

MEMORANDUM

TO: Robert J. O'Connor, Mayor
FROM: Daisy Porter-Reynolds, Executive Director, Aurora Public Library
DATE: December 1, 2016
SUBJECT: Library Strategic Plan 2017-2019

PURPOSE:

To communicate the goals of the Aurora Public Library's 2017-2019 Strategic Plan to the mayor, the city council, and the general public.

BACKGROUND:

In early 2016, the Board of Directors hired Lynn Elam Consulting to facilitate the creation of a new strategic plan with a significant community research component. The planning process for the 36-month plan is based on the Public Library Association's manual for public libraries, *Strategic Planning for Results*.

The planning process produced a vision statement based on core values of the library; four service responses, or links between the community's needs, interests, and priorities and the programs and services a library offers; a set of goals, or the outcomes the community will receive as a result of library programs and services; for each goal, several objectives, the means by which the progress towards the goals is measured; a list of activities, or actions to achieve the goals and objectives; and a set of organizational competencies and initiatives for the library to develop and maintain effective, efficient operational processes.

Through the use of environmental scanning, stakeholder interviews, focus groups and SWOT analysis, key service responses were identified that articulated the goals, objectives, and activities for the library.

Steps in the Planning Process

The Strategic Planning Committee met with the consultant several times to discuss the planning process and anticipated outcomes and to set a schedule of activities necessary for the formulation of the plan.

The consultant attended programs at Santori, Eola Road Branch and West Branch of to observe and speak to attendees about library usage and the direction the library should take for future services.

The consultant, along with the Planning Committee, held focus groups to gather community input. The Planning Committee created a series of questions for community stakeholders that focused on perceptions of the library, current usage and desired future services and programs. A main focus of the interview session was to identify community service gaps that the Library could fill. Groups interviewed included community leaders, parents, teens, Latinos and non-users. Generally, all participants spoke highly of the library, its connections to the community, and the value that it provides to residents. Some areas of need were noted centering on size and availability of collections, additional hours, communication, and needs of specific user groups. A summary of comments was submitted to the library.

Concurrently with the focus groups, the Northern Illinois University Center for Governmental Studies conducted a community-wide survey to determine usage and future direction of services. The survey was conducted by cell and landline telephone during June and July of 2016. A total of 452 Aurora residents completed the survey

Internally, the consultant conducted SWOT (strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, threats) analyses with several groups of staff. Both groups identified the staff's expertise, customer service and willingness to provide extra effort as the number-one strength of the Library.

Subsequent to the SWOT analysis and community interviews, the consultant met with the Planning Committee to review and incorporate these findings into the extended strategic plan. During this meeting selected service responses were proposed and approved. The committee began development of the goals and objectives for review by trustees.

Following all data collection, establishment of service responses and goals and objectives, the trustees and Planning Committee met during a full-day retreat to review and finalize the goals of the plan. Additionally, those in attendance began work on the library's new vision statement.

I, along with senior staff and the consultant, reviewed organizational competencies needed to deliver effective services under the plan's service responses in the areas of finance, marketing and public relations, measurement and evaluation, operational efficiencies, organizational structure, policies, and training and staff development. Based on review, senior staff created organizational initiatives needed to meet the plan's goals and objectives. These initiatives are incorporated into the working documents of the library.

DISCUSSION:

Please see the attached document, which provides an overview of the strategic plan's focus areas and high-level goals. This plan should serve as a guide to library trustees and staff. It is intended to have enough flexibility to meet the changing needs and desires of the community for the next three years. The plan will also be used as a framework for budgeting and allocation of resources.

Regular review of progress in achieving the goals and objectives of the plan will be reviewed quarterly by senior staff, reviewed with employees quarterly, and reported semiannually to the board of directors.

RECOMMENDATION:

That the enclosed Library Strategic Plan Overview be included in the City of Aurora's budget documents as an illustration of the library's intended path over the next three years.

(attachment)