Washington County Library Strategic Planning Process
Stakeholder Committee Meeting #5
Monday, November 16, 2015 from 1:00-3:00 p.m.
Washington County Government Center – Lower Level Room 12
14949 62nd Street N., Stillwater, MN

AGENDA

1:00-2:00 p.m. I. Discussion of Draft Strategic Plan-Part II Facilities – Keith Ryskoski, Library Director, and Karen Rose, Library Strategies (Attachment A1 and A2)

2:00-2:30 p.m. II. Vision and mission – Keith Ryskoski (Attachment B)

2:30-2:45 p.m. III. Communicating key messages to the public – Keith Ryskoski

2:45-3:00 p.m. IV. Next Steps

Library Background and Overview Materials:

WC’s Library Strategic Planning website:  https://www.co.washington.mn.us/index.aspx?nid=2298
Facilities Plan:  www.co.washington.mn.us/DocumentCenter/View/708
a report to the
Washington County Library System

STRATEGIC PLAN - DRAFT
November 4, 2015

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Overview & Summary

This report was commissioned as part of the Washington County Library strategic planning process conducted by Library Strategies. The report reflects the comprehensive activities of a nine-month process that included extensive assessment, data analysis and trend research as well as a deliberate and focused attention on gaining community input through various channels to identify residents’ needs and vision for library service. The data analysis, trend research, and community input provided a foundation for the planning process, which culminated in two all-day planning retreats with community members from across the county. This report is the result of the Washington County community working with Library Strategies to develop a strategic plan that reflects the community’s vision and direction for their library.

The Washington County Library is highly valued by County residents who are generally pleased with the level of library service they receive. Yet there is a growing desire to access new and different types of services to accommodate new populations, new ways to learn, and new ways to do business. The goals and strategies that have emerged from this planning process are focused on six specific areas:

- mission and vision
- programming for targeted populations
- public awareness and library marketing
- space and facility needs
- resources and partnerships
- staffing models

These six goals, and the strategies designed to achieve them, will be carried forward in a forthcoming Implementation Plan which will include specific activities, timelines, accountabilities, outcome measures, as well as annual staff and resource implications.

This is an important time for Washington County, especially with the hiring of a new Library Director, to anticipate and develop enhanced library service across the County. This report, generated by and for the residents of Washington County, will provide a roadmap for the Library and County leaders to effectively and efficiently address the changing needs and desires of its residents for more and different library services.
Methodology

Washington County requested a planning process driven by data analysis and extensive community input. Library Strategies also employed the Rapid Results Planning™ (“RRP”) retreat component to engage the community in co-creating the strategic plan.

The scope of work included the creation of a 17-member Stakeholder Committee to oversee and assist with the strategic planning process. A sub-group of this Committee helped to identify participants representing a broad profile of the county to invite to participate in the RRP planning retreats. (See Appendix A: Stakeholder Committee membership list.)

At the onset of the process, a Library Strategies consultant conducted independent interviews with each of the Washington County Commissioners to gain background, perspective and expectations. A series of three community forums were conducted between May and July in Cottage Grove, Stillwater and Forest Lake, to provide an opportunity for citizens to express their needs and desires for future library services (see Community Forum Notes).

Meanwhile a resident survey was mailed to 1,500 households designed to capture current library satisfaction, usage and perceptions as well as projections of future library needs and usage. (See Washington County Library 2015 Residential Survey report.) Also, an online questionnaire was made available to the public on the Washington County Library website page. Approximately 200 residents responded to this questionnaire, providing additional community input.

Concurrent to the summer’s community input activity, Dr. Anthony Molaro, a Library Strategies consultant and assistant professor in the Master of Library and Information Science program at St. Catherine University conducted an assessment of the current Washington County Library environment with comparisons to five peer libraries as well as to the Twin Cities metro area libraries (with the exception of St. Paul and Hennepin County). In addition, Dr. Molaro conducted a SWOT (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities & Threats) analysis with library department staff. (See Washington County Assessment of Current Library Environment.)

Dr. Molaro also conducted research on new and emerging library trends to provide forward thinking perspective on the evolution of library service. In addition to this research, demographic and trend data were also used to provide a residential profile of Washington County for this report. (See Washington County Assessment of New and Emerging Trends in Library Services.)
To provide further insights into community-level needs and environment, a questionnaire was sent to the elected officials of the 33 communities and townships within Washington County. Also, a meeting was held with city administrators of these communities to discuss current and future community issues that could be impacted by library services.

Finally, two all-day retreats were held in September and October in Woodbury and Forest Lake. These retreats attracted 30-50 people - current users and non-users of the Library - who represented specific targeted populations of the County. (See Appendix B: RRP Retreat Participants.) These retreats were designed to put a framework on the strategic plan and identify key themes from which to develop goals and strategies. The retreats were also designed to increase dialogue and introduce potential partnerships with organizations throughout the County.

The outcome of the above activities includes this strategic plan report as well as a forthcoming Implementation Plan that will be developed with library staff following approval and acceptance of the strategic plan.

Findings & Rationale
As part of the investigative portion of the strategic planning process, Library Strategies, with the assistance of County staff, examined a wide variety of qualitative and quantitative data and inputs in preparation for creation of the strategic plan. Many of these assessments and analyses have been presented to the County previously in comprehensive reports. Presented here, in much abbreviated form, are the major findings from these analyses, and in particular, the assessments that contribute to various rationales included in the strategic planning goals.

Library Assessment, Comparative Data and Staff SWOT Analysis
Library Strategies conducted an assessment of the Library system, looked at peer data from comparable library systems across the country, and did a “Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats (SWOT) analysis with library department staff. These assessments were fully documented in separate reports to the County. Here are the major findings from these three assessments:

- Washington County Library, in comparison to comparable library systems, is an average to good system. Overall, the Library fares better in comparison to national peers, whereas it lags somewhat behind metro area library averages.
- The Library is highly efficient and provides good value to residents per taxpayer dollar.
The Library is very dedicated to customer service, and overall, receives high satisfaction marks from residents.

The current mission and vision of the Library/County do not appear to be widely embraced by staff, nor are they driving a direction for the Library.

In comparison to peer libraries, the Washington County Library is funded at a rate of $77,000 less annually than national peers, and $410,000 less annually than metro area peers.

Washington County uses a system where the Library department pays rent to the County for its facilities. This is an appropriate system, but the peer libraries in the metro area do not have this added, substantial fee. With this rent payment accounted for, the Library’s operational resources are even lower in comparison to its metro area peers.

The lower funding level translates primarily into fewer staff. The Library has fewer staff on average than peers, and there is some indication of staff burnout, as well as a need for increased professional development opportunities for staff.

In comparison to national and Twin Cities peers, the Library is below average in cardholder penetration, number of programs and program attendance. (The disparity in cardholder penetration may be due to Washington County’s active purging to remove inactive cards. Other libraries may not manage their cardholder lists in this manner.)

In comparison to national and Twin Cities peers, the Library is somewhat above peers and recommended indicators for purchase of print materials. For all collections (including downloadable) it is average to below average in collections budget per capita.

In addition to some of the above areas, the SWOT analysis indicated opportunities for more partnerships, expanded programming, and improvements in outreach. Threats and weaknesses included lack of space, internal communication challenges, and splintering off of city libraries outside of the system.

The associated but independent libraries in Stillwater and Bayport provide quality library service primarily to the residents in those communities as well as to other County residents. This arrangement is a positive for all County residents but there is disparity of service between these libraries and the rest of the County libraries in the system.

Community libraries exist in Newport and Marine-on-St. Croix but are not fully associated libraries. These libraries are supported by the County with the addition of “Express Library” locker services.

Lake Elmo has an independent library that is not affiliated with the County system and is not part of the County’s taxing district.

The associate and independent libraries in Washington County present challenges in the public’s understanding of the library as well as disparities in library service standards.
Library Service Trends

An examination and report on New and Emerging Trends in Library Services was also conducted by Library Strategies in an attempt to project possible future directions for the Library. A summary of those trends and key findings follows:

- Reading remains as popular as ever in the Internet Age, but the formats on which people access the written word is varied and changing rapidly. Specifically, eBooks and digital content usage is expected to climb, while use of print materials may remain flat or decline very gradually.

- The “Internet of Things” – or the network of objects embedded with computer or digital technology will increase dramatically. Further, technology devices and usage are changing very rapidly, and the pace of change is not expected to decrease. This is an opportunity that is being embraced by many libraries who are emerging as the “go to” place for technology training and internet literacy.

- “Maker” technologies are a significant trend in libraries. These creative “makerspaces,” primarily based in technology, are becoming a standard service offering in many public libraries.

- Internal library systems technologies (as opposed to technology service offerings to patrons) are not expected to see significant changes in the foreseeable future.

- Despite reductions in print materials in many cases, libraries are not getting smaller. Instead, more space is needed for meeting rooms, programs, separate teen areas, quiet spaces, and other specialized activities. Libraries increasingly focus on flexible space that can be easily altered in the future.

- Various software technologies exist to assist in staffing and other internal efficiencies, such as in scheduling for example.

- The use of more powerful data analytics offer libraries increasing opportunities for improving service and being more efficient. These technologies are becoming more affordable and accessible.

- Many public libraries have adopted primary missions beyond books, such as lifelong learning and other education services, programming and cultural events, early literacy advancement, technology training, some social service functions, and more, depending on community needs.

- For many communities, public libraries are playing an increased role in economic and workforce development.

- Marketing services to the community is increasingly a part of library operations. Easy-to-use and attractive websites are a both a core service and a critical marketing tool. (Note: The Library receives low marks and satisfaction levels for its current website.)
Some libraries are challenging traditional organizational structures (such as technical services, adult services, and children’s services), and moving to management and staff structures designed to achieve strategic goals (advancing literacy, economic development, outreach, partnerships, etc.) This may include functional reorganization based on programs and populations served rather than on geography. The strategic goals in this report could drive reorganization around core priorities in service delivery and program development.

Demographic and Other Trends and Factors in the County
A wide variety of federal, state, county and regional data sources and reports were examined as part of the investigative phase to project major trends for the County that would affect Library service:

- The County is expected to experience significant population growth by 2040, with a current population of approximately 248,000 increasing to 338,000 – an increase of 90,000 or 36%.
- The largest percentage population increases are expected to occur in the Hugo and Lake Elmo areas, with significant growth in total numbers also occurring in Woodbury, Cottage Grove, and Forest Lake.
- The percentage of households with seniors is expected to see the largest increase.
- Based on recent trend reports from the U.S. Census and American Community Survey, the total number of children and teens is not expected to grow significantly – but will remain more or less stable at current levels. (For the past eight years, the percentage of total population under 19 years has decreased from 28.9% to 27.8% but the total number has gone up and down and ultimately grown slightly by about 3,000 individuals.)
- There will be significantly more diversity in the County’s population, expected to rise to 20% or more non-white in the coming decades.
- Based on recent U.S. Census trend reports, the County will likely experience an increased number of households at higher incomes, while simultaneously seeing a growth in under-resourced households. (Median household income increased from $66,305 in 2000 to $80,748 in 2013. Meanwhile, the percentage of households in poverty during this same period increased from 2.9% to 5.8% and has not recovered since the Great Recession.)
• Washington County residents are highly educated, with 96% obtaining a high school graduate degree or higher. In addition, around 40% of its population has bachelor’s degree or higher, up from 26% in 1990. Educational achievement and higher household incomes both correlate positively with library usage and reading.

• A relatively large percentage of employed Washington County residents do not currently work in the County and are likely accessing services elsewhere.

• Transportation within the County is a major issue and concern for a high percentage of households that are under-resourced, a portion of the senior population, and teens.

• According to Metropolitan Council reports, expanded public transportation is needed along I-94 to Woodbury and beyond, south toward Cottage Grove and Hastings (across the border in Dakota County), along Highway 36 to Stillwater, and north parallel to I-35E to Hugo and Forest Lake.

Community Survey
Under Library Strategies’ guidance, Rainbow Research conducted an independent, confidential, random sample survey of 1,500 residents of Washington County regarding Library service, both current and projected into the future. The margin of error for the survey was + or – 2.5%. The primary findings from the survey report were:

• The survey responses were weighted toward people 40 and older, so while still valid, it should be noted that service to children and young adults is probably under-represented in the results.

• The Stafford Library in Woodbury is the most popular library for respondents. Other heavily used libraries, in order, were Park Grove in Cottage Grove, Hardwood Creek in Forest Lake, Stillwater Public, Oakdale and Wildwood.

• The Library is used first and foremost on-site for physical resources (i.e., checking out books), as well as remotely for many resources, and on-site for meetings or space. Use of the Library for courses or education, and for technical resources showed lower use. Patterns of use were surprisingly similar for all age groups, except the 75 and older population.

• The Library is used at least every other month by 64% of respondents.

• Nearly 25% of respondents also use another public library outside of Washington County – a particularly high figure.

• Respondents show a high satisfaction level with all current services, and 75% strongly agree that they feel welcomed at the Library.

• The highest use of the Library remains checking out books, followed by browsing collections, getting help from a librarian, and checking out DVDs or CDs.
• In terms of projecting use 5 years in the future, the highest increase in expected use by respondents is “Visiting the Library in person,” followed by “Use of on-line resources,” “To read or study,” and “Take a class or learn a new skill.” Virtually all other Library services also showed expected increases, but at a lower percentage or rate.

• Respondents think the Library is an important gathering place for their community, and the physical location matters to them.

• 61% of those responding to the question agree or strongly agree that they are willing to pay additional taxes for expanded Library services and hours.

Qualitative Inputs: Community Voices, Municipal Administrators Meetings, Forums, Retreats
Qualitative data and input into a strategic planning process is often richer and more meaningful in providing directions on community needs and desires than various “hard” data. Community voices enrich the conversation, and provide much needed balance and perspective in the process. Library Strategies and the Library conducted a wide range of offerings and venues for County residents to share qualitative input into the process (see Methodology, page 2), all of which provided rich data that will be useful to Library administration in looking at detailed provision of service. Here, however, we summarize the major themes and findings heard across these processes:

• Washington County residents highly value their public libraries, and would like to see enhanced services and facilities.

• There is not clarity among Washington County residents as to what are Washington County libraries versus associated libraries or community libraries. Most people associate with the library nearest to them rather than the system.

• Increasing and enhancing services to seniors is a priority, particularly in outreach, technology training and support, and programming and lifelong learning activities.

• Enhancing services to teens, at least in some areas of the Library system, is desired. Creating dedicated, vibrant teen spaces in some of the system libraries seems to be the major focus or need.

• Early literacy is a concern across the County, however, most agree that the Library has good early literacy services currently and the major area for improvement is in outreach and public awareness.

• Increased and enhanced programming and educational activities for all ages is desired. It was widely noted, however, that the Library should not duplicate other offerings in the community, particularly activities offered by community education programs.
• The Library’s website is not user friendly and users would like to see a major overhaul and upgrade. This message was heard in virtually all venues.
• Respondents want the Library to maintain strong print collections, but also increase downloadable and digital materials.
• Respondents would also like to see the Library keep up-to-date with technology, but are more concerned about technology training and assistance than hardware/software.
• Increased or enhanced services to under-resourced, diverse, and special needs households and individuals was heard widely. Major strategies or concerns in this area centered around outreach, transportation issues, and lack of awareness among these varied populations.
• There was substantial interest, although not universal, in the creation of “makerspaces” or other creative areas in some of the libraries.
• Although not shared in all of these qualitative venues, there was significant interest in advancing the Library’s mission around workforce and economic development.
• Advancing partnerships in the community was a regular theme, both to increase resources and connections for the Library, but also as a public awareness and community advancement tool more broadly. Stronger partnerships with schools was desired across all of these forums, although many noted that it will be a challenge working across multiple, diverse school districts.
• Increasing use of volunteers for more diverse tasks was a common theme.
• Stronger marketing, public relations, and public awareness of the Library and its services was widely desired.
• In the community retreats, and to some extent in the other qualitative venues, most people expressed a preference for larger, full service libraries rather than small community or neighborhood libraries. This was not universally expressed, but was the preponderance of the direction for the majority of those in attendance.
• There was significant agreement that more space was desired for the current library facilities – for meetings, programs, training and educational offerings, community gathering – and that additional facilities or expansions are also likely needed in the future. Respondents strongly agreed that there should be an emphasis on flexible, changeable space in any renovations or expansions in the future.

**Investigative Phase: Major Drivers**

All of the above findings and rationales listed above must be considered in shaping the Library’s strategic directions and goals, balanced, of course, by resource, geographic and other realities. However, the short list of major drivers that must be accounted for in shaping the strategic plan include:
1. Significant projected population growth for the County.

2. The increasing diversification of the County’s population, especially seniors, non-white populations, and under-resourced households.

3. Current and future funding and staffing levels for the Library. More particularly, realistic capital and operational budgets must be factored into any major directional changes.

4. Use of the Library is gradually shifting from use of hard copy materials to digital materials and access to resources, educational offerings and training, programming, and community gathering spaces.

5. The Library is a diversified system, offering facilities ranging from full-service, large libraries to community libraries and express locker systems, and that diversity of facilities is likely to continue in the future. Upgrades and renovations are needed at a number of current Library facilities. A one-size-fits-all approach to facilities is unlikely to serve the range of needs and desires among County communities and residents.

6. Relationships with and provision of services at associated and community libraries in the County must be accounted for in the Library’s strategic directions.

7. Lack of transportation, particularly for households and individuals without easy access to cars, is a significant barrier to use of the Library for many residents. In parallel, a large percentage of County residents currently work outside of the County.

8. Increasing community partnerships and private support are significant trends in increasing support for public libraries.

9. Nationwide, library staffing structures and management models are changing to better fit service needs and directions, and community goals.

10. There is an opportunity to further advance awareness and use of Library services among County residents.
Recommended Goals & Strategies

**GOAL 1: Revise and refresh the Library Mission Statement as a foundation for future direction, focus and activity.**

**Strategy 1:** Review the current mission statement and articulate more active and energizing language that will advance the work of the Library in accomplishing its strategic directions.

**Strategy 2:** Communicate the mission statement broadly and frequently to clarify the Library’s role and value throughout the County.

**Strategy 3:** Align internal practices and policies to activate the mission statement throughout the organization.

**PRIMARY RATIONALES FOR GOAL AND Strategies:**

- A strong mission statement is critical to providing a foundation for the organization as it plans for the future.
- This is a transformational time for libraries and most are finding the need to clarify their purpose and brand message in the community.
- When employees understand, embrace, and believe in a mission statement they are more engaged and committed to their jobs.

**GOAL 2: Increase and Enhance Lifelong Learning, Outreach, Youth Services and Digital Resources to Meet Targeted Community Needs**

**Strategy 1:** Increase programming and lifelong opportunities for all ages, with a focus on adult and teen programs.

**Strategy 2:** Expand outreach services to senior, under-resourced, and diverse populations, including adding a full-time staff position dedicated to community outreach and incorporating expanded use of volunteers and partnerships.

**Strategy 3:** Enhance technology drop-in and training services, particularly for older adults.

**Strategy 4:** Further develop youth services, particularly teen services and resources, and early literacy outreach to parents and young children.
**Strategy 5:** Examine the collections development program and redirect those resources from print to digital materials to meet the changing needs of the library users.

**PRIMARY RATIONALES FOR GOAL AND STRATEGIES:**

- Lack of robust programming due to lack of staff and space resources which may be affecting various usage statistics
- Trend of public libraries to increase programming and training opportunities
- Strong community need for increased outreach to seniors, which is expected to increase with growth in senior population
- Growing populations of under-resourced and diverse households with different needs
- Lack of public transportation for some populations
- Increased demand for assistance and training support regarding the multiple technologies available today
- Expressed community desire for at least piloting expanded teen programming and services, and perceived need for increased early literacy outreach particularly to under-resourced families
- Higher than average expenditures on print and other hard copy materials, and the potential for reallocation of a percentage of these resources

**GOAL 3: Advance Public Knowledge of the Services Available to Increase Use of the Library**

**Strategy 1:** Overhaul the Library’s website to make it more user-friendly for users of all ages and increase its mobile functionality.

**Strategy 2:** Create a three-year marketing and promotions plan with specific goals, outcomes, and accountabilities to increase the public’s knowledge of the various library services and programs.

**Strategy 3:** Increase dedicated marketing and promotions resources to allow for additional public relations activities.

**Strategy 4:** Explore the use of partnerships and volunteers to enhance promotion and marketing.
PRIMARY RATIONALES FOR GOAL AND STRATEGIES:

- Dissatisfaction with the website by patrons, and outdated website approach compared to peer libraries
- Lack of awareness of the full range of Library services by a significant portion of respondents and commentators
- Lower usage statistics, such as cardholder penetration, in comparison to metro area peer libraries
- Recently proposed, but still restricted internal staffing and other resources for Library marketing
- Opportunities to cost-effectively advance marketing through partnerships (such as with schools or colleges), and the use of marketing or promotion volunteers

GOAL 4: Improve Library Facilities to Better Meet the Needs of County Communities and Residents

Strategy 1: Based on the strategic plan and recommendations, create a ten- to twenty-year facilities plan that includes updating existing facilities and planning for the identification of additional library space. (see separate Facilities and Service Model Plan).

Strategy 2: Pilot the creation of an innovative teen space and a creative “makerspace” area in the Library system.

Strategy 3: Examine current use of space, and explore opportunities to rework current space for flexible programming, meetings, small business support, technology access, educational and community gathering space.

PRIMARY RATIONALES FOR GOAL AND STRATEGIES:

- Significant projected population growth, particularly in Cottage Grove, Hugo, Lake Elmo, and Woodbury
- Some facilities in need of renovation or upgrade due to age, lack of flexibility, facility condition, index assessment, or increased use
- The changing nature of Library service and the increasing need for programming, meeting room and flexible space
- Low usage statistics in some areas, due in part to lack of facilities in certain areas, lack of functional programming space, and open hours
Community desire for enhanced teen service not currently available anywhere in the system, and similar desire for more creative, innovative, active makerspace among users.

GOAL 5: Develop Additional Resources and Partnerships to Enhance Current Services and Operations

Strategy 1: Based on strategic plan and directions, incrementally increase the annual budget to align with metro area peers to allow for development of services, expansion of facilities, and subsequent increase in usage.

Strategy 2: Work with the Washington County Library Partners, and other community partners, to increase private support for the Library.

Strategy 3: Create a plan and a full-time staff position to spearhead a community engagement plan that includes partnerships with area organizations and schools. (Community engagement and outreach are related activities and could be incorporated into one position if necessary.)

Strategy 4: Expand the current volunteer program, particularly for marketing, programming and outreach activities.

PRIMARY RATIONALES FOR GOAL AND STRATEGIES:

- Current funding levels below peer metro area libraries
- Need for staff to meet increasing service load
- Willingness of a majority of respondents to support a tax increase
- Need and desire for increased or enhanced service in numerous areas
- Projected increase in population and communities of need, and subsequent demand for library services
- Opportunities for increased resources from private sources, partnerships, and volunteers if resources are dedicated to those areas

GOAL 6: Explore New Models of Management and Staffing to Better Serve Patrons

Strategy 1: Review current management structure, and explore new library models to align more closely with strategic areas such as partnerships, outreach, programming, and marketing.
Strategy 2: Develop a multi-year staffing plan to direct human resources to changing Library directions and examine the need for increased staffing levels.

Strategy 3: Examine current internal communications, and explore alternatives to advance efficiency and understanding among staff.

Strategy 4: Access technology to increase efficiency in staff utilization across the County, particularly regarding scheduling.

Strategy 5: Offer more evening/weekend hours to provide access to library resources, especially internet service, particularly to meet the needs of students and small businesses in areas where internet access is unreliable.

**PRIMARY RATIONALES FOR GOAL AND STRATEGIES:**

- The focus of the Library is shifting and administrative structures need to match new priorities
- Innovative and effective management models have been developed elsewhere in libraries
- Staff expressed dissatisfaction with burnout and lack of communication
- The Library system is large, diverse, and geographically spread out which contributes to difficulties in communication and collaboration across the system
- If the Library engages in any expansions, communications and management will become even more of a challenge
- Weak or problematic internet access in pockets of the County

**Conclusion**

Based on the research, analysis, and community input and participation in defining a vision for the future of library service in Washington County, Library Strategies presents this report with recommendations for clear and direct goals and strategies to guide the Washington County Library for the next three years. Many of the strategies outlined above have staff, space and budgetary implications that will require further discussion and consideration. An important next step is the creation of a detailed, internal Implementation Plan with Library staff to carry the goals and strategies forward with specific activities, accountabilities, annual budget implications and outcome measurement processes.
APPENDIX A:
Library Strategic Planning
Stakeholder Committee (2014-15)

Polly Blom, Central Park Recreation Specialist, Woodbury
Judy Bull, Chair, Library Board
Marie Skinner, Vice Chair, Library Board
Lynne Bertalmio, Stillwater Library Director
Dean Zuleger, City Administrator, Lake Elmo
Shayla Syverson, Parks Planner, Hugo
Tom Triplett, Library Board Member, Marine
Jo Bailey, Business Representative and Library Advisory Committee, Newport
Dennis Johnson, Rasmussen College
Ryan Laager, Stillwater Schools, Executive Director of Curriculum and Secondary Education
Curt Geissler, Business Representative
Brian Zeller, Business Representative and former Library Board member
Jill Tammen, Community Representative
John Keilholz, Community Representative
Renee McGivern, Community Representative
Bill Sullivan, Community Representative
Jean Oswald, Community Representative
APPENDIX B:
Strategic Planning Retreat Participants

Retreat #1
Heidi Bardwell
Anna Barker
Elizabeth Bell
Lynne Bertalmio
Karla Bigham
Sharna Braucks
Judy Bull
Majel Carroll
Katherine Cram
Shayla Denaway
Megan Gryzwa
Bill Hargis
Jane Hetlund Stevenson
Denise Koller
Brian Kraft
Dawn LaBrose
June Mathiowetz
Renee McGivern
Doug Menikheim
Sara Meyer
Pete Orput
Jean Oswald
Trina Patterson
Mary Planten-Krell
Michael Reeves
Jean Rozinka
Steve Ryan
Keith Ryskoski
Joyce Schneider
Marie Skinner
Sue Swanson
Jill Tammen
Mary Ann Thelen
Marissa Vette
Lisa Weik
Norma Wilson
Skylar Wolfe

Retreat #2
Jo Bailey
Judy Bull
Gina Gamnis
Laura Helgason
Girish Jorapurkar
John Keilholz
Alyssa Kruzel
Chad Lubbers
June Mathiowetz
Anne McManus
Fran Miron
John Norton
Molly O’Rourke
Keith Ryskoski
Aaron Pozzini
Joyce Schneider
Jessi Schulte
Amy Stenftenagel
Ken Stone
Gail Theisen
Jennifer Tolzmann
Tom Triplett
Amy Worwa
Jane Young
Susan Young
Brian Zeller
a report to the
Washington County Library System
Preliminary Directions for Facilities Planning
DRAFT
November 4, 2015

LIBRARY STRATEGIES
A Consulting Group of The Friends of the Saint Paul Public Library

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A Report on Preliminary Directions for Facilities Planning

Summary of Current Situation
The Washington County Library is a complicated system serving a large, diverse and geographically disparate population. The Library Department currently includes six branches, three express libraries and a law library. Of the six branches, three would be classified as regional, full-service facilities (Hardwood Creek, R. H. Stafford, and Park Grove). Two libraries are medium-sized facilities offering most services but are somewhat more restricted by space (Wildwood and Oakdale), one library is small with limited services (Lakeland), and there is a small law library at the Government Center in Stillwater. The Library also has three express libraries in Hugo, Marine on St. Croix, and Newport, which are locker systems for pickup and drop-off of materials. The express libraries in Marine on St. Croix and Newport are also connected to small community libraries operated independently.

There also are two associate libraries in Washington County in Stillwater and Bayport, which receive some services from the County system and collaborate in a number of areas, but are funded and operated independently by their municipalities. Residents in those communities have full lending privileges in the County system and vice versa. The Stillwater Public Library would be considered a large branch, and Bayport a small branch in comparison to the libraries in the Washington County system. In addition to the independent associate libraries, there is also a small, independent library in Lake Elmo, which is not affiliated with the County system.

A significant portion of Washington County residents also regularly use the public libraries in surrounding counties and municipalities (the use of other libraries may be as high as 25%). Minnesota and metro area libraries have cooperative agreements which permit residents of one community to use other Minnesota and metro area libraries free of charge. Because a high percentage of Washington County residents work and shop outside the County, and significant portions of the population live in close proximity to Ramsey, Anoka, and Dakota counties and the city of Saint Paul, one would expect this trend to continue. In particular, in the community resident survey conducted as a part of this strategic planning process, the use of Ramsey County libraries by Washington County residents was notable and should be considered in
future planning. A few school districts in Washington County overlap with surrounding counties, which provides opportunities for use of other libraries. Thus, planning for facilities development in Washington County must factor in the use of other libraries and the fact that other libraries may be closer to, or easier to use, for many Washington County residents.

Given the current Library facilities, associate and community libraries, and availability of other public libraries in nearby counties, the population centers of the County are reasonably well-served in terms of library facilities and services. In other words, the great majority of the population of Washington County residents has access to a library facility near where they work or live.

However, with the population of the County expanding significantly, with demographic shifts, and the changing nature of library services, among other factors, the Washington County Library system needs to address current and long-term facility needs.

**Facilities Recommendation**

This report is part of a strategic planning process for the Washington County Library. In this process, facilities were examined in a number of ways and from various viewpoints. These include a brief look at each facility and usage patterns; comparison and benchmarking across the system to peer libraries and national library standards; examination of demographic, population trends and Met Council transit projections; and a host of forums for community input from across the County.

However, this process did not include a comprehensive look at current facilities, usage patterns by facility, or detailed community facility needs – that was beyond the scope of this strategic planning process. **Thus, Library Strategies’ primary recommendation is for the Washington County Library to develop a comprehensive facilities plan for the system within the next 2-3 months.**

As part of the strategic planning process, and the variety of data and inputs collected, Library Strategies has identified that facilities are indeed a primary strategic direction and concern for the County. What is presented here, then, are factors and considerations for facilities development, and broad categories for the County to examine more closely in a facilities planning process. These recommendations for facilities planning should be considered a starting point for further community discussion, examination, study and consideration before embarking on a long-term facilities plan.
Overview of Planning for Library Facilities

Across the country, library facilities are being renovated and expanded to accommodate the new ways citizens are using libraries. Even as technology enables more research, reading and learning activities to occur on mobile platforms, libraries are becoming places to bring people together – places to use access to information to share and create new ideas. Now more than ever, libraries are providing the space needed to build connections and link various community assets. As John Palfrey states:

*People are moving away from physical objects, by and large, as sources of discovery and information. But the need for human interaction – for humanity, in the broadest sense – has never been greater. Libraries can thrive at precisely this intersection.*

Vibrant communities are continuing to build public libraries, but today, the choices around what type of facility or library is the right fit for a community is more challenging than ever. There is no one model for a public library. They vary tremendously in facilities, staffing, service models, collections, technology and, indeed in every aspect of operations.

The American Library Association has not set standards for public library facilities since the 1970s:

*ALA no longer sets prescriptive standards for libraries in America. The reasons for this is that each library serves a different community with different needs. For example, a public library serving a community with many young families wants and needs a library with different facilities and services than a library serving a similar size population with a high percentage of empty-nesters and retirees. (ALA website page on facilities)*

Minnesota does not currently have state standards for public libraries, and while many states, such as Wisconsin, do have standards, they tend to be broad or minimum standards that provide little guidance to a well-developed, sophisticated library system such as Washington County. Kentucky, for example, provides the following standards:

1. *Library facilities are well-maintained.*
2. *Buildings are conveniently located and accessible to all.*
3. *The library is comfortable and efficient and provides a safe environment for users.*
4. *The library is inviting to users.*
5. *The library has external signage that identifies the facility as a library, and internal signage to facilitate use.*
Indeed, the Washington County Library clearly meets these standards, and would meet the standards of virtually all state minimums across the country.

Thus, the “standards” approach is not very helpful in facilities planning for Washington County. Similarly, while there are some benchmarks for library facilities development, the range of these benchmarks is large nationwide so that they only provide an initial starting point or reference at best. As the former Executive Director of the Toledo-Lucas County Public Library, Clyde Scoles recently commented:

> While questions always arise about space requirements for public libraries, there is no magic formula or algorithm for how large a library should be. In our planning activities, we encounter individuals – even seasoned architects and planners with extensive experience building offices, commercial development or homes – who assume there is a definitive formula for determining library space needs. This is simply not the case.

So how does one move forward, if standards and benchmarks are not particularly useful? For public libraries, the approach has been to work within communities to achieve desired outcomes and then build services and facilities to address those very specific needs. This approach is first and foremost community-oriented, but also includes balancing a host of considerations, and options for the specific community or region served. For Washington County, the balancing act must account for the significant variation of communities within the service area, and thus it would be expected that library facilities will continue to be diverse and varied in the County to best serve local and County-wide needs.

**Considerations in Planning Washington County Libraries**

The Washington County Library system currently exceeds all minimum state standards. Additionally, in many areas, the Library meets or exceeds other minimum facilities or service benchmarks. Nonetheless, throughout the planning process, residents expressed needs or desires for new or enhanced facilities and services. Additionally, the County population is expected to grow significantly, as well as change in some profound ways demographically in the coming decades. Finally, the types of services at public libraries has changed enormously, and the possibilities for new or different offerings at the Washington County Library is expected to grow as well. Thus, the County has opportunities to make informed choices about the future of library service to positively affect the lives of residents.
What is presented here, then, are considerations for Washington County as it moves into planning for facilities development. Some of these factors are generic to all public libraries, including reference to some standards or benchmarks, while others are more specific to Washington County. The latter are based on findings from the strategic planning process, including Library Strategies consultants’ cursory assessment of the Library’s facilities.

Here is a list of factors for consideration in the facilities planning process for Washington County:

**FACILITIES ARE TOOLS, NOT AN OUTCOMES** – Public libraries should be designed to address community needs or aspirations. Simply put libraries should either be helping communities make a needed change, and/or providing an enhancement to enrich the quality of life in a community. Facilities should be planned around the need(s) to be address or the enrichment value for the community.

**IT’S NOT JUST ABOUT BUILDINGS** – The core cost centers for libraries are staff, collections, and facilities (and to some degree technology). While this has always been true, the trend in library services today is toward areas like outreach, programming, and training/education, as well as much more robust digital and website access (many libraries consider their websites as a separate branch). Facilities are still needed for gathering, training, and yes, collections, but the spaces are looking different, and the need for staff and operational support is greater than ever for vibrant, well-used public libraries.

**THE LIBRARY SYSTEM AS A WHOLE** – For a large system like Washington County, which is also surrounded by available public libraries in other locales, no facility or service should be looked at in isolation. The totality of the system should be considered, and services not offered at one location may be balanced by an offering at a nearby location.

**COORDINATION AND COOPERATION WITH SURROUNDING LIBRARY SYSTEMS** – Currently for Washington County, there appears to be significant use of Ramsey County libraries (White Bear Lake, Maplewood, Roseville, etc.) in the northwestern section of the County. Similarly, there may be significant overlap with Dakota County libraries in the southern section of the County (i.e., Pleasant Hill Library in Hastings). Washington County residents may be using these libraries because they are closest to their home, are near where they work or go to school or shop, or offer more attractive services. Facilities planning should definitely incorporate these surrounding library options for residents.
COOPERATION WITH ASSOCIATED AND COMMUNITY LIBRARIES – In parallel to library service in other counties used by residents, a notable percentage of Washington County residents are served by associated libraries in Stillwater and Bayport and community libraries in Marine-on-St. Croix and Newport (and a community library in Lake Elmo, which is outside the County’s taxing district). For the old, historic, associated libraries in Stillwater and Bayport, which pre-date the creation of the County system, the communities provide substantial local funding and resources to operate the libraries, but they also collaborate with the County on various services. This arrangement mitigates the need for the County system to provide separate facilities in the associated and community library communities, and generally enhances service in these communities and the County as a whole. In short, it currently is a positive partnership for the associated and affiliated community libraries. That said, as the County and these communities change, the collaborative agreements between and among these independent entities will need to be periodically examined – which may affect future facilities decisions.

THE CONDITION OF CURRENT FACILITIES – A driving factor can be the current state of a library facility. How old is it? Is it in good physical condition? Is it safe and accessible for patrons and employees? Can it be renovated cost-effectively? Can it be expanded for appropriate use? Is there a better location? And, there are a number of additional considerations and questions regarding a particular site. Based on input from staff and residents, and a very brief visual assessment of each library, it appears that the Oakdale, R.H. Stafford, Park Grove, Wildwood, and Lakeland libraries in particular should receive further examination regarding condition or age (although as part of a facilities plan, every library facility should be examined closely.)

THE AREA TO BE SERVED – Of vital importance is to look at the primary service area for the facility and determine the community needs, demographics and wishes, both currently and in the future. For example, a community with a large senior population might focus library service on collections, quiet space, and programs/lifelong learning, whereas as community with a strong population of young families would build interactive early literacy spaces, dynamic children’s and teen areas, and flexible meeting areas. Once again, the outcomes should be addressed, and the tools to achieve outcomes for the community may, or may not, involve facilities.

RESOURCES AVAILABLE – Facilities require funding, not only for bricks and mortar, but more importantly for operational funding that allows the facility to remain open and offering service. A great facility open only a few hours is unlikely to serve residents well, whereas as an acceptable facility open greater hours may be more likely to provide superior service. Determining long-term public and private support can be the critical factor in advancing a facilities project.
QUALITY AND LEVEL OF SERVICE – Because libraries today offer such a diverse range of offerings and services, determining quality of service can be difficult. Is customer service most highly valued or a large, easy-to-checkout collection? Or both? What are residents expecting and what do they have for comparison. Because Washington County residents are mobile and a high percentage use other metro area libraries, there may be expectations by some residents for Washington County Library services, hours and facilities to match or even exceed peer libraries in the region.

NEED FOR ENHANCED SERVICES – In the strategic planning process, a number of community needs for increased or enhanced services that may affect facilities planning emerged. Particularly, these needs included increasing services for seniors, especially for training, programmatic and learning activities; enhanced spaces for programming, training, and meetings; newer or more innovative spaces for teens; flexible spaces for use by workers, small business owners, and self-employed individuals; and outreach to under-resourced households, and families with small children. These expressed needs have many system ramifications, but definitely point toward the need for more flexible, meeting/training type spaces across the system, as well as possible exploration of larger, enhanced teen spaces in at least some facilities.

PROJECTED USE, AND TYPE OF USE, BY TARGETED POPULATIONS – This is a difficult issue faced by many libraries. Different populations use libraries at different rates, and use different services at varying rates. For instance, women and highly educated individuals tend to use libraries at higher rates than the general population, particularly for traditional services such as check out of books. On the other hand, outreach services, workforce development, or strong cultural programs may be needed and may have significant impacts on the households and individuals in particular communities. While full-service libraries have some offerings, such as strong collections, that may be used by the majority of communities within an area, determining the need to target the service needs of particular populations, particularly underserved communities, may be a critical factor in planning facilities and services.

POPULATION DENSITY AND POPULATION GROWTH – In attempting to serve the greatest number of people, libraries should be placed near population centers. A big factor, as most buildings are constructed for at least a 20-year lifespan, is to examine population trends and to build where the population centers will be in the future. While anecdotal, it is said that great libraries serve 90 percent of the people 90 percent of the time. Thus, public libraries need to focus on placement in population centers, whereas residents living in more rural or sparsely populated areas of the County may expect to travel further to their nearest library, as they would for various other commercial services. Another aspect of looking at population is the size of the library. Generally, the larger the population, the larger the library needed to adequately serve community needs.
SIZE OF FACILITY AND USE OF SPACE WITHIN LIBRARIES – Although not absolutes, an accepted benchmark for libraries based on the Kentucky Public Library Standards (a common national standard) is that facilities should have at least .6 square foot of space per capita, with excellent libraries having 1.5 to 2 square feet of space per capita. Currently, the Washington County Library would need to add approximately 30,000 square feet in the County to meet that basic standard.

CURRENT:
2013 Washington County Library service area population: 213,081
(not including Stillwater and Bayport)

| Total current library facility square footage at .41 sq. ft. per resident: | 83,604 sq. ft. |
| Total square footage needed to achieve .6 sq. ft. per resident: | 113,600 sq. ft. |
| (30,000 sq. ft. increase) |
| Total square footage needed to achieve 1 sq. ft. per resident: | 212,600 sq. ft. |
| (129,000 sq. ft. increase) |
| Total square footage needed to achieve 1.5 sq. ft. per resident: | 319,600 sq. ft. |
| (236,000 sq. ft. increase) |

Based on project population increases, by 2040 the Library may need to add as much as 189,000 square feet of space to meet the .6 sq. foot standard for adequate service and significantly more to achieve higher standards.

2040 PROJECTIONS:
Washington County Library service area population expected in 2040: 315,310
(not including Stillwater)

| Total square footage needed at current .41 level: | 129,000 sq. ft. |
| (45,000 sq. ft. increase) |
| Total square footage needed to achieve .6 sq. ft. per resident: | 189,000 sq. ft. |
| (105,000 sq. ft. increase) |
| Total square footage needed to achieve 1.0 sq. ft. per resident: | 315,000 sq. ft. |
| (231,000 sq. ft. increase) |
| Total square footage needed to achieve 1.5 sq. ft. per resident: | 473,000 sq. ft. |
| (389,000 sq. ft. increase) |
USE OF SPACE WITHIN LIBRARY FACILITIES – Within the libraries, division of space for collections, adult reading areas, children’s or teen areas, programs and meeting spaces, staff areas, etc. typically emerges in the planning process as service needs and building programs are determined. There are no useful formulas for division of space within libraries, and change is happening quickly such that recent trends have focused on building highly flexible space that can be changed easily and cost-effectively as needs change.

AVOIDING DUPLICATION OF OTHER COMMUNITY RESOURCES – Because public libraries today are so diverse in their service offerings, both facilities and service planning must look at other community resources. As an example, for library facilities, planning should look at other resources or venues for teens within a service area before embarking on building expanded teen rooms or centers in a library. Similarly, many communities have a multitude of meeting rooms that are under-utilized, such that the need to build these types of facilities in a library may be lessened. For the latter, however, it should be noted that “gathering spaces” in libraries usually encompass multiple uses and types of rooms to accommodate such things as community meetings, library meetings, library programs for all ages that are related to collections, children’s story times, training and educational activities, technology for remote access, and tutoring or small work or study spaces. Thus, the need for flexible, multi-purpose, on-site “gathering spaces” at public libraries is often compelling.

TRAVEL TIME TO THE LIBRARY – In concert with placing libraries near population centers, studies have shown that the closer a library is to a person’s home, the more likely an individual is to use it. A reasonable benchmark is that most households will not regularly use a library if it is more than 15 minutes from one’s home. Thus, successful libraries are usually placed near population centers and/or other high traffic areas, such as business, commercial or shopping districts. Washington County does have areas, such as the northeastern and southeastern sectors, that have relatively sparse populations compared to the larger communities in the County. These areas are also not expected to grow significantly in terms of population. Rather than drive time for these locations, factors such as the nearest larger commercial districts that these residents use may determine library placement.

EASY ACCESS FOR ALL, OR FOR PARTICULAR AUDIENCES – While the majority of residents in a locale like Washington County may have access to cars or other transportation, for a significant, and often under-resourced, segment of the population, it may be important to locate libraries on public transportation lines or hubs. Similarly, if a community library is targeting a particular population, such as teens, it is vital to assess how that population will travel to the library. Coordination of public transit options should be a factor in siting of new construction of public libraries.
WORK AND EMPLOYMENT PATTERNS – How the majority of a population works or how they travel to work can impact the type, size, and location of libraries. For instance, a large percentage of Washington County residents do not work in the County, so locating libraries on well-traveled transportation corridors for ease of access before or after work is a likely consideration.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT – Public libraries, particularly large libraries, often attract hundreds of people to a location daily. In general, most people, make more than one stop when running errands, and some communities have used new libraries to stimulate new growth and economic development in an area or region. More broadly, some communities have marketed new libraries as a community amenity, alongside good schools and parks, to attract new businesses or developments to the area.

TYPE OF SERVICE MODEL AND LIBRARY – There is no one model for public libraries today, and there are multiple service models and types of facilities that can match community needs most effectively. For example, Washington County currently has at least four different service models of libraries in the County. That said, a simple juxtaposition is whether to build one large, regional, full-service library or multiple small, community-oriented libraries. There are advantages and disadvantages to both models. The large libraries are usually more efficient and cost-effective, can provide a much broader range of services, and typically have longer hours. Smaller, community-based libraries are better able to meet specific community needs, and build stronger attachments and sometimes per capita use. For the diversity of Washington County, one would expect to have multiple service models, as currently exists, to serve the population well. Thus a mix of large, regional libraries; medium size area libraries; smaller community libraries; express locker-type libraries; and perhaps some newer, innovative models, may best fit the make-up of the County system in the future.

MULTI-USE FACILITIES AND LIBRARIES – Library research does not show a clear direction of pros or cons for building libraries in multi-use facilities or in partnership with other entities. It is successful in some cases, and less so in others, depending on the community and service needs. Nonetheless, placing libraries in multi-purpose centers, or in partnership with other organizations has been a strong trend in libraries in recent decades. Common types of these facilities are combining libraries with other government service centers, with park or recreational facilities, with housing developments, or in business or market centers. The R.H. Stafford and Hardwood Creek libraries are excellent examples of these types of libraries.
COMBINING PUBLIC AND SCHOOL LIBRARY FACILITIES – A special category of public libraries in multi-use facilities are joint public and school libraries. While broad and deep cooperation between schools and public libraries is desired, and can be highly successful on many fronts, these types of joint facilities have proven more difficult. According to a 2000 article in School Library Media Research, positives for a joint public/school library may include: a broader collection, longer hours, better trained staff, better use of the building at lower cost, and closer relationship among parents, schoolchildren and librarians. However, the negatives are more extensive, and include: inconvenience for public patrons of a library in a school setting, difficulty in promoting the library as a public library, inadequate collections to serve a diverse set of user groups, inadequate training for staff to serve in the dual role, difficulties with dual administrative and governance structures, school and public library service areas that are not contiguous, and security and privacy issues. The article found that joint public/school libraries were most likely to be successful in small communities of under 5,000 population, where resource sharing was necessary and diversity of access was less of an issue. While worth exploring, with the large and growing population of Washington County and the complexity of the school districts within the County, joint facilities may be a less successful approach than other types of school collaborations for the Library.

INNOVATIVE, NON-TRADITIONAL MODELS – Many different types of library service models have emerged for libraries in recent years. A common example, present in three locations in Washington County, are the use of express locker systems for delivery of materials. But other innovative library models also exist, such as 24/7 self-service libraries, small libraries focused only on one or two services (such as children’s services or technology), and technology-only libraries. As with express libraries, Washington County’s diversity of communities may lead it to exploring the use of other creative and innovative facilities trends in public libraries.
Conclusion

Determining the expansion or improvement of facilities in a library system is a balancing act among many factors, which also change over time. Thus, a comprehensive facilities plan, which is updated at least every 5 years, is recommended for a large system such as Washington County.

For the strategic planning process, Library Strategies examined all of these areas, and the findings in the first section of the separate strategic planning report outline many of the directions that may impact building and facilities decisions. These findings, combined with knowledge of other library systems, building projects and various trends contribute to the recommendation that the Washington County Library look at the following factors as most critical in forming a facilities plan:

- Community needs and aspirations for library service
- Operational resources
- The current condition of Library facilities
- Current location of facilities in the County system as well as associated, community and other metro area libraries.
- Projected population growth by area
- The totality of the Library system and provision of service to all residents

Assessment of these critical factors, in addition to the other considerations listed above, will assist the County in providing balanced, good Library service for the majority of residents. Library/County leadership will ultimately spearhead decision making, but using the strategic planning process as a starting point, followed by additional staff, community, and expert input on facilities, will ensure that a plan is created that provides for County libraries that are cost-effective, meet community needs, and help the County continue to be “a great place to live, work and play ...today and tomorrow.”
Washington County

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

Vision:
A great place to live, work and play...today and tomorrow.

Washington County Library (current)

Mission:
Washington County Library’s mission is to enrich both the individual and the community by assisting people in their search for information, ideas, education, and recreation.

Vision:
The Washington County Library is a cornerstone of the county community that, through leadership, technology, collections, programs, and other services, provides access to information and technology used to inspire intellectual curiosity, facilitate life-long learning, and literacy. It preserves the best of the past while seeking new ways to promote, maintain, and enhance library services.
Mission Statements:

We connect people in XXXXX with the imperative and the joy of learning through a lifetime.

Provide free access for all to the knowledge and ideas that transform lives.

Our mission is to nourish minds, transform lives and build community together.

To best serve the XXXXX community, the library will be a provider of resources, spaces, and experiences that enrich and empower people’s lives.

XXXXX library...your connection to ideas, information, and inspiration.

The mission of the XXXXX library is to support lifelong learning for county residents of all ages by:

- Anticipating and responding to their needs for information
- Encouraging their desire to read
- Enriching the quality of life in their communities

Our mission is to provide access to material, information, and programs delivered by a courteous and informed staff to all members of the XXXXX community.

The people of XXXXX are empowered and their lives enriched by services which enhance their access and use of information and ideas in the global community.

Connect, Learn, Enjoy @Your Library

Vision Statements:

The vision of the XXXXX library system is to be responsive, innovative and caring in providing convenient, high quality services and facilities in a cost efficient manner to all members of our community.

XXXXX library ...your community hub. We are a nimble organization working to provide a wealth of resources and experiences to enrich the lives of residents.

We envision a XXXXX where library services ensure every person has the opportunity and resources to read, graduate, engage, work and learn.

We are a cornerstone of a thriving XXXXX: welcoming people of all ages and cultures; strengthening neighborhoods and learning networks; and inspiring all with the world of ideas.

The mission of the XXXXX library is to preserve intellectual freedom and strengthen the communities it serves by providing open and affordable access to ideas and information.

To inspire intellectual curiosity, the joy of discovery, and facilitate lifelong learning.

Create extraordinary learning environments and experiences.
Present: Jo Bailey, Judy Bull, Dennis Johnson, John Keilholz, Shayla Denaway, Jill Tammen, Bill Sullivan, Tom Triplett

Staff and Guests: Kevin Corbid (WC Deputy Administrator), Nate Deprey (Lake Elmo Library Director), June Mathiowetz (WC Administration Staff), Sara Meyer (Library Board) Keith Ryskoski (WC Library Director), Michael Reeves (Library Board), Karen Rose (Library Strategies), Joyce Schneider (WC Library Deputy Director), Amy Stenftenagel (WCL Digital & Social Media Services Librarian), Stu Wilson (Library Strategies)

Absent: Lynne Bertalmio, Polly Bloom, Katherine Cram, Curt Geissler, Ryan Laager, Renee McGivern, Jean Oswald, Brian Zeller

1. Welcome and Progress Update. The meeting started at 1:00 p.m. with June Mathiowetz highlighting key remaining steps in the strategic plan development process. She noted tomorrow, November 17th, the County Board will discuss the draft Strategic Plan in a workshop. It is the County’s intent to release the draft Strategic Plan for a 6 week public comment period before it is finalized. A final Community Capstone event will be held to report out on and celebrate the release of the final plan, likely in February. The Library Director, Keith Ryskoski has already begun discussion of the vision-mission-values and is developing a new facilities plan. Work on these two areas will continue into the beginning of next year.

2. Discussion of the Draft Strategic Plan. Karen Rose and Stu Wilson facilitated a discussion about the draft Strategic Plan. Karen and Stu reminded stakeholders they had discussed only the first half of the Strategic Plan at the last meeting and noted the version sent with the agenda had been updated to incorporate their feedback. Karen asked if there were any further changes or comments to that first half of the plan. Sara Meyer noted that on Page 9, the sentence about library size preferences needed to be re-addressed to not state that there is a preference for larger, full service libraries. She did not feel this accurately represented what was heard in the process and the way the point is written overstates that perspective.

The group then discussed the second section of the plan on facilities. The following comments were made:

- Tom Triplett shared with the group that the County Housing and Redevelopment Authority (HRA) has a set of criteria it uses when considering sites for new facilities. One of those criteria is related to proximity to public transportation. He suggested that perhaps it makes sense to add a new criterion to site selection for Housing Authority facilities that encourages proximity to libraries. This would help improve seniors’ access to libraries.
- John Keilholz asked for clarification about whether the report’s identified need for more library square footage is about adding to existing facilities or building new facilities. Library Strategies commented it could be either or both and suggested that the library facilities report process that Keith Ryskoski is beginning will likely shed further light on the question. Keith added three library facilities currently appear at the top of the County’s Facilities Condition Index as priorities needing further investment.
- Michael Reeves asked a clarifying question regarding whether Library Strategies had incorporated Lake Elmo’s population data into their size and space square footage guidelines on Page 8. Stu Wilson
pointed out the 2013 and 2040 calculations currently included Lake Elmo’s population numbers. County staff will work with Library Strategies to adjust this as needed.

- Stu Wilson noted the question of whether future direction needs to be on creating fewer larger facilities or more community libraries is a challenging one because it raises the question of equity. While some communities may have the resources that make it feasible to have a library, not all communities do. The County obviously will want to provide as equitable of services as possible, regardless of a local community’s ability to raise additional funds. Michael Reeves added that we really need a high level, holistic response on this and that every department needs to be asked to think about how library services can expand and improve the services they currently offer. Stu Wilson further noted that libraries have a large and unusual charge in that they service across the age span from toddlers to seniors. Parks are similar in that they offer services for all. There is a balance that needs to be determined around meeting direct needs of a specific population versus creating opportunities for all.

- John Keilholz asked if we are doing enough for youth through the County’s Library system. Some comments by others that followed suggested there are many adults in this county who don’t want youth to gather or collect anywhere, especially teens. Another added that “teens scare people”. Sara Meyer noted that a sea change is needed as it relates to teens, further pointing out they need structure and libraries create an opportunity to provide that and bring out kids’ best. Keith Ryskoski affirmed that prioritizing work with youth needs to be intentional.

- Shayla Denaway commented, “The strategic plan’s first section did a better job of encouraging partnerships than the facility section does. The facility plan highlights that shared school/library facilities are challenging and that duplication of resources should be avoided. It specifies what doesn’t work. It doesn’t really point out a way that partnerships with facilities could work. I wished the facility plan discussed what some of the partnership/sharing opportunities could be throughout the county.”

- Stu Wilson noted that, regionally, new library facilities are being built. Ramsey County has expanded, Carver County has added a tech and kids center, Hennepin County has built a number of new facilities and renovated others. There is a national trend toward building and renovating libraries right now. Facilities being built are 10-20 percent larger than old libraries and look very different. There are many interesting examples. For an example, he noted that there are now libraries that have 24/7 access to technology - an “Anytime Fitness” model - in which people get a security card and can get into the technology area of the library around the clock. Stu further added that one of the best things that can happen for many communities is to build a new library facility. One of the worst things that can happen is to build a brand new library and then not have the funds to do it well or keep it open more than 20 hours a week.

- Chief Bill Sullivan noted that this draft strategic plan is very well done.

- As the conversation closed, Stu Wilson noted that “the facility by itself isn’t a library. Libraries are about people and people run and fill them.” He noted a library in Cork, Ireland he had visited to emphasize this point. He said, “It was an amazing place to see, the staff were engaged, and it had all kinds of interesting programming underway, it was packed with many people. Yet, in terms of a physical facility, probably all of the facilities here in Washington County surpass the quality of that building itself. But, what was key was that it had a lot going on, it was a very alive place.”

3. **Development of Vision and Mission Statements.** Keith Ryskoski noted he has begun the process for vision-mission-values discussion and pointed out the task has been formally added as a stated goal to this version of the Strategic Plan on Page 11. He solicited feedback from the group about their thoughts on vision and mission.

   Jill Tammen questioned if it is the mission of the County Library system to bring people together and further stated that “if it is, then a new mission statement needs to reflect that.” She also commented that
the vision/mission statement needs to have an emotion expressed in it, such as “joy” and that “service” needs to be included somewhere in the statements.

Michael Reeves asked if the library has a set of values already developed and, if so, will it also be revisiting those? The Library does not currently have a defined set of values separate from the County. There was brief conversation about the interaction of potential Library vision-mission-values statements with those of the County overall. Kevin Corbid noted that the County Board has not provided final direction on whether County departments need to have their own vision statement or if they need to use the overall County’s overarching vision statement. Right now all departments have a mission statement, but only a few departments have vision statements.

Bill Sullivan shared that he’s observed over the years that it is important for departments to have their own vision-mission statements. Stu noted that if staff are engaged with purpose, then mission-vision-values aren’t as important. An additional comment that emerged was that “the library is different than other departments - it’s a different entity, one established to take us to a higher aspirational place.”

Sara Meyer urged that the process of developing a mission-vision-values statement not be made overly laborious and complex.

4. Communicating Key Messages to the Public. Keith Ryskoski highlighted the importance of having some key messages developed for communicating to the public about the Strategic Plan and he asked the group what they thought those key messages are. The following comments emerged:

- Jo Bailey noted that she believes we can communicate that “The Washington County Library is alive and well and thriving."
- John Keilholz stated “the conclusions made will be the result of really good feedback.”
- Tom Triplett challenged that he “doesn’t see any major re-direction of the Library in the County emerging out of the process that’s just been undertaken. Unfortunately, I see this as mostly tinkering, when much more is needed.”
- Judy Bull noted that she thought “it’s been a kick-start and is hopeful that in the end vibrant, great spaces will emerge out of this process and that libraries will be uplifted more.”
- Sara Meyer noted, “This process takes time and our leadership under the Library Director and County Board are going to be able to set the pace and a good foundation for the future with the work that’s been completed. They can take it to the next level. I see brave cognitive thinking occurring about bringing this work to the next level.”
- Chief Bill Sullivan noted he feels assured that “we are not just letting the future happen to us, we are planning it.”
- Jill Tammen commented, “The process has better explained the state of our library system and looked at ways to make it outstanding.”
- Mike Reeves mentioned that “strategic planning sometimes involves identifying a Big, Hairy, Audacious Goal (BHAG), which can act as a long range goal and drive intermediate actions”, and asked whether the Library had one.
- Sara Meyer noted that the “incremental process we’ve been doing is vital. The County has brought a wonderful format to this process.”

5. Next Steps. Keith Ryskoski reiterated next steps as mentioned at the beginning of the meeting. Although the group agreed they will not need to meet again, county staff noted they will continue to be invited to attend county board workshops, the capstone event and engage in communicating the plan.

6. Adjournment. The meeting adjourned at 3:05 p.m.