



STRATEGIC PLAN

DECEMBER 2021

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MISSION STATEMENT

The mission statement of the West Branch Public Library is as follows:

The West Branch Public Library provides resources and opportunities for all people and groups in the community to connect, learn, and celebrate diversity.

The Mission Statement of the library is the primary goal of the library. All goals and objectives provided here within try to meet and ensure success of the mission.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The West Branch Public Library's Strategic Plan is created to guide the library staff and board of trustees in what direction the library should be headed. It describes the correlation between community interests and library services and provides a measurable timeline for meeting its goals and objectives.

The plan is required by the State of Iowa in conjunction with the state's library accreditation process. The requirement states that the library has a written plan not to exceed 5 years into the future. It must outline the library's goals and objectives to meet the communities needs. It must also be reviewed annually.

In 2021, the library began the strategic planning process in March and April with community input. The library conducted a survey to assess current views of the library facilities and services. The library would normally then conduct focus groups to determine community priorities, but instead conducted phone and online interviews due to COVID-19 concerns. The interviews looked to establish the community's needs, strengths, and weaknesses. The resulting comments of the interviews may be found under Appendix A.

A second focus group would then typically follow which would choose the overall topics that the library would address referred to as Service Responses. In this process, again abstaining from large gatherings, the library board of trustees¹ reviewed the community survey responses and chose the Service Responses. These three library service responses were chosen:

- **Know Your Community / Be an Informed Citizen** which emphasizes providing community information so that residents will know about services and events as well as making informed decisions on local issues.
- **Build Successful Enterprises** promotes our businesses and non-profits and ensures their directors, managers, employees, and volunteers have the resources they need to develop and maintain strong organizations.
- **Celebrate Diversity** promotes appreciation and understanding of cultures, histories, beliefs, and the many ways of living life around us.

With these service responses, the library board again looked at the community input and set goals for each. The goals declare what the community will receive within the service responses. Within the goals, the library staff selected objectives to meet these goals. The objectives include specific actions and time frames which allow the measurement of success within the strategic plan.

The Strategic Plan is intended to be a dynamic document, reviewed at least annually by the staff and board of trustees to meet the changing needs and interests of the community. The plan is intended to cover a period of three financial years, covering January 2022 through December 2024.

¹ The library Board of Trustees is a group of seven members of the West Branch community appointed by the Mayor and approved by the city council.

GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

KNOW YOUR COMMUNITY / BE AN INFORMED CITIZEN

Definitions

Know Your Community - Residents will have a central source for information about the wide variety of programs, services, and activities provided by community agencies and organizations.

Be an Informed Citizen - Residents will have the information they need to support and promote democracy; fulfill their civic responsibilities at the local, state, and national levels; and fully participate in community decision-making.

Goal 1: Prospective residents, newcomers, and current residents are informed about community services, resources, and activities.

OBJECTIVE 1. The library will help create a community calendar by July of 2023

The West Branch Community is full of many organizations looking to provide education, entertainment, information, and other forms of activities. Knowing what is occurring in town is difficult for residents and providing information on what is available is difficult for the many organizations. The library will help create a place where all activities may be listed to help bridge these gaps.

Potential partners include the West Branch City Departments, West Branch Community School District organizations, churches, service organizations, businesses, and residents.

OBJECTIVE 2. By 2023, the library will investigate the use of email updates for library information

The library worked to provide communication on events and activities in the community via paper and video through the past few years. In this objective, the library will look to further bring information to where people are already and provide information by email.

OBJECTIVE 3. The library will partner with other community entities to provide a new resident welcome kit by July 2023

The West Branch Community has a lot to offer residents. New residents likely do not know of everything going on in the community without direct connection. The library will look to help connect with new residents and provide a pleasant welcome to the community as well as information regarding activities in the many organizations in town.

Potential partners include the West Branch City Office, West Branch Community Development Group, local realtors.

OBJECTIVE 4. The library will create a TikTok account to help promote library and community events by 2023.

The West Branch Public Library tries to provide learning opportunities and information through ways where members of the community are already active. In the past strategic plan, the library expanded efforts in many social media avenues. As a quickly rising social

media source, the library will look to expand into TikTok as a means of outreach.

Potential partners include community youth and West Branch Community School groups

Goal 2: The library helps create and promote a positive image of the community

OBJECTIVE 1. By the end of February 2022, the library will evaluate the participation in the West Branch Community Development Group

With the Community Development Group, library members have worked to improve the local downtown area. The downtown provides a vital point in the community as residents and visitors to the community often hit that area first. It also provides a primary source of income into the city and allows for the employment of many residents. As such, its success provides an important first step to the community success as a whole.

To best serve the community, the library will evaluate its participation to ensure that the library staff abilities are best being used within the organization or if different forms of involvement might better serve the community, the CDG organization, and encourage the success of these strategic plan items.

OBJECTIVE 2. By July 2022, the library will change the front of the library website to a blog format including community events and library information.

As mentioned previously, the library has worked in the past strategic plan to provide library and community information through various print and electronic methods. To help promote active content and information to the community, the library will change its website to an initial blog format to better promote upcoming activities and new information.

Goal 3: Residents receive information and support on health literacy

OBJECTIVE 1. The library will host a health-based information event twice a year

The health of the West Branch Community is always of utmost importance in order for our community to live fulfilling lives. In the past few years, there has also been significant difficulty in determining accurate health information due to misinformation efforts in social media outlets. The library will look to provide at least two events on unspecified health topics through the year.

Possible partners include local health care providers, HyVee dietary staff, Iowa State Extension

OBJECTIVE 2. Once a year, the library will host an informational event or discussion on mental health or available mental health resources.

As with the above objective, the health and happiness of members of our community is vital to the success of our community as a whole. The past two years have been extremely difficult for many people in addition to many people who inherently have issues like work or school stress, anxiety, depression, or any of many forms of mental illness. The library will work to help provide information and support for these issues over the coming years through at least one event every year.

Possible partners include local health care providers and local mental health professionals.

BUILD SUCCESSFUL ENTERPRISES

Definitions

Build Successful Enterprises - Business owners and non-profit organization directors and their managers will have the resources they need to develop and maintain strong, viable organizations.

Goal 1: Nonprofits and charities will be connected with residents and local businesses interested in their missions and goals.

OBJECTIVE 1. By the end of 2024, the library will create a website or online database of community nonprofits and charities

West Branch is a very active community with many different community groups, businesses, and residents. The library will look to provide a central location for joining all of these together. This will likely be a wiki website which allows for many people to create and organize information throughout the community.

Suggested partners include other City of West Branch Departments, West Branch Community Development Group, community churches, West Branch Community School District.

OBJECTIVE 2. The library will support a wishlist of needed items and donations for local nonprofits by 2024

This objective couples strongly with the objective above. There are many organizations in West Branch who need assistance either in donations of money or other items. The library will create and support a list of these items.

Suggested partners include other City of West Branch Departments, West Branch Community Development Group, community churches, West Branch Community School District.

Goal 2: Local Business owners will have access to information regarding city codes, available support, and community events.

OBJECTIVE 1. The library will partner with city administration and Community Development Group to provide new businesses in West Branch a welcome packet of important local codes, utility, and event information by the end of 2024

Beginning a new small business like those found within West Branch is difficult and the community is complex with many activities and events. There are a lot of resources available for those looking to start a business, but they are spread across multiple organizations and in conjunction with many different people. To help a local business have the best chance at success, we will work to help them have the information they need at the start of their business. This will also include information on local events so that new business owners know what is coming and how they may best make use of these events.

Possible Partners include the West Branch Community Development Group and West Branch City office.

OBJECTIVE 2. The library will create and maintain a searchable database or website of community information for business owners by 2024.

In addition to the welcome packet in the above objective, the library will ensure that this information is also available online. It is likely that this information will be included in the same medium as the objective on creating a database for residents with new information.

Possible Partners include the West Branch Community Development Group and West Branch City office.

Goal 3: Residents who work remotely will find the support and connection to the community

OBJECTIVE 1. The library will provide technology to support remote work at the library by the end of 2023

The conjunction of improving technology and pandemic has lead to many people working remotely. While working remotely, many people may need technology support, additional technology, or a space away from home to work. The library will create spaces that assist remote workers in their day to day lives.

OBJECTIVE 2. The library will host programming and events for remote workers by 2023.

While remote work is amenable to many people, the act of working outside of the office leads to disconnect from other coworkers and other community members. The library will support this connection by hosting events aimed towards this population.

CELEBRATE DIVERSITY

Definitions

Celebrate Diversity - Residents will have programs and services that promote appreciation and understanding of their personal heritage and the heritage of others in the community.

Goal 1: Residents of all ages will have access to events and information celebrating the community's diverse heritages

OBJECTIVE 1. The library will explore a subscription to Ancestry.com by the end of 2022

A common way for people to explore their heritage is to study their genealogy. The library will pursue a subscription to Ancestry.com as a common genealogy service for residents.

OBJECTIVE 2. Once a year, the library will host an event that highlights the backgrounds and abilities of the people in our community.

To know others in our community better, residents have to have a forum to discuss their backgrounds. This, in part, forms who they are as people. By understanding one another

better the library hopes to provide educational opportunities, but also help residents understand and communicate with one another better.

OBJECTIVE 3. Twice a year, the library will create a new display on a variety of cultural heritages

In the essence of the prior objective, the library will work with residents to create a display on a resident's heritage at least twice a year. Through knowing more about other heritages and one another, the library hopes to improve communication and connection among the community.

Goal 2: The community finds richness through the diversity of people and the many viewpoints they bring

OBJECTIVE 1. By July 2022, library staff will receive training on being an LGBTQIA safe place.

The library wishes to support the LGBTQIA community and wishes to be a safe place for these residents in our community. To best provide this space and service, the library staff would like to receive educational opportunities to be better allies to the population.

OBJECTIVE 2. Six times per year, the library will host youth or family programming on diversity

There are many forms of diversity including race, history, ability, age, etc. The library wants to help members of the West Branch community understand others better by providing programming and events that promote diverse understandings.

Possible programming includes diversity-based storytimes, after school events, and food fairs.

OBJECTIVE 3. The library will include at least one book in the book discussion on diversity each year.

To provide an avenue for diversity education in the adult population, the library will include a book focused on diversity at least once a year.

TIMELINE

YEAR	MONTH	OBJECTIVE
2022	JANUARY	
	FEBRUARY	Youth/Family diversity program held
	MARCH	Evaluate library participation in CDG
	APRIL	Youth/Family diversity program held
	MAY	
	JUNE	Youth/Family diversity program held
	JULY	Library Website front page converted to blog format Library staff trained to provide LGTBQIA safe place New cultural heritage display Health-based event held
	AUGUST	Youth/Family diversity program held
	SEPTEMBER	
	OCTOBER	Youth/Family diversity program held
	NOVEMBER	
	DECEMBER	Explored subscription to Ancestry.com Youth/Family diversity program held Diversity-based book included in Book Discussion Mental Health Program
2023	JANUARY	Investigate email/print updates for library information TikTok Account Created New cultural heritage display Health-based event held Program for remote workers held
	FEBRUARY	Youth/Family diversity program held
	MARCH	
	APRIL	Youth/Family diversity program held
	MAY	
	JUNE	Youth/Family diversity program held New resident welcome created and implemented Community calendar implemented

	JULY	New cultural heritage display Health-based event held
	AUGUST	Youth/Family diversity program held
	SEPTEMBER	
	OCTOBER	Youth/Family diversity program held
	NOVEMBER	
	DECEMBER	Information website/database for business owners created Technology for remote work provided Youth/Family diversity program held Diversity-based book included in Book Discussion Mental health program held Programming for remote workers created
2024	JANUARY	Nonprofit wishlist implemented New cultural heritage display Health-based event held
	FEBRUARY	Youth/Family diversity program held
	MARCH	
	APRIL	Youth/Family diversity program held
	MAY	
	JUNE	Youth/Family diversity program held
	JULY	New cultural heritage display Health-based event held
	AUGUST	Youth/Family diversity program held
	SEPTEMBER	
	OCTOBER	Youth/Family diversity program held
	NOVEMBER	
	DECEMBER	Nonprofit/Charity website or database created Welcome packet for new businesses created Youth/Family diversity program held Diversity-based book included in Book Discussion Mental health program held

APPENDIX A

Within the table, you'll find a listing of main points and sub points within each. The number associated with each item is how many interviews mentioned that point (17 total). A single interview likely gave multiple main points and sub points. If someone listed multiple sub-points within a main point, those sub points were each counted once for that interview, but the main point was only counted once for that interview. In other words, each number is how many interviews total mentioned that point.

1. What are your wishes or aspirations for the West Branch community? Where would you like us to be in 5, 10, 20 years? If you have a dream of what the community could be, what do you see?

Aspirations, Needs, & Wants	Main Point	Sub Point
82.35%	14 Main Street/Businesses	
		7 Eating/dining - more options
		6 Drug Store/Pharmacy
		5 Grocery Store - improvements
		4 Hardware Store
		3 Retail
		2 Entertainment
		2 Promotion - More
		2 Toy/gift shop
		1 Accountant
		1 Antique Store - additional
		1 Attorney
		1 Bakery
		1 Bigger Farmer's Market
		1 Clothing Store - additional
		1 Deli/Sandwich
		1 Destination for out of Towners
		1 Growing thriving
		1 Italian Restaurant
		1 Local Owners
		1 Movie Theater
		1 Open Regularly
		1 Outdoor seating
		1 Owners involved in community
		1 Reputation as great place to live
		1 Revitalization of East Downtown
		1 Small/Historic Stores

			1 Somewhere for kids while parents shop
			1 Thrift Store
76.47%	13	Growth	
			4 More interactivity of people moving in
			4 Younger families
			3 More Families
			3 Mix of age groups
			2 Larger Tax Base
			1 Has to be sustainable
			1 Planning for it
52.94%	9	Splash Pad/Pool	
41.18%	7	Housing	
			6 Affordable
			3 Apartment/Condo Style
35.29%	6	Rec Center	
			1 Ability to use School Facilities without cost
			1 Combined with new Library
29.41%	5	Social Events (not bar)	
29.41%	5	Trails	
			3 More Trails
			2 Interconnected trails
			2 Nature Trail - longer/continuance
			1 Hard surface trails - not gravel
			1 Kids w/o license cant get to Casey's now
			1 Parks connected
			1 Riding Trails
17.65%	3	Assisted Living	
11.76%	2	Library Expansion	
	2	More collaboration between entities	
	2	Small town Charm	
	2	Streets	
			1 Better Street Conditions
			1 Improved County Line Road
5.88%	1	Ambulance Service In Town	
	1	Communication - need better methods	

	1	Community Building - Meeting, Seniors, Meals on Wheels		
	1	Dog Park		
	1	Downtown Infrastructure		
			1	More investment in the downtown
			1	More physical changes from CDG involvement
			1	Streetscaping
	1	Expanded Mentality - not small town		
	1	Expanded Food Pantry		
	1	Food Support for Kids		
	1	More connectedness		
	1	More Diversity		
	1	Pocket Parks		
	1	Public/Private Partnerships		
	1	Sidewalks		
	1	Truck Route through Town not in Downtown		

2. Thinking about those wishes or aspirations for the community, what do you think the community has - strengths and opportunities - to make those dreams come true?

Strengths / Opportunities		Main Point		Sub Point
70.59%	12	Schools		
			7	New Investment good
			2	Good Size
			1	In-house daycare
			1	Pre-K program
58.82%	10	Local Businesses		
			5	Good Stores Currently
			2	Available Space
			1	Balanced history with modern amenities
			1	Close together and distinct
			1	Defined Downtown

			1	Owners with ties to the community
			1	Support one another
			1	Young business owners
		10 Small Town Charm		
			4	Can ask for help and receive it
			4	Know Your neighbors
			2	Safe
			1	Included in events
			1	Interconnect jobs and community
47.06%		8 Organizations		
			4	Fire Department
			3	Local Service Groups
		8 National Park/Presidential Library		
			1	Brings Others In
			1	Federal funding for local jobs
			1	Renovation will bring people in
41.18%		7 Public Library		
			1	Library Meeting Space
			1	Programming
35.29%		6 Growth		
			5	Potential for Growth
29.41%		5 Proximity to Iowa City/Corridor		
23.53%		4 Parks & Recreation		
			1	Parks
			1	Pickleball
17.65%		3 Historic		
11.76%		2 Activities for Youth - Soccer/Baseball		
		2 Churches		
		2 Community Events - Christmas Past, Hoover's Hometown Days		
		2 I-80		
5.88%		1 Physical Downtown Organization		
			1	Close and comfortable
			1	No major traffic

	1	Golf Course		
	1	Hoover Nature Trail		
	1	Many Volunteers		
	1	Scattergood		
			1	Brings in new families
			1	Community uses facilities
	1	Town Hall		

3. Now on the opposite side, what weaknesses, challenges, or threats does the community have to consider or overcome to make those wishes, aspirations, and dreams come true.

Weaknesses/ Threats		Main Point		Sub Point
52.94%	9	Small/Old Town Mentality		
			6	Won't accept change, growth
			2	People don't want to spend money for change
			2	Sometimes not inclusive of new people
			1	Entities do things separately
			1	Growth too fast for some
			1	No place for groups to come together
			1	Too particular in what we want
47.06%	8	Businesses		
			4	More - quantity/types
			3	Expensive to maintain historic buildings
			3	Hard to generate sales
			2	Too close to other options (IC or Quad Cities)
			1	Amazon hurt small business
			1	Greater Involvement
			1	Open Storefronts
			1	Taxes turn away some businesses
35.29%	6	Housing		
			3	High cost
			1	On outskirts of town - don't keep people downtown
			1	Some have poor upkeep
			1	Streets too small
23.53%	4	Diversity		
			1	Promote/Celebrate diversity/holidays
	4	Too small of tax base		

			1 All improvements will cost money
			1 Finances too stressed
			1 Have to plan shared resources
17.65%	3 Resident characteristics		
			1 Less involvement from younger/new residents
			1 Hard to find volunteers/active members
			1 Internal Disagreements
			1 Less connection with commuters
			1 No large donors
	3 Trails		
			1 Developments don't have to add trailways
			1 Nature trail connections difficult
			1 Not connected to other trail system
11.76%	2 Creek Flooding		
	2 Lack of Jobs		
			1 Have to drive into IC/CR for many jobs
			1 Need something to draw and keep people in town during the day
	2 Pandemic		
			1 People don't need to go to work anymore
	2 Restriction in physical area of town		
			1 I-80 hard boundary
	2 Streets		
			1 Constricting framework
			1 Poor Conditions
5.88%	1 Aging infrastructure		
	1 Better Method for Communication		
	1 Changes in Health Care - might lose clinic		
	1 Current TIF Situation		
	1 Johnson/Cedar Boundary problematic		
	1 Lack of large wealth/donors		
	1 Noise from I-80		
	1 More traffic through National Park		

	1	Others don't realize how close to IC we are		
	1	Out of town building owners		
	1	Plan for how community develops		