



CONNECTING NORTHVILLE TO THE WORLD OF KNOWLEDGE

STRATEGIC PLAN 2023 – 2025



NORTHVILLE DISTRICT LIBRARY

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Northville District Library
212 W. Cady Street
Northville, Michigan 48167
248-349-3020

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Prepared in partnership with [The Ivy Group](#)





NORTHVILLE DISTRICT LIBRARY

MISSION & VISION

Mission

The Northville District Library offers our community the means to discover, learn, grow, and enjoy life. We provide and promote resources and connections to the world of knowledge and imagination.

Vision

Enriching Lives, Inspiring Discovery,
Connecting Community

Slogan

Connecting you to Ideas,
Information & Imagination!



northvillelibrary.org

LETTER FROM THE DIRECTOR

On behalf of the Northville District Library (NDL), I am pleased to present our FY2023-FY2026 Strategic Plan.

The last time the NDL commissioned a strategic plan was in 2010. Since that time, much has changed in our communities and in how libraries provide service to the public.

Throughout 2022, the NDL worked with the Ivy Group to scan the local environment, benchmark against peer libraries, examine changing demographics, interview library stakeholders and community leaders, and execute the largest patron survey in the NDL's history. To those of you who participated in any of these activities, thank you for helping the NDL plan its next chapter!

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From the research that was conducted, four key themes emerged and these make up the cornerstones of the new plan:

Convenience and Access: How can the NDL increase usage by making its collections, services, and programs more relevant and accessible to community?

Programs and Collections: What can the NDL do to expand the breadth and depth of the diversity of collections and programs based upon evolving community needs?

Space: How can the NDL reconfigure its footprint to optimize use for current and changing user needs and technological updates?

Unique Identity: What can the NDL do to raise public awareness of its unique and unusual offerings?

The Strategic Plan is meant to serve as a roadmap for the NDL to build upon and enhance its existing services and to implement new innovations. It will serve as living document that will help to guide library leadership in its decision making process so that the NDL can continue to fulfill its core mission of enriching lives, inspiring discovery and connecting all members of the Northville communities to the world of knowledge.

Laura Mancini

Library Director

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Northville District Library (NDL) engaged the services of The Ivy Group to assess its performance against peer libraries nationwide, review societal trends impacting library service, and analyze community feedback and perceptions of the Library to determine how to provide the most relevant services to its residents over the next three years.

Northville District Library serves the City of Northville and Northville Township. The Northville communities are affluent, highly educated areas in Southeast Michigan that are now facing notable challenges: major demographic shifts, declining school enrollment, and community concerns regarding development projects and changes to their unique historical identity. The area evokes a small-town charm and a strong sense of history, located in close proximity to the amenities of Ann Arbor and Detroit. It boasts excellent cultural, recreational, and educational opportunities. The Northville Public Schools topped Niche's ranking of state school districts in 2022, and has a nationally accredited Early Childhood program. Over 66% of adults hold a bachelor's degree or higher. The population is becoming more diverse, and 15% of Township residents are Asian. Looking forward, growth is projected with the redevelopment of the Northville Downs racetrack. The median age is expected to rise, and a projected 40% of residents will be aged 65-84 by 2045. ([2020 US Census](#), [DataUSA](#))

The Library is well supported by the community. The August 2022 millage passed with an 82% approval rate, the most successful of the more than 50 library millage issues during that election cycle.

RESEARCH HIGHLIGHTS INCLUDE:

- Community leaders and stakeholders unanimously praised the invaluable services provided by NDL.
- The Library is highly regarded as a community anchor and a vital educational partner to the local schools.
- An overwhelming majority of the staff report high morale and maintain that their jobs are a source of great pride.
- Telephone and online survey respondents reported high satisfaction rates with the Library's staff and services and offered numerous suggestions for enhancement.

- The consultants heard directly from several respondents regarding why they did not use the Library.
- A market segmentation study identified households who do not currently use the Library and recommended services to engage both non-user households and current patrons.

Community residents also identified several challenges for the Library. These included meeting the needs of an increasingly diverse community, continuing to remain relevant to different generations, and integrating the Library's services with broader community priorities. Despite the many programs and services offered by the Library, a large segment of the community appears to be unaware of everything that the Library has to offer. Still, surveys revealed that most users are "very satisfied" with the Northville District Library. NDL has an excellent opportunity to build on very positive community sentiments and significantly enhance overall community satisfaction with its services.

The Ivy Group collated and analyzed the extensive information from their research and reported their findings at a planning summit attended by staff, trustees, and Friends of the Library. What emerged is a portrait of a community that maintains very traditional perspectives of the Library's role in providing a wide collection of physical and digital materials, and in serving as a gathering place for residents to pursue personal interests, hobbies, and educational goals. Internal stakeholder workgroups reviewed the consultants' findings to identify major themes that would form the crux of the Library's new Strategic Plan. Four major areas of focus arose from their discussions:

1. Programs and Collections
2. Spaces
3. Convenience and Access
4. Unique Identity

Library leadership and staff then prioritized specific strategies and tactics under each of these areas where the Library can make the most impact on the community. With an overarching focus on these areas and a concentrated effort to communicate the Library's many offerings, NDL is well positioned to build on its successful service to residents, bolster its excellent reputation and significantly enhance its image in the community.

PROJECT METHODOLOGY

To prioritize the issues facing the Northville District Library and to understand community perspectives, the strategic planning team engaged with internal stakeholders, community leaders, and members of the public. In surveys and conversations, the strategic planning team collected personal accounts from the Northville communities. Data analysis connected disparate threads, revealing the areas of highest need and providing a roadmap for the Library's response.

Data Analysis

Methodologies that rely on quantitative data offer a reliable snapshot of the issue under consideration. They allow measurements to be precisely compared, and thus they transform numbers into insights.

Environmental Scan

The consulting team reviewed and analyzed Census demographic data, previous NDL surveys, budgets, master plans, annual reports, economic development reports, and other regional information to create an environmental scan of forces shaping the city of Northville and Northville Township.

Benchmarking Study

This exercise creates an accurate picture in time to evaluate library performance across a variety of measures. Using the most recent published data from the Institute of Museum and Library Services (2019), we compared NDL against four national peer libraries that share similar operating expenses, service area size, and demographic indicators, as well as against a "composite library system" representing the average of libraries serving a similarly sized community. The library in the neighboring community of Novi was included as a comparison but was not part of the peer set. With these results, NDL can identify strengths and opportunities and establish a baseline for measuring progress.

Market Segmentation Study

Claritas' MyBestSegments lifestyle systems define every household in the U.S. by distinct types, called "segments," to provide a comprehensive picture of who lives where and what they are like. The study identified key demographics, lifestyle characteristics, consumer behavior, and media preferences of library patrons and non-users. These insights can guide decision-making for services, collections, and programs and inform more effective marketing strategies.

Stakeholder Engagement

Those closest to an organization offer unique insight in their assessment of its strengths and opportunities.

Planning Session

On February 7, 2022, Library management and staff met with consultants to review consumer trends, discuss and prioritize areas of need, and conduct a SWOT (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats) exercise.

Staff Online Survey

Library leadership collaborated with consultants to create an anonymous staff survey which was administered in April 2022. The survey explored key issues, such as staff perceptions of the facility, customer service, training, and professional development. 35 staff members participated.

Trustee Interviews

In January 2022, consultants conducted telephone and Zoom interviews with the seven Northville District Library Board of Trustees about local strengths and challenges and how NDL's strategic plan can address community needs.

Community Engagement

Engagement with community members ensures that the assessment process is transparent and inclusive. The qualitative information gathered gives context to the hard data, explaining the "why" behind relationships and uncovering hidden needs.

Community Leader Interviews

Library leadership and trustees interviewed nine influential members of the Northville community to determine community challenges and priorities and to gauge feedback about NDL, its perception in the wider community, and opportunities for enhancing its services.

An online survey is an effective way to engage the public in an inclusive, transparent manner. Over 90% of households in the NDL service area have a computer and broadband access at home. There were 1,233 participants, and 559 (45.3%) took the opportunity to expand on how the Library might become a better resource for them.

Online and Telephone Community Surveys

From April 4 to May 11, 2022, we solicited community input via telephone interviews and an online survey platform. The surveys identified the needs and preferences of the community with respect to public library use, probed reasons why households do not currently use library services, and solicited ideas to develop future priorities for Library offerings.

A telephone survey is the best method of soliciting statistically reliable data from a representative sample of the service area, especially from non-users. There were 379 interviews (54.3% library users and 45.6% non-users) completed, yielding a margin of error of +/- 5% at the 95% confidence level for the 28,821 residents of the city of Northville and Northville Township over the age of 18. Of those respondents, 123 (32.5%) took the opportunity to expand on how the Library might better meet their needs.

AREAS OF FOCUS

Using a combination of qualitative and quantitative methods, stakeholders, staff, and residents were asked about the challenges facing the Northville communities. During a collaborative session with staff and stakeholders, opportunities and aspirations were prioritized into four core themes:

Programs and Collections will help NDL provide and promote materials and connections that meet the evolving needs of the community through print, digital, and experiential resources.

Convenience and Access will attract new users and retain existing ones through a combination of services and locations that meet people where they are.

Space will guide NDL's future reconfiguration efforts and align space allocation with user needs.

Unique Identity will communicate the irreplaceable role NDL serves in the community from a gathering place to a 21st century portal to knowledge and imagination.

These priorities are the backbone of the strategic plan. As "areas of focus," they guide the Library's investment in collections, services, and spaces in the next three years. "Research highlights" connect the area of focus with the study's investigations and data from the 2020 Census and the 2019 American Community Survey. Strategies and tactics provide step by step guidance for library service over the next three years.

Largely due to its success and popularity, community members want more from NDL. The Library will need to dedicate resources to meet that need and achieve the goals outlined in the strategic plan.

Resource Highlights:

- Increased funding
- Increased or reassigned staff
- Space reallocation and/or increase square footage
- Updated and new technology
- New equipment
- More resources for continuing opportunities to stay current with changes in the profession
- Expanded or enhanced productivity tools

AREAS OF FOCUS

PROGRAMS AND COLLECTIONS

NDL will offer enhanced programs and print and digital collections to meet the growing needs of its increasingly diverse community. Towards this end, it should explore holding programs and events in locations throughout its service area, and it should enhance its partnerships with relevant community organizations and service providers to better reach underserved residents. NDL should engage residents in discussion of potential new programs and services. The Library should continue to expand its print and digital collections and work to reduce or eliminate wait times for high demand titles to enhance customer satisfaction.

RESEARCH HIGHLIGHTS

- Benchmarking revealed that NDL ranks 1st in the peer set for electronic material expenditures but 4th in circulation per downloadable material, indicating a need for increased promotion of digital material or evaluation of selection criteria to make this collection relevant, appealing, and easy to access.
- Expanding the digital collection topped the list of services for the Library to expand or enhance in both the telephone and online surveys.
- Downloadable media offerings were the #1 resource chosen for expansion in the staff survey.
- Library trustees recommended expanding the local history collection.
- Due to limited meeting space, NDL offered the fewest number of programs in the benchmarking peer set, but it ranked 2nd in total attendance, indicating unmet demand.
- Community leaders identified the need to serve professional adults better and perceived several opportunities: to develop partnerships for offering business workshops, to expand programs for young families, and to preserve local history.
- Library trustees stated that NDL should engage new residents, especially immigrants, in discussion of potential new programs and services, and expand the partnership with the school district.
- Only 27% of staff surveyed agreed that the current integrated library system is efficient and easy to use.
- The mature needs segments of the NDL service area have concentrated areas of below average to lowest technology use, indicating an opportunity for Library instruction.

Expand breadth, depth, and diversity of programs based on evolving community needs

1. Design unique programs that meet community needs by partnering with Northville organizations, creating memoranda of understanding with key partners, collecting ongoing feedback, regularly meeting with service providers, and improving interdepartmental communication.
2. Explore permanent solution for outdoor programs through formal partnerships with the municipal governments and Parks and Recreation departments.
3. Hold programs in locations convenient for residents, such as at the Township Hall, Thayer Corner, the Northville Community Center, and senior centers.
4. Partner with the Northville Senior Center to expand programs that support healthy aging.
5. Expand programs that celebrate Northville's diversity, such as Pride Month displays and activities, Lunar New Year celebrations, Holi activities, Japanese film festivals, Arabic calligraphy classes, and conversation circles that support the International Language Collection in Chinese and Spanish. Add Arabic, Bengali, and Urdu materials to the International Language Collection.
6. Expand the community-wide read organized by the Neighborhood Library Association by adding related programs for all age groups hosted at NDL and throughout the service area.
7. Increase the frequency of popular children's programs, such as storytimes and book clubs, to eliminate waitlists.
8. Expand enrichment programs for adults, such as art workshops, podcasting classes, and live performances by regional acts.
9. Align program schedule with community needs by offering more children's programs on weekends and more adult programs in the evenings.
10. Improve attendance at youth programs by partnering with schools, camps, and other youth-oriented providers on development and marketing.
11. Offer more large-scale youth programs, similar to the successful current offerings of video game tournaments, Battle of the Books, and Free Comic Book Day.

"Create more interesting events for the community... More class options. More community centered events and opportunities."

- COMMUNITY ONLINE SURVEY RESPONDENT

Expand breadth, depth, and diversity of physical and digital collections through patron-driven collection development policies

12. Explore ways to reduce wait times, such as regularly comparing holds lists to local availability, investigating a leasing program for high-demand titles, increasing the number of books in a book club kit, and adding copies of high-demand periodicals and newspapers.
13. Increase the digital collection, especially high-demand titles and online resources such as the Financial Times.
14. Improve discoverability with new item spotlights, a digital library map, easy-to-find personalized recommendations, and the promotion of specific collections and formats.
15. Improve access to genealogy and local history resources by better publicizing the digital collections.
16. Provide access to useful but not readily available items through an expanded Library of Things and a Makerspace.
17. Establish a formal weeding schedule.
18. Focus collection development on titles that reflect the community's changing demographics.
19. Explore the possibility of ILS migration and continue to have conversations with the consortium about NDL needs to give staff the tools they need to operate most efficiently.

"More selection and copies of digital books especially the top 'sellers' (e.g., NY Times bestseller lists, popular authors, etc). Wait times for some books are 6 months or more."

- COMMUNITY ONLINE SURVEY RESPONDENT



AREA OF FOCUS

SPACE

Recognizing that there has been a significant shift in how library patrons use library spaces following the COVID-19 pandemic, NDL will review all its existing spaces and explore creating flexible spaces that are compatible with current and changing needs for both users and staff. These include indoor and outdoor spaces to more effectively merchandise popular collections, host educational and recreational programs, and provide efficient workspace for staff, patrons, and community groups. To be comparable to neighboring and peer libraries, NDL will consider expanding into the community with possible other locations and facilities.

RESEARCH HIGHLIGHTS

- Community leaders suggested improving remote working infrastructure and expanding study rooms, meeting spaces, and research resources to better serve youth.
- The top space rated as “very important” in both the telephone and online survey was space for books, CDs, and DVDs.
- When surveyed, staff indicated a need for more workspace and a larger break room.
- Library trustees expressed concern about lack of space—for staff, meeting rooms, and collections—and recommended exploring a physical presence in the Township.
- Community leaders identified the need to reevaluate the size and scope of the Library building in a post COVID-19 pandemic environment.
- 74% of Library users in the telephone survey are “highly satisfied” with the condition of the Library building.

Plan for changing use patterns with furniture and technology updates

1. Add flexible seating and workspaces that accommodate students and the growing segment of remote workers.
2. Create distinctive children's areas with tablets, interactive toys, and manipulatives.
3. Meet the growing demand for study space and remote work space with flexible furniture, outlets throughout the building, and collaboration tools, such as large, HDMI-enabled screens positioned in small study rooms.

“Create more space for people to work and create technical infrastructure to support that.”

- COMMUNITY LEADER INTERVIEW

Update policies to decrease perceived barriers to use

4. Create a welcoming, relaxing atmosphere by increasing cell phone use areas, and allowing light refreshments from external vendors and library vending machines in defined areas, including the meeting and study rooms. This casual atmosphere encourages people to stay longer in the building and thus use more resources and services. The Code of Conduct should be updated to reflect these changes.
 5. Identify off-site outreach or collaboration spaces, and work with partners to secure permission for use.
- "We grab and go because don't feel like it's a space to get comfortable in."**
- COMMUNITY ONLINE SURVEY

Reconfigure the footprint to optimize facility use for current and changing user needs

6. Develop a Facilities Master plan to determine space and location needs for the next decade.
 7. Determine feasibility of locating all of the adult materials on one floor and all of the children's materials on one floor.
 8. Determine optimal bookstore location.
 9. Investigate the feasibility of an entrance on the lower level with a greeter station and self-check out.
 10. Create a self-serve holds pick up area.
 11. Restructure teen space to better accommodate collaboration and noise.
 12. Reduce the size of information and reference desks and improve directional signage to improve traffic flow in the main floor, especially around the staircase.
 13. Identify ways to display art in the building, such as in a stairwell gallery, through murals by local artists, or in rotating exhibits, to build on the success of Detroit Institute of Arts' Inside/Out program.
 14. Add a return box near the building, so patrons can return items without getting out of their vehicles.
 15. Improve awareness of the available parking near the Library.
 16. Improve storage options for Summer Reading and other program materials by investigating off-site storage and displaying Library of Things in public areas.
 17. Create a dedicated area for a Makerspace.
 18. Investigate opportunities to make the best use of the recently vacated gift shop space.
- "Would be interested in new library technology like 3D printing and music production software."**
- COMMUNITY TELEPHONE SURVEY

AREA OF FOCUS

CONVENIENCE AND ACCESS

NDL will strive to enhance its user experience by reducing or eliminating barriers to materials and services. This may take multiple forms, such as expanding operating hours, providing library collections and services at convenient, high-traffic locations, and reaching out to residents who are not physically able to visit the library. NDL will also undertake a comprehensive review of its policies and procedures to ensure that they enhance patron convenience and access to library collections and services.

RESEARCH HIGHLIGHTS

- 71% of online survey respondents and 54% of telephone survey respondents were “very interested” or “interested” in extended hours. The most common response to the open-ended questions in both surveys was a request for extended hours.
- 64% of online survey respondents and 57% of telephone survey respondents were “very interested” or “interested” in self-service outlets in the Township such as book drops or 24/7 vending.
- Only 39% of staff agreed that NDL does everything it can to connect with non-users, the lowest of all areas evaluated. Nearly half of the staff recommend increasing outreach services to Township residents.
- The benchmarking study ranked NDL last in the peer set for hours open.
- Community leaders recommended extending hours of operation, especially on weekends.
- Community leaders recommended expanding outreach to homebound residents and newcomers.
- Library non-users in the telephone and online surveys cited a lack of time as one of the primary reasons they do not use the library, indicating a need to communicate NDL's time-saving services.



Increase usage of Library collections, services, and programs by making them more relevant and convenient to access

1. Introduce 24/7 physical access services such as lockers for holds pickups and on-site and remote book drops.
2. Provide limited pop-up library services at convenient, high-traffic locations such as the farmers market and the Chamber of Commerce's Northville Marketplace festival.
3. Expand material check out options.
4. Align with consumer self-service expectations by adding more self-checkout stations and touch screen public catalog terminals.
5. Investigate the most appropriate presence in the Northville Township, such as a vending machine, bookmobile, or branch.
6. Investigate alternatives to the Dewey Decimal system to improve discoverability.

"A locker or something to pick up my holds or in a drive [thru] setting, similar to Novi Public Library. A cafe would be nice."

- COMMUNITY ONLINE SURVEY

Expand patron base by reducing barriers to materials and services

7. Offer services to homebound residents through mail or home delivery of materials.
 8. Improve access to speakers of languages other than English with multilingual signage, promotional materials, translation options for the website, and multilingual staff.
 9. Expand hours especially on Sundays and on Friday evenings.
 10. Conduct an ADA assessment to identify areas for improvement, such as lighting, lower bookshelves, and accessibility for people using mobility devices.
 11. Extend time limits on public computers and relocate stations to allow for private browsing and the use of cell phones for consultations.
 12. Evaluate the code of conduct and customer service policies to ensure equitable, low-barrier access.
- "One consistent inquiry is the limited open hours of operation. Added weekend hours of operation are usually a topic of interest."

- COMMUNITY LEADER INTERVIEW

AREA OF FOCUS

UNIQUE IDENTITY

NDL will create a unique identity for itself as a fun, exciting community destination that warmly welcomes residents from all backgrounds and age groups. Updated marketing resources and the development of new resources, programs, and services will raise public awareness of the Library's value.

RESEARCH HIGHLIGHTS

- Community leaders and Library trustees feel that the Library needs a strong marketing message to make itself more relevant to users and non-users.
- NDL ranks 4th in the benchmarking peer set for registered users per capita.
- NDL ranks last in the peer set for visits per capita.
- Community leaders suggested the Library provide regular updates at City Council and Township Board meetings.
- Library trustees would like NDL to become a destination attraction with fun, hands-on activities like a Makerspace.
- Telephone and online survey respondents identified email, the Library newsletter, and the Library website as the best ways to receive Library news and information.
- Staff courtesy and customer service garnered the highest user satisfaction in the online and telephone surveys.



Raise public awareness of the Library's unique and useful offerings

1. Emphasize personalized services, such as themed book boxes, book match request, book club kits, notary services, local resource referral, and one-on-one tech assistance.
2. Spotlight exceptional products such as Reference Solutions, The New York Times, and MorningStar.
3. Host open house events that demonstrate unique collections like the Library of Things, sensory kits, local history resources, and Makerspace technology.

"Four out of ten people know what you do."

- COMMUNITY LEADER INTERVIEW

Develop marketing to increase Library usage

4. Adopt a brand and tagline that memorably communicate NDL's personality and value.
5. Create a marketing plan to organize and prioritize the Library's promotional activities.
6. Establish a marketing committee to cohesively and efficiently promote NDL's collections, services, and programs.
7. Explore best uses of NDL's automated marketing platforms to efficiently target and tailor communications.
8. Improve internal communication so that all employees are empowered to promote NDL.
9. Balance "new and noteworthy" promotions with public communications about core services.

"I would love to see more of an emphasis on community engagement and partnerships. I think that the role of the library of a community hub is something that makes it truly unique."

- STAFF SURVEY