

Strategic Plan for Keene Memorial Library, Fremont, NE

Reviewed and re-adopted by the Library Board, August 18, 2014

Approved by the Fremont City Council, September 9, 2014

Start date of Planning: May 17, 2013

End Date: September 2015

Planning Process

Pat Wagner, library consultant, conducted a two day strategic planning process for the Keene Memorial Library on May 17 and 18, 2013. Library Board members Larry Jirsak, Connie Schmeichel, Cindy Slykhuis and Jan Therien participated. Library Director Janet Davenport rounded out the group. Closing of the library Friday afternoon May 17 allowed all staff to participate in a focus group to provide input into the process. A public forum planned over the Friday lunch hour, with lunch provided, was minimally attended.

Community Profile

Fremont is a city of 26,397 located in Dodge County. Although it is the largest population center in the county and a shopping hub for the area, the population has grown slowly, up 1,223 over the last decade. The population has grown in diversity over the last decade, and now nearly 12% of the residents are identified as Hispanic or Latino. Eight percent are from Mexico with the majority of the remaining from other Central American countries. Other ethnic groups represented in the population are Black or African American 0.7%, American Indian and Alaska Native, 0.6% and Asian, 0.6%.

The city of Fremont is located at the convergence of three major highways and is only 20 minutes away from the western edge of Omaha. The ready access to highways contributes to a large number of workers commuting to Douglas County for employment. However, Fremont attracts other area rural residents to the city by offering an array of retail businesses as well as a full-service hospital. The economy is rooted in agriculture and agribusiness with an expanding industrial sector including logistics and transportation and food processing. The manufacturing industry provides the most jobs followed closely by jobs in the education, health care, and social assistance sector.

Seventy percent of the population age 16 and over is in the labor force. The average household income is \$54,480. The unemployment rate is 4.5%. Poverty levels are on the rise with 13.8% of residents identified as having incomes below the poverty line, and 56.1% of the school students are eligible for free and reduced lunch. This student poverty figure is significantly higher than the state rate of 44%. The poverty rate is higher among Hispanic residents.

The Fremont school district serves the city of Fremont as well as local rural residents. The ten school buildings all have libraries with professional staff and access to information and books through technology. There are also a number of parochial

schools serving the area. There is a Head Start program serving pre-school children who qualify based upon income. The community also has two post-secondary institutions which include a community college and a liberal arts college.

The town has a number of recreational facilities including municipal swimming pools, 22 parks, and a large community YMCA facility. The Chamber of Commerce is active in supporting the community and sponsors various community events on an annual basis. There are a number of other civic groups including active Rotary and Jaycee groups who largely support educational initiatives.

Communications are good with the Fremont community being served by a local daily newspaper and a radio station. Television coverage comes out of Omaha.

Community Needs

Community needs were identified as part of the planning process for the library's strategic plan as well as from the City of Fremont comprehensive Plan "Blue Print for Tomorrow". Issues identified include the following:

- Little population growth over the last 40 years
- Disproportionate increase in poverty as compared to the state as a whole
- A growing Hispanic (and Spanish-speaking) population
- Difficulty in attracting businesses to locate in Fremont
- Insufficient middle and lower cost housing

SWOT Assessment

Internal environment

Strengths

- Customer-driven, personal service
- Extensive children's programming and materials including story time and summer reading
- Access to technology
- Extensive music CD collection
- Genealogy resources

Weaknesses

- Limited support for technology
- Limited adult programming for literacy including GED
- Limited offerings for television and movies on DVD
- Not enough staff to have someone walking around to offer assistance
- Limited display areas
- No online reference service offered
- No bilingual pre-school programming

- Limited teen programming
- No Wi-Fi printing capacity
- Limited meeting space
- No community maker space
- No computer lab space for training

External environment

Opportunities

- Need for more thriving businesses including quality restaurants and stores
- Community traditions such as John C. Fremont Days
- Culture is shifting
- Fremont has nice architecture and some well-maintained homes.
- Tech Park has been developed with some additional opportunities for well trained individuals.
- Need to increase the library's visibility in the community

Threats

- Many city buildings need updates to their infrastructure
- Younger population is leaving the city
- Less than welcoming atmosphere for immigrants
- Not all see education as a priority
- Population is shifting and thus creating a more transient, commuter, and elderly population
- There is a perceived lack of involvement in politics and community affairs
- General disinterest in raising taxes to support infrastructure improvements

Library Mission: Preserving our Past, Informing our Present, Inspiring our Future

The Strategic Planning participants see the future Fremont as place where everyone is welcome, has an opportunity to find a good job, get a good education and lead a rich intellectual life.

Goals and Tasks

The Library Board and staff have identified goals and tasks which are focused on library services that can help in making that future for Fremont a reality.

The library board also expresses deep concerns that many of the tasks and goals identified in this document may not be feasible given the current staffing levels of the library. While there is a strong commitment to implement these programming goals, it is expected that all may not be progressing or completed at the end of the defined period.

Goal One: Increase use of the library and its resources to support the economic wellbeing of residents and growth of business in the community.

- Work with the Nebraska Dept. of Labor to provide training on employment skills. Contact by January, 2015.
- Establish regularly scheduled beginning computer classes at KML or at a cooperating location by January 2015.
- Introduce one or more new business and job seeker related services or programs by July, 2015.
- Develop programming on topics such as job hunting, creating a business plan, and writing a resume by May, 2015.
- Partner with other entities such as the Chamber of Commerce and the Greater Fremont Development Agency to support them with information that will help attract new businesses to the Fremont community. Initial contacts by March, 2015.
- Increase information resources and programming to support the startup of new small businesses by July, 2015.
- Provide programming on personal finance in conjunction with the Nebraska Library Association Smart Investing @ Your Library project, by May 2015

Goal Two: Keene Memorial Library will provide an array of resources, programs and services supporting the educational, cultural and intellectual needs of all generations of library customers.

Services to Youth

- Continue to develop early literacy program
 - Provide 2 or more Every Child Ready to Read “Star Power” series by Sept 2015
 - Introduce Prime Time for Preschoolers by Sept 2015
- Teen programming
 - Develop new teen programming, 2 new programs by September 2015
 - Develop teen advisory board into a regularly meeting group by May 2015
- Outreach
 - Develop a tour and program for middle school students to highlight library resources for school work
 - Schedule and represent library at school Orientation nights annually
- Continue quality children’s programming
 - Add bilingual story times by December 2014
- Provide a spring and a fall series of Prime Time Family Reading Time in 2014-15

Services to Adults

- Programming
 - Complete a community programming interest survey and develop an adult programming plan by June 2014
 - Provide One Book One Nebraska programming annually
 - Arrange 6 author visits or comparable programming by Sept 2014
- Collections
 - Complete Weeding of Adult Fiction and Non Fiction collections
 - Expand e-book and e-audio collections
 - Evaluate potential of e-video, identify funding source

Services Promoting Inclusiveness

- Promote participation in the community government
 - KML to be a voter registration site by 2014 midterm election
 - Host non-partisan forums and presentations related to governance in conjunction with election schedule
- Plan for and provide 1 multinational program to measure interest and impact
- Develop one multinational display
- Plan for community conversation based program series in to begin fall 2015

Goal Three: Communicate the services of the library to a wider audience in the community.

- Develop a formal marketing plan by June, 2015.
- Create marketing materials for the library's business related services by September, 2015.
- Implement "Geek the Library, Community Awareness Campaign" September 2014
- Publish a regular library newsletter both in print and online at least six times per year by June 2014
- Reformat and update library website by March, 2015.
- Increase the number of outreach visits in the community by 3% per year.

Goal Four: Utilize the existing facility to provide a welcoming place for community interactions, to disseminate community information, and deliver timely and responsive programming.

- Technology! Technology!
 - Implement and promote Freegal downloadable music by Fall 2013
 - Implement and promote Tutor.com Fall 2013
 - Evaluate Horizon's new web interface and implement if found acceptable

- Add eResource Center module (multiplatform searching) when available
 - Add Mobile Circ module when available – Winter 2014
 - Implement eCommerce credit card interface by Sept 2015
 - Purchase and circulate e-readers by Dec 2014
 - Work with city IT to develop formal technology plan by Sept 2014
- Partnerships
 - Explore opportunities for partnerships with at 2 or more community organizations by Sept 2015
 - Metropolitan Community College
 - Fremont Public Schools
 - Fremont Early Childhood coalition
 - Friendship Center
- Attitude of Hospitality and welcoming
 - Facilities
 - Hire new part time janitor to take on heavy duties and complement work of existing custodial helper; start regular cleaning schedule for carpet and hard surface floors, Spring 2014
 - Renovate landscaping around East Annex - Fall of 2013
 - Evaluate fruit trees on the east of the parking area, possible planting of additional fruit trees – Fall 2014
 - Install new lounge seating on the main floor, Fall 2013, from Keno Grant
 - Install new lounge seating on second floor, Spring 2014 request to Friends of the Keene Memorial Library, A Trust.
 - Return LaBrezza to the library by Dec 2014
 - Install Flat Screen TV/Monitors in East Annex and Board Room by Dec 2014
 - Customer Service
 - Review and revise policies to be customer friendly - ongoing
 - Develop staff training plan and explore possibility of regular 1 day or ½ day closures to provide staff training opportunities – June of 2015

Evaluation:

An evaluation of the plan will take place annually by the library staff and library board. Each goal and objective will be reviewed to determine whether progress has been made. If the objective has not been met, steps will be outlined to modify the objective or to assess what further actions will be needed to meet the measure.