



OPENING DOORS FOR CURIOUS MINDS

**A STRATEGIC PLAN FOR THE
WEST FARGO PUBLIC LIBRARY
2015 - 2019**

OPENING DOORS FOR CURIOUS MINDS

Appreciation is extended to the following people for their contributions, hard work and dedication in creating this plan for the West Fargo Public Library:

Strategic Planning Committee

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Appreciation is also due to the hundreds of West Fargo area residents who participated in the plan through their attendance at focus groups, by completing a survey, and/or by participating in personal interviews that were conducted as part of the planning process.

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A MESSAGE FROM THE LIBRARY DIRECTOR

This is an exciting time in the City of West Fargo. As one of the fastest growing communities in the state, our population expanded at a rate of 72.9% between 2000 and 2010 ... and it continues to grow! To meet the needs resulting from this phenomenal growth, the community is building new schools and infrastructure.

The public library, too, must look forward and seek ways to meet the future information and cultural needs of our community. In January, 2014, a planning committee was formed to undertake a major strategic planning project. During the course of this project, input was gathered from hundreds of residents who participated through community surveys, focus group meetings, and interviews. The resulting plan charts a path to a 21st century library which serves as a center of community learning, activity, and creativity.

We are grateful to all those who participated in this planning process, and we look forward to providing ever-improving service to the people of this great city!

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INTRODUCTION

The West Fargo Public Library recognizes that a growing, thriving West Fargo community needs a 21st century library that opens doors for curious minds and enriches the lives of its residents. The strategic plan that follows embraces the growing importance of technology and digital resources, affirms the ongoing importance of books and other print resources, and emphasizes the important role the Library plays in stimulating creativity by bringing people together with ideas and with each other.

The availability of broadband Internet connectivity and the proliferation of laptop computers, smart phones, tablets and e-readers have caused some to question the relevance of public libraries. Recent research related to the market share of e-books and reader preferences paints a different picture. Studies indicate that we will likely be living in the world of “AND” rather than a world of “OR” (e-content AND print resources rather than e-content OR print resources) for many years to come. Both national and local statistics affirm these facts. Public library usage in America during the last decade has been higher than at any time in the history of the institution.

While the emergence of technologies will clearly continue to have an impact on the way new generations of readers, listeners and viewers acquire content, the public library service model of acquiring content (whether digital or print) once for the benefit of many is more vital than ever. The Library’s digital resources are expanding to meet this growing need. Furthermore, public libraries are increasingly serving as creative centers of community life where people gather to interact with ideas and with each other.

Unfortunately, as the City of West Fargo has grown, the location of the existing Public Library facility in a residential setting has become less central in relation to the middle of the community’s population. Consequently, the Library suffers from a lack of visibility. This plan seeks to address the VISIBILITY of the Library as well as its VIBRANCY and its VIABILITY.

The West Fargo Library can’t become the 21st century library that it needs to be on its own. Success in the implementation of its plan will require active partnerships with a wide variety of community stakeholders ranging from individual residents to the City of West Fargo government and from local businesses to schools and non-profit agencies. With broad community support, the Library can contribute to the development of children’s reading skills, provide opportunities for lifelong learning for people of all ages, and encourage creativity and innovation.

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THE PLANNING PROCESS

This plan is the result of many months of hard work by a dedicated Strategic Planning Committee comprised of citizen representatives as well as Library Board members and Library staff members. The Committee met on three occasions throughout the process.

The Committee considered a significant amount of information that came directly from residents of the City and the surrounding area. A total of 212 individuals responded to a mail survey distributed to 1,200 randomly selected households. Another 393 residents participated through web-based surveys. Focus groups involving the public and staff netted another 39 participants. Fourteen individuals identified as having unique insights into the community and the West Fargo Library were also interviewed.

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THE PLANNING FRAMEWORK



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OUR VALUES – WHAT WE BELIEVE

The West Fargo Public Library is guided by the following values in everything it does:

COMMUNITY/CIVIC ENGAGEMENT – The West Fargo Public Library believes that communities thrive on public interaction and participation and that by providing opportunities for people to gather and explore ideas, the Library can help build a stronger community.

COLLABORATION – The West Fargo Public Library believes that by working together with other governmental entities, non-profit organizations, businesses, and with individuals that share the Library's vision for a strong, cohesive community, it can maximize the benefits available to every resident.

CREATIVITY & INNOVATION – The West Fargo Public Library believes that connecting people with ideas and with each other in an information-rich environment invigorates the community and stimulates a creative economy.

DISCOVERY & LIFELONG LEARNING – The West Fargo Public Library believes that every life is enriched through discovery and learning and that by fostering the joy of reading and a love of learning, the Library contributes to the quality of life enjoyed by all.

EQUALITY & RESPECT – The West Fargo Public Library respects the public and recognizes that the people of West Fargo are not only the Library's customers, they are the reason the Library exists. The Library believes that quality information resources should be readily available and equally accessible to all.

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OUR MISSION – WHY WE EXIST

By connecting individuals with information, ideas, and with each other, the West Fargo Public Library enriches lives and strengthens the community.

“I read a lot... I read mostly nonfiction because I always want to learn more about how the world works... and reading is how I learn best.”

Bill Gates



OUR VISION – HOW WE SEE THE FUTURE

We envision a strong, cohesive West Fargo community where people live, learn, grow, and succeed together!

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"A library outranks any other one thing a community can do to benefit its people. It is a never failing spring in the desert."

Andrew Carnegie

**"Make no little plans.
They have no magic to stir men's blood...
make big plans;
aim high in hope and work."**

- Daniel Burnham

Daniel Burnham, the Chicago architect and visionary who challenged the "Windy City" to attempt and accomplish great things in the late 1890s and early 1900s, was not shy in setting high goals for his adopted city. Over 100 years later, the residents of Chicago are still enjoying the parks and buildings that resulted from his lofty aspirations.

In a similar way, the West Fargo Public Library needs to make bold plans for the future. West Fargo is already a thriving community. The City's future looks bright indeed. However, investment in the future and quality of educational and cultural institutions are key elements that set extraordinary places apart from mundane communities. The Public Library is a critical institution that offers opportunity for all and enhances the quality of life enjoyed by the citizens of the West Fargo area. The strategic plan that follows attempts to set a course that will ensure that, as West Fargo continues to grow, it will also nurture educated and enriched citizens that contribute to a vibrant, thriving community.

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OUR STRATEGIES – HOW WE INVEST OUR RESOURCES



We strategically invest our resources in six areas to create a visible, vibrant, and viable library that helps create a cohesive, thriving community.

- **Our Customers** – The people of the West Fargo area who the Library exists to serve
 - **Our Resources** – The physical books and periodicals, non-print media, and the digital content the Library offers to the public
 - **Our Programs** – The events and gatherings the Library sponsors to create opportunities for learning and interaction
 - **Our Technology** – The technological infrastructure and tools that enable public access to digital content and facilitate creativity
 - **Our Facility** – The physical spaces that support our vision of nurturing learning, creating opportunities and enriching lives
 - **Our Staff** – The knowledgeable, friendly, professional workers who are dedicated to excellence in public service
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OUR GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

CUSTOMER / PUBLIC AWARENESS

Goal 1: Fuel a passion for reading, personal growth and learning

Objective 1: To ensure that the public recognizes the importance of reading and lifelong learning and that it continues to associate reading and lifelong learning with the Library

Objective 2: To ensure that all residents of West Fargo recognize the importance of reading to personal success and the economic vitality of the community



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Goal 2: Establish the Library as a civic focal point and resource hub for the greater West Fargo community

Objective 1: To ensure that all West Fargo residents know that the Library exists, know where it is located, and are aware of the resources and services it offers

Objective 2: To enhance the public's perception of the Library as an active center of community life



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RESOURCES

Goal 3: *Expand access to information and ideas*

Objective 1: To connect West Fargo residents of all ages with reading resources they need and/or will enjoy



Objective 2: To enhance the availability of information content that is available through the Library's web-presence

Goal 4: *Offer opportunities for individuals to develop the critical skills they need to find, evaluate, and effectively use information to meet their own goals and needs to succeed in school, in the workplace, and in their daily lives*

Objective 1: To enhance the Library's role as a source of information literacy and digital literacy training



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PROGRAMS

Goal 5: Provide opportunities for people of all ages to explore new ideas and expand their horizons, and enrich their lives through library programs that inform, enlighten, inspire and delight.

Objective 1: To offer West Fargo residents of all ages more opportunities to explore new ideas, discover new information, and experience and enjoy culture and the arts through firsthand, in-person, and hands-on experiences



Objective 2: To encourage the development of knowledge and skills related to science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) through effective partnerships with schools and the business community



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Goal 6: Expand the Library's capacity to make a positive difference in people's lives

Objective 1: To identify and nurture strategic partnerships that enable the Library to offer opportunities for people of all ages to explore new ideas, acquire new skills, and discover new information



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TECHNOLOGY

Goal 7: *Ensure connections to the digital world*

Objective 1: To ensure that all residents have access to the technologies they need to succeed in school and to compete in a global economy

Objective 2: To expose the public to technologies that enable them to explore topics of interest and to discover new information that enhances their quality of life



Goal 8: *Provide opportunities to explore, create and share new digital content*

Objective 1: To expand the range of technologies offered by the Library that encourage and support the arts, sciences, innovation and creative expression

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FACILITIES

Goal 9: Build a physical environment in the Library that encourages exploration, discovery, imagination and creativity

Objective 1: To offer the public effective and efficient services from highly visible physical facilities that are conveniently located

Objective 2: To ensure that the physical library facility/facilities is/are able to accommodate the characteristics of exemplary 21st century public libraries such as a robust technological infrastructure, diverse spaces for meeting and group interaction, and the ability to support hands-on learning and creative expression

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STAFF

Goal 10: Foster an organizational culture of customer service, professional growth, and innovation

Objective 1: To ensure that residents of West Fargo are served by a friendly, welcoming, knowledgeable, and professional team of Library staff members who pride themselves on offering excellent customer service

Objective 2: To ensure that staff members receive the education and training they need to offer library and information services in a digital age
