



AUBURN
PUBLIC
LIBRARY

Strategic Plan
FY 2021 - FY 2024

Vision

The Auburn Public Library is the heart and mind of Auburn.

Mission

The Auburn Public Library inspires, enriches, and delights our residents with vital and valuable resources, services, and experiences.

Values

Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion

Welcoming all with respect and cordiality

Collaboration and Creativity

Working together to advance the community's vitality and welfare

Innovation

Anticipating and responding to community needs with leading-edge technology and stimulating programs

Professional Excellence and Integrity

Delivering the highest-quality confidential and nonjudgmental service

Lifelong Learning and Literacy

Providing access to relevant knowledge and useful information through diverse formats

Civic Engagement

Facilitating conversations, discussions, deliberations, and gatherings

Research Methodology and Key Insights

Board Interviews

For a clear understanding of the environmental and social contexts of the planning effort, Ivy Group consultants conducted personal phone interviews with members of the Auburn Public Library Board prior to their first on-site visit. These conversations provided Board Members with the opportunity to share their thoughts about the Auburn Public Library (APL or “the Library”), its strengths and challenges, and where it is best equipped to support the citizens of Auburn.

Board Members spoke highly of the energy and accomplishments of APL’s leadership team and an engaged, professional staff dedicated to serving the community. And yet, explosive growth is changing the landscape in Auburn and making APL’s charge increasingly difficult. There is no room to expand the existing facility, and parking is a major issue. While the outdoor classroom will help, there is simply not enough space to best serve the influx of young families drawn to Auburn for its excellent schools and high quality of life. At a minimum, a space update is needed to meet the evolving needs of the community. Board Members also conveyed their excitement about increased digital collections and services and suggested that the Library could do more to support and educate those who may express resistance to or anxiety about emerging technologies.

Market Segmentation Study

The consulting team conducted a market segmentation study of APL’s service area, applying Claritas *My Best Segments* consumer data to the Library’s anonymized patron list to identify key demographics, lifestyle characteristics, and media preferences of Auburn residents. The exercise enables APL’s management and staff to assess market penetration of the service area, determine the interests and needs of both users and nonusers, identify the best means of reaching out to specific population segments, understand varying technology needs, and pinpoint relevant service and collection strategies—all with an eye to increasing community use of the Library.

The study paints the picture of an extremely diverse community and a significant opportunity for the Library to increase its penetration of the service area, whether by adopting a sheer numbers approach or targeting smaller population segments by specific need.

Only one consumer segment represents more than 14% of the service area population, with the top seven segments comprising just over half of the population. These households are “wired,” if not tech-savvy, indicating that digital marketing initiatives may be quite effective in increasing community use of the Library. Primary concerns in accessing services hinge on convenience, as family, school, and work obligations take precedence.

Executive Interviews

The Library Director interviewed nine civic and community leaders for their perspectives on the Library—its profile, perceived value in the community, and greatest contributions to life in Auburn—and what service priorities would best respond to current trends and meet the growing and varied needs of its residents. Unanimously, leaders spoke to the impact that rapid growth is having on Auburn. Income disparity and resource inequities are growing. Traffic congestion, compounded by the lack of public transportation, is a significant barrier to those who most need the services of the Library. Meeting and study spaces—so important to community connections and educational aspirations—are insufficient in APL’s sole facility.

All the while, leaders praise the Library for the welcoming face it presents to the community, particularly to the growing population of first-generation Americans, and they affirm its continued commitment to early childhood literacy and excellence in education. At the same time, they see a need for the APL to communicate more effectively its relevance to residents, promoting more aggressively its programs and services to grow a diverse user base and ensure the highest-quality service to all residents of Auburn. Facilitating access and finding ways to “create convenience” for patrons will be key to APL’s success.

Town Hall Meetings

Four town hall meetings held in August 2019 at a variety of locations solicited input about the Library from individuals interested in adding their voices to the strategic planning effort. The Library Director facilitated the open discussions about APL’s place in community life—what it does well, where improvements are needed, and what additional resources and services Auburn residents would like to see in the future.

Thirty-four residents participated in the sessions, speaking to the value of outreach to seniors and other underserved segments of the community; the resources and programs the Library provides—particularly to young children and immigrant/international populations; the inclusivity and diversity of APL’s collections; and the sense of welcome that the APL extends to all, likening it to the “cultural center for the community.” Growth is indeed reshaping Auburn

from a large village to bustling city, with residents citing the need for additional branch locations and meeting/study spaces, expanded collections, and increased program offerings relevant and appealing to diverse populations.

Online Feedback

To ensure every opportunity to participate in the planning process was made available, the Library also created a convenient online comment card by which Auburn residents could offer input. Thirty-six individuals shared their thoughts, many speaking to the desire to see a second library facility or satellite outlets, citing Northwest Auburn in particular; expanded meeting and programming space as popular offerings fill up quickly; more digital resources; an increasingly diverse collection; and a continued commitment to children's services.

Benchmarking Study

The consulting team benchmarked APL's performance against that of four peer libraries from across the United States, selected for their similarity in size (one outlet), service area population, and operating budget. The purpose of this exercise was to gauge the efficiency of APL's operations and identify those areas where performance might be improved. The most recently published data from the Institute of Museum and Library Services and the Public Library Data Service (FY 2017) informed the study.

Statistics reveal that APL's funding appears low compared to peers, ranking well below the mean in both total revenue and total revenue *per capita*.

While spending is in line with peers relative to community size overall, the Library spends proportionally more on staff and less on its collections. And yet, while APL's total holdings *per capita* is the smallest in the peer set, circulation of both physical and electronic materials is robust—ranking 2nd among peers and signaling a high return on investment in collections.

Compared to all but one peer, the APL hosts fewer programs and spends more per program. However, the investment seems to pay off in high program attendance, suggesting that the community may be hungry for expanded program offerings.

The Library ranks 1st among peers for total annual service hours. In contrast, however, it claims comparatively few users and the lowest number of visits *per capita* in the peer set, raising questions about barriers to use, the appeal of current offerings, and/or the effectiveness of current marketing efforts.

Residential Telephone Survey

To confirm or refute qualitative information gathered in interviews and from the public at large, The Ivy Group directed a telephone survey of 266 randomly-selected Auburn residents, 18 years of age and older. The survey profiled user and nonuser respondents; identified barriers that prevent some residents from patronizing the APL; assessed customer satisfaction with specific services; gauged interest in the expansion of existing services and potential implementation of new offerings; and elicited what might entice residents to increase their use of the Library.

266 interviews yield a margin of error of +/- 6% at the 95% confidence level for the Library's service area population, but not for individual market segments.

A full one-third of survey respondents indicated they had not used the APL at all in the preceding 12 months—the top two reasons being personal preference for the Internet as a source of information and lack of time. This would suggest that ramping up its digital presence and emphasizing convenience in service delivery will be key to growing APL's user base. Marketing and promotions would also appear to be a factor, with the majority of nonusers indicating that they hear or see something about the APL infrequently, if ever.

The majority of users see the APL in the most traditional light: a source for books and magazines. They express the greatest satisfaction with staff courtesy and customer service but indicate improvements are needed in the variety of the digital collection, APL's website, wait time for reserved items, and item availability. Users emphasize the need for the Library to expand its services to children, seniors, and English language learners; outreach to disadvantaged populations; and the digital collection. Satellite locations around town and additional meeting or study space top their list of potential offerings they would like to see the Library make available.

Anecdotally, survey respondents most frequently call for additions to the collection—more materials, varied formats, and greater diversity in both content and audience appeal—and expanded programming that offers variety, emphasizes education, and builds community.

Area of Focus: Access & Delivery

Strategy: Enhance the patron experience by reducing barriers to materials and services.

- Accelerate materials turnaround by centralizing patron returns.
- Increase the convenience of holds placement, patron notification, and item pickup and return.
- Implement satellite service locations throughout Auburn, offering a variety of checkout and return options.
- Evaluate existing hours of operation and the feasibility of making the Library (unstaffed) accessible to patrons outside of business hours.
- Develop a plan for serving patrons who are homebound and patrons with limited mobility.
- Revise relevant workflows, policies, and procedures to ensure customer-centric service delivery.
- Create video user guides to assist patrons in accessing the collection.
- Streamline access to public technology services, such as printing.

Requirements

- Funding for facility modifications, technology enhancements, and equipment
- Customer service training
- Staff planning and development time
- Promotion of new and improved services through website, social media, and other publicity avenues available to the Library, including resources of other City departments, such as Parks and Recreation and Community Services

Success Measures

- Patron surveys
- Increase in circulation

Area of Focus: Access & Delivery

Strategy: Assess patron technology needs and implement resources and services to address deficiencies.

- Produce technology “how-to” webinars and short videos for the Library website.
- Establish a technology resource center in Northwest Auburn.

Requirements

- Funding for hardware and software, furniture, fixtures, equipment, and operations (staffing and facility) for Northwest Auburn technology resource center
- Collaboration with IT and Community Services
- Technology training
- Promotion of new and improved technology resources via website and social media

Success Measures

- Website views of instructional technology resources
- Technology resource center use statistics

Strategy: Establish more usable spaces for learning, studying, collaborations, and public meetings.

- Implement the recommendations of the 2020 Library Space Study to
 - integrate considerations of accessibility, facility occupant load, and emergency exits;
 - reallocate space within the Library’s existing footprint to create additional meeting and study environments;
 - establish dedicated spaces for independent study and group collaboration;
 - create a dedicated teen space; and
 - improve the Library’s early learning environment for children.
- Establish a Teen Advisory Board to guide teen space design.
- Evaluate policies and procedures for public meeting space management; collaborate with OCM and the Library Board regarding policy adoption; and conduct staff training on new policies and procedures and customer service implications.

Requirements

- Funding for design, new/additional furnishings and equipment, and facility alterations/improvements

Success Measures

- Patron surveys regarding availability and quality of spaces for independent study, group collaboration, and meetings
- Public meeting room use statistics
- Study/collaborative/assigned space use statistics

Strategy: Increase collection visibility and discoverability by employing retail merchandising techniques.

- Showcase selected materials by topical interests rather than by strict Dewey Decimal Classification.
- Incorporate additional displays and LED signs/message boards to promote the collection and cross-promote formats.
- Conduct staff training on effective merchandising and display strategies.
- Develop branded and creative wayfinding, promotional, and cross-promotional in-library signage.

Requirements

- Funding for furnishings, equipment, and signage
- Collaboration with OCM to promote ongoing improvements via the website and social media, as well as through other publicity avenues

Success Measures

- Increased circulation of print and audiovisual collections
- Turnover of titles on display

Area of Focus: Collections, Programs, & Outreach

Strategy: Expand breadth, depth, and diversity of patron-driven and inclusive physical and digital collections.

- Utilize market segmentation study for collection development.
- Expand collection of popular titles and digital resources in languages other than English and for English language learners.
- Pilot innovative and unconventional collections to assess their popularity and the need for further development and expansion.
- Streamline workflow, including online form, for receiving patron collection requests.
- Implement streaming video.
- Expand digital legal resources collection.

Requirements

- Funding to support acquisitions and processing
- Subscription costs for streaming video service
- Website improvements and enhancements to support web-based patron collection request forms
- Collaboration with OCM on promotion of new services and collections via website and social media

Success Measures

- Number of patron collection requests received and filled
- Increase in print and digital collection size as well as circulation
- Increase in holds activity, including total number of holds placed/filled as well as the number of patrons utilizing the Library's holds service
- Decrease in wait times (from hold placement to item collection) and turnaround times (from item check-in to reshelving)

Strategy: Expand breadth, depth, and diversity of relevant and needed programs and outreach initiatives.

- Evaluate the feasibility of acquiring a vehicle for community outreach to local agencies and community events.
- Continue to encourage and support Auburn’s youngest readers through a rich program of early childhood literacy offerings.
- Build children and teen programs by expanding partnerships with local education organizations and agencies.
- Collaborate with Auburn City Schools to provide relevant ebooks and digital resources for students.
- Develop bilingual early literacy and family engagement programs.
- Develop “adulting” programs focused on financial literacy and economic opportunity.
- Expand schedule of technology classes held at the Library as well as offsite locations.

Requirements

- Additional staff, some of whom are bilingual
- Planning time
- Training on early childhood education and children’s services
- Evaluation of budgetary and staffing implications of mobile community outreach
- Website and catalog enhancements to support ACS students
- Co-promotion with Auburn City Schools

Success Measures

- Number of program offerings
- Program participation/attendance statistics
- Post-class surveys

Area of Focus: Marketing & Communications

Strategy: Maximize effectiveness of existing marketing resources and explore the development of new assets and programs to raise public awareness of Library resources, programs, and services.

- Convene an interdepartmental staff work group charged with enhancing the Library’s website and social media presence.
- Produce introductory promotional materials, both digital and in print, for new users.
- Implement subscription-based email-newsletter highlighting Library events, services, and collections.
- Identify community hubs for audience-specific marketing.
- Develop a targeted marketing program to promote patron-driven acquisitions and raise awareness of the value of materials and services provided by the Library.
- Identify opportunities for securing additional publicity—both “earned” promotion and paid advertising—such as print and broadcast media, digital billboards, public transportation, etc.
- Make exterior signage more visible, intuitive, and inviting and create engaging, branded interior wayfinding.

Requirements

- Staffing and funding to support marketing functions, materials production, and email newsletter subscription fee
- Collaboration with OCM, IT, and outside vendors regarding design and production of promotional materials

Success Measures

- Increase in program attendance, circulation, and number of registered patrons
- Number of introductory promotional materials produced and distributed

Area of Focus: Marketing & Communications

Strategy: Develop and implement marketing strategies to attract new users.

- Ensure marketing and communications balance digital and conventional media to reach potential library users at both extremes of the technology usage spectrum.
- Develop a pop-up library kit to streamline engagement with potential patrons.

Requirements

- Marketing budget
- Staff time to design, produce, and assemble promotional materials
- Collaboration with OCM and outside vendors regarding design and production of promotional materials

Success Measures

- Increase in program attendance and circulation
- Increase in number of registered patrons