



Kokomo-Howard County Public Library
2025-2028
STRATEGIC PLAN

Approved by the Board of Trustees on December 16, 2024



The Kokomo-Howard County Public Library has long served as a cornerstone for learning, connection, and cultural engagement in our community.

To create a strategic plan that meets the evolving needs of our residents, we engaged a diverse community committee, gathered insights from library staff and the Board, surveyed the general public, and incorporated key findings from the Harwood Conversations facilitated by the Community Foundation of Howard County. This inclusive process ensured voices from across our community — including marginalized populations, local businesses, families, and civic leaders — were heard and valued.

Key aspirations and concerns emerged from these conversations that inform our understanding of community needs. Residents expressed a strong desire for more vibrant and flexible public spaces that support collaborative activities, youth engagement, and arts and cultural programming. Mental health support and access to technology also surfaced as priorities, reflecting the increasing role of public institutions in addressing holistic well-being. Additionally, participants emphasized the importance of inclusivity, citing a need to foster a welcoming environment for diverse populations, including new residents drawn by local economic growth.

Our community committee echoed these priorities, highlighting the library's potential to address safe community spaces and help build connections, promote learning and literacy, and provide equitable access to resources. The Library Board and staff identified opportunities to advance understanding of AI and technologies, as well as enabling activities that support social interaction, inclusion, and advocacy and literacy for the populations we serve.

Guided by these insights, this strategic plan aims to position the library as a catalyst for community transformation. Through collaborative efforts and responsive programming, the Kokomo-Howard County Public Library will continue to evolve as a resource that brings community focus, remains trustworthy, and brings learned knowledge and insights to help our community thrive.

As a library, we are always striving to grow and better serve our community. If you have feedback and suggestions, please feel free to share those with us by emailing us at khcpl@khcpl.org.

Faith Brautigam

Library Director

Stephanie Carrell

President, KHCPL Board of Trustees

Doug Workinger

Assistant Director

KHCPL's Values Statement

CORE VALUES

Inherent, unchanging traits that are central and unique to us. It's hard to imagine compromising on these.

We are



COMMUNITY FOCUSED

We really mean it when we say we create opportunities for our community to become its best. From programs and services to individual interactions, it's about the people and community we serve.



TRUSTWORTHY

Our community believes we will provide amazing programs and events, thinks we spend our tax dollars well, and doesn't bat an eyelash when we go beyond traditional services. That's trust!



CONTINUALLY LEARNING

Sometimes it's a tip from a coworker, a group project, or a training video. It might come from trial and error, a podcast, or a book. Whatever the source or method, we keep learning and getting better.

ASPIRATIONAL VALUES

We want these to be true of us in a way that's consistent, complete and for always.

We strive to be more



DIVERSE

We want our employees, our materials, and the services we offer to become stronger by reflecting the diversity of our community more completely. Everyone deserves to see themselves here.



FLEXIBLE

Have you seen a coworker let go of expectations and adapt on the fly? When we're focused on how we can work together to make good things happen, even on short notice, we are at our best.



COLLABORATIVE

What if more organizations and businesses thought of us first when they wanted to collaborate? They wouldn't be able to imagine Howard County without us and we would invite them into decision-making on shared projects and concerns.



DESIGNING WHOLE PERSON OPPORTUNITIES

Prioritize whole person wellness in our assessments and decision-making process.

Assess and compare current service models to evaluate value and efficiency.

Develop a structured program aimed at onboarding all new hires

- ◆ Develop and train mentors
- ◆ Pair new hires with a mentor for guidance and support
- ◆ Reevaluate our New Employee Checklist and make necessary revisions
- ◆ Communicate and make available our onboarding processes and documents to staff

Enhance hiring and onboarding processes and formalize succession planning

- ◆ Participate in and be aware of State and community programs focused on training diverse staff
- ◆ Create an EDI-focused hiring and recruitment practice
- ◆ Identify ways to prepare staff for possible internal advancement opportunities and for succession planning
- ◆ Develop and maintain documentation of processes and procedures for job duties, particularly for positions held by one person

Continue and expand wellness opportunities, including physical and mental wellness

- ◆ Develop and curate a resource on community wellness, which would include physical and digital materials, online resources, databases, etc.
- ◆ Evaluate services, programs, and partnerships focused on aging adults
- ◆ Work with outside organizations to build on initiatives focused on a healthier community
- ◆ Explore new opportunities for outdoor activities

Complete a large-scale, value-driven reevaluation of our current service models

- ◆ If applicable, consider the results of the compensation study that we will conduct in 2025
- ◆ Prioritize joint training across departments
- ◆ Create a job-shadowing program
- ◆ Design an incentive program to encourage continuing education
- ◆ Tour other libraries to learn and observe how other libraries use their staff and services provided

Measure/track/record services we provide and when we are not able to provide those services or when we do not offer those services at all

- ◆ Periodically keep a log that reflects when we tell a patron “no” or don’t provide a service (per location)
- ◆ Update and rename the reference stat sheet to reflect other services we do provide
- ◆ Train staff on the No Log and the reasons why we are tracking this and other service stats
- ◆ Review the stats and No Log in Small Council at least on a quarterly basis to continually assess and adapt to service needs

CREATING EVOLVING EXPERIENCES

Offer services that match current societal or community needs and interests.

Develop a plan to promote and enhance civic literacy

- ◆ Conduct a study to find out what is most important to our community to make civic literacy discoverable
- ◆ Integrate civic literacy resources into the library's website
- ◆ Pair library resources with partners who can provide expertise for the public on community issues



Develop and refine innovative programming to serve a diverse community

- ◆ Review programs for all ages to identify any gaps where there is a community want but limited library availability
- ◆ Deliberately develop more programs aimed at aging adults
- ◆ Create intergenerational programs that engage both older and younger adults
- ◆ Develop a plan to identify programs that have a lifespan and to review discontinued programs for current relevancy and possible reinstatement

FOSTERING CONNECTIONS

Change perception by communicating value and enhancing understanding while planning spaces and places to build community.

Develop a marketing campaign that highlights success stories from library programs, showcasing their impact on individuals and the community

- ◆ Use library ambassadors and volunteers to gather success stories
- ◆ Train staff how to ask for and gather success stories for marketing purposes
- ◆ Deliberately focus on in-person marketing opportunities that will highlight special services, specifically the Digital Den and the To-Your-Door services

Continue to anticipate and address patron needs by connecting with different community demographics to enhance understanding

- ◆ Increase diversity in staffing that more accurately reflects the population of Howard County
- ◆ Develop interactive activities at events to highlight the library and relevant resources for community where we are (be intentional about where we go)
- ◆ Meet with community leaders from different cultures and demographics to find out what the library can do to help support their needs

Create welcoming and inclusive spaces that foster community interaction and support engaging events

- ◆ Assess and evaluate current spaces to ensure they are warm and welcoming
- ◆ Look for ways to make the Firefly Stage more welcoming by investigating different forms of possible seating, while considering aesthetics, practicality, and financial responsibility
- ◆ Look at other community spaces to gather ideas
- ◆ Conduct a feasibility study to look at adding a commissary kitchen

Create additional positive experiences for tweens and teens

- ◆ Visit other libraries with deliberate teen spaces to compare
- ◆ Develop an ad-hoc committee to research and develop how a teen space might work in terms of staffing and spaces
- ◆ Talk with teens directly as one part of the process of researching their needs
- ◆ Develop partnerships with existing organizations that work with teens to see how the library can contribute to helping make positive impacts on teens



MAXIMIZING SHARED SPACES

Reimagine existing spaces for multi-use and allow for spaces for discovery and play.

Regularly assess and adapt library layouts to ensure spaces are flexible and meet changing community needs

- ◆ Examine current spaces to identify any that could have multi-use functionality
- ◆ Explore modular features, such as furniture and flooring, to enhance flexibility
- ◆ Examine possible outcomes of moving the cafe area at Main and re-utilizing that space
- ◆ Look into conducting space audits, with either internal or external resources, which will provide the organization with an evaluation of physical layout and design of service areas to identify potential inefficiencies, improve flow, and optimize the overall patron experience

Research successful current mobile services, including local, regional, and national models and trends

- ◆ Collect feedback to understand the current needs, challenges, and expectations of users and non-users
- ◆ Create a specific plan for the future of bookmobiles based on user expectations and library trends
- ◆ Assess usage, public messaging, and staff workflows for To-Your-Door home delivery service



Create dynamic discovery and play spaces

- ◆ Develop interactive STEAM learning stations for families
- ◆ Explore the possibilities of outdoor recreational areas for different ages (juveniles, teens, and adults)
- ◆ Expand the collection of hourly check-out items for use at libraries to include popular, game-based experience kits
- ◆ Locate unused or underused public spaces and research the feasibility of adding small, interactive learning installations to encourage discovery and play

PROMOTING EXPLORATION AND EXPERIMENTATION

Innovate access.

Expand digital and technological access

- ◆ Launch new mobile app
- ◆ Launch ability to sign up for a library card digitally
- ◆ Promote digital access on social media and in email marketing
- ◆ Offer more technology-focused training to build staff and community skills

Become more of a tech positive organization

- ◆ Assign a person(s) to actively read and understand blogs and articles on AI with the intent of using AI as a tool and demonstrating, internally and externally, the beneficial uses of platforms such as ChatGPT
- ◆ Encourage innovation through tech-related events such as tech talks and guest speakers
- ◆ Foster a tech-positive culture by planning and encouraging digital literacy training for staff and users



Acknowledgements and Thanks To

LIBRARY BOARD OF TRUSTEES

- ◆ Stephanie Carrell, *President*
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- ◆ Alan Girton
- ◆ Karen Sosbe
- ◆ Joe Dunbar, *Vice President*
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- ◆ Stephanie Oden

LIBRARY STRATEGIC PLANNING COMMITTEE

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COMMUNITY COMMITTEE

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