



2019 - 2022
STRATEGIC DIRECTION

2022
SPPL



SAINT PAUL
PUBLIC LIBRARY



WEST 7TH LIBRARY

"If you want to see Saint Paul, go to a library."



CATHERINE PENKERT
DIRECTOR

That observation, shared with me by a community member this year, captures the unique power of our city's public libraries to bring people together and to connect, uplift, and transform individuals and communities.

We at Saint Paul Public Library have spent 2018 creating plans for the future. In order to chart our path forward, we listened to what our community members want and need from us. The vision and strategy enclosed in this document reflect months of conversation with our community and staff members. Thousands of people from all corners of Saint Paul helped to create

this direction, which will guide our work for the next three years. This direction builds on our strengths and informs areas for improvement and growth. It inspires us to work toward a vision where all people feel seen, safe, and welcome and where libraries bring people together to experience hope, joy, and creativity through learning.

I could not be more proud to be part of the team at Saint Paul Public Library and to live in a city that values libraries as places that welcome everyone to connect, learn, discover, and grow.

Strategic Planning Team

Many people were instrumental to the creation of the Library's new strategic direction. It evolved collaboratively and in strong partnership with the communities we serve. We asked questions, shared stories and experiences, and listened intently. We distilled everything we heard into the mission, vision, values, and direction that you will find in this document.

More than 50 staff members conducted interviews with members of the public, key stakeholders, community leaders, elected officials, and their Library colleagues to inform our work. All staff members had the opportunity to be interviewed and to provide feedback throughout the process.

We would like to thank all Library staff members for their participation and, in particular:

CORE STRATEGIC PLANNING TEAM

- Catherine Penkert, Director of Saint Paul Public Library
- Maureen Hartman, Deputy Director of Public Services
- Xenia Hernandez, Library Associate
- Phoebe Larson, Communications Director
- Tony Yang, Deputy Director of Operations
- Beth Burns, President, The Friends of Saint Paul Public Library
- Cassi Johnson, Innovation Team, City of Saint Paul

Imagine Deliver, a consulting firm based in Saint Paul, guided the Library's strategic planning process and helped us compile this final report. Through creative design, community engagement, and equitable strategy processes, Imagine Deliver helps leaders imagine and deliver a greater good. To learn more about their work, visit imaginedeliver.com.

Special thanks to:

- Kate Downing Khaled (Imagine Deliver)
- Tasee Khaled (Imagine Deliver)
- Asiya Mohamed (Imagine Deliver)
- Olivia Jefferson (Imagine Deliver)
- Lynnea Atlas-Ingebreton (Imagine Deliver)
- Adrienne Doyle (Juxtaposition Arts)
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Xenia Hernandez
Cassi Johnson
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Phoebe Larson
Lisa Motschke
Catherine Penkert
Jane Prince, Chair, Library Board
Rebecca Ryan
Katy Schulz
Erik Skold
Marika Staloch
Tati Terfa
Dua Thao
Pang Yang
Tony Yang

Community Learning Process

To inform our strategic planning goals, we completed four major learning and engagement efforts between March and May 2018. Every neighborhood in Saint Paul and every library location was represented in this community learning effort.

Empathy Interviews

More than 50 Library staff members were trained in the process of conducting empathy interviews – an approach to finding out as much as possible about a person's experience as a user of a space, a process, an objective, or an environment. Empathy interviews aim to understand the choices that people make and why they make them.

These staff members conducted more than 400 empathy interviews with their colleagues, community members, and Library stakeholders. All 250 Library staff members had the opportunity to be interviewed by one another at the Library's annual Staff Day in May 2018.

Questions included:

- What excites you about coming to the Library?
- What would it take to make the Library a regular part of your life?
- How does learning happen in your community?
- What keeps you from using the Library?

Community Pop-up Meetings

Young people from Juxtaposition Arts' Tactical Urbanism Program hosted seven "community pop-ups" throughout Saint Paul. This program uses art, design, and other practices to amplify neighborhood voice, build community knowledge, and interrupt patterns of disinvestment. They met Saint Paul residents where they were – outside of library branches, on buses, at light rail stops, local festivals, and more – to gain their insights on the Library.

Public Listening Sessions

In late April and early May we hosted two public listening sessions at Rondo Community Library and Arlington



PHOTO COURTESY OF JXTA

Hills Library. These sessions featured fun, hands-on activities to elicit creative ideas and solutions for the Library. Participants built their dream libraries out of Play-doh and pipe cleaners, they created a mural, depicting their favorite things about the Library, and they engaged in talking circles with other members of the community, among other activities.

Online Survey

More than 1,600 Library users completed an online survey made available via the Library's website and on public computers.

IDEATION SESSIONS

When our community engagement sessions were complete, we set to work, distilling the data into a meaningful strategy that honored what we heard. We assembled an "ideation team," comprised of Library staff members and stakeholders, that participated in a series of user-centered design exercises.

We created Library avatars, characters based on frequent Library users, to gain perspective on their needs, desires, and obstacles to library use. We then solved for these variables. We set idealistic "moonshot visions," and then determined how close we could come.

Using Play-Doh, pipe cleaners, and craft supplies, we created 3D pathways to libraries of the future.

Through this, we identified common values, beliefs, and goals held within our communities. We gained perspective as to the challenges people face when using the Library and developed solutions to increase access and better serve our users. The experience shaped our Library mission, vision, and value statements and our strategic direction.

Timeline



May-July 2018

- Ideation Team meets for two, four-hour sessions to synthesize data
- Community insights defined from data

January - March 2018

- Stakeholder mapping
- Interview questions identified
- 53 Library Design Fellows trained to conduct empathy interviews

April 2018

- 400 stakeholders and community members interviewed
- More than 200 people attend two public listening sessions
- Seven community pop-up meetings are held throughout Saint Paul
- More than 1,600 Library users complete an online survey
- Nearly 250 Library staff members interviewed at annual spring Staff Day

August-September 2018

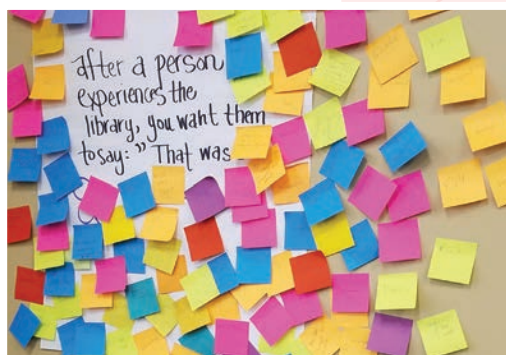
- Feedback collected from Library staff members and stakeholders
- New Library mission, vision, and values created

October 2018

- New Library strategic direction and goals developed

December 2018 - January 2019

- Present to Library Board
- Thank the community and launch plan





HIGHLAND PARK LIBRARY

Community Insights

Our community engagement sessions were dynamic, energizing, uplifting, and eye-opening. We heard from thousands of people across Saint Paul from all ages, races, backgrounds, and life experiences. Several common themes emerged from this process.

People want libraries to focus on young people and families.

Emphasis was placed on providing young people and families with access to information, creative programming, and supportive, trauma-sensitive spaces during important life transitions. Young people, especially teens, were frequently cited as one of the most important and challenging groups for the Library to

serve. One user shared that the Library can help with “bridging our family to the greater community and cultural events and engaging kids in lifelong learning.”

People want libraries to hold space for both quiet and loud activities.

Participants recognized and illustrated the tension between the need for quiet and loud spaces in libraries. They acknowledged that the perception of libraries as formal, quiet, and solitary spaces with rigid rules can be alienating to potential users, especially young people. However, they also recognized that the Library might be the only quiet space available for some people to do their best learning. Many users wished for music,

noise, and designated spaces for intentional gathering and connection. Ultimately, they want the Library to design and share intentional spaces for both quiet learning and loud community building.

People face structural, cultural, and financial barriers to using libraries.

Users across race, ethnicity, age, gender, education level, and neighborhood affinity consistently cited fines and the fear of fines and lost books as reasons not to go to the library.

Community Insights

This was followed by language barriers, library card issues, and limited Library hours. Other barriers included lack of transportation and getting books from other places that felt easier (online) or more welcoming (the school library). Cultural barriers included not knowing what is available at the Library, a sense of feeling unwelcome by staff members, being part of a community that doesn't go to the Library, and fear of other patrons.

Patrons who were identified as “people we want to serve better” need the Library to better reflect the community by “including all cultures,” and prioritizing the inclusion of all patrons. Users want to see Library

resources stay fresh, and deepen and improve the quantity, quality, and relevancy of resources that reflect and affirm Saint Paul's diverse population. Users asked for more books in Spanish and Vietnamese texts and shared disappointment that “the Library is missing LGBTQ+ materials.”

People seek an environment that fosters safety and belonging.

Participants wished for library branches to feel comfortable, welcoming, and clean. They asked for more inviting seating areas and improved children's spaces. They frequently requested that the Library serve as a community building space where all people

could feel welcome to meet and interact, while viewing exhibits or creating art. Some users said that library buildings should find ways to mirror the natural environment with plants and other natural elements that could create healing spaces for library users.

Many users, especially young people, suggested they would like a deeper relationship with the Library where they would feel seen and be invited to contribute their talents and skills to the Library by way of jobs or mentorship opportunities.

People seek programming beyond books and buildings.

While access to books remains a reason users visit the Library, people suggested a variety of resources that would make them more frequent users, including diverse materials (textbooks, sheet music, audiobooks, movies, tools, and hardware), more mobile library options (libraries in neighborhoods, online, and in other places), access to cutting-edge technology (3D printers, headphones, computers, tables, music production equipment, podcast equipment), items for young children (toys, books, games, art supplies), and access to experiences (cultural materials and exhibits). Users want the Library to come to them if they can't get to the Library.





Mission & Vision

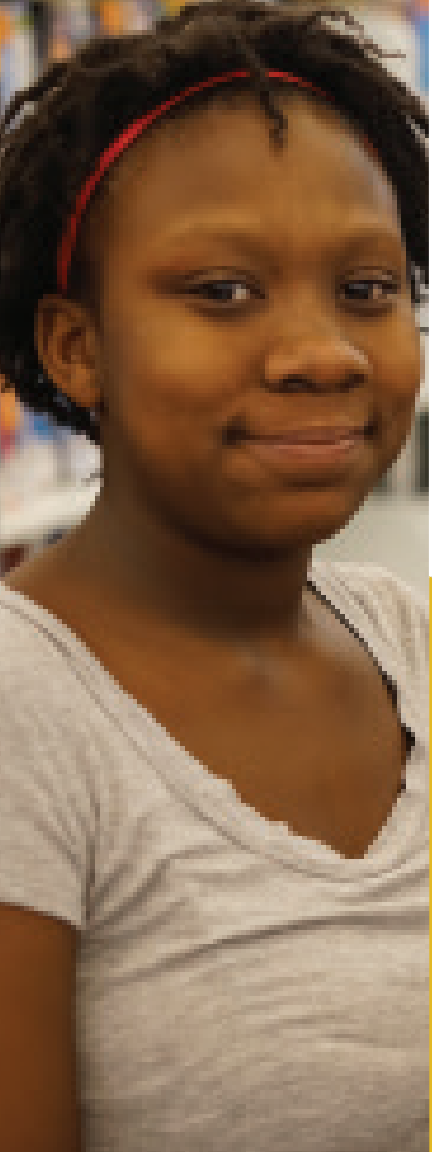
MISSION

We welcome all people to connect, learn, discover, and grow.

VISION

We imagine a Saint Paul where all people feel seen, safe, and welcome. We imagine a city where libraries bring people together to experience hope, joy, and creativity through learning.

RICE STREET LIBRARY



RONDO LIBRARY

Values

The Library belongs to the people of Saint Paul. We are your Library and you — our library users — shape our work. The following values guide our work.

We believe that learning is a human right.

To live, adapt, and thrive in a constantly changing world, all people need supportive learning environments, and free access to information and ideas from diverse points of view.

We believe in curiosity.

Curiosity can change the world and the path of one's life. We believe in igniting its spark through discovery and creative exploration.

We believe in connection.

The Library is a place for quiet reflection and boisterous activity; for likeness and for difference. It is comfortable, inclusive, and vital to creating healthy, strong communities.

We believe in the power of belonging.

When people feel they belong, they are able to learn and grow. The Library brings people together to access knowledge, information, and connection. We actively work to ensure that all people see themselves and our city's rich diversity reflected in our libraries.

Strategic Direction

2019-2022

DETAILED VIEW

WELCOME

We create welcoming places and experiences for library users.

CONNECT

We make it easy to connect with learning, information, and people.

LEARN

We provide free, equitable access to learning across a lifetime.

DISCOVER

We provide opportunities to discover potential and unlock new ideas.

GROW

We play a vital role in Saint Paul becoming a city that works for all.

Community-Focused Goals	Actively invite and welcome all Saint Paul residents into the Library.	Improve the library user experience by making it easy and enjoyable to connect to the Library.	Support readers of all ages and abilities, and cultivate a love of reading.	Ignite curiosity and build skills for an increasingly technology-driven world.	Support an inclusive and innovative local economy.
Sub-Goals	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reduce percent of library users blocked from borrowing access Increase number of annual visits 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Improve online and in-person user experience Ensure high level of user satisfaction across demographic groups 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increase number of active borrowers Engage 5,000 people annually in Read Brave Ensure the Library's collection (physical and digital) is equitable and responsive to community demand 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 80% of locations offer age-appropriate, hands-on, interest-based technology learning opportunities for K–12 youth Increase the number of adults building technology skills through Library offerings 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increase support for new and existing business owners Strengthen the Library's position as a resource for community members exploring career pathways that connect to better career options
Community-Focused Goals	Bring people together across similarities and differences for shared community experiences.	Expand the library experience beyond our buildings to reach all of Saint Paul.	Create equitable, impactful, playful learning experiences for young learners, ages 0–18.	Establish the Library as the best place in Saint Paul for families to learn together.	In partnership with communities, build a systemwide foundation for services to culturally and linguistically diverse communities.
Sub-Goals	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Curate community-informed events, programs, and activities that reflect, share, and honor the diversity of our city Prioritize arts and cultural programs, events, and activities as ways of sharing stories and fostering connections 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increase use of existing Library Go accounts by 50% Expand number of library-run programs and services offered at non-library locations (e.g. Wash & Learn) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Embed and deepen quality practices in programs and services for young learners 100% of library locations offer play-based learning for children 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increase attendance by 30% in programs designed for families to learn together Engage communities to inform culturally-specific strategies for family learning 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Embed, grow, and sustain Community Services work across our system Increase collaboration with and improved service for racial and ethnic groups currently underrepresented among Library users
Operations Goals	Invest in spaces that are safe, inviting, affirming, and comfortable for people of all cultures, abilities, and communities.	Reach new audiences when promoting the Library's critical value to Saint Paul and the role of libraries in thriving, multicultural communities.	Invest in developing staff to have the skills and support needed to meet the ever-changing needs of our community members.	Cultivate the Library to be an organization that enables a diverse workforce to thrive and grow.	Grow strong public and private support for the Library.
Sub-Goals	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop data-based, community-informed strategy for making capital investment decisions Expand Trauma-Sensitive Library project system-wide 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Deliver user-centered, customized marketing experiences Provide all staff members with the tools and materials needed to actively promote the Library Improve intercultural competency in communications 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop and implement a strategy to align staff development with individuals' needs and the Library's strategic plan Library employees report high level of engagement Improve onboarding practices for new employees 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increase career pathways within the Library At every level, the Library workforce reflects the racial and ethnic diversity of Saint Paul 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Partner with The Friends to increase annual philanthropic dollars raised to support library programs, services, and capital needs The Library actively collaborates across sectors to ensure Saint Paul is a city where all can thrive

Strategic Direction 2019-2022

HIGH LEVEL

Strategic Objectives	WELCOME We create welcoming places and experiences for library users.	CONNECT We make it easy to connect with learning, information, and people.	LEARN We provide free, equitable access to learning across a lifetime.	DISCOVER We provide opportunities to discover potential and unlock new ideas.	GROW We play a vital role in Saint Paul becoming a city that works for all.
Community-Focused Goals	Actively welcome all Saint Paul residents into the Library.	Make it easy and enjoyable to connect to the Library.	Support readers of all ages and abilities, and cultivate a love of reading.	Ignite curiosity and build skills for an increasingly technology-driven world.	Support an inclusive and innovative local economy.
Community-Focused Goals	Bring people together across similarities and differences for shared community experiences.	Expand the library experience beyond our buildings to reach all of Saint Paul.	Create equitable, impactful, playful learning experiences for young learners, ages 0–18.	Establish the Library as the best place in Saint Paul for families to learn together.	In partnership with communities, build a systemwide foundation for services to culturally and linguistically diverse communities.
Operations Goals	Invest in spaces that are safe, inviting, affirming, and comfortable for people of all cultures, abilities, and communities.	Reach new audiences when promoting the Library's critical value to Saint Paul and the role of libraries in thriving, multicultural communities.	Invest in developing staff to have the skills and support needed to meet the ever-changing needs of our community members.	Cultivate the Library to be an organization that enables a diverse workforce to thrive and grow.	Grow strong public and private support for the Library.

Resources

This is a sample of resources consulted. Visit sppl.org/2022 to see a full list.

PARTNER REPORTS

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"National Public Library Issues & Trends: An environmental scan to support Saint Paul Public Library's strategic planning process." City of Saint Paul and Saint Paul Innovation Team, June 2018.

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STRATEGIC PLANS CONSULTED

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"State of America's Libraries 2018 Executive Summary." Edited by Kathy S Rosa, American Library Association, 9 Apr. 2018.

Strong, Bruce A., and Mary Lee Kennedy. "How Employees Shaped Strategy at the New York Public Library." Harvard Business Review, 5 Dec. 2016.

Locations



AR

Arlington Hills

1200 Payne Ave, 55130
651-632-3870

CE

George Latimer Central

90 West Fourth St, 55102
651-266-7000

DB

Dayton's Bluff

645 East 7th St, 55106
651-793-1699

HA

Hamline Midway

1558 W Minnehaha Ave, 55104
651-642-0293

HH

Hayden Heights

1456 White Bear Ave, 55106
651-793-3934

HI

Highland Park

1974 Ford Parkway, 55116
651-695-3700

ME

Merriam Park

1831 Marshall Ave, 55104
651-642-0385

RC

Rice Street

1011 Rice St, 55117
651-558-2223

RV

Riverview

1 East George St, 55107
651-292-6626

RD

Rondo

461 North Dale St, 55103
651-266-7400

SA

Saint Anthony Park

2245 Como Ave, 55108
651-642-0411

SR

Sun Ray

2105 Wilson Ave, 55119
651-501-6300

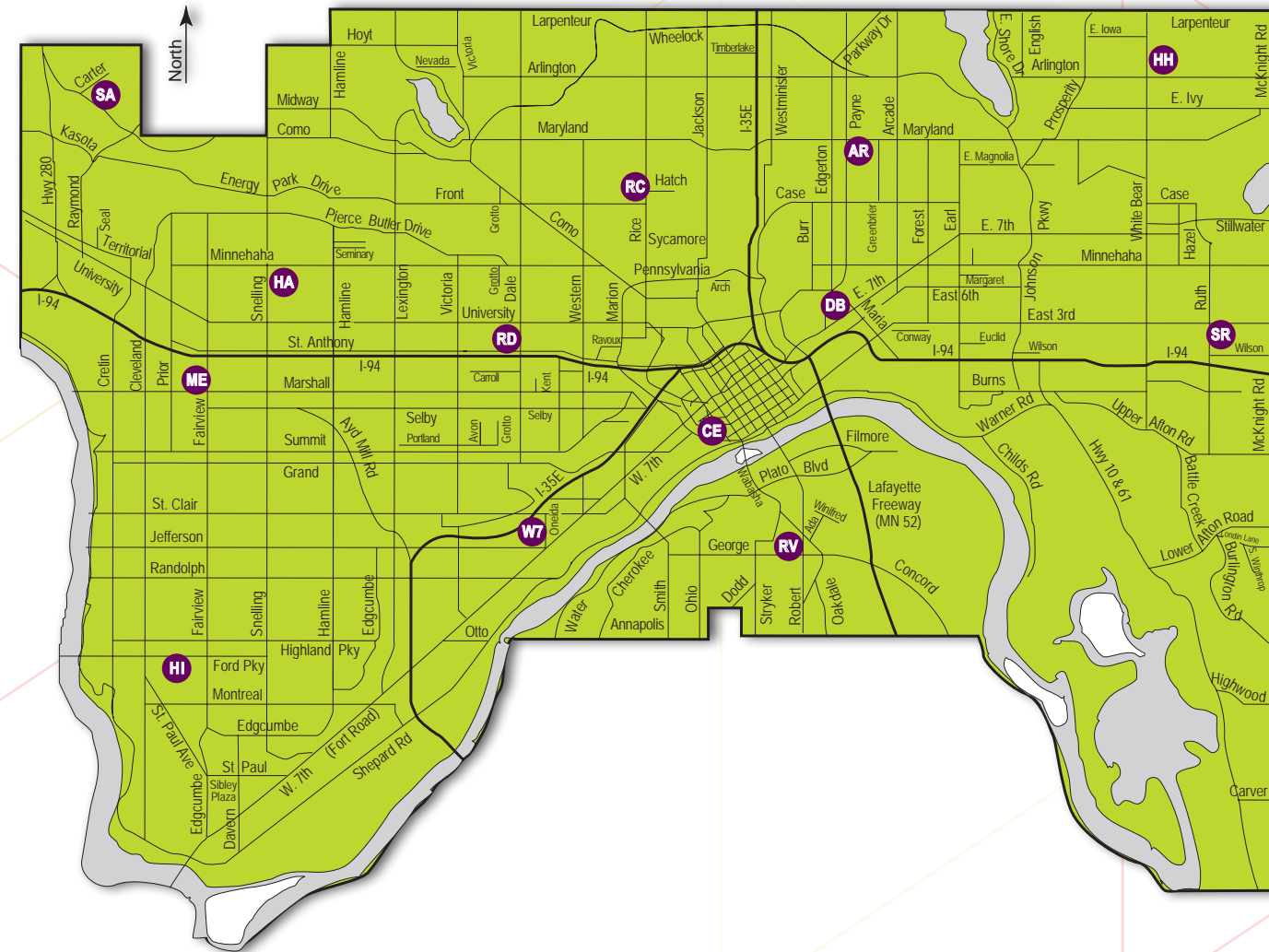
W7

West 7th

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651-298-5516



SAINT PAUL
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