INTRODUCTION

The Patrick Heath Public Library (PHPL) continuously strives to meet and exceed community needs through relevant and quality library services. Because this is important to us, the library’s strategic plan is updated every three (3) years. As the Patrick Heath Public Library Advisory Board (PHPLAB) represents the library’s community and is appointed by City Council, it was vital to solicit their expertise and guidance to formulate an updated strategic plan. The PHPLAB embarked upon the update in January 2022. To align with other city plans, the strategic plan will now be referred to as the PHPL Master Plan.

Since March 2020, the PHPL dealt with the unprecedented COVID-19 pandemic which dramatically impacted library services. As of the drafting of this plan, the library has surpassed most pre-pandemic levels of service.

Mission Statement

The Patrick Heath Public Library cultivates a love of reading, enriches lives through lifelong learning and cultural exploration, and provides a welcoming space for people to engage and connect.

Vision Statement

It is the library’s vision to:

Be a welcoming, empowering place to the community
Help library users into a productive and creative future
Assure equitable access to the library’s resources and services
Be a dynamic force in the community

Library Values

Inclusive

Welcoming, open, engaged, sense of community

Responsive

Information navigation, knowledge sharing, reader’s advisory

Respectful

Relationships: staff and patrons, staff and staff, staff and volunteers, staff and community partners
Patrons Rights: privacy, freedom of thought, solitude
Planning Timeline and Accomplishments

In January 2022, the City of Boerne retained the services of Partners Library Action Network (PLAN) to assist with the update of the 2020-2022 Strategic Plan. PLAN did an assessment of the facility and services, interviewed the staff and advisory board members, and met with local stakeholders. The assessment found the PHPL to be a high functioning library. The library has a welcoming, well trained, and service-oriented staff. The staff has a culture of continuous improvement. During the master plan update process, staff were already implementing changes before the plan was completed.

Both the staff and advisory board believe in the library’s values of being inclusive, responsive, and respectful to the residents of Boerne and Kendall County. The PHPLAB is very engaged and understands the library plays a major role in the quality of life for residents. The community partners already value the role the library plays and are excited to continue to collaborate to increase capacity for the library and partners. The library has strong support from the community in volunteerism and fundraising and will continue to strengthen relationships with support groups to benefit the community.

One of the major challenges facing the PHPL is dealing with an influx of new residents. Kendall County is projected to see a population increase of twenty-one percent (21%) in the next five (5) years. Residents and staff are concerned about the quality of life in Boerne and express a desire not to lose the "small town charm."

The library facility is beautiful and provides wonderful spaces for a variety of programming and services. However, like many libraries in high-growth areas, the library faces challenges with limited hours of operation and marketing on a shoestring budget. In terms of funding, the library competes for donations with other organizations in the community. Lack of public transportation means the library cannot serve everyone in the community who would like to use the library. As a one-facility library centrally located downtown the library is not near the areas of the community experiencing rapid growth.

While the library recognizes that the Internet has affected library use, it has also been an opportunity for the library to adapt to new technologies and new ways of providing information. This was very evident during the COVID-19 pandemic. Social media has opened a wide range of methods for the library to cost-effectively communicate to the community to promote library programs and services. Further, the building of a new Alamo Community College District (ACCD) school in the Balcones Creek neighborhood as well as population growth gives us many opportunities to serve our community whether that be in a partnership for educational opportunities or expanded library facilities/services in other areas of town.
Survey Results

The library conducted a survey of residents from May 1 to June 14, 2022. In the end, we received and analyzed 419 surveys. Nearly fifty-three percent (53%) of these survey respondents live inside the city limits, thirty-three percent (33%) live in Kendall County, and approximately fourteen percent (14%) live outside the county. Survey respondents were primarily female, and forty-eight percent (48%) of respondents were in the age range of 35-44 and 65+. Most respondents, eighty-two percent (82%), check out library materials. This is an increase of seven percent (7%) over the 2019 survey results. Approximately forty-two percent (42%) attend library seminars and programs, a drop of four percent (4%) from the 2019 survey, most likely due to the reluctance of some residents to participate in in-person programs due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Tied for third place—at thirty-eight percent (38%)—are downloading digital materials and accessing the website for information. Eighty-seven percent (87%) of the respondents are regular users of the library, an increase of six percent (6%) from the 2019 survey and only a small percentage of respondents were not aware of library services, or the library does not offer what they need or like. Fifty-four percent (54%) visit the library from 9 a.m. to 1 p.m. and forty-nine percent (49%) visit between 1 p.m. and 7 p.m. Seventy-seven percent (77%) think the library hours are fine, an increase of twelve percent (12%) over the 2019 results, and only eleven percent (11%) wanted Sunday hours, a decrease of about six percent (6%) from the 2019 results.

The following service outcomes best describe what the community wants the library to provide:

Reading for Enjoyment and Instilling a Love of Reading in Children

Patrons who want materials and programs to enhance their leisure time will be able to access them easily and will have the help they need to make choices from among the options. Children will have programs, collections, and services designed to ensure a love of reading.

Working in a Quiet, Comfortable Space

Patrons will have safe and welcoming physical places to meet and interact with others or sit quietly and read and will have open accessible virtual spaces that support networking.

Learning at Any Age

Patrons will have the resources and programs they need to explore topics of personal interest and continue to learn throughout their lives. Equally important to this community is for the library to be a central source for information about the community so that they can fulfill their civic responsibilities at the local, state, and national levels, and fully participate in community decision making. Patrons also want to attend artistic performances, classes and seminars, and explore genealogy and local history. An addition to this plan will be further emphasis on community outreach and engagement for residents who cannot visit the library or are not traditional library users.

Of the services gaps the highest percentage of respondents, at twenty-nine percent (29%), felt the library should expand digital materials. Twenty-eight percent (28%) noted comfortable seating, twenty-five percent (25%) café style food and drinks, and twenty-four percent (24%) books.

Approximately two hundred open-ended comments revealed the community lauds library staff, programs, collections, and facilities.
A Sampling of Survey Comments

“I think the library currently does a great job in providing a variety of programs for adults and children. I would like to see even more classes or seminars offered for adults. Library personnel is always helpful and provides outstanding customer service.”

“I would love to see more activities out on the lawn for kids to attend. Maybe arts/crafts days or something revolving around reading in groups perhaps. It’s a beautiful, peaceful environment outside! A splash pad here would be amazing but that may be too farfetched. Coffee shop would be nice too!”

“I love our little library and use it frequently as well as the digital resources ... I also have a SA library card and find they frequently have more digital books than the Boerne library but between the two I have everything I need. Great librarians and always helpful for my girls 7/10th grades. Lovely spaces to read and work. Send more info to the high schools so older students can become more involved (says my 10th grader!)”

“Love the programs for toddlers. Thank you for doing them!! Please include activities on the weekends for working parents :) Or continue to do “to go” bags with activities - love those!! Wish you were closer to Fair Oaks :)

“The children’s library program (and computers to use), homeschooling programming and cultural events, dance and concert performances have been the highlight of our experience at the Boerne Public Library. We would never have been able to afford pony riding for our child, various performances, the latest DVDs, etc. Thank you for what you do! Keep up the great work!”

The survey results and community stakeholder input were considered when staff and the PHPLAB determined goals, objectives, and action items for the plan years.
GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

EXPLORE

Our Goal is to inspire people of all ages to read for enjoyment and instill a love of reading in children.

Our Objective is to increase access to a variety of materials to meet customer needs.

Representative Action
- Continuously assess digital resources and add when appropriate.

Our Objective is to provide programming that evolves to meet the needs of the community.

Representative Actions
- Create a program evaluation process to continuously improve programming.
- Create a master plan, policy, and procedures for mobile outreach services.

ENRICH

Our Goal is to promote lifelong learning for all ages.

Our Objective is to increase resources, materials, and community involvement to assist customers at every stage of learning and education.

Representative Action
- Continue to digitize and make accessible collections in the Dietert Historical Archives.
- Implement the Family Place Libraries Program

Our Objective is to partner with community organizations and individuals to enhance and create new learning opportunities and amplify existing opportunities.

Representative Actions
- Continue to expand delivery service to Boerne area senior facilities.
- Work with a legal aid organization to provide legal assistance to residents.
- Work with local partners/universities to provide Social Work practicums for students.

“You are never too old to learn. At no time ever say, 'It’s too late to learn,’ not until the day you die.”
Kimani Ng’ang’a

“The whole world opened up to me when I learned to read.”
Mary McCleod Bethune
ENGAGE

Our Goal is to be flexible in developing spaces and services to meet the needs of a growing diverse community.

Our Objective is to connect with people in the community, through outreach, engagement, and virtual services.

Representative Actions

• Create a community engagement team within the library staff.
• Create engagement and outreach plans for Hispanic and other underrepresented segments of the community.
• Provide trauma-informed and mental health 101 training for all staff members.

Our Objective is to constantly assess and redesign library spaces for flexibility and accommodate current needs.

Representative Actions

• Replace some study tables with individual workstations.
• Create a café space.
• Consider implementing a dog-friendly policy.

Our Objective is to find innovative ways to serve high-growth areas in the community.

Representative Actions

• Fund a mobile library to deliver materials to patrons with limited mobility and create pop-up libraries at parks, low-income apartment complexes, festivals, and other community events.
• Add book drops and/or other passive service options to locations in high-growth areas of the community.
• Consider adding library services in multi-use spaces in high-growth areas.

“The basic economic resource - the means of production - is no longer capital, nor natural resources, nor labor. It is and will be knowledge.”
Peter Drucker

“Cultural differences should not separate us from each other, but rather cultural diversity brings a collective strength that can benefit all of humanity.”
Robert Alan
IN CONCLUSION

Always underlying our goals and objectives is the commitment to providing superior customer service with staff who are compassionate, welcoming, and knowledgeable.

As in previous plans staff will continue to emphasize organizational competencies, particularly partnerships, fundraising, training and staff development, and marketing.

Library staff and stakeholders are committed to providing the community with opportunities to flourish, solve challenges, and develop their best selves. It is our sincerest wish as an organization to strategically improve our community by sharing resources and collaborating to achieve better outcomes. We will continue to actively listen to what the community needs and work hard to provide the very best in targeted and worthwhile services.

“But that's the whole aim of civilization: to make everything a source of enjoyment.”

Leo Tolstoy
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS
Patrick Heath Public Library Board Members

Susan Nelson, Chair  Laura Bray, Vice-Chair
Huong-Trinh Arrieta  Angela Kirby Buser
Amy Bean  Lora Beth Escalante
Pam Bransford  Jennifer Hackett, Secretary

COMMUNITY LEADERS

Staci Almager  Paul Giguere
Christina Bergmann  Leigh Owen
Kim Blohm  Tommy Price
Bryce Boddie  Donna Sharp
Olivia Burdick  Amy Story

WITH GRATITUDE

Partners Library Action Network  Boerne Public Library Foundation
Friends of the Boerne Public Library  Boerne City Administration
Patrick Heath Public Library Staff  Boerne City Council

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