

Strategic Plan 2024-2029

WORTHINGTON
LIBRARIES

WHERE WE WERE

Our previous strategic plan was written in a simpler time, when we were excited to present an ambitious vision that sought to redefine library service. It even included a playlist of upbeat tunes to set the stage for positive things to come - beginning in 2020.

Little did we know, when putting the final touches on the plan in late 2019, we were weeks away from a global pandemic that would leave an indelible mark on everyone and everything, including the Library.

In this time of fear and uncertainty, we were challenged to serve our community in new ways. Our ever-resourceful staff met this challenge head on.

We presented virtual programs and events. We introduced curbside pickup of materials. We distributed take-and-make craft kits. We mailed new library cards to patrons so they could access online content and resources. We installed air filtration systems and distributed COVID-19 test kits to help keep our community healthy. And, as was the case for many workplaces, the stress of it all took its toll.

In the immediate aftermath of the pandemic, our staff unionized and our director, who had been with the Library for more than a decade, resigned, closely followed by our CFO.

We were, as the saying goes, living in interesting times.

WHERE WE ARE

Now, nearing the close of 2023, with the COVID-19 pandemic behind us, new leadership at the helm and a signed contract with our employee union in place, we can once again blast "Lovely Day" by Bill Withers from our speakers and approach the future with optimism.

This optimism is backed by evidence the Library remains a place of hope, respite and renewal for our community, even though how people use the Library has changed significantly in recent years.

Many of us can tell a story about how the pandemic altered our behaviors, in part because we found something, born of necessity, that became too convenient to give up even after the initial danger had passed.

Take curbside pickup, for example. It existed in retail environments before the pandemic, but it transitioned from occasional convenience to routine necessity when it was often the only way to access goods and services. Even with stores now fully open, people continue to take advantage of the time-saving

convenience of curbside pickup. This particular habit-changing phenomenon relates directly to library use.

Many who discovered the ease and convenience of reading (or listening to) digital books during the pandemic, have not returned to browse the Library shelves and check out physical books.

Others are reluctant to return to large indoor programs, but continue to use our smaller meeting rooms and attend outdoor programs in droves.

People still use and value the Library, but that use has evolved. The question for us: how do we evolve in tandem with our community and how do we maintain the library's essential role in their lives?

WHERE WE'RE GOING

While we continue to live in interesting times, with people worried about everything from climate change to the safety of their children and ongoing political unrest, it's essential to focus on what we can do to make lives better for everyone we serve, including our invaluable staff.

We are a place that provides unfettered information access as well as relaxation, entertainment, solitude and joy. When people **tell the stories** of their lives, we want the Library to have a role.

We value **human connection**, building community through the sharing and discussion of ideas and providing welcoming spaces and opportunities for people to gather and grow.

Through examination of our own policies and procedures and by fostering community conversations that support the open exchange of ideas and understanding of complex issues, we will center library service in **social justice** and meeting the needs of all we serve.

We are grateful for ongoing community support and want to make the best use of our resources to ensure the library's ongoing resilience and **sustainability**.

Please join us as, over the next five years, we collaborate to write the next chapter of Worthington Libraries.

Focus Area

Goals

Storytelling

We are a place that provides unfettered information access as well as relaxation, entertainment, solitude and joy. When people tell the stories of their lives, we want the Library to have a role.

- Find more ways to introduce people to the Library through increased outreach, innovative partnerships and blockbuster programs
- Increase the ease and convenience of accessing our collection and services
- Develop authentic relationships with community groups and organizations to learn more about their goals and determine how/if the Library can assist them
- Provide ample opportunities for staff development through trainings and attendance at local and national conferences
- Uphold intellectual freedom for all and position the Library as a safe haven for books and the people who wish to read them

Human Connection

We value human connection, building community through the sharing and discussion of ideas and providing welcoming spaces and opportunities for people to gather and grow.

- Give staff at all levels a greater role in leading change and bringing this plan to life
- Innovate at all levels and look for ways to surprise and delight our community with great customer service
- Revitalize the library's indoor and outdoor spaces to make them more attractive and inviting
- Present programs and access to experiences that give people the opportunity to interact in a safe and welcoming environment

Social Justice

Through examination of our own policies and procedures and by fostering community conversations that support the open exchange of ideas and understanding of complex issues, we will center library service in social justice and meeting the needs of all we serve.

- Support and increase our staff diversity so that we may better represent the community we serve
- Celebrate and defend the diversity in our collection, services and programming
- Identify new ways to reach underserved populations
- Center our community in discussions of how to improve the library experience
- Acknowledge the complexity of what it means to be human and support people with whatever they need to thrive

Sustainability

We are grateful for ongoing community support and want to make the best use of our resources to ensure the library's ongoing resilience and sustainability.

- Outline a plan for the library's growth and evolution that may include a request for additional funding to meet community demand for service
- Build our organizational resilience through ongoing analysis of key performance indicators
- Reduce our carbon footprint. Use less. Plant more. Welcome the bees
- Foster employee engagement through authentic conversations and recognition of the good work we do