

## Background

The Irvin L. Young Memorial Library continuously assesses the services, resources, and spaces we provide for the community of Whitewater. In order to plan for the next five years with purpose, the library and its board of trustees decided to undertake a strategic planning process informed by the voices of the community.

The staff and board of the library have adopted a plan for the next five years that is focused on improving the library's collections, services, and spaces through a process of listening, learning, and sharing. We are excited to continue to learn from and respond to our community and to in turn, share the vision and values of the Irvin L. Young Memorial Library with our Whitewater citizens.

## The Planning Process

The Irvin L. Young Memorial Library board formed a strategic planning committee composed of library staff and trustees. Under the direction and guidance of strategic planning consultants, data and information from a number of sources were gathered and analyzed between September and December of 2018. The following sources formed the foundation upon which the committee built the goals and objectives of this strategic plan:

- Results of a survey of the community conducted between October 1, 2018 and November 8, 2018 that garnered a total of 288 responses, from frequent and infrequent users of the library.
- Information from three Community Conversations attended by business and civic leaders, educators, officeholders, citizens and library users.
  - The first was held October 27, 2018 with six participants.
  - The second was held October 29, 2018 with nine participants.
  - The third took place November 1, 2018 with five participants.
- Results of an Issues and Needs Questionnaire completed by members of the strategic planning committee.
- Demographic and economic data from the American Community Survey and the 2000 and 2010 US Census.

The strategic planning committee, with the assistance of the consultants, reviewed the data and information and drafted the strategic plan framework on December 12, 2018. The Irvin L. Young Memorial Library board approved the plan on March 18, 2019.

## Findings

A majority of users indicated that the library is providing the services, resources, and collections they need. In particular, the community is very satisfied with the service they receive from the library staff. Survey respondents rated their satisfaction with getting help from a librarian very highly, with an average of 4.5 on a scale of 1 to 5 (one being very dissatisfied and five being very satisfied). Participants in the community conversations expressed their high satisfaction with the staff as well.

The survey also indicated that non-users and infrequent users viewed the library's importance to the community as strongly as regular users. The library, as a trusted community partner, can help promote literacy and learning in all the forms it may take.

The survey and community conversations showed us that the following were the most valued by our community:

- A well-rounded collection to find materials for personal enjoyment and schoolwork
- Free wi-fi access
- Ample computers
- Programs for all ages

However, there were many ideas shared through this process that would require additional space, hours, and staffing. Among the things the community wanted us to improve were:

- Be open more hours
- Host more cultural events
- Increase meeting room availability
- Help build civic engagement and pride
- Increase our work in the area of children's literacy
- Work with community partners to provide a safe and welcoming learning environment for all segments of the community.

## Mission and Values

Our mission is a statement about the role we want to play in our community. It inspires our goals and helps identify our priorities. Our values provide a touchstone for how decisions are made, define how we are expected to behave, the way we want to be perceived, and what we stand for.

### Our Mission

We will have the space and the stuff to do the things that you want.

### Our Values

The staff, board of trustees, and friends of the Irvin L. Young Memorial Library are committed to the following values:

#### ***Safe and welcoming***

Providing a safe space that is inclusive, respectful, and welcoming to all.

#### ***Trust***

Being a place of mutual trust where a person's right to privacy to read and learn is held in absolute confidence.

#### ***Diversity***

Celebrating diversity in our community, collections, and services.

#### ***Fun***

Supporting fun and imagination by providing access to tools, equipment, spaces, and opportunities for enrichment and entertainment.

***Lifelong learning and creativity***

Sparking curiosity and encouraging discovery through our collections, services, and programs.

***Making connections***

Bringing area residents together to socialize and collaborate while cultivating partnerships for the benefit of our community.

***Service excellence***

Taking pride in serving the community with the thoughtful use of our resources and a relentless drive to innovate and evolve.

## Goals

The library wants to meet the demands of the community so we have laid out the following four goal areas for the next five years.

**Building Toward the Future**

We will undertake a process of assessment to make sure our spaces, collections, and services align with the present and future needs of the community.

- *Develop spaces that fit the diverse and ever-changing needs of our community.*

**Center for Learning and Connecting, Inside the Building and Out**

We are committed to excellent and inclusive services for all members of our community. We will provide collections, services, and spaces that appeal to all members of the Whitewater community and meet their learning needs.

- *Increase inclusivity and access to services and resources that the library provides.*
- *Provide programming and collections that appeal across multiple segments of the Whitewater community.*
- *Provide welcoming, safe, and comfortable spaces throughout the library, both in the physical library and virtual library spaces.*

**Engaging and Effective Communication**

We will expand awareness of the library and our role in Whitewater as a community through effective communication efforts.

- *Increase awareness of all the library does and offers.*
- *Share community stories to highlight the needs and opportunities in Whitewater.*
- *Develop library advocates to promote the value of the library.*

## Strengthening Partnerships

We will engage members of the community to develop lasting civic engagement and pride of place. We will expand existing partnerships and initiate new connections that promote community success and lifelong learning.

- *Cultivate partners to support the library's mission.*
- *Create an environment to help other groups and organizations find ways to collaborate.*
- *Partner with schools and other organizations and groups to provide safe spaces and learning opportunities for school age children in the community.*
- *Explore ways to increase engagement and involvement in the city.*

## Implementation, Assessment, and Communication

The staff and board of trustees will work toward each of these goals over the course of the next five years. The library will undertake activities for each, but some work will inform the work in other areas. Specifically, the library will need to focus efforts in the first two years of the plan creating and executing a campaign to understand how the community views the library, how the library can understand the values of Whitewater, and how the library can show why it is a community partner in achieving larger goals in the community. This work will logically inform the next steps of the strategic plan, from building collections to designing spaces to staffing decisions.

The library director and staff will work in conjunction with the board of trustees to prioritize and identify service goals, and coordinate activities from this plan. The library will consider available resources, including funding and staff time; changing conditions locally, regionally, and statewide; and opportunities that arise to innovate during the implementation of the plan.

The ongoing planning process for the library will include project management, assessment, communication, and re-prioritization activities. The library will follow the following annual process and schedule to implement the strategic plan.

- June –The library director, in consultation with staff, provides a report to the library board, assessing progress implementing plan activities. The board, working with the director, will determine if adjustments to the plan are needed based on changing conditions or new challenges and opportunities, and will identify activities that will be the focus of the library's efforts in the following year. The decisions of the board will be reflected in the library's budget planning process and reported to the board as the budget is developed.
- December – The library director, with input from staff, prepares a report for the board, summarizing the prior year's work and identifying activities slated for the upcoming year.

## Acknowledgments

The Irvin L. Young Memorial Library would like to thank the community for their participation in our strategic planning process. Understanding the needs of Whitewater residents, from those that use the library on a weekly basis, to those who might never step foot inside of the library building, is imperative to prioritizing our work over the course of the next several years. These voices help guide our decisions and our goals. Thank you to those who completed a survey, attended a community conversation, or chatted with one of our staff or board members to let us know how we can best serve the people of Whitewater. Appreciation is extended to the wonderful staff whose understanding of the library and our community were critical in the creation of this plan.

The following individuals were instrumental in exploring the needs of the community and the library. We sincerely thank each for their support, hard work, and willingness to dedicate their time to create the best plan for the library and Whitewater.

### **Planning Team**

- Anne Hartwick, Library Trustee, President
- Richard Helmick, Library Trustee, Vice President
- Diane Jaroch, Assistant Library Director
- Stacey Lunsford, Library Director
- Deana Rolfsmeyer, Youth Educational Services Librarian
- Jaime Weigel, Library Trustee, Alternate

### **Library Board of Trustees**

- Anne Hartwick, President
- Richard Helmick, Vice-President
- Julie Caldwell, Treasurer
- Brienne Diebolt-Brown, Secretary
- Patrick Singer (Council Representative)
- Jim Winship
- Cory Pepler (School District Representative)
- Jaime Weigel (Alternate)

The library would also like to thank Melissa McLimans and Bruce Smith from WILS (Wisconsin Library Services) for providing planning process management and facilitation services to develop our strategic plan.