



Washington
County
LIBRARY

2024-2028

STRATEGIC PLAN



WashCoLib.org



A NOTE FROM THE DIRECTOR

In Washington County, we believe that a strong library is essential for a strong community.

This idea has resonated throughout a two-year strategic planning process as we collected survey data, assembled focus groups, and held listening sessions with community members and library staff. Repeatedly, we heard about the central role libraries play in providing essential access to resources, spaces, and information. We also heard how the library can evolve to better serve our users in an ever-changing world.

We proudly present this new strategic plan, which aims to build on our strengths and develop areas where growth is possible. We envision a library where everyone belongs, where services are convenient and accessible, and where our communities have access to quality resources and the knowledge of incredible library workers.

Many people were instrumental in developing this plan. Thank you to everyone who gave their time and energy to its creation — the result is an actionable strategy that positions us to deliver services that our communities need and deserve.

Over the next five years, we will strive to deliver equitable services, empower our staff, enhance our infrastructure, and expand our reach. I am extremely proud to be a part of this work, and look forward to making the library, and our communities, stronger than ever.

Jacquie Kramer, Library Director

LIBRARY MISSION

Inspire curiosity, champion innovation, and spark opportunity.

COUNTY MISSION

Providing quality services through responsible leadership, innovation, and the cooperation of dedicated people.

COUNTY GOALS

- Promote the health, safety, and quality of life of citizens.
- Provide accessible, high-quality services in a timely and respectful manner.
 - Address today's needs while proactively planning for the future.
- Maintain public trust through responsible use of public resources, accountability, and openness of government.

Washington County is in the process of updating the county-wide strategic plan, which includes a review of the county's mission and goals. The library will be evaluating its mission as part of that work.





OUR COMMUNITIES

Washington County Library proudly serves more than 267,000 county residents at seven branch locations, a Law Library in the Washington County Government Center, and three Library Express locker locations. We also offer online support through our website, catalog, and digital reference services.

Washington County is a thriving suburban community with a population expected to reach more than 340,000 residents by the year 2040. The county's population is also increasingly diverse, with growing communities of American Indian, Asian, Black, and Hispanic or Latino residents. According to the American Community Survey, approximately:

13%

of households primarily speak a language other than English

16%

of residents are older than 65

9%

of residents were born in another country

6%

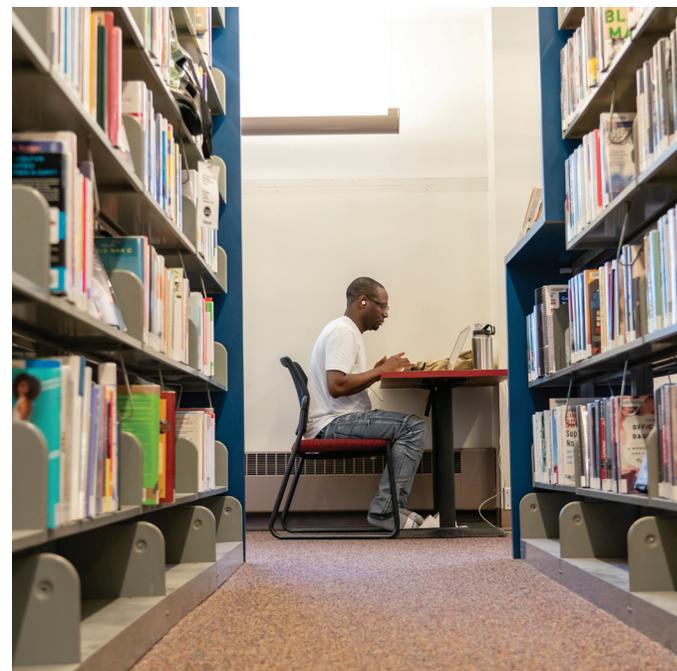
of households live below the poverty line

In 2022, Washington County Library had almost 114,000 registered cardholders and circulated more than 2.4 million items from both its physical and digital collection. Across the county, the library had more than 606,000 in-person visits and hosted around 2,000 programs.

OUR SERVICES

We serve our users in many ways:

- **Our collection** of physical and digital resources meets the information needs of our communities.
- **Support for users** of all backgrounds, provided by knowledgeable library staff, ensures visitors feel welcome and can access the information they seek.
- **Resources for literacy and learning** empower users of all ages to explore new interests and develop the skills they need to thrive.
- **Digital connectivity** to public computers, internet access, and printing services bridges gaps faced by many residents in navigating an increasingly technological world.
- **Welcoming and safe spaces** provide opportunities for users to gather, learn, and build community.



SERVICES ARE SUPPORTED BY:

Engagement - Strategic efforts to increase visibility and understanding of library services by establishing strong relationships and building trust with Washington County communities. Examples include attending community events, visiting schools and senior centers, and organizing pop up library events.

Partnerships - Intentional relationships built with other organizations or county departments which enhance library services and meet the needs of community members. An example is working with CareerForce to support jobseekers.

Programs - Library-planned activities that enhance or support the delivery of library services. Programs are led by staff or vendors and can take place in library branches or at library adjacent locations. Examples include storytimes, craft classes, vendor-led programs, and author talks.

STRATEGIC PLAN TIMELINE



SUMMER 2022

Launched community engagement efforts with outreach and public survey.



FALL 2022

Consultant completed focus groups interviews and brought results to staff for input.



SPRING 2023

Continued staff engagement to collect feedback on priorities and goals.



SUMMER 2023

Developed actions and implementation steps with input from library staff and leaders.



FALL 2023

Drafted plan and gathered feedback from managers and Library Board.

EARLY 2024

Launch Strategic Plan and begin projects to achieve goals.

A Multi-Year Process

Our strategic planning process took nearly two years as the department underwent an in-depth community and staff engagement process.

The effort began in early 2022 with an environmental scan. Soon after, we hired Genesis Consulting to reach and hear directly from communities that have historically been underserved in Washington County. In summer 2022, library staff gathered additional feedback through nearly 8,000 surveys from community members. Over the next year, staff and stakeholders participated in multiple workshops to gather additional feedback and refine the priorities and goals of the plan.

After hearing and incorporating feedback from multiple stakeholders, this strategic plan and related projects are on track to begin in early 2024.

COMMUNITY INSIGHTS

To prepare this strategic plan, Washington County Library completed an intensive staff and community engagement campaign to learn more about the state of the library system and identify areas for growth.

Library leadership solicited feedback from the public, county leadership, and library staff through meetings, focus groups, and an online survey. The library also worked with a consulting group to conduct more in-depth engagement with underrepresented communities in Washington County to be sure their voices and needs were part of the strategic planning process. In 2022, libraries across the Twin Cities also completed a digital inclusion survey to assess connectivity needs in the metro area.

QUALITY SERVICES

Quality services and collections were identified throughout the community engagement process as a priority for both library users and staff. Users noted that they would like library services to be more convenient and accessible, and shared that they would like to see materials in additional formats and languages.

WELCOMING SPACES

Community members also valued library spaces and facilities, highlighting how libraries offer safe, welcoming facilities for reading, studying, and gathering for residents of all ages. But there are challenges, including aging facilities and spaces that need to accommodate many different users at the same time.



CUSTOMER SERVICE

Community members appreciated the responsive customer service available at the library, and library staff are eager to better support residents through innovative ideas and service models. However, there is still more to do to ensure libraries are welcoming for all residents, and that visitors know about all the services available at the library.

STRONG PARTNERSHIPS

As a community-focused organization, library staff are always looking for ways to meet community needs through strong partnerships. These types of collaborations have already helped libraries meet the needs of community members, but there is strong interest in doing more to better serve the public.

EXPANDING OUR REACH

Both community members and staff expressed interest in increasing communication and awareness of library services and programs. As a growing community, there's ongoing need to reach out to new residents and engage effectively with current library cardholders.

THRIVING WORKPLACE

Finally, staff indicated they want Washington County Library to be a workplace that is supportive, diverse, and has opportunities for growth. High-quality and engaged staff are vital to providing quality programming and support for users.

The themes and opportunities identified through this community engagement process helped shape the priorities, goals, and actions of this strategic plan.





A COMMITMENT TO DIVERSITY, EQUITY, AND INCLUSION

Washington County Library is committed to embedding diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) into all aspects of our work.

We support the county’s overall vision to create a vibrant workplace and community that practices engagement, representation, and service to all members inclusively and equitably with dignity and respect.

In this strategic plan, we have deliberately woven DEI into all of our priorities, goals, and actions. Goals and actions that have been developed with a focus on DEI are called out with this symbol, which represents the diversity of individuals who work for and are served by Washington County.



STRATEGIC PRIORITIES

Washington County Library’s strategic plan includes four priorities that will shape the library’s work over the next several years:

- 1 Evaluate and improve library service delivery.
- 2 Strengthen organizational culture and operational effectiveness.
- 3 Enhance physical spaces and technology infrastructure.
- 4 Expand the reach of the library.

Each of these priorities is supported by specific goals and measurable actions to help this vision become a reality.

1 Evaluate and improve library service delivery.

GOAL

Champion reading and lifelong learning.

ACTIONS

- Evaluate programs to ensure they support the values and priorities of the library.
- Develop new programs to fill service gaps and phase out existing programs that do not meet community needs.

“Being able to browse the catalog, see where items are, and check on my hold requests and loans online is extremely valuable!”

Community Survey Response

GOAL

Broaden and improve access to ensure services are delivered equitably. 

ACTIONS

- Make catalog and website more user-friendly by improving findability of materials and information.
- Complete an audit to update or eliminate out of date policies, guidelines, and procedures.
- Identify additional opportunities to make materials more accessible for all community members. 
- Increase availability of library spaces.

“Allowing resources to be accessed at times when the library isn't open would be helpful.”

Focus Group Response

“There are fewer and fewer community service locations that people can go to freely, stay as long as they need, get help and access to technology, and gather. Our libraries are extremely important to our communities for all these reasons.”

Community Survey Response



2 Strengthen organizational culture and operational effectiveness.

GOAL

Support, educate, and empower staff to deliver library services.

ACTIONS

- Establish standardized guidelines and operating procedures.
- Assess opportunities to improve staff training with emphasis on DEI. 
- Ensure staffing is adequate to deliver library services at all locations.

GOAL

Build a diverse staff while retaining and investing in current employees. 

ACTIONS

- Provide equitable opportunities for all staff to participate in professional development.
- Improve staff retention.
- Examine our hiring process and remove barriers to recruit staff that reflect the communities we serve. 

“*The staff at my library are the frosting of a cupcake. They are both thoughtful and helpful and seem to have a boundless amount of energy and patience. I hope there are plans to assist them in assisting the public.*”

Community Survey Response

3 Enhance physical spaces and technology infrastructure.

GOAL

Provide technology that meets the needs of library users and staff.

ACTIONS

- Improve technology available to the public in library branches.
- Empower staff to explore and adopt new technologies by providing training and support.
- Collaborate with Information Technology to improve staff technology essential for delivering library services.

GOAL

Ensure library spaces are modern, safe, and inviting for all. 

ACTIONS

- Audit all spaces to identify if they are welcoming.
- Develop process for managing accommodation requests.
- Collaborate with Building Services, Risk Management, and the County's Security Liaison to ensure facilities are safe and accessible. 
- Ensure library signage is consistent, accessible, and effective. 

“*I cannot emphasize enough the importance of a 'third space' where we can gather as a community. A reduction in the physical footprint of our local library would feel like an evisceration of what makes our library the vibrant core of our city.*”

Community Survey Response

4 Expand the reach of the library.

GOAL

Increase visibility and awareness of library services.

ACTIONS

- Prioritize outreach to marginalized and underserved communities. 
- Develop a strategic marketing plan for library services.

“People have to know about the locations and updates on what’s going on in the library system. If they’re doing events with the communities, sharing about that is important.”

Focus Group Response

GOAL

Evaluate, strengthen, and expand partnerships.

ACTIONS

- Determine priorities for creating and forming partnerships with community organizations.
- Find community partners who help fill gaps in services and programming.
- Combine efforts with other county departments in targeted outreach activities.

“The library is a valuable asset to the community. I believe it is underutilized. I was not aware of many of the services/ events that were offered.”

Community Survey Response





THANK YOU

Many teams and individuals worked hard to create a comprehensive strategic plan that is responsive to library needs and representative of the communities we serve. Thank you for your efforts!

Library Leadership Team

Jacque Kramer (Director), Drew Wylie (Deputy Director), Tina Kaple (Division Manager), Cate Sering (Division Manager)

County Commissioners

Fran Miron (District 1), Stan Karwoski (District 2), Gary Kriesel (District 3), Karla Bigham (District 4), Michelle Clasen (District 5)

Library Board Members

Mary Burke, Kathleen Fink, Sarah Jansen, Cindy Kallstrom, Tammy McCulloch, David Olufson, Natalie Seim

Washington County Planners

Sara Allen, Joe Ayers-Johnson, Emily Jorgensen, Lyssa Leitner, Kevin Phan, Andrea Rehm

Strategic Planning Team

Kate Buechler, Tiffany Christian, Nancy Collett, Leah Eggersdorf, Natalie Eierman, Aubrey Fonfara, Justin Hall, Brian Kraft, Dawn LaBrosse, Michele Lo, Eric Nelsen, Kristine Norton, Angie Noyes, Megan Olson, Stephen Ortiz, Kirsten Redding, Jessi Schulte, Stefannye Slaughter, Kim Ukura, Dana Williams

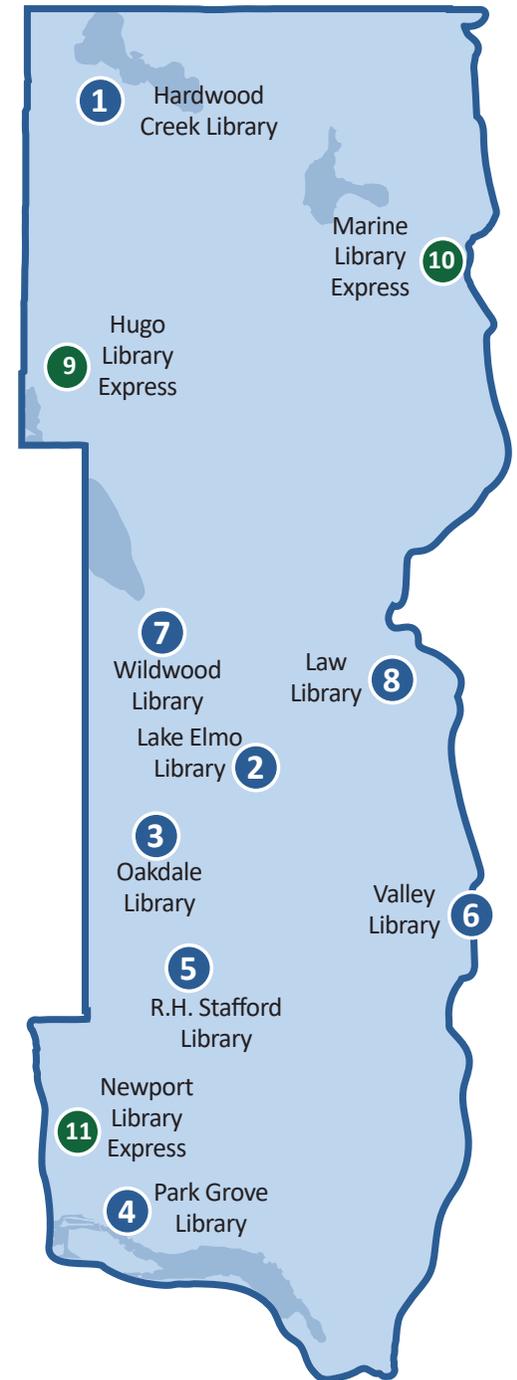
Genesis Consulting, LLC

LOCATIONS

- 1 Hardwood Creek Library**
19955 Forest Rd N, Forest Lake
651-275-7300
- 2 Lake Elmo Library**
3537 Lake Elmo Ave N, Lake Elmo
651-275-8515
- 3 Oakdale Library**
1010 Heron Ave N, Oakdale
651-730-0504
- 4 Park Grove Library**
7900 Hemingway Ave S, Cottage Grove
651-459-2040
- 5 R.H. Stafford Library**
8595 Central Park Pl, Woodbury
651-731-1320
- 6 Valley Library**
384 St Croix Trail S, Lakeland
651-436-5882
- 7 Wildwood Library**
763 Stillwater Rd, Mahtomedi
651-426-2042
- 8 Law Library**
14949 62nd St N, Stillwater
651-430-6330

Library Express:

- 9 Hugo Library Express**
Hugo City Hall
14669 Fitzgerald Ave N, Hugo
- 10 Marine Library Express**
Marine City Hall
121 Judd St, Marine on St Croix
- 11 Newport Library Express**
Newport Transit Station
250 Red Rock Crossing, Newport





Washington County LIBRARY

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8595 Central Park Pl.
Woodbury, MN 55125

CONTACT US

651-275-8500

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