



**Oshkosh
Public Library**

STRATEGIC PLAN 2026 - 2030

CO-CREATED BY

N O R T H S P A N



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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Beginning in April 2025, the Oshkosh Public Library engaged Northspan to conduct a strategic planning process to identify and advance organizational goals for the next five years. This effort was designed to provide both a clear vision for the library's future and a practical framework for decision-making, ensuring that the institution can continue to meet the evolving needs of the Oshkosh community.

The planning process focused on creating a comprehensive strategic framework that includes a practical vision, identification of critical challenges and barriers, definition of strategic directions, and the development of action steps to guide implementation. Input was gathered through committee work, community engagement, and comparative research, grounding the framework in both local priorities and broader best practices in library services.

Through this process, the Oshkosh Public Library Strategy Committee established an updated mission statement while reaffirming the library's long-standing core values. These statements reflect a strong commitment to accessibility, lifelong learning, and the role of the library as a vibrant civic gathering place.

VISION:

A Library in Every Life

MISSION:

To provide a vibrant, welcoming gathering place where people have free access to information, resources, and services.

CORE VALUES:

- **Literacy** – We champion literacy as the foundation for lifelong learning.
- **Learning** – We foster curiosity, supporting our community and staff in reaching their goals.
- **Access** – We preserve free and open access to information, resources, and experiences.
- **Equity** – We commit to inclusion and respect for every person's goals and story.
- **Service** – We create excellent user experiences by centering patron needs in all we do.
- **Community** – We strengthen community connections through attentive service and partnerships.
- **Privacy & Freedom from Censorship** – We protect every individual's right to privacy and freedom of choice in reading and information.

This document provides an overview of the Oshkosh Public Library's Strategic Plan 2026-2030, which will guide the organization's work for the next 5 years. Details on the strategic planning process and supporting documents from that process are available in the appendices.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

The Oshkosh Public Library (OPL) has been a cornerstone of civic life since 1900, when its landmark William Waters–designed building opened downtown on Washington Avenue. Funded through a combination of community donations and major gifts from Marshall Harris and Philetus Sawyer, the grand domed structure symbolized Oshkosh’s belief in knowledge, learning, and community; the Harris family’s original donation of land specified that the library must be free of charge in perpetuity. Over the years, OPL has expanded to meet changing needs, with significant renovations in 1967 and 1996, blending historic preservation with new facilities such as dedicated space for children’s books and activities, a modern second-floor addition, and updated public service areas.

Today, OPL serves not only the City of Oshkosh (population 67,245; extended service area over 82,000) but also acts as the resource library for the Winnefox Library System, which covers Winnebago, Fond du Lac, Green Lake, Marquette, and Waushara counties. As a resource library, OPL provides specialized support, advanced reference, training, and collaboration across the five- county system, while housing the Winnefox Library System headquarters and the Winnebago Area Literacy Council within its building.

The community it serves is evolving. Like much of Wisconsin, Oshkosh is experiencing demographic change, including a gradually aging population alongside notable increases in racial and ethnic diversity since 2013. While the share of residents over 65 remains slightly below state averages, this trend has implications for programming, accessibility, and collections. Oshkosh has also seen growth across most BIPOC groups, underscoring the importance of inclusive services, multilingual outreach, and culturally relevant engagement.

Economically, the city has made strides in the past 10 years, with poverty rates falling and median household income rising, though affordability challenges persist. Real income has declined roughly 12.5% since 2000, leaving gaps in opportunity for many households. Meanwhile, according to the Wisconsin Broadband Office, nearly 90% of Winnebago County households are now in areas with broadband access, slightly above state averages, positioning OPL as an important hub for digital inclusion and skills development.

Internally, OPL has embraced modernization while honoring its heritage. Its 2021 strategic plan articulated a vision of “A Library in Every Life,” with values of literacy, equity, community, and freedom of information. More recently, its “Spark Your Story” rebranding has refreshed OPL’s public identity, aiming to unify programs, partnerships, and customer experiences under a community-first narrative. This effort responds to national and local trends of declining circulation, visits, and cardholders, while leveraging rising general program attendance and digital engagement.

OPL’s role today is more than a building full of books. It is a community anchor at the intersection of history, culture, education, and civic engagement. Positioned within a diverse, changing, and opportunity-filled city, it is both a historic landmark and a forward-looking institution, shaping how residents of Oshkosh learn, connect, and grow into the future.



STRATEGIC PLAN 2026-2030

Oshkosh Public Library began work on its strategic planning process in Spring 2025 and completed two planning workshops in August 2025. The resulting Oshkosh Public Library Strategic Plan 2025- 2030 reflects a culmination of the work conducted throughout the planning process and is built around the following elements:

PRACTICAL VISION

What do we want to see in place in five years as a result of our strategic planning actions?

- Connection through Varied, High-Interest Programming
- Intentionally Inviting and Engaging Spaces
- Flexible and Accessible Opportunities
- A Welcoming, Safe, and Supportive Environment for Patrons and Staff
- Robust Community Connections and Support
- Curation and Development of Collections and Services That Meet Community Needs

BLOCKS

What is blocking us or holding us back from moving toward our practical vision?

- Internal Misalignment Limits Effectiveness
- Disconnected Public Perception Deters Utilization
- Underutilized Spaces Restrict Functionality
- Unrealistic Expectations Conflict with Capacity
- Challenging Behaviors Impact Library Experiences

STRATEGIC DIRECTIONS

What innovative, substantial actions will deal with the blocks and move us toward our practical vision?

- Revitalizing space for optimal use
- Expanding community-wide access points
- Leveraging strategic partnerships
- Aligning program goals with community interests
- Improving organizational effectiveness

SD1: REVITALIZING SPACE FOR OPTIMAL USE

This strategic direction emphasizes a need to reimagine the library's physical environment to better support learning, connection, and community life. It focuses on updating layouts, technology, and amenities, so every corner of the library serves today's needs while honoring its historic character.



ACTIONS:

1. Improve and clarify wayfinding and signage in the library building
2. Explore moving conference rooms and other spaces to optimize usage
3. Update furnishings, lighting, and flooring for comfort
4. Consult local Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) compliance officer
5. Create workspaces with upgraded technology
6. Create an eating area with vending options
7. Do a comprehensive review of the facility plan
8. Evaluate collection for space considerations
9. Explore the option for shorter shelves

OUTCOMES:

Enhanced accessibility and inclusivity

Optimized and flexible use of space

Improved patron experience and engagement

SD2: EXPANDING COMMUNITY-WIDE ACCESS POINTS

By extending the library's reach beyond its walls, important resources, programs, and services will be available wherever people live, learn, and gather. This direction emphasizes partnerships, digital tools, and offsite opportunities that make library access convenient, inclusive, and visible across the entire community.

ACTIONS:

- Establish community-wide drop-off points
- Develop off-site collections in places with widespread public access
- Explore placement of vending-type library material kiosks and holds pickup lockers
- Collaborate with school to offer universal library cards for 4K students
- Determine feasibility of procuring a mobile outreach/'Books on Wheels' vehicle
- Explore options for digital library kiosk(s)

OUTCOMES:

- Greater visibility of library services throughout the community
- Increased access to resources for residents outside the main library building
- Stronger connections with schools and community partners through shared access points

SD3: LEVERAGING STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIPS

Cultivating strong collaborations with organizations, businesses, and institutions allows the library to amplify its impact and expand its capacity to serve the community. This direction recognized that intentional partnerships that share resources, align goals, and spark innovation create new opportunities for growth.



ACTIONS:

1. Develop partnership plan to identify staff responsible for partner recognition, thank you events, etc.
2. Partner with school district and other educational and cultural institutions for programming
3. Connect program planning in advance to support sponsorships
4. Explore sponsorships and donor naming rights for new library spaces
5. Leverage leaders and Boards to develop opportunities to build relationships
6. Partner with University of Wisconsin-Oshkosh for interns to support social services in library

OUTCOMES:

- Expanded resources and services through collaborative initiatives
- Increased visibility and support for the library within the community
- Stronger, more sustainable relationships with educational, business, and nonprofit partners

SD4: ALIGNING PROGRAM GOALS WITH COMMUNITY INTEREST

Programs that reflect the needs, interests, and aspirations of Oshkosh residents ensure the library's offerings are both meaningful and relevant. This direction emphasizes continuous community input and responsive planning so that every program sparks engagement and connection.

ACTIONS:

1. Survey community interests and availability for programming and look at data from strategic planning community survey
2. Create and actively involve Friends of the Library
3. Work with Friends group to establish revenue-building events (potentially annually recurring)
4. Create a comprehensive programming plan to include more cultural events with defined staff roles for execution
5. Reach out to community partners to explore shared programming opportunities
6. Working with City and other landholding partners, create StoryWalk initiative

OUTCOMES:

- Programs that consistently reflect community needs and interests
- Increased participation and engagement across diverse audiences
- Stronger collaboration with partners to deliver shared programming opportunities

SD5: IMPROVING ORGANIZATIONAL EFFECTIVENESS

Strengthening the library's internal systems, staff capacity, and decision-making processes ensures that resources are used wisely and services are delivered seamlessly. This direction emphasizes efficiency, transparency, and continuous improvement so the library can adapt and thrive in a changing environment.



ACTIONS:

1. Enhance training for new staff (including navigating safety issues) and use/continuously improve onboarding practices
2. Develop a process for communicating and providing guidance to staff on strategic goals
3. Create opportunities for staff to learn their own jobs in greater depth and a system for learning skills that enhance internal promotability
4. Purchase scheduling software
5. Develop a plan to incorporate more intentional focus on patron-centered thinking and service in regular processes
6. Develop a plan to implement consistent customer service training and cross-training

OUTCOMES:

- Stronger staff capacity and consistency in service delivery
- More efficient and transparent organizational processes
- A workplace culture centered on collaboration, customer service, and continuous improvement

TIMELINE AND PRIORITIES

Strategy committee workshop participants placed strategic plan actions on a timeline, which is available in Appendix H titled Strategic Plan Timeline.

Source: Minnesota Department of Employment and Economic Development, 2013 and 2023.



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STRATEGIC PLAN 2026 - 2030

APPENDIX A

STRATEGIC PLANNING PROCESS





APPENDIX A: STRATEGIC PLANNING PROCESS

The Oshkosh Public Library contracted with Northspan to facilitate the development of this 5-year strategic plan to guide its activities and achieve accomplishments consistent with the group's vision and mission. The strategic process steps, including session dates and agendas where applicable, are included below. Further details on individual process components are available as separate appendices, where noted.

PROCESS STEPS

Preparation & Design Internal and External Analysis
Strategy Committee, Board, & Staff Survey Community-Informed Survey
Community Member Focus Groups Strategic Planning Workshop A
Strategic Planning Workshop B
Strategic Planning Workshop C
Draft Strategic Plan Review & Feedback Strategic Plan Board Presentation

PREPARATION & DESIGN

The strategic planning process began in April 2025 with a series of meetings and communications between Northspan and representatives of the Oshkosh Public Library to clarify strategic planning goals, establish timelines for the initial process steps, discuss participants and stakeholders to be engaged, and collect existing planning documents and relevant background information to provide context for the planning process.

INTERNAL & EXTERNAL ANALYSIS

The provided background materials and planning documents were thoroughly reviewed by Northspan, and key themes and takeaways were synthesized into a context presentation shared at the beginning of the first strategic planning workshop. This contextual review aimed to establish shared foundational knowledge among workshop participants. Northspan's notes summarizing these materials and documents are available as Appendix B, titled Internal & External Analysis Summary.

STRATEGY COMMITTEE, BOARD, & STAFF SURVEY

Northspan conducted a survey targeted for the Oshkosh Public Library strategy committee, board, and/ staff members to gather feedback and ideas to inform the strategic planning process. The survey was conducted from July 1 through July 22, 2025, and received 60 responses, a robust sample showing strong interest in the process. Survey questions included an evaluation of the current vision, mission, and core values and featured a strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and

threats (SWOT) analysis. A summary of the survey results is available in Appendix C titled Strategy Committee, Board, & Staff Survey Summary.



COMMUNITY-INFORMED SURVEY

Northspan partnered with the Oshkosh Public Library to design and distribute a community survey as a key tool for gathering broad-based feedback and ideas to inform the strategic planning process. The survey was conducted from July 1 to July 22, 2025, and generated a strong response, with a total of 1,146 community members participating.

The questionnaire invited respondents to share how they currently use the library, assess the quality and relevance of its existing services and programs, and suggest new opportunities for future offerings. This mix of evaluative and forward-looking questions provided a valuable snapshot of present-day usage and a window into the evolving needs and expectations of the Oshkosh community.

A summarized overview of the survey results is available in Appendix D titled Community-Informed Survey Summary.

COMMUNITY FOCUS GROUPS

AGENDA | August 4 & 5, 2025 | 6pm-8pm, 10am-12pm, and 5pm-7pm

- Welcome, Agenda, & Context Overview
- Gallery Walk Focus Group
- Focused Conversation
- Reflection & Next Steps
- Adjourn

As part of the process for developing the Oshkosh Public Library 2026–2030 Strategic Plan, Northspan facilitated three focus group listening sessions targeted toward community members, library patrons, and organizational partners on August 4 and 5, 2025. Each two-hour session was held at the Oshkosh Public Library and provided participants with an opportunity to share input on the library's future. Attendance was steady across all three sessions, with 14 participants in the first session, 12 in the second, and 14 in the third. A central feature of the sessions was the gallery walk, an interactive exercise designed to spark broad input and dialogue. Participants moved through a series of stations around the room, each focused on a key theme or question related to library services, facilities, and community role. Using sticky notes and written prompts, attendees were able to respond individually while also seeing and reacting to the ideas of others. This format encouraged a wide range of perspectives, reduced the pressure of speaking in front of the whole group, and created a visible map of community priorities and concerns that informed subsequent discussion.

Following the gallery walk, participants came together for a focused conversation that synthesized emerging themes, identified challenges, and highlighted opportunities. Each session concluded

with reflection and next steps, ensuring that participants understood how their contributions would be incorporated into the strategic planning process.

A summary of these sessions is available in Appendix E titled Community Focus Groups Summary 1 C 3 and Appendix F titled Community Focus Group Summary 2.



STRATEGIC PLANNING WORKSHOP A

AGENDA | August 19, 2025, | 8:00am-12:00pm

- Welcome, Agenda, C Introductions
- Context Presentation
- Mission, Vision, Values Workshop
- Practical Vision Workshop

On August 19, 2025, members of the Oshkosh Public Library Strategy Committee met with Northspan staff at the Boys and Girls Club of Oshkosh for the first of three strategic planning workshops. The session began with a context presentation that outlined existing planning documents, reviewed related materials, and highlighted major themes emerging from the community survey and focus groups held earlier in the process. This foundation ensured participants entered the workshop with a shared understanding of the library's current position and the voices of its stakeholders.

Northspan then facilitated a series of exercises to refine the library's guiding statements. Participants agreed to amend the mission and discussed changes to the vision statement to reflect the library's evolving role, while reaffirming its enduring core values:

Vision:

To be the library in your life.

MISSION:

To provide a vibrant, welcoming gathering place where people have free access to information, resources, and services.

Participants discussed the existing core values and agreed that they were still relevant and indicative of the goals of the Oshkosh Public Library.

CORE VALUES:

- Literacy
- Learning
- Access
- Equity
- Community
- Privacy and Freedom from Censorship

Next, strategy committee members reviewed ideas for the practical vision that had been gathered through the strategic planning committee, board, and staff survey. Building on this input, the group worked together to identify and name the categories that best captured the aspirations for the future of the library. This discussion was framed around the guiding question: "What do we want to see in place in five years as a result of our strategic planning actions?" The group identified a practical vision consisting of the following six elements:



- Connection through Diverse Programming
- Intentionally Inviting and Engaging Spaces
- Flexible and Accessible Opportunities
- A Welcoming, Safe, and Supportive Environment for Patrons and Staff
- Robust Community Connections and Support
- Curation and Development of Collections and Services That Meet Community Needs

Workshop A concluded with a break for participants to eat lunch together.

STRATEGIC PLANNING WORKSHOP B

AGENDA | August 20, 2025, | 1:00pm-4:00pm

- Blocks Workshop
- Strategic Directions Workshop
- Reflection and Next Steps
- Adjourn

After lunch, the Oshkosh Public Library Strategy Committee reconvened for the second of three workshops facilitated by Northspan. This session began by revisiting the practical vision identified in the morning, ensuring participants maintained a clear line of sight on the library's five-year aspirations. Building from this foundation, the focus shifted to examining the barriers standing in the way of realizing that vision.

The strategy committee worked to identify the challenges that stand in the way of achieving the practical vision. Using the input gathered through the strategic planning committee, board, and staff survey as a foundation, participants discussed and refined the key barriers. This process surfaced both internal and external challenges, which the group organized into five central blocks and answered the question, "What is blocking us from moving toward our practical vision?"

- Internal misalignment limits effectiveness
- Disconnected public perception deters utilization
- Underutilized spaces restrict functionality
- Unrealistic expectations conflict with capacity
- Challenging behaviors impact library experiences

With these barriers clearly defined, the workshop moved into its second phase: generating solutions. Participants engaged in a second round of brainstorming and prioritization, this time focused on the guiding question: "What innovative, substantial actions will deal with the blocks and move us toward our practical vision?"

The group reached consensus on five strategic directions that will shape the Oshkosh Public Library's work from 2026–2030:

- Revitalizing space for optimal use
- Expanding community-wide access points



- Leveraging strategic partnerships
- Aligning program goals with community interests
- Improving organizational effectiveness

STRATEGIC PLANNING WORKSHOP C

AGENDA | August 20, 2025 | 9:00am-1:00pm

- Welcome, Agenda, & Introductions/Yesterday Reflections
- Focused Implementation
- Current Reality, Success Indicators, Actions
- Focused Implementation
- Timeline
- Priority
- Next Steps
- Reflection
- Adjourn

On August 20, 2025, the Oshkosh Public Library Strategy Committee gathered for the third and final workshop facilitated by Northspan at the Boys C Girls Club of Oshkosh. This culminating session opened with a review of the mission, vision, core values, practical vision, blocks, and strategic directions developed in the earlier workshops, grounding participants in the full arc of their progress.

With that shared foundation, the committee engaged in a focused implementation workshop designed to move from strategy to action. Guided by Northspan facilitators, participants explored the library's current reality, candidly assessing both strengths and limitations. They then identified success indicators, defined as concrete signs that would demonstrate progress toward the strategic directions. Next, the group began developing specific actions and accomplishments that could be achieved over the next five years. The identified actions and other outcomes of the workshop activity are available in Appendix G titled Current Reality, Success Indicators C Actions.

Building on this, strategy committee participants took part in a focused implementation action planning exercise to define the timeline for the identified strategic plan actions. This step allowed the group to consider sequencing, prioritize initiatives, and align actions with available resources. By working through this timeline together, participants ensured that the plan balances ambition with practicality, setting the stage for measurable progress. The timeline is available in Appendix H titled Strategic Plan Timeline.

The workshop concluded with a reflection period, allowing participants to look back on the three-session process and forward to the work ahead. By the end of the day, the committee had created a roadmap that connects vision to action—equipping the Oshkosh Public Library with a clear framework to guide decisions, strengthen operations, and expand its role as a vital community resource from 2026 through 2030.



**Oshkosh
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APPENDIX B

INTERNAL & EXTERNAL ANALYSIS SUMMARY





APPENDIX B: INTERNAL & EXTERNAL ANALYSIS SUMMARY

The population of Oshkosh is cited at 66,247, per 2023 consensus statistics. The Oshkosh Public Library (OPL) serves the City of Oshkosh and acts as the resource library for the Winnefox Library System, which covers five counties (Winnebago, Fond du Lac, Green Lake, Marquette, Waushara). OPL's historic facility also houses Winnefox and the Winnebago Area Literacy Council, further anchoring its regional role as a community hub.

DEMOGRAPHIC TRENDS

Population growth has been essentially flat over the past decade, with a slight 0.1% decrease from 2013–2023. The population of Oshkosh is aging overall, though the percentage of residents 65+ remains slightly below Wisconsin's average. The community is becoming more ethnically diverse, with growth in nearly every BIPOC group. The largest increase has been in residents reporting two or more ethnicities.

INCOME AND POVERTY

Median household income has risen significantly even after inflation adjustment. Poverty rates have declined since 2013 but remain above Wisconsin's average.

DIGITAL INCLUSION

As of 2025, 90% of Winnebago County households have broadband access, slightly above the state average of 89%.

OPL'S POSITION IN THE LIBRARY SYSTEM

Wisconsin has 16 public library systems. As part of the Winnefox system, OPL provides shared services across member libraries. OPL's designation as resource library gives it elevated visibility and responsibility, offering advanced reference, training, and specialized support for other libraries.

LIBRARY USAGE AND SERVICE TRENDS (2015–2024)

Circulation: Total checkouts declined from 826,900 (2015) to 474,600 (2024). Children's circulation followed a similar path, with some recovery after the pandemic low.

Public computer usage: Sharp long-term decline, from 61,200 (2015) to 22,000 (2024), likely due to increased access to personal devices.



Children's programming: Expanded significantly post 2021, with 737 programs and 13,000 attendees in 2024—both above pre pandemic levels.

Library visits: Dropped from 316,300 (2015) to 236,900 (2024). Visits have gradually rebounded since 2021 but remain below pre pandemic figures.

Cardholders: Stable base, from 32,400 (2015) to 30,800 (2024).

Total programs and attendance: Both have grown steadily since 2021, though average attendance per program has decreased, suggesting more events but smaller audiences per event.

Data taken from the Wisconsin Public Library Consortium database using figures from 2015 through 2024.



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APPENDIX C

**STRATEGY COMMITTEE, BOARD,
& STAFF SURVEY SUMMARY**



OVERVIEW

Oshkosh Public Library engaged with strategic planning consultants from Northspan to guide the development of the library’s new five-year strategic plan. As part of this process, a Strategy Committee, Board, and Staff Survey was conducted to gather focused input from individuals with a deep understanding of the library’s mission, operations, and current role in the community.

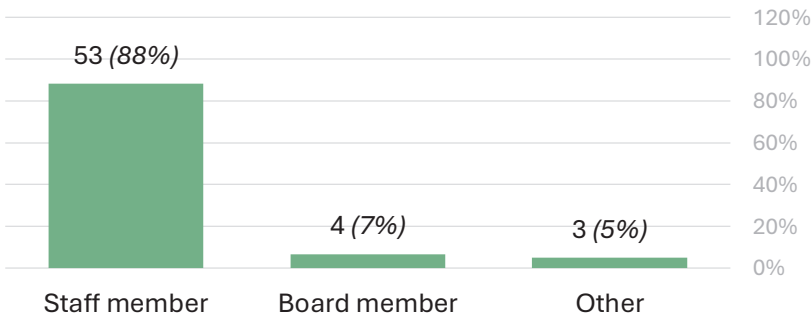
The survey invited participants to reflect on the library’s current strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats through a SWOT analysis; brainstorm ideas for desired outcomes of the five-year strategic plan, known as a practical vision; identify blocks or barriers that could hinder progress; and contribute words or concepts that they feel reflect the library’s values. It concluded with an open-ended question inviting any additional considerations or suggestions. These insights aim to provide key context for strategic planning workshops and help shape the library’s priorities for the next five years.

METHODOLOGY

The survey was open from July 1 to July 22, 2025, and received 60 total responses. The distribution of respondents’ association with the Oshkosh Public Library can be found below. It was conducted exclusively online via SurveyMonkey and was distributed directly by library leadership via an emailed link to all Board and staff members, as well as a small representation of close partners and stakeholders with a strong working knowledge of the library. All survey responses were recorded anonymously without identifying information, and third-party analysis was conducted by Northspan.

This summary document contains an overview of the synthesized survey findings. Open-ended responses to the SWOT analysis were grouped by theme into high-level categories and displayed in the approximate order of frequency each theme appeared. Responses to the practical vision and blocks questions were categorized and are included in a separate, standalone document that will serve to inform an interactive strategic planning workshop activity. Responses to the values question were aggregated into a word cloud to show the most frequently cited terms. In the final question, any additional open-ended comments and closing thoughts were synthesized in a narrative summary.

Respondent Distribution



Of the three respondents who indicated other associations with the library, two identified as City of Oshkosh non-library employees, and the remaining respondent identified as a member of the Winnebago Area Literacy Council.

STRENGTHS, WEAKNESSES, OPPORTUNITIES & THREATS (SWOT) ANALYSIS

Survey respondents were asked to complete a SWOT analysis identifying Oshkosh Public Library's internal strengths and weaknesses compared to other organizations, as well as external opportunities and threats that may positively or negatively impact its work. Participants were instructed to enter up to 3 open-ended responses per category.

<i>Strengths</i>	<i>Weaknesses</i>
• Skilled, dedicated staff and leadership • Commitment to accessibility, equity, and freedom of information • Presence, involvement, and reputation in the community • Extensive collection of materials and archives • Spacious, historic facility • Effective, collaborative organizational processes • Wide variety of programs and resources • Willingness to embrace new ideas or opportunities • Endowment funds and financial resources • Renewed brand identity and marketing	• Aging building with structural limitations • Internal misalignment and unclear direction • Safety and security concerns at the library • Limited awareness, marketing, and outreach • Slow adoption of modern technology and innovation • Gaps in program and service offerings • Staffing and scheduling constraints • Geographic reach and distribution challenges • Disjointed levels of support/customer service for patrons with diverse backgrounds and needs • Budgetary and funding restraints
<i>Opportunities</i>	<i>Threats</i>
• Strengthening partnerships with local schools, organizations, businesses, and government • Participating in local events to increase visibility • Expanding digital marketing and social media presence (BookTok/TikTok, etc.) • Reimagining library spaces and optimizing layout • Increasing off-site or mobile access points • Promoting the library's historic identity and downtown location • Responding to economic, demographic, and social community trends • Expanding skill-based and educational programming for all ages • Positioning the library as a community third space and cultural hub • Exploring new funding and volunteer engagement opportunities	• Political polarization, censorship campaigns, and anti-library rhetoric • Volatile funding and budget cuts • Disruptive or hostile patron behaviors • Public perceptions that libraries are outdated or unnecessary • Competition from digital media and online resources • Access and transportation barriers due to city growth • Declining literacy rates and interest in reading • External economic and labor market factors impact staffing • Service overlap or competition from other community organizations • Rapid growth of AI and new emerging technology



ADDITIONAL COMMENTS

Lastly, the survey invited respondents to share any additional comments or closing thoughts via the open-ended question prompt, ***“Is there anything else that you think the library should know or consider during its strategic planning process?”*** Responses to this final question are summarized below, with a particular emphasis on actionable insights and takeaways contained within.

Supporting and Empowering Staff

Survey participants shared a range of ideas and concerns for the library to consider in its upcoming strategic plan, including the importance of supporting and empowering staff by providing them with **de-escalation, trauma-informed service, and unconscious bias training**. There were also calls to ensure that management plays a more **active role** in implementing initiatives, as well as the need to maintain **adequate staffing levels** and provide resources to **prevent burnout**.

Welcoming, Safe, and Purpose-Driven Spaces

Creating welcoming, safe, and purpose-driven spaces also emerged as a priority. Suggestions included **reimagining underused areas** such as the Reading Room and Dome with more public programming, adding a café or flexible seating, and improving **safety and security measures**, like expanded camera coverage and streamlined incident reporting, while also ensuring that any measures implemented allow the library to remain **inclusive and inviting for all patrons**.

Reflecting the Community Interests

Multiple comments also called for program offerings that reflect the interests of various age groups and individuals in the community, including more **adult programs**, especially for young adults in their 20s–30s, expanded **passive programming**, and **better coordination across departments** to avoid missed opportunities. Strengthening the library’s **marketing efforts** through **social media platforms** like TikTok that appeal to youth, **community partnerships** with other organizations, and more **visible event promotion** were also mentioned as ways to better reach intended audiences.

Unified Long-Term Direction

Several responses highlighted the need for a clear, unified long-term direction. There were hopes that the strategic planning process would **provide clarity in major areas**, such as whether the library would potentially decide to pursue relocation, revive the bookmobile, or launch satellite branches, which would help ensure that any **future investments are strategically aligned**. Respondents also encouraged a **measured pace of implementing change**, with **regular evaluation of initiatives**, discontinuation of those that are ineffective, and prioritization of efforts that align with the library’s long-term goals.

Adaptive Services and Materials

Additionally, survey participants noted the importance of **adapting the library’s services and collections** to meet **evolving community and technological needs**. Suggestions included the possibility of **phasing out lower-demand formats** like CDs, **expanding popular formats** such as Wonderbooks, **strengthening outreach** to underserved populations (including through potential west side access points), and proactively **anticipating shifts in media consumption and technology** trends to remain relevant in the community.



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APPENDIX D

COMMUNITY-INFORMED SURVEY SUMMARY



OVERVIEW

The Oshkosh Public Library conducted a community-wide survey to gather feedback that provides key context for the development of the library's new five-year strategic plan. As part of a planning process facilitated by Northspan, the survey invited library patrons, Oshkosh-area residents, and community stakeholders to share their insights, aiming to ensure the library's direction over the next five years aligns with community priorities and needs.

Questions included in the survey covered a range of topics, including library usage, satisfaction, perceptions of value, potential improvements or additions to the library's services and programs, and other ideas they would like to see for the library's future. Respondents were also invited to share optional demographic information to help the library understand the survey audience and identify potential gaps in engagement. The survey received an exceptionally strong participation turnout, indicating that the Oshkosh community has a clear interest and investment in the library's future.

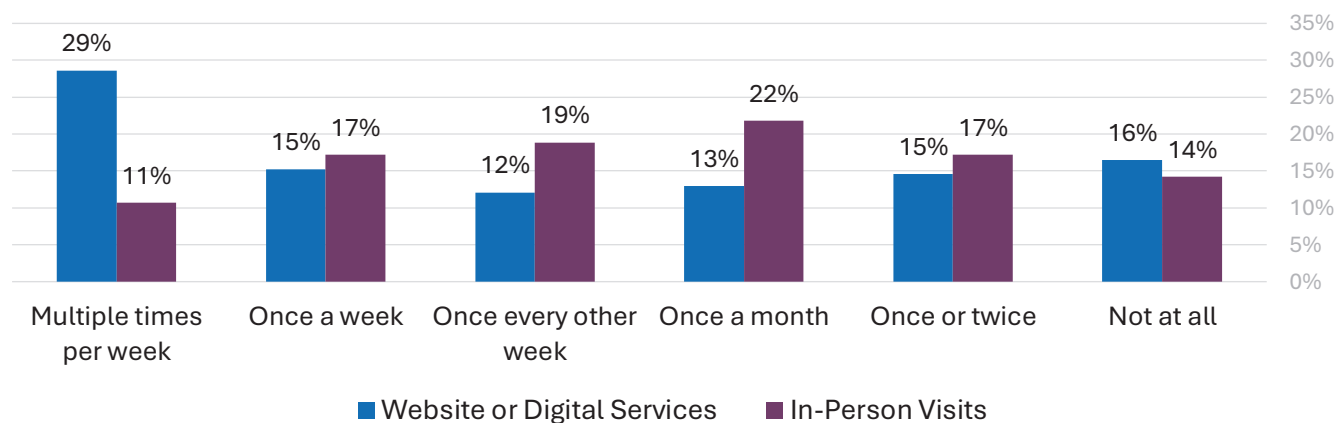
METHODOLOGY

The survey was open from July 1 to July 22, 2025, and received 1,146 total responses (1,054 online and 92 paper copies). For a community of Oshkosh's size, this robust sample provides statistically reliable insights with a margin of error of approximately $\pm 2.87\%$ at the 95% confidence level. The survey was primarily conducted online via SurveyMonkey, although paper copies were also made available at the library and community partner locations for accessibility purposes. It was promoted through various channels, including the library's website, social media channels, and a feature in the Oshkosh Herald. All responses were anonymous, and Northspan analyzed the survey results as a neutral third party.

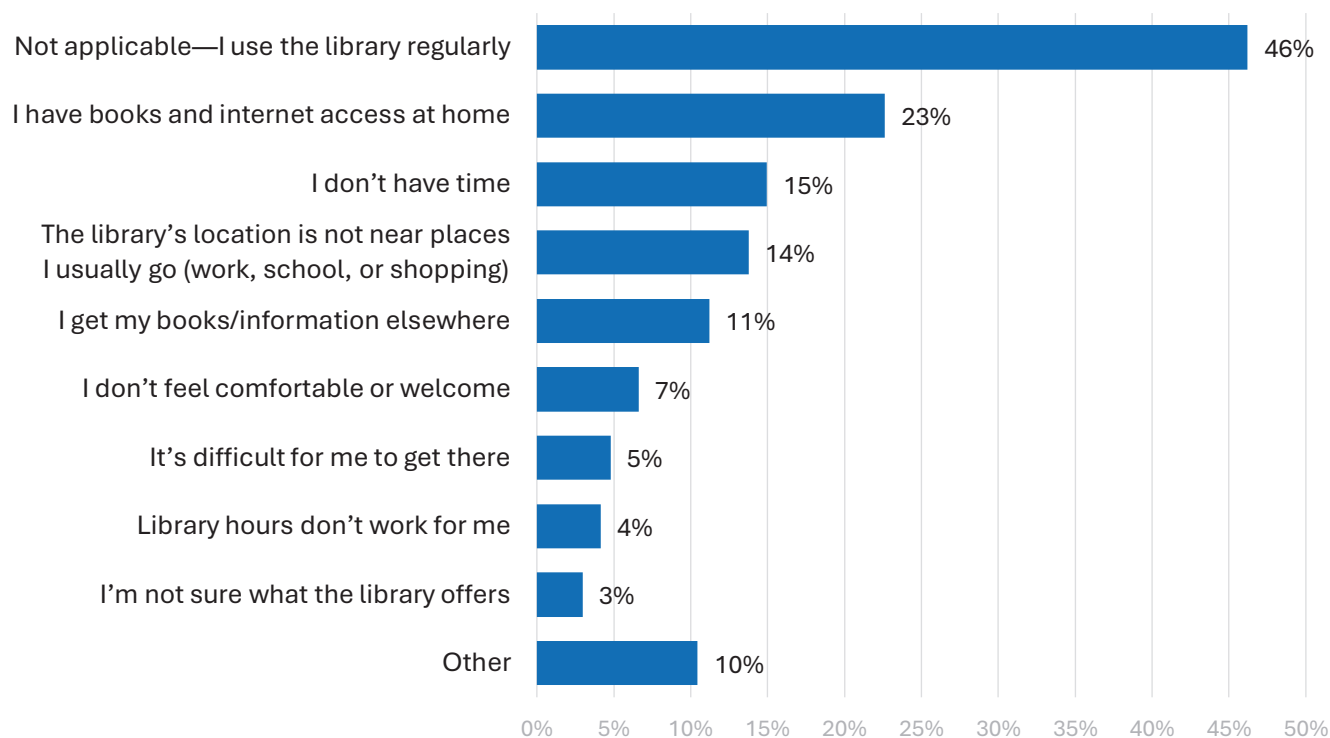
This summary document contains an overview of the survey results, incorporating both the online and paper copy responses received. Responses to closed-ended, multiple-choice questions are reported as given; where applicable, for multiple-choice questions with an "Other" option prompting participants to elaborate via a comment box, responses that fit clearly into existing categories were manually reassigned, and non-responses (e.g., "none, N/A, etc.") were excluded from the results. Additionally, select open-ended comments are highlighted throughout the summary document to capture community voices and insights verbatim.

SECTION 1: LIBRARY USE AND SERVICES

Library Usage Patterns Over the Past 3 Months



Main Reason(s) for Not Using the Library Often or at All

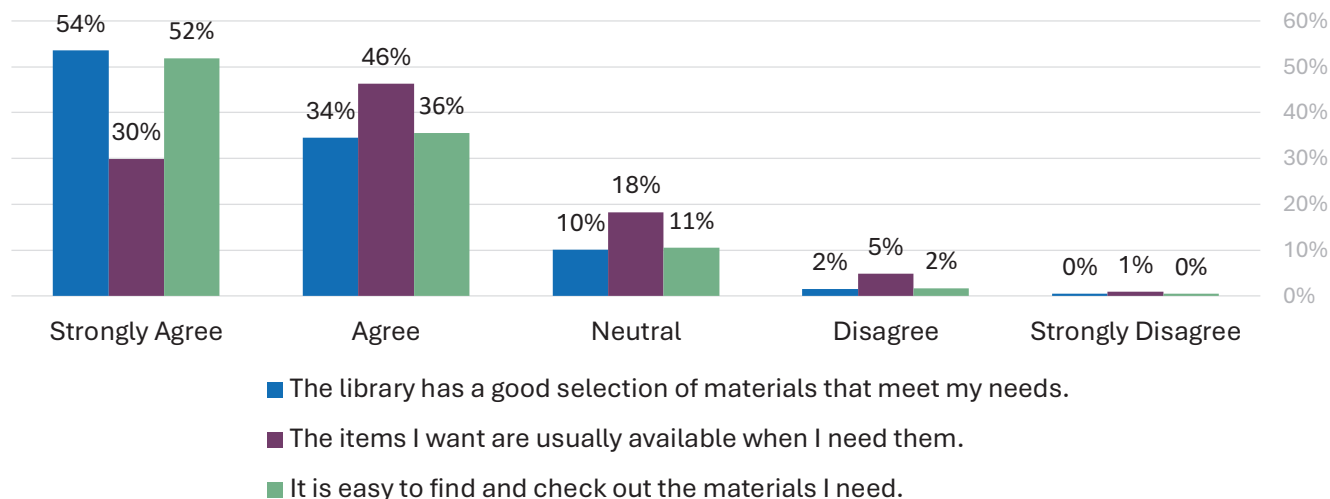


Participants who selected “other” cited several additional reasons for not using or visiting the library, including **preferring to use digital library services; utilizing delivery or off-site access points** instead of visiting the library in person; **safety concerns** at the library building; **being a new resident** who is still settling in; **mobility and accessibility issues** due to health concerns or disability; **not making library usage a personal priority**; **lack of interest** in what the library offers; **using the library for specific purposes** or only as needed; **unavailable or difficult to access materials**; **no longer having young children**; and **only using the library seasonally**.

OSHKOSH PUBLIC LIBRARY STRATEGIC PLANNING COMMUNITY SURVEY SUMMARY

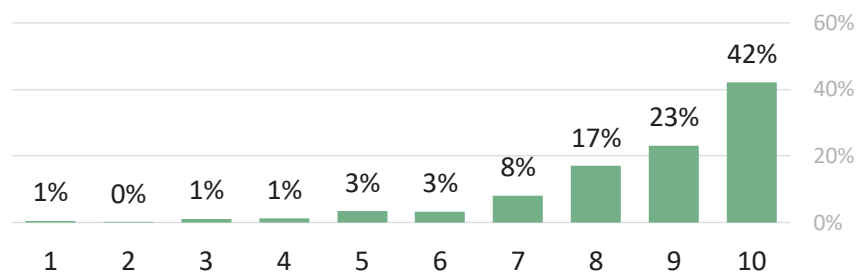


Experience Checking Out Library Materials



Overall Library Satisfaction Rating

(1 = not at all satisfied, 10 = extremely satisfied)



8.58

**Average Overall
Satisfaction Rating**

Explanation of Any Reason(s) for Overall Satisfaction Rating

"I read a lot! I could never afford to buy the number of books I want to read. The library is the best bargain I get with my tax dollars."

Positive comments related to respondents' satisfaction with the library most commonly cited a **general appreciation for the library and its role in the community**, along with **convenient access to a wide selection of materials**, and a **welcoming environment with friendly, helpful staff**.

OSHKOSH PUBLIC LIBRARY STRATEGIC PLANNING COMMUNITY SURVEY SUMMARY

Neutral, mixed, or negative comments, many from respondents who had high overall satisfaction and simultaneously voiced appreciation for the library, included a **limited selection** of newer or niche materials; **long wait times** for books or digital materials; **feeling unsafe or uncomfortable** due to other patrons; **desire for more programs and activities for different age groups**; **difficulty locating materials or navigating technology** (3%), **inconvenient hours or location** (3%), **outdated facilities and atmosphere** (2%), **rarely or never visiting the library** (2%), **misalignment with personal or political values** (2%), and **poor customer service or staff interactions** (2%).

"I'm happy to have digital assets that are easily available, but I wish I felt more comfortable visiting the library on my own."

Library Service Usage and Perceptions of Value	Most Used or Valued (%)	Least Used or Valued (%)
Borrowing or accessing physical materials (<i>books, DVDS, etc.</i>)	84%	4%
Borrowing or accessing digital materials (<i>E-books, etc.</i>)	42%	21%
Services for readers (<i>interlibrary loans, book club kits, staff recommendations on website, etc.</i>)	34%	16%
The library's used bookstore	30%	18%
Programs for adults (<i>speakers, DIY, book clubs, etc.</i>)	24%	24%
Printing, copying, and other document services (<i>faxing, lamination, shredding, etc.</i>)	23%	35%
Pick-up and drop-off options (<i>delivery, curbside, drop-off/pick-up materials at Evergreen, etc.</i>)	21%	28%
Personalized help with info or research (<i>general questions, Book a Librarian, genealogy/local history, etc.</i>)	20%	23%
Library communications/notifications (<i>email newsletter, Shoutbomb text notifications, etc.</i>)	20%	17%
Youth programming and events (<i>storytime, book clubs, STEAM programs, etc.</i>)	18%	42%
Wi-Fi and internet access	17%	36%
Civic services (<i>notary, tax forms, bus passes, etc.</i>)	16%	35%
Private and group workspaces (<i>study space, meeting rooms, etc.</i>)	14%	39%
Outreach and community engagement (<i>information, instruction, other assistance from staff at locations out in the community, etc.</i>)	11%	32%
In-library use of computers and basic tech (<i>Chromebooks, device charging stations, DVD player, etc.</i>)	11%	47%
Interactive learning activities for children (<i>computer learning stations, Take & Make Kits, etc.</i>)	9%	40%
In-library use of specialized tech and equipment (<i>microfilm, DVD conversion station, etc.</i>)	9%	39%

OSHKOSH PUBLIC LIBRARY STRATEGIC PLANNING COMMUNITY SURVEY SUMMARY

Support services (<i>hygiene items, job search assistance, legal assistance clinic, etc.</i>)	7%	47%
Classroom and educator resources (<i>teacher card, class tours, books for classroom use, etc.</i>)	6%	47%
Accessibility and mobility aids (<i>basket carts, magnifier, wheelchair, hearing loops, etc.</i>)	5%	43%
Supplies for on-site purchase (<i>earbuds, flash drives, blank DVDs, envelopes, etc.</i>)	3%	52%
Other	7%	7%

Top MOST Used or Valued Library Services:

- **Borrowing or accessing physical materials** (*books, DVDS, etc.*) – 84%
- **Borrowing or accessing digital materials** (*E-books, etc.*) – 42%
- **Services for readers** (*interlibrary loans, book club kits, staff recommendations, etc.*) – 34%

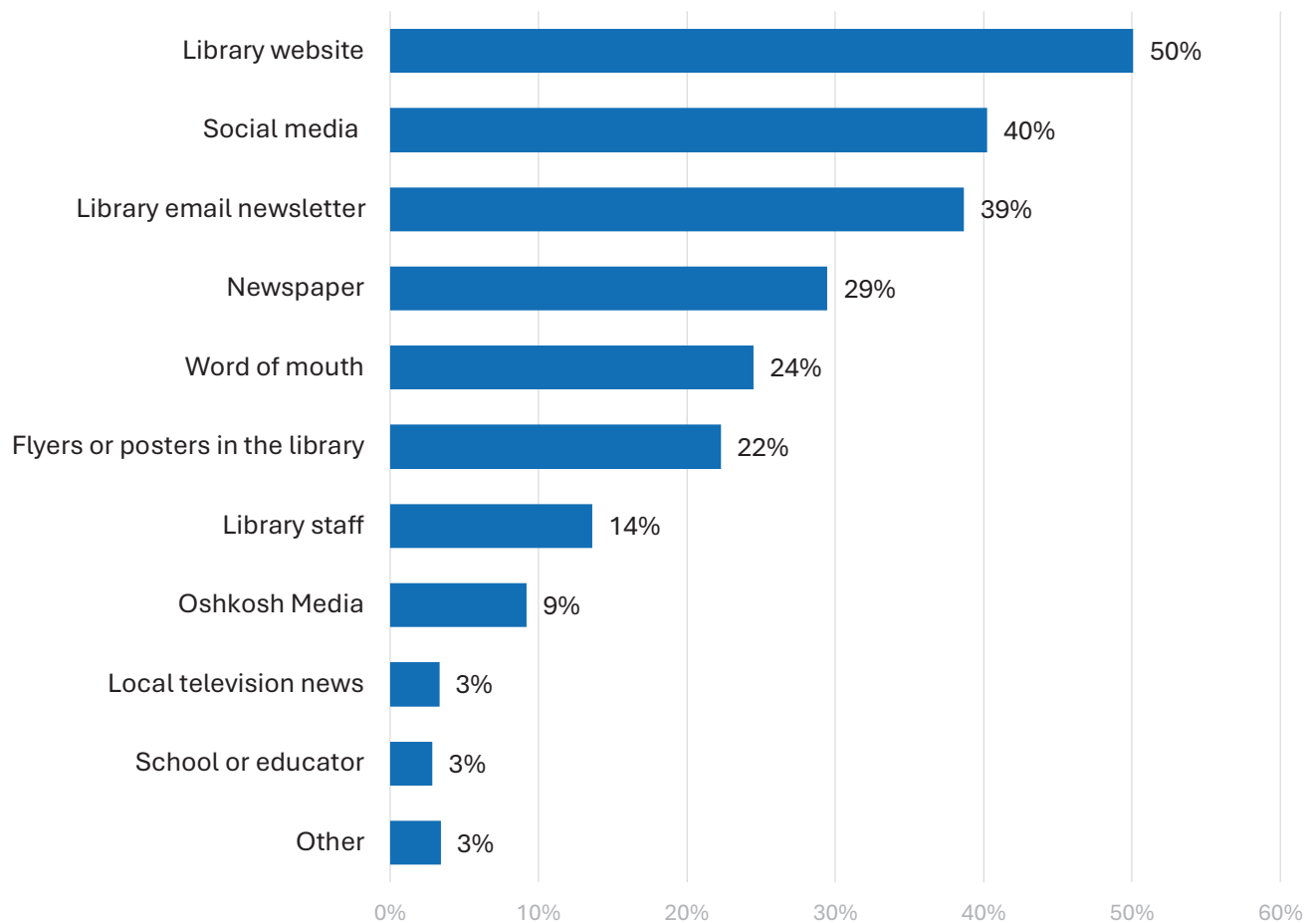
Top LEAST Used or Valued Library Services:

- **Supplies for on-site purchase** (*earbuds, flash drives, blank DVDs, envelopes, etc.*) – 52%
- **Support services** (*hygiene items, job search assistance, legal assistance clinic, etc.*) – 47%
- **In-library use of computers and basic tech** (*Chromebooks, charging stations, etc.*) – 47%
- **Classroom and educator resources** (*teacher card, class tours, classroom books, etc.*) – 47%

“It’s great that so many services are available. I value them all, even if I don’t (yet) rely on them all.”

The majority of respondents who selected “other” to the questions regarding which library services they used or valued most and least used it as an opportunity to share that they **felt that all of the services offered were valuable, even the ones that they did not personally use**, while many of the remaining participants who answered “other” used the comment space to note that they were **not previously aware of many of these services offered** prior to taking the survey.

How Respondents Hear About Library Events, Services, or Updates



Of the respondents who selected the “other” answer option for the above question, many noted that they **rarely or never hear about library events, services, or updates**, while others shared that they receive communication about the library through channels like the **Boys and Girls Club, library brochures or pamphlets, the senior center, and the Discover Oshkosh website.**

I actually don't hear about events in any way, but I may check out social media to see if I can follow to be more aware.

Suggestions for New Library Services That Are Not Currently Offered

Responses (%)

Social events and clubs for adults (*books/comic-oriented, music, movie nights, etc.*)

15%

OSHKOSH PUBLIC LIBRARY STRATEGIC PLANNING COMMUNITY SURVEY SUMMARY



More adult learning and life skills classes (<i>digital literacy, language, career exploration and development, entrepreneurship, CPR, etc.</i>)	13%
Library of Things additions (<i>tools, cooking equipment, gardening supplies, STEM toys, etc.</i>)	12%
Material discovery and service navigation aids (<i>improved signage and organization, kiosks, resource guides, expanded promotion, etc.</i>)	12%
Creative resources and innovation tech (<i>Makerspace, Idea Studio, painting class, etc.</i>)	10%
Greater variety of youth, teen, and family programming (<i>multigenerational, homeschool-specific, experience passes, etc.</i>)	10%
Expanded access points (<i>Bookmobile revival, west-side pickup/dropoff, satellite locations, extended hours, etc.</i>)	9%
On-site amenities and dedicated spaces (<i>coffee shop/café, vending, quiet zones, etc.</i>)	9%
Accessibility and inclusivity services (<i>neurodivergent-friendly programs, dyslexia fonts, mobility scooter, benefit navigation, etc.</i>)	7%
Expanded digital and physical collections (<i>increased e-book access, DVDs, whole series, multilingual, Playaways, etc.</i>)	4%

Suggestions for Improvements to Current Library Services	Responses (%)
Clearer guidelines and policy enforcement (<i>safety and security, quiet vs. active spaces, youth behavior, room checkout, etc.</i>)	19%
Flexible and varied programming (<i>weekend hours, program schedule, drop-in events, etc.</i>)	17%
Broader material selection (<i>diverse genres, new releases, low-vision accessible, audiobooks, varied media formats, etc.</i>)	13%
Facility upgrades (<i>cozy seating, mood lighting, cleanliness, modern tech, etc.</i>)	11%
Improved communication of services (<i>regular emails, social media updates, general visibility, etc.</i>)	9%
Streamlined digital experience (<i>app/website navigation support, online catalog, ability to view check-out history, etc.</i>)	8%
Faster access to materials (<i>less wait, transparent hold times, more copies, fewer e-book limits, clear suggestion process, etc.</i>)	7%
Staff visibility and support (<i>increased presence, "roving" staff/volunteers, staff training, director drop-in hours, etc.</i>)	6%
Clearer navigation and layout (<i>visible and accessible signage, recommendation displays, shelf labels, intuitive floorplan, etc.</i>)	5%
Increased access options (<i>mobile outreach, more pick-up/drop-off locations, longer check-out window, etc.</i>)	4%

SECTION 2: LOOKING INTO THE FUTURE

OSHKOSH PUBLIC LIBRARY STRATEGIC PLANNING COMMUNITY SURVEY SUMMARY



In this section, survey participants were invited to share their boldest hopes, dreams, and ideas for the library's future via open-ended responses to the question, *"Looking ahead 5 years, what other changes or new ideas would you love to see at the library?"*

Additional Changes or New Ideas Respondents Want to See at the Library In 5 Years

★ Engaging Community Programs

Looking ahead, multiple respondents imagine a library that functions as a **lively community hub** that allows them to explore their interests. Patrons asked for more **hands-on classes** in areas like **arts and crafts, cooking, technology, and sewing**, along with regular **author talks, historical lectures, movie nights, and live musical performances**. Many hoped for programs such as **expanded book clubs** covering diverse genres, **"blind date" book exchanges**, and **reading challenges**, as well as activities like **board game nights, jigsaw puzzle sessions, and themed social events** that make it easy to connect with others. Families and youth asked for more **story times, homeschool groups, and activities that are geared toward broader age ranges** or designed to **accommodate neurodiversity and sensory issues**. Several respondents also shared enthusiasm for **volunteer opportunities** or positioning the library as an **entrepreneurial hub** to become a catalyst for local talent.

"Adult story-inspired events like a fairy ball, a Mad Hatter tea party, a murder mystery game, that kind of thing."

"More activities focused on tweens. Our 11 year old is too old for the younger kids group and too young for the teen group."

"Coffee shop, mixed use building, more quiet spaces"

"More cozy seating options for hanging out and reading."

★ Welcoming Spaces and Amenities

Many people envisioned the library as having an **inviting and up-to-date physical environment** while capitalizing on the building's **architectural advantages and historical beauty**. Their wish list included enhancements like **comfortable seating, natural and mood lighting**, dedicated **spaces for phone or Zoom calls, quiet zones** for studying or reading, and **modern children's areas** with more play space and adult seating for supervision. Other suggestions ranged from adding an **on-site café, snack bars, or water bottle fillers**, to creating a **space for nursing mothers**. New areas like a **makerspace, idea lab, or gaming room** were also a common desire, along with improvements like **better signage, enhanced cleanliness, remodeled bathrooms, easier parking, and revitalized décor**.

★ Convenient, Community-Wide Access

Access emerged as a priority for many community members who want the library to be **easier to reach**, where and when they need it. Suggestions included opening **satellite branches or pickup and return locations** on the west and south sides, or **reviving the bookmobile** to extend the library's reach to those who live further away or have limited transportation. Others emphasized **expanding the library's hours**, suggesting increased **weekend availability, earlier opening times, late-night options, or varied program scheduling** to accommodate patrons who work non-traditional hours or have family responsibilities. Additionally, several patrons voiced a desire for

"It would be great to have bookdrops on the west side of Oshkosh."

"Expanded hours, especially during the summer"

OSHKOSH PUBLIC LIBRARY STRATEGIC PLANNING COMMUNITY SURVEY SUMMARY



24/7 pickup lockers or drive-through options that let people collect holds on their schedules and engage with the library on their own terms.

★ **Expansive, Diverse, and Accessible Collections**

Patrons continued to place high value on the library's offering a **broad array of materials** that reflect the community's wide interests and needs. Numerous respondents envisioned the library expanding its collection to include more **niche subjects and diverse genres**, from graphic novels to Christian children's books, while keeping pace with **new releases, popular fiction, and nonfiction** materials. In addition to maintaining a robust collection of **hardcopy and e-books**, many desired more **audiobooks, periodicals, movies, music, and games**, along with accessible options such as **multiple languages, large-print, and Braille**. Continuing to support **interlibrary loans** and exploring avenues to **reduce wait times** for books on hold were other common themes. Multiple community members also shared hopes about **broadening the "Library of Things"** to include items like sewing machines, more instruments, telescopes, baking pans, craft supplies, tools, and gardening supplies, enabling them to access necessities or explore interests.

"More curated collections - I love various themes or staff picks."

"Adding and maintaining materials for all diverse groups in the community."

★ **Innovative Digital Services**

Numerous respondents saw technology as a major component of the library's future. Many expressed a desire for **upgraded, modern in-library tech equipment, faster Wi-Fi, newer gaming consoles, and streaming options** for movies and music. Several also asked for a more **intuitive, user-friendly app and online catalog** that integrates hold lists, tracks reading and check-out history, and links with other community resources. Calls for **AI workshops, digital literacy training, and instruction in how to navigate emerging tech** suggest an appetite for the library to be a place where patrons can explore and learn about cutting-edge tools. Several respondents hoped for **continued access to digital local history archives and subscription-based services**, including genealogy and research databases, paired with classes that teach patrons how to navigate these resources.

"Embracing new technology and how to work with it instead of fearing it."

"Expanded access to online resources and research tools"

"Some sort of boundaries for the homeless population. I understand they should have use of the library, but shouldn't be lounging around or being loud or inappropriate."

"Mental health resources beyond books - something like a connection with social workers or grief support counselors."

★ **Safe, Inclusive Policies**

Several comments underscored the importance of maintaining the library as a **safe, comfortable space for all** as it moves into the future. Patrons want **clear, equitable policies** that uphold community access and freedom of information while ensuring comfort for families and those seeking quiet study time. Many desired to see **consistent enforcement of rules** regarding disruptive behavior, smoking, or loitering, as well as advocating for **staff training in inclusion, mental health awareness, and conflict de-escalation**. Some responses suggested **providing resources, social service benefit navigation, or dedicated spaces** for unhoused patrons so that all can use the library with dignity. Keeping the library as a **neutral repository of knowledge**

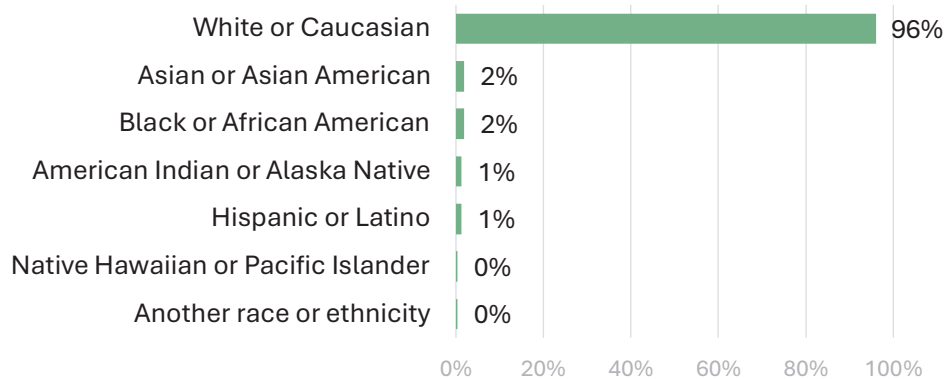
OSHKOSH PUBLIC LIBRARY STRATEGIC PLANNING COMMUNITY SURVEY SUMMARY



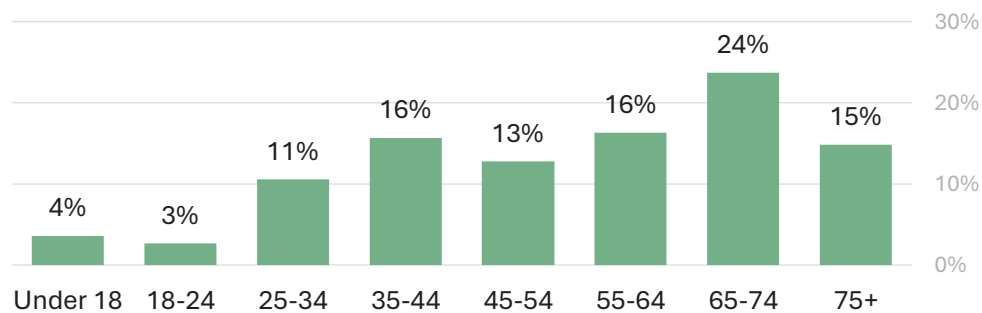
was also seen as crucial for the future, and several respondents cautioned against politicizing its services or collections.

SECTION 3: RESPONDENT DEMOGRAPHICS

Race or Ethnicity



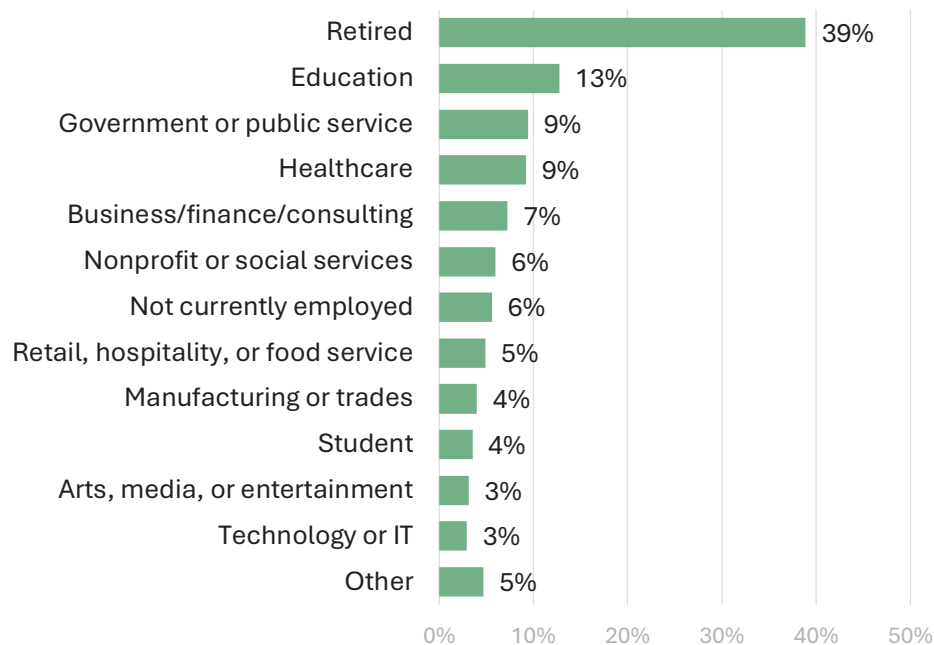
Age



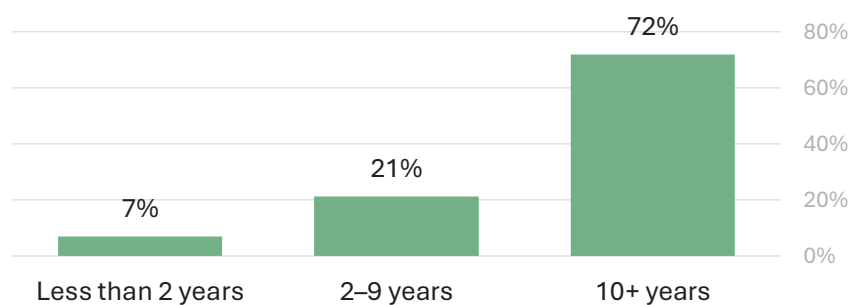
OSHKOSH PUBLIC LIBRARY STRATEGIC PLANNING COMMUNITY SURVEY SUMMARY



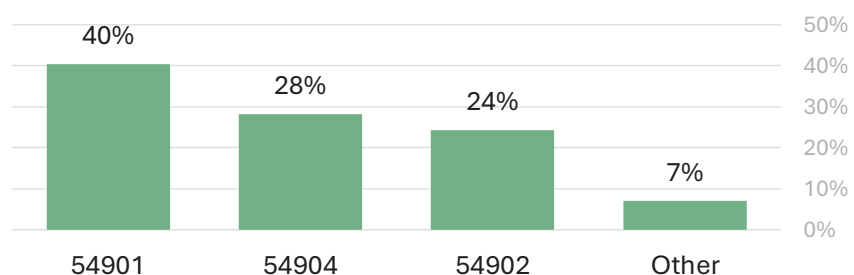
Current Employment Sector



Length of Residence in the Oshkosh Community

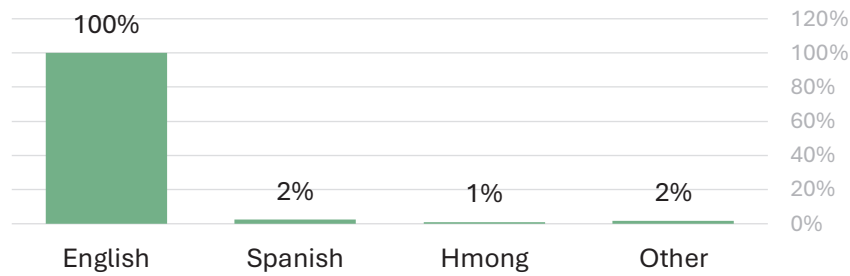


ZIP Code

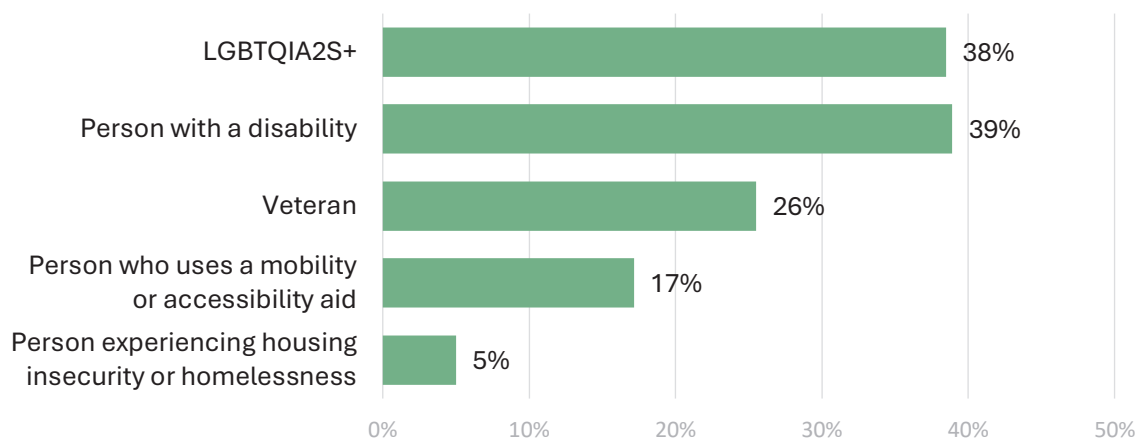


OSHKOSH PUBLIC LIBRARY STRATEGIC PLANNING COMMUNITY SURVEY SUMMARY

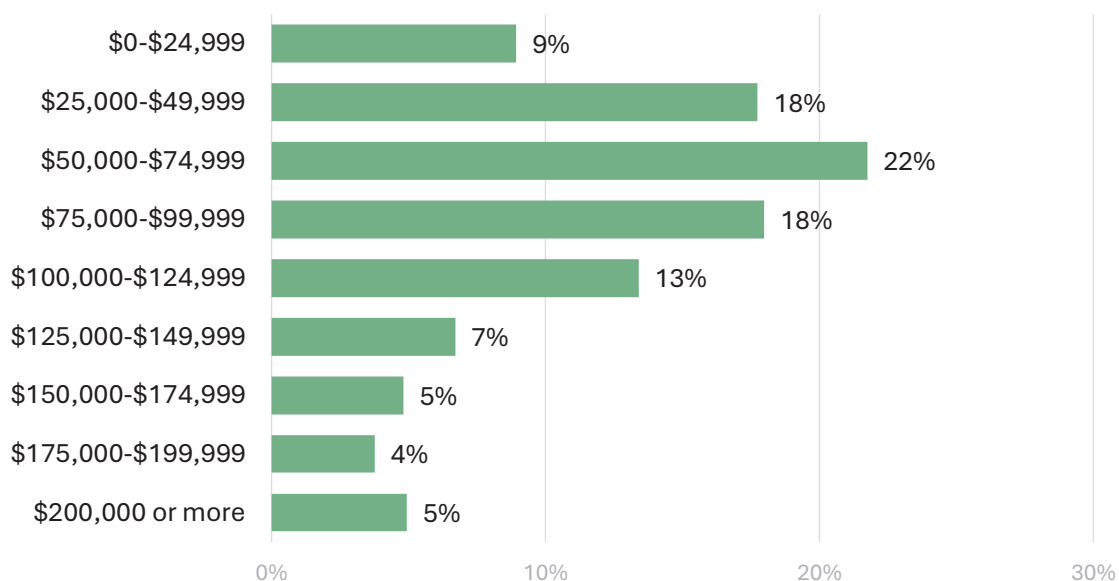
Language(s) Spoken at Home



Identification with Specific Groups



Approximate Annual Household Income



SECTION 4: CLOSING THOUGHTS

Lastly, the survey concluded by inviting participants to respond to the open-ended question prompt:

“Are there any other thoughts you would like to share?”

Many respondents used the final question to share **personal reflections and experiences**, along with a deep **appreciation for the library** and its continued **presence in the Oshkosh community**. Dozens described the library as a **welcoming, vital, and even cherished community asset**, often highlighting its **impact on their lives**. Across the board, responses reflected a **strong sense of care for the library’s future**.

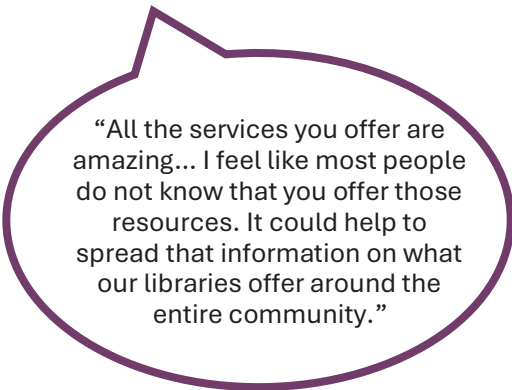


“Keep up the good work and keep asking questions.”

Several responses offered **constructive feedback**, such as for outreach, programming, and building improvements, that largely **mirrored the topics, themes, and ideas** previously covered in other parts of the survey. Similarly, a small number of responses **reiterated concerns about safety, aesthetics, and the library’s evolving role** in serving the needs of all members of the community. Several respondents also noted how much they **appreciated being asked for their input** in this survey and for the opportunity to inform decisions with their feedback.



“As I grow older, and my kids are leaving the nest, I look to the library as an additional social outlet. Thank you for being a cornerstone of our community.”



“All the services you offer are amazing... I feel like most people do not know that you offer those resources. It could help to spread that information on what our libraries offer around the entire community.”

KEY TAKEAWAYS

1. The Library's Atmosphere Shapes How People Engage

The physical and social environment of the library deeply influences how welcome, safe, and comfortable people feel using the space. While many patrons see the library as an engaging and peaceful place to visit, numerous others reported feeling uncomfortable or unsafe due to visible security concerns, noise, rowdy youth behavior, or unwelcoming interactions. Additionally, while there is broad appreciation for the library's architectural beauty, numerous responses noted that parts of the building can sometimes feel underutilized or outdated. These perceptions can significantly affect how, when, and whether people choose to visit.

2. Programming is a Strength (and a Growth Opportunity)

Library programs are highly valued by patrons, with many highlighting the impact of offerings such as storytimes, summer reading challenges, book clubs, and special events. At the same time, there's a strong desire for more variety across age groups, scheduling options, and programming based on specific interests or hobbies. Community members are looking for programs that reflect their unique identities and needs, expand their knowledge, and help build social connections with others.

3. Residents Want More Ways to Access the Library

While the central library location is a hub for many, convenient access remains a barrier that prevents portions of the community from fully utilizing its services. Patrons are seeking options that make library services easier to access, whether through neighborhood drop boxes, satellite pickup points, or expanded hours. These requests reflect a broader need to align services with those who may have varied routines or live further away from the library's downtown location.

4. Patrons Value Materials That Reflect Their Needs and Interests

Perhaps unsurprisingly, books and other library materials continue to be a key component of what people use and value most about the library. Many patrons expressed interest in a greater overall selection and wider variety of genres and formats, including accessible options for multilingual and low-vision readers. Others noted long wait times for popular items and a desire to play a more active role in suggesting new titles or understanding how materials are selected.

5. Communication and Awareness Gaps Limit Use of Existing Services

Even loyal, frequent users don't always know the full breadth of what the library has to offer, and many respondents noted that their first time hearing about certain services was through the survey itself. This suggests that tactics such as clear, proactive communication and stronger outreach across multiple channels, along with tools like easy-to-digest service guides, could significantly increase engagement by expanding awareness of the library's offerings.



**Oshkosh
Public Library**

STRATEGIC PLAN 2026 - 2030

APPENDIX E

**COMMUNITY FOCUS GROUP
SUMMARY 1 & 3**



Two community member focus groups were held at the Oshkosh Public Library Conference Room as part of the strategic planning process. The first session took place on Monday, August 4 from 6:00 to 8:00 p.m. with 16 attendees, and the second on Tuesday, August 5 from 5:00 to 7:00 p.m. with 12 attendees. Library staff welcomed participants and Northspan staff facilitated the sessions. Each began with introductions and a brief overview of the strategic plan project and recent community survey findings. Participants then moved through a series of discussion stations, recording their ideas on large sheets of paper. The sessions concluded with a short group reflection before adjourning.

Community Connections

Participants emphasized the importance of increasing the library's presence in the community through broader outreach, stronger partnerships, and improved accessibility. They discussed ways the library could engage more residents, build relationships with local groups, and make it easier for people to connect with its resources and services.

Attendees identified a mix of logistical, environmental, and awareness-related factors that can discourage library visits. These included challenges related to convenience, comfort, safety, and program relevance. Some participants noted that current offerings and access points do not fully meet the needs of all residents.

What could the library do to help people feel more connected to the Oshkosh community?

- Learning in Retirement, Evergreen
- Bookmobile
- Visit Oshkosh employers
- Share more of what Oshkosh is reading
- Free Little Library support (+1)
- Oshkosh history/genealogy resources & programs
- Flyers at stores
- Email newsletters
- Social media ✓
- OASD schools
- Volunteers sharing their hobbies & interests either at the library or at other locations (e.g., Christine Ann Center)
- Social media: Engage with more local organizations

- Content creation online
- Bring back Sawdust Day buttons with library theme
- Bus transportation on Sundays & evenings
- Closer bus stop
- Be more accessible
- Welcome basket with info about local organizations for renters & homebuyers
- Promote library at new housing developments
- Move reference section to main floor
- Neighborhood association outreach
- Featured neighborhood meetings

If there is a reason you have not visited the library lately, what is it?

- Parking is tight stalls & not enough (+1, +2)
- Rowdy kids at kid activities
- Too busy
- Limited + odd hours
- Out of the way
- Digital checkout length limitations
- Not a friendly environment or welcoming (feels like an office)
- Safety concerns
- Not aware of what is here
- Arts & music – space & scheduling issues (for others, potentially)
- Bad internet
- Safety concerns & perceptions (after dark)
- Hard to find event information
- I use Libby & Hoopla
- Busy
- Buy books from Amazon
- Friends use digital
- No engaging adult programming:
- Lectures on local history
- Brewing
- Authors

Library as a Lifeline

Participants envisioned the library as a central hub for learning, skill development, and essential services. They discussed opportunities to expand educational programs, provide practical support for everyday needs, and connect people with information and resources that improve quality of life.

What needs or challenges do people face in Oshkosh that the library could help address?

- Community ambassadors
- Literacy tutoring
- Learning English
- Internet access
- Critical thinking skills
- Low-income support
- Job skills/interviewing skills/resume
- Tax assistance
- Budgeting assistance
- Social skills
- Classes for free ("business law", etc.)
- Cooking classes/health
- Welcome packet
- Outreach to schools, for new people or kids
- Safety in space
- Health & medical materials in other languages
- Checkout legacy media & tech (VCR, etc.)
- Legal clinic w/ specialties
- How to navigate local government, city council & committees
- Support groups (i.e. Chronic illness)
- Services:
- Financial literacy
- Job help
- Partner with Day by Day Shelter to provide services
- Partner with Teachers Closet for resources

- Advocap
- Satellite sites using existing buildings (school district)
- Reach out to residents of the tiny village to get them library cards & services
- Mailbox drop-offs throughout the city

Learning & Enrichment

The group identified a wide range of potential programs and experiences to support personal growth, lifelong learning, and community interaction. They expressed interest in activities that encourage creativity, cultural exchange, skill-building, and opportunities for people of different ages to learn together.

What new learning or enrichment opportunities would you like to see available at the library?

- Maker spaces
- Learning to garden
- Making your own laundry/detergent
- Card making
- Author talks
- History/local history talks
- Community reads (Appleton)
- Sensory room (library)
- Language (learn another, speak with others)
- Cooking demos (YMCA or co-op)
- Better partnership with school district
- Art classes (Canvas painting – adult)
- Book clubs (after 5 PM)
- Travel seminars
- Open mic night (literature/poetry)
- Writer's groups
- Intergenerational learning opportunities
- Tool library / experts to teach us how to use them
- Adulting classes
- "Check out a human" storytelling

- Taxes & finance (budgeting)
- World Relief
- Volunteer fair (partner with United Way)
- Library tours (virtual + in person)
- Life skills for teens & students (financial)
- Teen speaker events
- Single & mingle events for older adults
- Intergenerational online format
- Multi-language programming
- Multi-language collections
- More accessibility services for folks with disabilities
- Public speaking classes
- Monthly senior center events/engagement (different time options)
- AI classes
- Foreign language conversation tables
- Cooking classes
- Mystery book group
- Lecture series from pioneer families (with photos)
- Speed-friending events
- Teach people how to use online services (eBooks)

Bold Ideas for the Future

When asked to think expansively, participants proposed ways the library could offer unique experiences, enhance its spaces, and broaden its role as a place for both learning and leisure. They emphasized the value of innovation and fresh approaches to engaging the public.

Dream big! What's one bold new service or feature you'd love to see at the library?

- Seed library / plant swap (+1, +1)
- Library café (+1, +1, +1)
- Adult book clubs for working families (hours extended)
- Book club support:
 - Community outreach

- Scavenger hunt
 - Suggestions
- Resources for writers
- Puzzle night
- Sleepover at the library
- Gaming sessions
- Literacy & programs for challenged adults
- Bingo
- Film showings (art/foreign)
- Date night
- Author events
- Bookmobile! (+1)
- Community hygiene “bags” / kits
- Highlight WI authors/books/destinations
- Cooking class
- Crafting class
- More inviting space featuring local art/murals
- Entry via the Lions’ staircase
- TV-series night
- Additional check-out for kids area
- Movie nights
- 1:1 help with teens & seniors (teens teaching older adults tech)
- Utilize students (middle & high) to create maps, scavenger hunts, digitize materials, art
- Weekly article in the *Herald* about library happenings
- QR code for the library & event calendar
- Magazine room is underutilized
- More events inside the library (flea market)
- Offer maps of the library or wall mural
- Live person (greeter) at the welcome desk
- Café as a meeting hub
- Child care service areas (even 20 minutes)
- High School Babysitter Program
- Friends of the Library

Reimagining the Role of the Library

Looking ahead, participants described a vision of the library as an adaptable, welcoming, and relevant institution that serves all members of the community. They saw it as both a gathering place and a trusted source for cultural, historical, and educational resources, strengthened through collaboration with other organizations.

What should the role of a modern library be in 2025 and beyond?

- Facilitator
- Willingness to meet community where they are (+1)
- Honoring and showcasing the history of WI / Oshkosh
- Adaptable & responsive to patron needs
- A gathering place
- A community meeting space
- Reaching all ages 0–100+
- Genealogy resource!
- Read at the zoo
- More experience passes:
 - Sports, arts, events
 - Lifestyle complements
- Hub of the community
- My social outlet
- Celebrating a place where books are always in demand
- Implement 1% library tax (if feasible???)
- Hope
- Be relevant
- Cultural/educational hub
- Help transition books to emerging tech formats (+ teaching how)
- Remain FREE, don't go backwards
- Strengthen Winnefox consortium/collaboration
- **Partnerships:**
 - Colleges/majors

- IT department
- Literacy Council
- World Relief
- High schools
- SSI office

Welcoming & Inclusive Spaces

Attendees shared ideas for making the library more accessible, comfortable, and reflective of the community's diversity. They highlighted the importance of designing spaces and services that meet the needs of people with varying abilities, backgrounds, and interests.

Participants expressed a desire for the library to support shared interests and recreational pursuits. They saw value in creating opportunities for social connection, skill-sharing, and exploration of personal passions within the library setting.

How can the library become more inclusive and accessible?

- Check out “things”
- Remove sleeping ban / large bags
- Greeter (ALA concierge)
- More comfortable seating
- More cozy seating
- Low stim environment for neurodivergent
- Better entrance
- Better parking lot entrance/spaces
- Use the Dome for more things
- More concerts in the Dome
- Walk-in hours for new users or those who may be unfamiliar/prolonged absence
- Glad sleeping bags are banned.
- Considerations for blind/low-vision users
- Neurodivergence and sensory-friendly spaces/programs
- Go Transit: closer bus stop
- Café
- Welcome Desk with Greeter
- Maps of library

- Embrace “wandering”
- Welcome & actively include immigrants, new Americans, and non-English speakers (including high school students)
- Discover Oshkosh: leverage partnerships for new resident outreach

What are your hobbies and interests? How can the library support them?

- Plant swap / seed exchange / library education
- Craft classes (knit, crochet, etc.) by a teacher:
 - Paper crafts / mixed media
 - Painting / pastels
 - Beading
- Meets at downtown
- Teachers to teach a new hobby
- Watercolor
- Collecting extinct in the wild plants
- Cooking
- Organizing tips/tricks
- Repair Café (more often)
- More hobby groups (+ travel, music, embroidery)
- YA book club for adults
- Community book
- Non-fiction book clubs
- Puzzle competitions / exchange
- Book exchange / swap
- Book sales
- Foreign language conversation
- Local history
- Brewing
- Gardening Club
- Musical events, community singing
- Boating/fishing
- More book-related things, author discussions
- Dog training
- Scrapbooking

- Writing classes
- Photography
- Journaling
- Volunteer/job fair
- OPL Jam plays for community sing

Key Takeaways

1. The community wants the library to play a larger role in public life, with more visible outreach, stronger partnerships, and improved accessibility.
2. Barriers to use include both practical issues and perceptions of relevance, signaling a need for adjustments to hours, services, and communication.
3. There is interest in the library as a hub for lifelong learning, skills development, and essential services, not just traditional collections.
4. People value inclusive, welcoming spaces and programming that reflect the diversity of the community.



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APPENDIX F

COMMUNITY FOCUS GROUP SUMMARY 2



A community partner focus group was held at the Oshkosh Public Library on Tuesday, August 5 from 10:00 a.m. to 12:00 p.m. as part of the strategic planning process. The session brought together 12 representatives from local agencies, government, and other organizations. Library staff welcomed participants, and Northspan staff facilitated the discussion. Following introductions, facilitators provided a brief overview of the strategic plan project and recent community survey results. The conversation focused on opportunities for collaboration and strengthening partnerships, with participants rotating through discussion stations to share ideas. The session concluded with a short group reflection before adjourning.

Library Spaces & Use

Participants described the library as a place that offers a variety of spaces and resources that serve both individual and group needs. They saw value in maintaining a mix of areas that support study, research, learning, and community engagement. The discussion also touched on opportunities to adapt existing spaces or create new ones to better meet current demands, enhance flexibility, and accommodate different types of activities.

Which areas or resources within the library do you or the people you serve use most often?

- Books
- Conference rooms
- Children's area
- Online research
- Online newspaper
- COVID tests
- Community access
- Calendar of events
- As a place to study (individual/group)
- Historical research
- Maps
- Periodicals
- Exhibit space
- Lions in front
- Workforce development
- Voting
- Literacy council

Are there spaces you wish were available or used differently?

- Teen area
- Services for work-at-home (Zoom space, virtual)
- Plaza & gazebo
- Consolidated space (city/library same building)

Strengthening the Library's Role

Community partners described the library as a valued part of the local service network, with potential to play an even greater role in supporting residents and organizations. Participants emphasized the importance of maintaining the library's core mission while expanding its role as a safe, accessible, and well-resourced gathering place.

There was agreement that physical and virtual spaces should be adaptable to evolving needs, with attention to accessibility, flexibility, and comfort. Participants felt that enhancing available space, improving layout, and ensuring efficient use of facilities could strengthen the library's ability to serve a wider range of users.

In your opinion, what would make the library an even more valuable resource and community hub for residents, organizations, and local leaders?

- Be aware of other community spaces
- Stay true to mission
- Resources & resource connection
- Place of safety
 - Extreme weather
- More meeting space
 - Adequate
 - Free
 - Accessible
- Co-working space
- Be careful & thoughtful in planning resources
- Make sure what we're doing now, we're doing well, before adding new
- Continue to align expectations & standards for patrons

Future Programs & Services

The group identified opportunities to expand programs that build literacy, encourage lifelong learning, and connect multiple generations. They also discussed the value of better communication about existing services, along with staff training and support to ensure programs are effective and inclusive.

What new or expanded programs and services would you like to see the library offer that could have the greatest impact on the community in the next 5 years?

- Coordinate with neighborhood associations to increase access
- Expand current services
- Be aware of budget considerations
- Literacy programs (non-English speakers & all)
- Intergenerational programming
- Interpretive services
- Communicate existing services (book delivery)
- Support & training for staff (youth issues)
- Safety for staff

Library as a Partner

Partnerships were seen as a major strength and an area for growth. Attendees highlighted the library's ability to work with schools, nonprofits, and civic organizations to deliver shared programming, extend outreach, and coordinate resources. They also noted that stronger communication channels would help align goals and make collaboration more efficient.

When you think about collaboration, how do you currently see the library as a partner to your organization?

- Ability to lend UW materials to public library (WISCAT)
- Museum programming & education (Book Nook, local history materials)
- Summer reading program (Parks/CF-funded) – free pool pass incentives
- Experience passes – partnership with area organizations
- Schools – what is being done for outreach

Looking ahead, what opportunities for partnership do you see with your organization and the library?

- Workshop for parents/kids on early literacy (Learning Collaborative)
- Polk Library demolition – leverage student engagement (Pilot expanded hours)
- YMCA/B+GC?
- Leveraging communication networks
- Cross collaboration of field trips (museum)
- Pop-ups for communication
- 211 kiosk for resource navigation
- Revenue-generating activities (legal/ethical issues? ways to harness collaboration?)
 - Leasing parking lot?
 - Utilizing events (farmers market, etc.)
 - Paid tours?

Perception of the Library

Perceptions of the library were generally positive, with recognition of its innovative efforts and community presence. At the same time, participants acknowledged challenges in awareness, accessibility, and perceptions of inclusivity. They encouraged the library to continue balancing innovation with consistent delivery of existing services and to strengthen its role as a trusted and welcoming civic space.

How would you describe the library's image or reputation in the community?

- More openness/collaboration
- Go-to for parents
- Improved safety (more enforcement/expectations)
- Point of pride in community
- “Intellectuals only” library anxiety
- Library reflects the identity of the community
- Lacking things compared to other libraries (maker space, etc.)
- Not as “welcoming” as some, less meeting space, no recording equipment
- Trying new/innovative things (3D printing)
- New, exciting programs that people don’t always know about

- Privilege, not a right (how to enforce code of conduct and encourage community responsibility)

Connecting with Your Audiences

The group emphasized the importance of outreach that reflects the diversity of the community, accommodates different communication preferences, and connects people with the resources they need. They viewed the library as both a provider of direct services and a connector that can link residents to a broader network of community supports.

How could the library better reach and serve the individuals or groups your organization works with?

- Community events at parks, zoos, youth connections
- Museum programming & event outreach
- Focus on Oshkosh cultural assets/connections – tell the community’s identity/story
- How can the library encourage reciprocal communication – easily shareable content/posts/etc.
- Instead of expanding/building new spaces – the library as a civic/digital hub?
- Literacy outreach – refugees, children
- Intergenerational programming – recognizing how different generations get info

Are there specific ways we could help connect them with library resources and services?

- Accommodating communication needs
 - Generational preferences
 - Interpretive services for languages

Key Takeaways

1. **Partnerships are valued and have growth potential.** The library is seen as a strong collaborator with opportunities to deepen connections with schools, nonprofits, and civic organizations.

2. **Spaces need to be flexible and responsive.** There is a desire for physical and virtual spaces that can adapt to changing needs, support multiple purposes, and be more accessible.
3. **Program expansion should focus on impact and inclusivity.** Literacy, lifelong learning, and intergenerational programming are priorities, along with better promotion of existing services.
4. **Communication is a recurring theme.** Stronger outreach and clearer channels for sharing information would help align goals and connect more people with resources.
5. **Perception is generally positive but not universal.** The library is recognized for innovation and community pride, but there are concerns about accessibility, inclusivity, and public awareness.



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APPENDIX G

**CURRENT REALITY, SUCCESS
INDICATORS & ACTIONS**



**Current Realities, Success Indicators & Actions
Focused Implementation Workshop | August 20, 2025**

Current Reality: Describes the current situation as it relates to the Strategic Direction (SD).

Success Indicators: Explains what will be different in 5 years if Oshkosh Public Library mobilizes around and gets behind the Strategic Direction.

Actions: Considers and answers “What are our specific, measurable, and achievable actions for the next 5 years?”

SD1. Revitalizing Space for Optimal Use

This strategic direction emphasizes a need to reimagine the library’s physical environment to better support learning, connection, and community life. It focuses on updating layouts, technology, and amenities so every corner of the library serves today’s needs while honoring its historic character.

Current Reality

- Disjointed historical building and addition
- Love for the building
- Mobility challenges
- Space not as welcoming as it could be
- Great, welcoming people
- Renovation in 1993
- Technology is outdated
- Space doesn’t match modern needs
- Lots of space, some underutilized
- Tall shelves
- Footprint of the collection makes it hard to move
- Funding challenges for large-scale renovations/updates

Success Indicators

- Increased in-person visits
- Increased use of meeting space, including more partnerships with community organizations
- More ‘people’ space in the library
- Specific space created for teens
- Specific spaces created for hobbies (e.g., makerspace)
- Increased circulation
- Easier building navigation with more intuitive layout
- Improved accessibility

Actions

1. Improve and clarify wayfinding and signage in the library building
2. Explore moving conference rooms and other spaces to optimize usage
3. Update furnishings, lighting, and flooring for comfort
4. Consult local Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) compliance officer
5. Create workspaces with upgraded technology
6. Create an eating area with vending options
7. Do a comprehensive review of the facility plan
8. Evaluate collection for space considerations
9. Explore the option for shorter shelves

SD2. Expanding Community-Wide Access Points

By extending the library's reach beyond its walls, important resources, programs, and services will be available wherever people live, learn, and gather. This direction emphasizes partnerships, digital tools, and offsite opportunities that make library access convenient, inclusive, and visible across the entire community.

Current Reality

- Many people must travel far to visit the library
- Requires intentional out-of-the way visits for non-54901 residents
- Not centrally located
- Not located in major retail corridor
- Far from new development on the west side of the city
- Particular groups (e.g., youth, non-drivers) have extra difficulty accessing
- Located by a bus station with limited hours of operation
- Not close to high schools
- Existing school reading program outreach and an outreach librarian
- No current mobile service/Bookmobile
- Drop-off and pick-up available at Evergreen

Success Indicators

- Increased usage and access by non-54901 residents
- Increased circulation numbers
- More pick-up and drop-off points in convenient locations
- Increased visibility and brand awareness
- Outreach vehicle in the community
- Expanded ability to obtain library cards

Actions

1. Establish community-wide drop-off points
2. Develop off-site collections in places with widespread public access
3. Explore placement of vending-type library material kiosks and holds pickup lockers
4. Collaborate with school to offer universal library cards for 4K students
5. Determine feasibility of procuring a mobile outreach/'Books on Wheels' vehicle
6. Explore options for digital library kiosk(s)

SD3. Leveraging Strategic Partnerships

Cultivating strong collaborations with organizations, businesses, and institutions allows the library to amplify its impact and expand its capacity to serve the community. This direction recognized that intentional partnerships that share resources, align goals, and spark innovation create new opportunities for growth.

Current Reality

- No partnership strategy/plan in place
- No one officially in charge or responsible for cultivating/managing partnerships
- Partnerships are currently weak or undefined overall
- Friends of the Library is in the process of being restarted
- Potential for new or expanded community partnerships, including:
 - JEK Foundation
 - Schools
 - Oshkosh Public Museum
 - Winnebago Area Literacy Council
 - Chamber of Commerce
 - Fortune 500 companies headquartered in Oshkosh
 - Service clubs
 - Oshkosh Area Community Foundation
 - Senior center

Success Indicators

- Increased sponsorships/donations
- Increased support in the community
- Schools and other partners educating on library usage
- Identification of more project opportunities for events and capital
- Clearly defined staff roles and goals for strategic partnerships through community engagement, outreach, and development

Actions

1. Develop partnership plan to identify staff responsible for partner recognition, thank you event, etc.
2. Partner with school district and other educational and cultural institutions for programming
3. Connect program planning in advance to support sponsorships
4. Explore sponsorships and donor naming rights for new library spaces
5. Leverage leaders and Boards to develop opportunities to build relationships
6. Partner with University of Wisconsin-Oshkosh for interns to support social services in library

SD4. Aligning Program Goals with Community Interest

Programs that reflect the needs, interests, and aspirations of Oshkosh residents ensure the library's offerings are both meaningful and relevant. This direction emphasizes continuous community input and responsive planning so that every program sparks engagement and connection.

Current Reality

- Limited staff capacity for programming
- No defined programming librarian role
- 7 librarians, 3 managers who do programs
- Level II Library Assistants can also do programs
- Longstanding programs get better attendance than new ones
- No key fundraising event
- Working on a Friends of the Library
- Missing programs/collections for multilingual populations

Success Indicators

- Increased participation in programming
- Friends of OPL exists and is active
- Programming librarian role exists
- Program offerings reflect community wants/needs
- Clear strategy for developing and evaluating programs
- Greater public satisfaction with programming

Actions

1. Survey community interests and availability for programming and look at data from strategic planning community survey
2. Create and actively involve Friends of the Library
3. Work with Friends group to establish revenue-building events (potentially annually recurring)
4. Create a comprehensive programming plan to include more cultural events with defined staff roles for execution
5. Reach out to community partners to explore shared programming opportunities
6. Working with City and other landholding partners, create StoryWalk initiative

SD5. Improving Organizational Effectiveness

Strengthening the library's internal systems, staff capacity, and decision-making processes ensures that resources are used wisely and services are delivered seamlessly. This direction emphasizes efficiency, transparency, and continuous improvement so the Library can adapt and thrive in a changing environment.

Current Reality

- Staff spaces are fragmented and impede workflow
- Limited opportunities to offer upward feedback
- Discomfort in using existing feedback loops/processes
- Gossip amongst staff
- Inappropriate communication between staff in public spaces
- Efforts to promote inclusion in all aspects of the organization and staff
- More all-staff events, training, and Staff Day implemented
- Unbalanced internal vs. patron-centered focus
- Organizational hierarchy can be confusing (e.g., committees)
- Too much info to manage effectively
- Instances of info withholding
- Staff scheduling issues
- Strategic misalignment across the organization

Success Indicators

- Staff have better understanding of their roles
- Ability to shift focus to patron-centered initiatives and strategic programming
- All staff, including pages and support staff, feel more informed and included
- More consistent customer service delivery
- Improved patron experience
- Fewer scheduling crises
- Staffing levels meet needs

Actions

1. Enhance training for new staff (including navigating safety issues) and use/continuously improve onboarding practices
2. Develop a process for communicating and providing guidance to staff on strategic goals
3. Create opportunities for staff to learn their own jobs in greater depth and a system for learning skills that enhance internal promotability
4. Purchase scheduling software
5. Develop a plan to incorporate more intentional focus on patron-centered thinking and service in regular processes
6. Develop a plan to implement consistent customer service training and cross-training



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APPENDIX H

STRATEGIC PLAN TIMELINE





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