and/or modified to meet the objectives provided in this plan. The strategies listed in this plan will be the focus moving forward with the understanding that new strategies will be added to ensure the Library does everything it can to provide the best library experience to our patrons.

Staff will also continue to implement the beneficial outcome of these strategies using the Project Outcome Toolkit. Outcome surveys will be utilized to measure changes in knowledge, confidence, application, and awareness.