



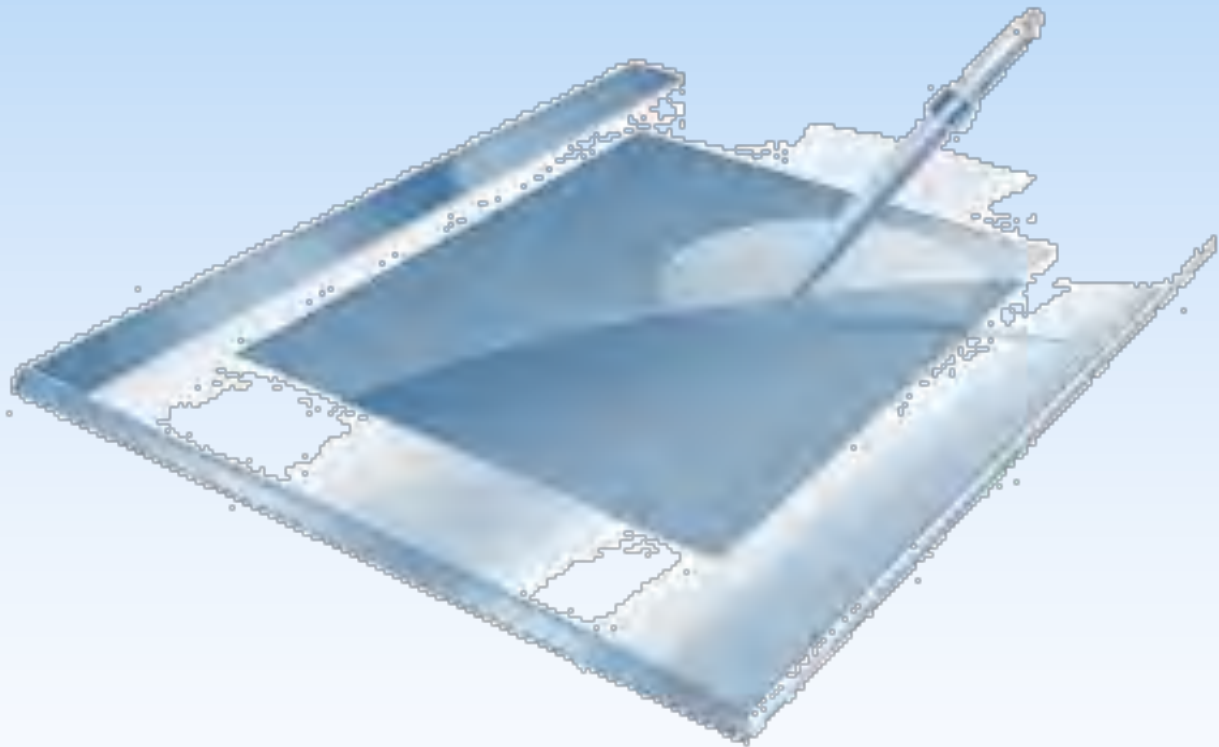
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The Henderson County Public Library



Strategic Plan 2012 – 2022

Planning the Future of Our Library



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The Henderson County Public Library Strategic Plan

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INTRODUCTION

Purpose of this Strategic Plan

The twenty-first century has ushered in the need for great transformation within public libraries. On the one hand, the traditional role of the library can be defined as a center of community life, a place to gain access to educational, informational, and recreational materials, and a place where people can interact with fellow citizens to share and discuss ideas. These definitions clearly continue to be an important part of what the library is and does. Conversely, the advent of the internet, mobile communications devices, and downloadable titles requires new approaches to the services and resources that the library provides. In order to remain relevant, the library must evolve in ways that track both the pace of these technological changes and the diverse needs of our users, while ensuring that all members of our community continue to have equal access to the world of ideas.



This strategic plan — the result of a series of analytic conversations about the future of the library — is our road map to the future. The plan will provide the library with vision, direction, and guidance during this time of great transformation. The plan will ensure that the library stays true to its mission and adapts thoughtfully to emerging challenges to best meet the needs of our patrons.



The Library Then

In 1914 the Hendersonville Public Library began serving its citizens in a 3,000-square-foot facility containing approximately 600 books. By the end of the first year the library had 557 card holders and an annual circulation of 7,800 items. The city remained responsible for the operation of the library until 1950 when it became a joint city-county venture. By 1957 the county had assumed full responsibility for the operation of the library, at which time it became known as the Henderson County Public Library.

By 1967 the facility had begun to experience considerable growing pains. The collection had reached 25,000 volumes and annual circulation had increased to 120,000. County commissioners purchased property at the corner of Washington Street and Third Avenue, and in 1970 a new 20,095-square-foot library at 301 N. Washington Street opened for business.

The new facility was designed to accommodate a growth span of twenty years, but due to the rapid growth and expansion of the county population the library had once again outgrown the facility by the mid-1980s. On July 25, 1990, groundbreaking for a two-story main library addition took place, and in 1992 the main library opened its newly expanded 42,500-square-foot facility containing 140,000 volumes.



The first Henderson County Public Library was donated by Andrew Carnegie and the property by Capt. Marion Columbus Toms. The building stands on the corner of Fourth Avenue and King Street and served as the county library until July 1970.

Between 1977 and 1990, through the efforts of and funding from community organizations, four branch libraries were opened throughout the county. The Fletcher, Etowah, Edneyville, and Green River libraries were each opened to meet the needs of the **growing population in the county's** outlying areas. In 2005 a fifth branch library was opened in Mills River.

During these two decades the library went through a period of considerable transformation as paper card catalogs were replaced with computerized catalogs, obsolete collections were removed, new audiovisual collections were begun, and annual circulation reached 500,000. The library used updated community information and analysis to aid in planning and executing this transformation, and to ensure that the needs of the community were being met throughout the process.



The free service library bookmobile in 1943.

The Library Now

During the two decades since 1990 library hours, services, and users have steadily increased; circulation has increased by over 94 percent. The six-branch library system has grown to include over 275,000 print, audiovisual, and digital titles; to serve over 57,500 library card holders; and to circulate over 970,000 items annually. This increase coincides with, and is in large part a result of, a 54 percent increase in county population during the same twenty-year period.

Looking forward to the next twenty years, the library finds itself faced with a 33 percent projected population growth and an increased demand for materials and services. This great demand comes at a time when the library is confronted with space constraints, staff shortages, and reduced funding. Planning is a critical step to effectively doing more with less. The strategic plan provides an outline of the library of the future, one that effectively allocates finite resources and continues to offer quality services to the residents of Henderson County.

The Planning Process

In early 2011 the Henderson County Public Library embarked on a strategic planning process designed to define its twenty-first century priorities and services. Throughout the course of several months, many individuals and groups shared their ideas, opinions, and passions about the services and collections provided throughout the library system.



In April 2011 the newly formed Strategic Planning Committee began meeting to review current services and structures, analyze library usage data, and identify avenues for garnering public input throughout the planning process. It was determined that the combined use of a survey with predefined focus groups would provide the best opportunities for public involvement.

During a nine-week period over the summer, 825 people responded to the Henderson County Public Library Community survey, answering questions about their current use of **the library's resources and buildings**, their engagement with library staff members, and their ideas for the future of the library system. Throughout this same time period, the Planning Committee facilitated focus groups with parents of young children, teens, older adults, Latinos, and library staff. A total of 89 people participated in these discussions, which focused on how the library can better serve these populations.

Throughout this planning process the Strategic Planning Committee continued to meet regularly to review the input from these various sources, identify themes, and design **strategic initiatives to guide the library's** development over the next several years.

GUIDING PRINCIPLES

MISSION

The mission of the Henderson County Public Library is to provide informational, educational, cultural, and recreational services to the residents of Henderson County.

VISION

The vision of the Henderson County Public Library is to be a safe and friendly destination which serves the roles of public library and community center. It is a place where people can embrace and discover the rich heritage and vibrant future of the community, connect socially and intellectually with family and friends, and successfully access resources that will allow them to live more fulfilled and productive lives.



Summary of Strategic Directions & Goals

GOAL 1 *Connect To The Online World*

Provide digital access and instruction so the community can engage in the online world.

GOAL 2 *Encourage Young Readers*

Prepare youth from birth to 18 to succeed in school and life.

GOAL 3 *Be A Visible And Engaged Presence*

Market and provide information about library programs, activities, and services to the community.

GOAL 4 *Create & Maintain A Comfortable Place*

Create and maintain flexible, safe, and inviting spaces that meet individual and community service needs.

GOAL 5 *Aid Citizens To Make Informed Decisions*

Provide the community with the services and resources needed to make informed decisions.

GOAL 1

Connect To The Online World

Provide digital access and instruction so the community can engage in the online world.

The online world ten years from now will no doubt look very different from the online world of today. However, people will still want to use their mobile and computing devices to communicate, transfer, look up, and create information. When they come to the Henderson County Public Library they will find facilities, equipment, and staff ready to meet their needs to engage in that online world.



In large part this will be made possible by a staff well-trained in the use of the technologies available at the library. These technologies will include mobile, wireless, and hard-wired devices, available for use in-house or for checkout. We imagine that devices similar to tablets and e-readers will be available for checkout and that the public will be able to access not only our materials, but the larger digital world using these devices. The library will also be

a repository for digital, as well as print materials that the public may access with our devices or their own. For example, digital books, both in audio and text form, are very popular now; no doubt they will exist in some form in the future and we will provide the means to access those items. Many of these technological resources will also be accessible by the public anywhere outside the library via the internet and the use of their library smart card.

Technology training will also be available to the public. Again, some of the training will be accessible via the internet on our website, **perhaps in the form of “webinars”**. Other training sessions will be conducted by staff for the public at our branches. Training will cover a range of topics, from computer basics and software to the latest trending Web technologies. To sustain our training goals, staff will receive ongoing technology training.



GOAL 2

Encourage Young Readers

Prepare youth from birth to eighteen to succeed in school and life.

We envision the Youth Services Department of the future as an inviting, interactive, and innovative place for children, teens, and families — a place where children and teens will want to come.

Although the library is committed to keeping up with the many technological advances in this rapidly changing world, library Youth Services will always keep a place for **traditional children's library services such as story times**, summer reading programs, and print collections with wonderful picture, board, chapter, and informational books. These services are vital to helping children and teens prepare for school and life. But library youth ser-



VICES of the future must go beyond the traditional and computer services of today. Offering a variety of interactive and innovative electronic formats will help kids **prepare for tomorrow's online world**. Expanding our parent-child computer centers to include various electronic "stations" such as an interactive listening station, an online story-time station, or a gaming station will give children the opportunity to become familiar with electronic formats and feel confident using them.

We will utilize existing space effectively by streamlining collections; this will allow us to expand not only the electronic services we offer, but also create age-specific spaces, such as a baby and toddler corner, a preschool area, a school-age (K-4) **section**, a 'tween' area for grades 5-8, and a separate but connecting space for older



teens. Creating better defined 'tween' and teen spaces with laptops, internet access, game and learning stations, as well as electronic and print collections will give upper elementary, middle school, and high school students a place to study, explore, and socialize.

Collaboration with other youth-centered agencies in the community is another high priority. Partnering with community youth organizations such as local day cares, the Boys & Girls Club, Youth Theatre, 4-H Club, Blue Ridge Community College, and the public schools will provide opportunities for youth of all ages to engage in a variety of cultural programs and services.

GOAL 3

Be A Visible And Engaged Presence

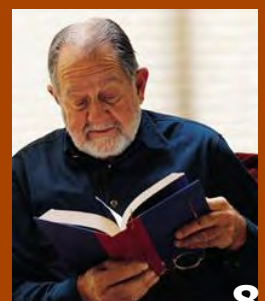
Market and provide information about library programs, activities, and services to the community.

A positive user experience is paramount to the success of the library of the future; thus, the library needs to reach out to all diverse groups within the Henderson County community. Marketing our services to the user will be a key component for staying relevant in the minds of everyone in the community. Marketing can be done in various cost-effective ways that will be reviewed and implemented annually.

The library will market to the community using four strategies. First, in-house marketing will include digital signage, up-to-date and attractive newsletters, vibrant posters, and word of mouth through personal interaction with patrons. Second, local print media sources will be utilized on an ongoing basis. Third, the library will increase its virtual presence by updating its website, creating new e-newsletters, and using social networking sites and blogs. Finally, building community partnerships will help us reach more Henderson County residents. These efforts will include, participating in festivals and fairs, communicating with schools, hosting joint events, and creating outreach opportunities.

The wide and varying use of electronic marketing and communication is an opportunity that the library must embrace in order to reach all diverse segments of our population and the youth of the community. We will continue to review our current electronic marketing methods and look for new and engaging electronic methods to reach both our core and potential patron base.

The result of positive and effective marketing will be an increase in the number of **new library users**. **The library's relevancy and existence is dependent on users who** view the library as a place to gather as a family and a community.



GOAL 4

Create And Maintain A Comfortable Place

Create and maintain flexible, safe, and inviting spaces that meet individual and community service needs.

Whether planning a new building, remodeling an existing facility, or simply just refreshing one area in a corner of the library, we want our spaces to be welcoming. Accommodating, convenient, attractive, and well-maintained facilities will ensure that patrons feel welcome and comfortable — and keep coming back.

To be certain that patrons' needs are met, we aim to provide space for them to conduct research, relax with a good book, socialize with friends, or engage with their children. We will provide flexible space for collaborative learning and quiet study, community meetings and public performances, bulletin boards, and exhibits. Our spaces will still archive physical collections, but also serve as portals to virtual collections and virtual services.

Wherever practicable we will remove barriers to extend the welcome. Our facilities will be conveniently located for pedestrians, and accessible by car, public transport, and other means of transportation. Buildings with adequate parking and safe, well-lit approaches will be foremost in our thinking. Inside accessibility to services and collections will be enhanced with effective signage and logical floor plans. Shelving and furniture will be well placed to ensure traffic flow and maximize the visibility of key areas and service points. Opening up spaces and replacing large impersonal desks with smaller, multifunctional ones will free the staff to engage more easily with patrons. For added convenience and cost-savings, we will always be looking to provide more self-service options.

We will create aesthetically pleasing, age-appropriate spaces, with attractive color schemes and comfortable furnishings. We will enhance our interiors with locally produced arts and crafts to establish a sense of place and celebrate our regional character. Always cost-conscious, we will strive to be good stewards of county tax dollars. We will support green initiatives in building, remodeling, and maintaining our facilities. Saving money *and* the environment at the same time is something we can all feel good about.



GOAL 5

Aid Citizens To Make Informed Decisions

Provide the community with the services and resources needed to make informed decisions.

The Reference Collection Web page will be organized along topics that are important to people in making everyday decisions. Examples of these topics are health, finances, consumer information, legal, real estate, job search. The Web page will link patrons to print and electronic resources and provide online learning tools where appropriate.

There will be a systematic method for seeking ongoing formal and informal feedback from patrons and staff concerning which resources and topics are popular or useful. These can then be integrated into the reference collection as needed, while less useful resources and topics can be removed. Reference staff will also provide ongoing instruction to patrons on the accessing of library resources, and how they can be used to make informed decisions.

Resources will be easily and freely accessible not only through wireless and internet, but also through mobile devices. In addition, reference staff will be embedded in the library, making use of tablet computers to assist patrons.



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