

Wells Branch Community Library District

Long Range Plan 2023-2027 (draft)

Mission Statement: WBCLD is a welcoming and responsive community resource dedicated to delivering equitable access to information, supporting literacy and personal development, and providing enrichment opportunities for everyone.

Wells Branch Community Library is a Special Purpose District independent of the city, county, MUD, or any larger library system. As such, we can be specialized and responsive to our users. We enjoy the flexibility of an independent budget, but must be self-sufficient as we do not have access to resources a larger library system or city department can rely upon.

The Wells Branch neighborhood has 3367 single-family homes and 21 apartment complexes. Population information available from the census shows that the zip code went from 20299 residents in 2010 to 21857 in 2020. The 2020 numbers were collected during a period of global pandemic on top of political concerns for immigrants, and it can be assumed that many families did not respond or fully complete the information.

Wells Branch is 29% owner occupied with 71% of residents renting. The average household size is just over 2.1 with annual income of \$62223. The state average is 2.8 people and slightly higher income. Wells Branch residents are more likely than Texans are on the whole to be educated, with over 95% of adults reporting HS graduation and almost 50% holding a degree.

Accreditation for libraries in Texas comes from the Texas State Library and Archives commission (TSLAC). TSLAC publishes standards for libraries at three levels, basic, enhanced and exemplary. Those standards are published at tsl.texas.gov. The Wells Branch Community Library strives to achieve the standard of Exemplary in every possible category.

The previous Long Range Plan covered 2016-2020. To keep the staff and community safe through an unprecedented global pandemic, the library closed in March 2020 and the physical facility was unavailable to the public for over a year. Development, goals, and strategic planning have necessarily been fluid throughout recovery as services, programs, and material distribution and circulation have adjusted and evolved.

In drafting this plan, the library solicited professional and community input. The Executive Director of the Partners Library Action Network performed an assessment of the library. The focus was to catch any deficiencies or missed opportunities that have been overlooked. An experienced, professional outsider compared our facilities and services to other libraries. Results were very positive highlighting accessibility, welcoming and professional staff, and adequate spaces.

The library also conducted a community development survey that was widely distributed through social media and outreach to solicit input from both users and nonusers. The focus of this survey was to determine stakeholder priorities. These priorities are divided into things to build or buy (physical requests) and things to do (service and program requests). Physical development requests included quiet spaces, a separate and appealing teen space, and developed outdoor spaces. Program and service requests focused on more diverse scheduling to accommodate working parents, more hands-on crafting programs for all ages, and language learning support.

Facilities

Priority- to develop and provide spaces to meet community needs, maintain property value, minimize carbon footprint whenever possible, and maintain welcoming landscaping.

Development Goals:

1. Develop outdoor spaces for increased patron enjoyment.
 - Add more interactive play activities in the fenced yard for children.
 - Maintain native landscaping and seating in the outside spaces and porches.
2. Maintain and protect the public investment on building and grounds.
 - Continue to update lighting to LED throughout the facilities.
 - Upgrade HVAC systems as needed to eco-friendly refrigerant.
 - Maintain landscaping with native plants and other materials with minimal watering needs.
3. Work towards certification in the Sustainable Libraries Initiative for a library and community that is economically feasible, socially equitable, and environmentally sound.
 - Join the Sustainable Library Initiative (www.sustainablelibrariesinitiative.org).
 - Form a sustainability team to research and make recommendations for the twelve categories.
4. Solicit plans and ideas from professionals to expand usable space for community enrichment.
 - Create a separate, safe and welcoming area for teens.
 - Build a glass wall to provide a clear delineation of space and noise barrier.
 - Install a television/gaming system and necessary equipment for other targeted activities.
 - Create a collaborative workspace for students within the area.
 - Provide areas to accommodate increased programming schedule with more space for patrons to distance without compromising access to the LAB.
 - Shift the cabinets and equipment from the Larger to Smaller program room as a temporary fix to increase availability of the larger room for programs.

- Utilize the Quiet Reading Room as a secondary small formal program space for book-clubs or conversation groups.
- Create an additional large program space if possible by combining the Director's Office and Quiet Reading room with the newly formed hallway near the newly enclosed teen area.
- Enclose the breezeway and/or some of the outdoor porch areas to add usable space without increasing impermeable ground coverage.
- Repurpose rooms and spaces as needed to meet evolving community needs.

Technology

Priority- to provide adequate equipment and services to meet patron needs and address the digital divide while protecting private information and the library network and equipment.

Development Goals:

1. Maintain public access machines with management software, virus protection, and the software patrons need to complete their tasks.
 - Replace computers with updated machines every 3-5 years.
 - Replace peripherals as frequently as necessary.
2. Provide a safe space for patrons and guests to access virtual meetings such as medical appointments or employment interviews with adequate privacy.
3. Solicit the development of a library app for ease of use on mobile devices.
4. Offer regular access for patrons to digital and technology assistance.
5. Integrate more EBooks and digital resources into the catalog.
 - Add ERead Texas and Simply E services as available through the Texas State Library and Archives Commission.
 - Incorporate online periodical access for newspapers and other requests.
 - Annually evaluate any additional databases or online access resources that could be meaningful to the community and fall within budget and resource guidelines.

Collection and Circulation

Priority- to develop and maintain a current, relevant, varied collection of materials that serve the community's learning and enrichment needs

Development Goals:

1. Increase digital collection by seeking additional resources and regularly evaluating available databases and offerings.
2. Maintain a current physical collection through continual weeding and targeted purchases. Determine an ideas collection size for our service population and adjust purchases and removals accordingly.
3. Consider the addition of chrome books or a similar solution to circulate.

4. Develop the library of things to include additional appropriate items that interest the community.
 - Create additional space to store nontraditional items safely.
 - Add specialty tools and devices that patrons may need infrequently, such as a multi-meter, lawn aerator, stud finder, bike repair kit, auto computer code reader, and similar items.
 - Add non-consumable crafting kits to support LAB DIY programs such as knitting rings, embroidery hoops, and hand looms.

Programs and Services

Priority- to deliver a variety of meaningful, enjoyable, and educational programs and services that foster community, literacy, and lifelong learning.

Development Goals:

1. Reintroduce Family Place style workshops and play space availability for caretakers and children ages 0-4.
 - Modify previously offered educational workshops for caregivers on topics such as safety, nutrition, and development in a modified format to reach more families.
 - Open safe play spaces with developmentally appropriate toys available to support co-playing and exploration.
2. Offer more regular programming for older children and teens, including:
 - STEAM learning opportunities
 - seasonal family (age 8+ with an adult) craft programming using LAB equipment
 - regular teen programming in the LAB with specific machines such as sewing
 - Increased Teen Programming using developed separate space for gaming events and other requested workshops
3. Offer increased, meaningful programming in the LAB, including:
 - open LAB hours for adults to do drop-in projects and trainings
 - technology assistance in the LAB during open hours
 - varied and valuable project programs for adults using LAB materials and equipment
 - contracted skilled artists for one-time project programs
4. Strengthen educational program offerings in the following areas:
 - language learning for adults
 - math and science for students
 - test preparation

Community Outreach and Development

Priority- Optimize neighborhood access to social and employment services to support marginalized and/or disadvantaged patrons and visitors.

Development Goals:

1. Support adult employment needs.
 - Provide job search and resume building workshops.
 - Offer a mock interview or practice interview services.
 - Increase and/or promote online credentialing and testing resources.
2. Increase library outreach to established users, new users, and nonusers.
 - Initiate a program of Donuts with the Director, similar to coffee with the principal at schools, or another similar opportunity for stakeholders and newcomers to interact directly with library management.
 - Host a library orientation or open house style events to welcome new users.
 - Increase homebound services.
 - Maintain social media presence and advertising.
 - Regularly and continually solicit input from users and potential library users.
 - Conduct full image audit and community survey in advance of the creation of our next Long Range Plan.
 - Create a program of social media ambassadors to spread library messages across platforms and expand our reach.
3. Offer access to targeted specialists (tax expert, tutor, social worker), via contract or volunteer, for library patrons.
4. Offer community programming specifically aimed at evolving welfare needs in the community.
5. Maintain a digital and physical collection of information for social services and other needs to be readily accessible and discreet for library visitors.

Workforce and Administration

Priority- Ensure responsible and transparent handling of public funds, support a successful staff, maintain compliance with all relevant legislation for special purpose districts, ensure continued library accreditation, and keep up with industry standards.

Development Goals:

1. Support and advance the very best library staff.
 - Maintain wage levels for employees consistent with libraries in the area including competitive and meaningful benefits.
 - Structure for succession planning and coverage to include the creation of a position for Assistant Director.
 - Provide a culture of continual learning with educational goals and opportunities for all stakeholders.
 - Invigorate team building activities that struggled during closure and pandemic concerns.
2. Recognize the contribution of volunteers and other unpaid stakeholders.
 - Offer regular appreciation events for volunteers.

- maintain the presidential volunteer recognition program.
 - fund and support the Teen Library Council of volunteers
3. Maintain all reports and activities required to be an accredited library and special purpose district within the State of Texas to include annual audit, election, records management, open meetings, public information, and varied governmental reporting requirements.
 4. Support and promote the idea and ideals of professional librarianship.
 - Advocate for libraries and library priorities including the freedom to read and the right to privacy.
 - Join and participate in professional library networks and associations, such as the ALA and TxLA.
 - Support area libraries and librarians.