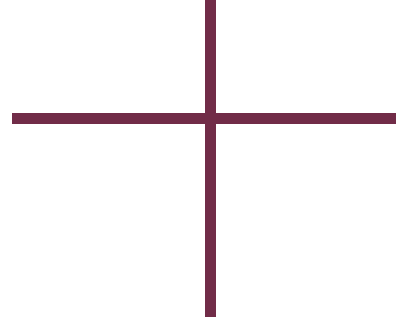




2025 - 2030 STRATEGIC PLAN

**VESPASIAN
WARNER PUBLIC
LIBRARY DISTRICT**



WELCOME

Our beloved library has changed greatly in its 123-year-life: from a two-room private library serving a hundred subscribers to today's public library district serving just under 11,000 patrons with an annual circulation of 100,000.

Our services have also expanded over the past century from simply providing access to print materials, to adding audio-visual items, digital content, educational programs, internet access, and more. As our patrons' needs have changed and diversified, so have our offerings.

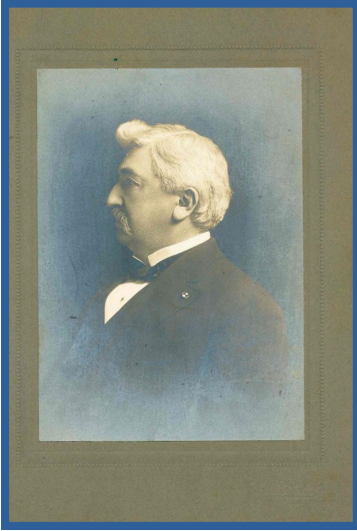
Our facilities and services are ever evolving, but our core values have remained constant: connecting people, sharing knowledge, and enabling life-long learning. We are passionate about enriching our community and making our patrons' lives better.

With these values in mind, we are proud to present our 2025-2030 Strategic Plan. This plan captures the important values, priorities, and mission of our institution while remaining flexible enough to allow the library to adapt quickly to our patrons' ever changing and diverse needs.

This plan utilizes much of the 2019-2021 Strategic Plan, while being adapted and updated to post-pandemic realities. Much has changed coming out of 2020, but our commitment to serving our community to the best of our ability is steadfast.

Strategic planning is an ongoing process for any vibrant institution, and we anticipate adjusting and updating this plan before our next formal plan is released. We greatly value the input and opinions of our patrons, so please engage with our staff and board to share your ideas and needs as we continue to build the Vespasian Warner Public Library District to serve our community as it enters the third decade of the 21st century.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY



Vespasian Warner



Vespasian Warner Library, ca. 1908

VWPLD is deeply rooted in DeWitt County and provides a significant historic presence for library district residents and beyond. The legacy of the members of the Moore and Warner families is widely known, and many institutions have benefitted from their generosity. The physical library is unique, a building within a building, which features Arts and Crafts architecture and decorative arts. The library houses many historic documents and items and serves as the home of the DeWitt County local history collection.

Since the publication of the last strategic plan, the community has undergone significant changes. Although the library no longer faces the immediate concern of revenue loss due to the potential closure of the Constellation Nuclear Power Plant, we are still contending with a declining population and the loss of other major businesses. Additionally, we need to plan for substantial maintenance of our aging library facility, including a complete HVAC system overhaul scheduled for 2024/2025.

The impetus behind this iteration of the Strategic Plan is to ensure continuity of service despite any internal or external challenges the library may encounter.

PROCESS SUMMARY

As with many organizations emerging from the 2020 COVID-19 pandemic, the library has adapted to a new normal with a reduced service population. While we have had to remain flexible and responsive to rapidly changing circumstances, much of the 2019-2021 Strategic Plan remains useful and relevant.

The board of trustees established a Strategic Plan Review Ad Hoc Committee to review and update the 2019-2021 Strategic Plan. The committee recognized that a key part of the review process involved engaging with library users and various community groups to ensure that the library continues to meet patron needs and address service gaps. This outreach included a patron survey and several targeted focus groups.

The survey results indicated that current library users are generally satisfied with the library's offerings and staff. Focus groups, which included homeschooling families, patrons with disabilities, and teens, among others, consisted of both regular library users and those who rarely use the library. Overall, while the library meets the needs of its patrons, the committee identified a need to add a fourth strategic focus area: Accessibility and Equity, based on feedback from the surveys and focus groups.

The library staff and board reviewed and updated the library's mission and vision statements as well as its core values. The executive director, in collaboration with library staff, developed a new culture statement, which was previously absent. These statements and values are the foundation of everything the library does and offers to its patrons.



WHO WE ARE

OUR MISSION

The Vespasian Warner Public Library District strives to be a welcoming place that meets the diverse needs of its communities through high-quality resources and supportive services to stimulate and facilitate creativity, curiosity and learning.

OUR VISION

Connecting People

Connecting patrons to our services, connecting with other community groups when goals align, and connecting patrons to other groups in the community that can help them meet their needs when the library can't.

Sharing Knowledge

Serving as a central hub in the community as a repository for knowledge, especially in the field of local history. A wide range of information is shared in a variety of formats to meet patron needs.

Enabling Life-Long Learning

Facilitating the development of life-long learners in the community through programming, active participation, and engagement with all patrons.

OUR CULTURE

Our library is more than just a building or a collection. It is the people who work every day to serve all patrons in our community in a welcoming, judgement-free environment. We have made our library a safe space, where everyone can be themselves, learn, and explore new ideas. Our library should serve as a mirror and a window: all of our patrons deserve to see themselves reflected in our collection and our collection also serves as a window to the wider world.

At VWPLD, we value each employee's contributions and talents and administration is open to ideas and opinions from all staff members. We are flexible and will adapt services to meet our patrons' evolving needs. We collaborate with each other and with partner organizations to make our community a better place.

STRATEGIC AREAS OF FOCUS

Using our mission, vision, and culture as guides, we developed the following strategic areas of focus for library services.



The library will expand its reach in the community and create a heightened profile in the district. The library will become a priority destination.



The library will create and facilitate effective, targeted, and inclusive programs, collections, and services, all in a welcoming environment.



The library will ensure that all its patrons, regardless of ability, will have equitable access to library resources.



The library will maintain its role as an expert and destination for the preservation of local history and archive items.

LIBRARY CONSIDERATIONS

In order to meet the needs of the community and make progress in each Strategic Area of Focus, library staff members and the board of trustees must consider their actions from multiple perspectives. The tools below will help to guide the library in a positive direction.

FISCAL RESPONSIBILITY

The library will take care to be a good steward of its funding. A strong finance policy will guide the decision-making process for all major projects.

LIBRARY SPACE USE

The library will consider all possibilities for efficient and effective space use, including new configurations for materials, furniture, and equipment.

WELL-TRAINED STAFF

The library will ensure that policies and procedures are implemented to support professional development, ongoing staff evaluations, and succession planning for current lead staff members.

DATA-DRIVEN DECISIONS

The library will be equipped for robust data collection and analysis to make informed decisions about all aspects of library functions.

TECHNOLOGY

The library will keep abreast of library technology trends and implement new initiatives in order to better serve the community.

FLEXIBILITY & INNOVATION

The library will promptly adapt to societal and technological changes in order to stay relevant in an ever-changing world.



THE LIBRARY WILL EXPAND ITS REACH IN THE COMMUNITY AND CREATE A HEIGHTENED PROFILE IN THE DISTRICT. THE LIBRARY WILL BECOME A PRIORITY DESTINATION.

This strategic area includes the library being proactive in bringing the community together and establishing the building, contents, staff, and services as valuable and irreplaceable assets. It will be a place to conduct business, engage with others, and participate in recreational and educational activities.

KEY OBJECTIVES & METRICS OF SUCCESS

Increased public perception as a priority destination in the community as measured by:

- Total number of library visitors
- Results of program evaluation surveys
- Total number of new patrons, including total number of library card holders.

Increased community collaboration as measured by:

- Total number of partner-based initiatives completed
- Total number of community referrals given to the public
- Total funding received through local grants, donations, and gifts

Increased public usage of library common spaces as measured by:

- Total number of public room reservations
- Total attendance in public room rentals
- Types of gatherings conducted at the library



THE LIBRARY WILL CREATE AND FACILITATE EFFECTIVE, TARGETED, AND INCLUSIVE PROGRAMS, COLLECTIONS, AND SERVICES, ALL IN A WELCOMING ENVIRONMENT.

This strategic area includes opportunities for engagement through programs, services, and library materials. Patrons walk through the library doors with the intent to discover something new, and everyone in the community can benefit from added knowledge and skills. The library will offer quality resources for free information, education, and entertainment.

KEY OBJECTIVES & METRICS OF SUCCESS

Increased patron knowledge delivered through programs as measured by:

- Results of program evaluation surveys
- Total number of programs offered
- Types of programs offered at the library

Increased patron knowledge delivered through services as measured by:

- Rate of successfully answered reference and reader advisory questions
- Total number of one-on-one trainings provided
- Total number of services offered to the public, including usage data

Increased diversification of circulating collections as measured by:

- Circulation statistics
- Total number of new items offered to the public
- Collection development statistics to track collection diversity



THE LIBRARY WILL ENSURE THAT ALL ITS PATRONS, REGARDLESS OF ABILITY, WILL HAVE EQUITABLE ACCESS TO LIBRARY RESOURCES

This strategic area involves proactively serving patrons with diverse needs and abilities. The library will comply with ADA standards and all state accessibility requirements, offer materials in various formats to accommodate all patrons, and adapt services to provide reasonable accommodations for individuals with disabilities. The library will remain a welcoming and safe space for all patrons.

KEY OBJECTIVES & METRICS OF SUCCESS

Increased collection and usage of items in multiple, accessible formats as measured by:

- Total number of large-print, audio, and high-interest-low-vocabulary books added to the collection.
- Total number of circulations of disability-friendly items
- Efforts made to collect high-demand items in a variety of formats

Meeting ADA compliance for all of the library's programs and services:

- A fully ADA-compliant library website (94% compliant as of 2024) by 2027
- Total number of accessibility aids available in the library
- Maintaining homebound delivery services for patrons unable to come to the library

Increased marketing of library services available for patrons with disabilities

- Up-to-date informational pamphlets on library services for patrons with varying needs
- A dedicated page on the library's website listing all available accommodations and services for patrons with disabilities
- Reaching out to relevant community organizations to share library services



THE LIBRARY WILL MAINTAIN ITS ROLE AS AN EXPERT AND DESTINATION FOR THE PRESERVATION OF LOCAL HISTORY AND ARCHIVE ITEMS.

This strategic area includes the preservation, restoration, digitization, and display of historically significant artifacts and documents. Effort in this area has the potential to bring in an audience the library has not interacted with previously. The preservation of local history has the potential to use shared experiences to strengthen the community's bond.

KEY OBJECTIVES & METRICS OF SUCCESS

Increased public access to one-of-a-kind historical resources as measured by:

- Total number of available archive items
- Total number of available digital archive files
- Total number of archive items available through library - affiliated displays

Increased public usage of the library's local history collection and equipment as measured by:

- Total number of archive questions and requests answered
- Total number of in-person and digital archive item views
- Memory Lab and equipment usage statistics

Increased awareness of the library as a holder of local knowledge and history as measured by:

- Insights from social media and marketing efforts
- Results of program evaluation surveys
- Total number of local history items donated to the library