

Florida Public Library 2021-2026 Long Range Plan

Planning the Plan

The staff and board of the FPL began the planning process for their fifth Long Range Plan in the summer/fall of 2019 by gathering the names of individuals who would be asked to share their thoughts on the role of the Library in the community, now and in the future. People of all ages, from teens to senior citizens, from local organizations, businesses, school and government, newcomers and longtime residents, as well as both Library users and non-users, were invited to attend a focus group meeting. The focus group meetings were led by Diane Arcieri, a member of the Board of Trustees and a retired training and management consultant. To make the meetings as accessible as possible, they were scheduled at various times and days of the week.

Six focus groups with a total of thirty people met from August till October in 2 ½ hour sessions to examine Library use statistics and to discuss their library experiences, questions, frustrations and hopes. Participants were asked to consider these five questions:

- What is the current community environment in Florida?
- The Library – What’s working?
- The Library – What would you change/what are the obstacles?
- The Library – What are and should be its programs and services?
- The Library – What physical space do we have and do we need?

During the lively sessions, a variety of comments were offered in response to these questions. Each comment, brief or lengthy, was recorded. After the sessions, this material was collated and analyzed by the Library staff and comments by the staff and the board of trustees were included. Like comments were grouped together, consolidated and their frequency was noted. These agreements voiced by participants pointed the way to priorities that should be addressed by the Plan.

Question 1: What is the current community environment in Florida?

The most frequent comments made by participants are summarized here:

- Growth on Main Street
 - Changing
 - Positive growth
 - More people downtown
 - Main Street is busy
 - Strong business community
 - Sense of pride in community & the way Main Street looks
 - Lots of restaurants
- Library is important social aspect
- More Commuter – both parents working
- Lack of transportation – just “Dial-A-Bus”
- Small town, quaint town, people come together to get things done,

- Centered around school – lots of school aged families-pride in
- Family oriented
- Increasing diversity
- Village of Florida is developing a Master Plan – community center is needed
- More Seniors

Question 2: The Library – What’s working?

Responses included:

- Staff
 - Small, but know patrons
 - Personal service, wear multiple hats
 - Helpful, friendly, plugged into community
 - Well educated
 - Able to act quickly (flexible)
 - Good interaction between staff
 - People feel comfortable
 - Like personalized service
- Location
 - Kids can walk
 - Place for Middle Schoolers
 - Close to Senior Center & Police Station
 - Cozy Environment
 - Like the Deck (outdoor space)
- Hours (Good & Bad)
 - Earlier morning hours – stay open later
- Communications
 - Like when we inform patrons of upcoming programs while in library/at program
 - Tell people about programs
- Community likes having their own library and is supportive of our budget
- People get excited about new things – continue to keep them excited

Question 3: The Library – Challenges and Obstacles?

Responses to this question are summarized in order of their frequency:

- Space
 - Too small, tight space and very dated
 - Too loud
 - Need teen computer space
 - Staff work area
 - Storage
 - Having to move furniture to set up for programs
 - Limited space for collections
 - More options in Children’s Room (make more appealing)
 - Need separate program room/ Closing Children’s Room when having a program
 - See Library as Information Center

- Computer Center outdated
- Lack of parking
- Can only have a limited number of attendees at program due to space limitations
- Can only do one program at a time
- Funding
- Lot of competition from outside organizations (including Senior Center)
- New libraries in Goshen and Warwick
- Communication
 - Don't know about Programs
 - People don't know they can use card in other libraries or in library
 - Don't know we are a school district library
 - Programs supported by taxpayers
 - We pay for programs/presenters – they aren't free!
 - Patrons don't let us know when they can't come to a program
 - Better acknowledgement of the services we offer
 - Lack of a community newspaper
- Not reaching millennials

Question 4: The Library – Programs and Services?

Responses to this question included:

- Programs – Current/Working
 - Children's programs
 - Variety of programs
 - Ability to register online
 - Adult programs
 - Food Programs
 - Video Game programs
 - Annual Events
- Services – Current/Working
 - Audio Collection
 - DVD Collection
 - Ability to ILL – can get almost any book/item
 - Museum & Park Passes
 - New books
 - New video games
- Programs – Future ideas or problems with current programs
 - More programs for middle schoolers/teens – how to get teens back into library?
 - Have activities in the evening for families with working parents
 - Scout activities
 - Have an open house, explain library services
 - Class on life skills for teens
 - Programs for Dads
 - Programs for millennials
 - Have more Annual Events & Concerts

- More Author Visits
- College Financial Planning Programs, Retirement Planning & Elder Services Programs
- Monthly Reading Club for kids-read so many books with local businesses awarding prizes (mayor suggested)
- Services – Future Ideas or problems with current programs
 - Keep technology updated
 - Late night/early morning
 - Have school visit/field trip, transport GH student to library for afterschool programs
 - Homebound services for seniors

Question 5: The Library – What physical space do we have and do we need?

Responses to this question included:

What Do You See Now?

- Crowded with stuff (lots of paper & flyers)
- Comfy Chairs
- Carts
- Like seeing the Circ Desk

What Would Like to See?

- Separate Program room with storage/Community Room
- Open space
- Teen Room
- Larger Children’s Room, more interactive, cozy area for reading
- Friends of Library Bookstore & increased space for the Friends
- More comfy chairs
- Outdoor space
- Art space/display area (local history area)
- Makerspace
- Work/study/tutor area or room which could be used for small groups
- Separate Staff area/better work stations
- Separate Kitchen/Break Room
- Updated Computer Area
- Connect to Senior Center
- Second Floor
- Better Storage
- Separate Book Processing Area & re-shelving area
- Better access to basement
- Update Phone System
- Better displays and book shelves
- Elevator
- Space for Technology Class

Based on the above responses, the board and staff proceeded to divide the priorities identified above into five areas in order to develop goals and objectives for the Plan:

- Staff Development
- Collection Development
- Programs and Services
- Outreach and Communications
- Technology

One overriding concern has emerged in our last Plan and this new one, too – the issue of space. Florida Public Library does not have the physical space to meet the demands of our customers, our workers and our community. While much of the Plan is focused on other areas, our dominant preoccupation for the future must be to address how to provide the programs and services that our users and taxpayers need and want in an expanded space that accommodates their vision of what their Library can and should be. A separate Building Plans needs to be developed as the challenges of addressing physical space needs are too broad to address in a Long-Range Plan.

Florida Public Library Long Range Plan 2021-2026

Mission Statement:

The Florida Public Library strives to be the local community's best resource for materials that inform, educate, enrich, and entertain. The library serves patrons of all ages and backgrounds and promotes open and equal access to ideas, programs, and opportunities from early learning, to personal and professional enrichment.

1. Collections

Goal: The Library will provide a diverse, updated collection of materials for all ages.

Objectives:

- Evaluate collections for possible reorganization to maximize patron accessibility, and weed by a regular schedule to be developed within the next year.
- Staff with collection development responsibilities will submit to the Librarian lists of suggested purchases on a monthly basis, to be forwarded to the Director for final approval.
- Conduct a full collection inventory to clean shelves and records within the next three years.

2. Programs and Services

Goal: The Library will offer a variety of programs and services to meet our patrons' evolving needs from the first time they visit.

Objectives:

- Create a visual orientation tour of the Library and welcome packets for new patrons of all ages, and keep these updated as needed.
- Review library scheduling to include possible changes of open hours based on patron usage, including the possibility of opening earlier and/or closing later on certain days of the week.
- Provide a wide range of educational and entertainment programs for patrons of all ages, using enhanced outreach efforts to determine users' interests.

3. Outreach and Communications

Goal: To continue to build relationships and outreach opportunities within the community to highlight the value of Library programs.

Objectives:

- Continue to use the Library's existing newsletter and social media platforms to publicize library programs and services. Feature more programs on the FPL YouTube channel.
- Develop a monthly E-blast to patrons.
- Develop a Homeschooler Program which would include a Homeschooler Page on our website and plan a Homeschooler Swap Event within the next two years.
- Create more interchange between the Library and local businesses through active participation in Chamber of Commerce meetings and projects.
- Publicize the monetary value of library programs and services.

4. Technology

Goal: To continue to meet the needs of Library users and staff by providing the latest technology.

Objectives:

- Develop a yearly technology plan, identifying services to be offered and hardware/software purchases needed to implement the plan.
- Promote digital inclusion to ensure the needs of staff, patrons and community are addressed within reason and the budget.
- Partner with RCLS and other library organizations to use technology resources and seek funding for new initiatives.

5. Staff Development

Goal: To provide staff and volunteers with resources and education to fulfill the mission of the Library.

Objectives:

- Share resources and training opportunities to ensure staff, and volunteers where appropriate, are up to date with Library and community needs and wants.
- Develop and schedule training for staff a minimum of 2-3 times per year in both group and individual sessions where information can be shared to meet and support Library goals.
- Review work responsibilities and schedules to provide professional development goals via technology.
- Continue monthly meetings for staff who have programming and marketing responsibilities.
- Partner with community organizations and government agencies for training on topics of mutual interest.

**Adopted by the Board of Trustees
May 3, 2021**