



# **STRATEGIC PLAN 2025 - 2029**

Adopted by the  
Maud Preston  
Palenske  
Memorial Library  
Board of Trustees  
March 25, 2025

Strategic Plan Facilitators:  
Midwest Collaborative for Library Services  
Jan Davidson

The library's public-facing strategic plan document will be available online  
at the Library's website: [Librarybythelake.org](https://librarybythelake.org)

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# ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The development of the strategic plan took many hours and the dedicated effort of many people. We would like to extend our sincere thanks to all those who helped make this plan a reality.

- The Library staff for their contributions to the process, and who will ultimately make this plan succeed.
- The members of the Library Board of Trustees for for their active participation and support throughout the process.
- To the members of the Strategic Planning Committee, for their valuable time and expertise, as well as their engagement in planning meetings
- To the community members who took the time to complete our survey, sharing their insights and aspirations for our community.
- To the staff at MCLS: Your ability to keep us organized and on track was crucial in navigating the complexities of this process.

This strategic plan represents a shared vision for our future, and it wouldn't have been possible without your collective effort. Your hard work has laid the groundwork for our continued growth and success.

Thank you again for your outstanding contributions. I am truly grateful to be part of such a talented and dedicated team.

Paula Stakley, Library Director

## Library Board of Trustees

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Clem Brueck, community member  
Kathleen Buursma, Board  
Melissa Clapper, Board  
Curtis Osmun, staff  
Jesse Crosby, staff  
Judy Felland, community member  
Zackery North, staff  
Paula Stakley, Library Director  
Mary Streufert, Board  
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Paula Stakley  
Gabrielle Steckler  
Nancy Stinemetz  
Adella Strong  
Amy Sweet  
Leigh Vallone

# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

To guide this effort, the Board elected to work with consultants at the Midwest Collaborative for Library Services (MCLS) of Lansing, MI to facilitate a strategic planning process that would help to align library services with the aspirations and needs of the community. We began with a Community Survey to help answer questions about what the community wants from the Library.

Keeping in mind the context gained through the community's input, the Strategic Planning Committee recommended that the Library Board adopt four strategic service priorities for the period Fiscal Years 2025-2029. The priorities are:

## **Improve Accessibility**

*We evaluate and seek to upgrade, reconfigure, and modernize facilities and technology to improve both staff and patron experiences.*

## **Advocate for Shared Engagement**

*We work to strengthen relationships and offer programming and space that promotes a variety of literacies, civic dialogue, and critical thinking for all age groups.*

## **Enhance Awareness**

*We investigate methods for increasing and improving communication and promotion of all we have to offer.*

## **Maximize Sustainability**

*We explore new and creative funding opportunities and invest in our staff, creating consistency in library services.*

# OVERVIEW OF THE PLANNING PROCESS

1. The Library Board approved working with consultants from the Midwest Collaborative for Library Services (MCLS) to facilitate the creation of a new strategic plan that would be based on community needs. MCLS, based in Lansing, MI, is a non-profit, member-driven organization whose mission is to facilitate sharing resources and to collaborate with other organizations to benefit Michigan and Indiana libraries. MCLS uses a planning process based on The Harwood Institute for Public Innovation's "Turning Outward" approach. "Turning Outward" is a process that entails taking steps to better understand communities; changing processes and thinking to make conversations more community-focused; being proactive to community issues; and putting community aspirations first.
2. In September 2024, MCLS consultants created a public community survey that was offered through the MPPML library website and in person. There were 432 responses to the library survey.
3. A thirteen-person Strategic Planning Committee was assembled, which included representatives from the Library Board, the Library staff, and engaged Library users from the community.
4. MCLS consultants generated a Survey Report from the community survey responses, which was given to the Library to share with the Strategic Planning Committee ahead of their Retreat.
5. The Strategic Planning Committee, on December 3, 2024, participated in a SOAR analysis of the library, identifying strengths, opportunities, aspirations, and results. This Strategic Planning Retreat was facilitated by a consultant from MCLS. The strengths became the basis for the library's core values; the aspirations became the basis of the library's vision statement; and opportunities resulted in the identification of key service priorities. They also evaluated the Library's Mission Statement and suggested changes.
6. On December 17, 2024, the MCLS consultant met with the library's staff to take forward the work of the Strategic Planning Committee, to operationalize the plan to address the four key priorities that were identified by the Strategic Planning Committee. The group answered the following questions for each priority: "How will the patron benefit?"; "How will the community benefit?"; "What activities might occur?" "What will success look like?"; "What organizational issues will need to be addressed, including facilities, technology, policies, staffing, etc.?" This work created the basis for the development of goals, objectives, and activities that make up the five-year strategic plan.
7. Work continued through the winter with the creation of the draft strategic plan, including the refinement by the Board subcommittee of the goals, objectives, and activities.
8. Once the Plan is approved by the Library Board this spring, the MCLS Consultant will meet with the Library staff to create an initial implementation plan to address each potential activity and

assign a target date for startup and/or completion, and which department(s) or people will be assigned responsibility. Assignments and work related to each new initiative will reveal a plan that is flexible and evolving, in order to adapt to changes that may be needed along the way. A measurement plan is also being created by the Library Director and staff leadership to track the progress of the goals identified in the Strategic Plan.

# MAUD PRESTON PALENSKE MEMORIAL LIBRARY STRATEGIC PLAN

## Mission

To creatively serve our entire community with diverse resources, inclusive space, and opportunities for knowledge, learning, and literacy.

## Vision

We are an essential community asset, welcoming all and striving to exceed expectations through an abundance of programming and resources for all ages, functional space, modern technology, and knowledgeable, well-trained staff.

## Core Values

### **Space to Learn and Grow**

We cultivate an environment that is inclusive, friendly, and approachable and celebrates knowledge and self-discovery.

### **Creative, Dedicated Staff**

We strive to make the best even better through responsive, personalized, patron-focused service.

### **Mission-Driven Collaboration**

We work together as a staff and with community members to ensure that our library reflects everyone.

### **Resourcefulness**

We seek continuously evolving ways to stretch our resources into high quality collections and services.

### **Inviting Location**

We exist in a beautiful, central location which draws both community members and visitors to utilize our space and resources.



## **Strategic Priorities and Goals**

### ***Improve Accessibility***

*We evaluate and seek to upgrade, reconfigure, and modernize facilities and technology to improve both staff and patron experiences.*

- Improve the user experience when encountering library resources.
- Create a sense of welcome and inclusiveness in our indoor and outdoor spaces.
- Proactively evaluate and plan for the future.

### ***Advocate for Shared Engagement***

*We work to strengthen relationships and offer programming and space that promotes a variety of literacies, civic dialogue, and critical thinking for all age groups.*

- Promote critical thinking and a variety of literacies for adults.
- Offer engaging experiences with open dialogue.
- Create an environment where all people can come together and learn side-by-side and from each other.

### ***Enhance Awareness***

*We investigate methods for increasing and improving communication and promotion of all we have to offer.*

- Be more visible across our community.
- Increase the effectiveness of our communication and marketing.

### ***Maximize Sustainability***

*We explore new and creative funding opportunities and invest in our staff, creating consistency in library services.*

- Enhance the Board's fiscal leadership.
- Deepen staff professional development opportunities and expectations.
- Strengthen our supportive internal structure.

## **Priorities, Goals, Objectives, and Potential Opportunities**

The Maud Preston Palenske Memorial Library's goals address the strategic priorities and aspirations identified by participants during the planning process. These goals serve as a roadmap for the next few years. Although these goals do not cover all of the Library's work, they are intended to set a strategic direction for the life of this plan. The objectives are performance measures that indicate "how much" and "by when." The potential opportunities are specific activities that the Library will undertake to achieve the objectives and goals. The goals will remain constant while objectives and potential opportunities may evolve.

### **FOCUS AREA 1**

#### **Improve Accessibility**

*We evaluate and seek to upgrade, reconfigure, and modernize facilities and technology to improve both staff and patron experiences.*

#### **GOAL 1**     *Improve the user experience when encountering library resources.*

##### **OBJECTIVES:**

- Library visitors are able to access materials and information easily
- Develop an ADA compliant website that is easy to navigate
- Increased variety of materials and services
- Library users report they can easily navigate our building
- Library users report they can easily navigate our online tools

##### **Potential Activities to support this goal:**

- Explore implementing a new ILS
- Increase and improve signage
- Evaluate and improve the informational resources we offer
- Look for ways to increase access to the most current technology for both patrons and staff
- Look for ways to reduce barriers for the community to navigate our resources, such as scheduling their own events through our website

#### **GOAL 2**     *Create a sense of welcome and inclusiveness in our indoor and outdoor spaces.*

##### **OBJECTIVES:**

- Increased Library and program attendance

- People report feeling welcome at the Library
- People say they can see themselves in our collection

**Potential Activities to support this goal:**

- Review/audit all ADA, auditory, visual and other physical needs
- Audit our collections for inclusion
- Explore facility access issues
- Explore ways for the public to feel more welcome at the Library
- Develop a Library info kiosk/table/map
- Look at ways to utilize our outdoor space

**GOAL 3** *Proactively evaluate and plan for the future.*

**OBJECTIVES:**

- Facilities meet a variety of needs for our community
- Staff report confidence in helping patrons access what they need.
- The Library seeks community input by asking people what they want to see at least once/year
- People see the Library as a community center that is modern and appealing
- People say the Library provides both quiet and interactive spaces

**Potential Activities to support this goal:**

- Create a facility plan - how can we better utilize and modernize the main floor space?
- Investigate designing flexible furniture and spaces
- Develop a plan for regular community feedback

## **FOCUS AREA 2**

### **Advocate for Shared Engagement**

*We work to strengthen relationships and offer programming and space that promote a variety of literacies, civic dialogue, and critical thinking for all age groups.*

**GOAL 1** *Promote critical thinking and a variety of literacies for adults.*

**OBJECTIVES:**

- Patrons feel more comfortable discerning credibility of information because of the Library
- Increase in engagement of Library resources of all types
- Created at least 2 resource guides for staff and public each year
- We are the community's go-to resource for information

**Potential Activities to support this goal:**

- Connect with other organizations with expertise to teach 21<sup>st</sup> century skills
- Identify different "literacies" we would like to help teach and make a plan to add some programs
- Hold community reading programs
- Look at how we distribute information, about the Library AND other, to be sure it's effectively utilized
- Add to our resource guides
- Offer (or partner to offer) programming around critical thinking

**GOAL 2**     *Offer engaging experiences with open dialogue.*

**OBJECTIVES**

- Patrons feel ownership over programming
- Host at least 2 programs for civic dialogue per year
- Patrons identify the Library as a space for engaging with others on important topics

**Potential Activities to support this goal:**

- Consistently scheduled "town hall" type discussions
- Bring in speakers on different topics WITH an open dialogue component
- Offer space to other organizations promoting civic dialogue and engagement

**GOAL 3**     *Create an environment where all people can come together and learn side-by-side and from each other.*

**OBJECTIVES**

- Host at least 2 programs with an Equity, Diversity, & Inclusion focus every year
- Staff feel confident presenting and promoting E.D.I. initiatives
- Patrons feel an increase in their own sense of curiosity
- Patrons feel more comfortable in their community and more connected to the Library

- Add at least 1 multi-generational program (active or passive) every year

**Potential Activities to support this goal:**

- Make updates to our collection which reflect AND stretch our community
- Develop methods for gathering public input into new programming
- Develop new programming that highlights what this particular community – and its residents – provide
- Consider new programming ideas that bring people together and empower them to learn from each other
- Build relationships with other organizations that serve particular segments of our population

## **FOCUS AREA 3**

### **Enhance Awareness**

*We investigate methods for increasing and improving communication and promotion of all we have to offer.*

#### **GOAL 1      *Be more visible across our community.***

**OBJECTIVES:**

- Increase in Library card sign-up
- People will say they see the Library represented at community events and in community spaces
- Increase school visits to 2x/year
- Hold at least 1 outreach event/month
- Increase in winter patronage

**Potential Activities to support this goal:**

- Commit to being present in as many spaces and at as many community events as we can.
- Consider ways to connect with patrons outside of them coming to the Library building.
- Develop a strategy for outreach events to ensure variety and frequency.
- Enhance partnerships with schools.
- Develop winter-specific programming and advertise it across the community.
- Work to ensure that our facilities draw people in.

## **GOAL 2**     *Increase the effectiveness of our communication and marketing.*

### **OBJECTIVES:**

- Increase in program attendance
- *Each year more people indicate they are aware of Library services*
- Increase in newsletter subscriptions

### **Potential Activities to support this goal:**

- Multiple sources of communication to meet people where they are
- Add to/improve our in-Library communication methods, signage, etc.

## **FOCUS AREA 4**

### **Explore Sustainability**

*We explore new and creative funding opportunities and invest in our staff, creating consistency in library services.*

## **GOAL 1**     *Enhance the Board's fiscal leadership.*

### **OBJECTIVES:**

- Each year, Board members report an understanding of the Library's fiscal agency
- Each year, Board Finance Committee will identify two new potential funding sources
- New Board members indicate that within six months of joining the Board they have completed an onboarding checklist
- Offer at least two professional development opportunities per year for our Board

### **Potential Activities to support this goal:**

- Create a Board Finance Committee to focus on Library funding
- Develop a defined, consistent onboarding process for Library Board members
- Cultivate community awareness about how libraries are funded and ways they can support the Library.
- Nurture partnerships with local government and organizations, including giving presentations to highlight library initiatives.
- Explore new and creative budget and funding solutions

## **GOAL 2**     *Deepen staff professional development opportunities and expectations.*

### **OBJECTIVES:**

- Patrons report feeling confident in Library staff
- Staff reports more confidence in doing their jobs
- Increase in staff attending conferences
- Increase in # of staff training opportunities utilized

### **Potential Activities to support this goal:**

- Hold regular staff in-services
- Strengthen and grow staff cross-training and shadowing
- Develop a process for identifying gaps in staff knowledge and providing training

## **GOAL 3**     *Strengthen our supportive internal structure.*

### **OBJECTIVES:**

- Staff report a strong connection and high level of trust with leadership and each other
- Increase in staff retention
- Staff report organizational communication (within teams and overall) is clear, timely, and effective.
- Staff will indicate each year that they have read and understand the policy manuals
- Increase matches of qualified volunteers within needed roles

### **Potential Activities to support this goal:**

- Develop clear policy & procedure manual, including annual reviews
- Establish a method to improve staff coordination/communication
- Develop a staffing model that will ensure patron and employee safety, facilitate excellent customer service, and support strategic goals
- Consider ways for staff to get to develop relationships as a team
- Review and reevaluate possible volunteer job descriptions
- Consider ways to publicize volunteer opportunities

# **APPENDIX: Supplemental Information**

## **Implementation Plan**

- An Implementation Plan will be created to turn the Strategic Plan into action and help the library accomplish the Strategic Plan's goals and objectives.
- The staff of MPPML will be meeting with an MCLS Consultant this spring for a retreat to begin creation of the Implementation Plan.
- The plan will outline the potential opportunities, roles and responsibilities, and decisions necessary to turn the strategic plan into reality. Mapping out a strategic plan this way brings the strategy to life and drives success. It also ensures more buy-in from stakeholders, and guidance so that everyone involved knows what, when, and who will be initiating potential projects.
- The Library will review this document each year to incorporate the ever-changing opportunities for the library, and the needs and interests of the community.

## **Communications Plan**

- A strategic plan document will be made available on the library's website.
- A social media marketing piece will be created and shared on Facebook and Instagram.
- A print marketing piece which states the values, vision, mission, and key priorities will be distributed at the library and other locations.
- An announcement about the new plan will be made in the library's newsletter.

## **Financial Resources and Sustainability**

- Our Operating Fund Budget will be based on available sources of public funding and will not exceed the assessed value growth quotient for the budget year.
- State and Federal grants and grants from other institutions may supplement the budget.
- Funds may be used from the Endowment Fund or from the Growth and Use fund at the Berrien Community Foundation.
- Collaboration with other groups in providing programs and services will enable cost-sharing.

## **Professional Development Plan**

- The library director and supervisory staff will meet quarterly to assess staff training and discern areas of need.
- All staff will be encouraged to attend pertinent training, webinars, and conferences each year, and to take advantage of learning opportunities.

## **Collaboration**

- We have memberships in the Michigan Library Association, and in the Midwest Collaborative for Library Services (MCLS).
- We are members of the Southwest Michigan Library Cooperative.
- We are members of Saint Joseph Today.
- Community partners include (but are not limited to) the area schools, Region IV Area Agency on Aging, The Outcenter, and Berrien Regional Education Service Agency.