



Strategic Plan
2024-2028

Approved by the Board of Trustees on

_____9/19/2024_____

Kent Free Library Strategic Plan 2024-2028

Our Mission

Kent Free Library empowers the community through information, education, and recreation.

Our Vision

The destination for whatever you imagine.

Our Values

Welcoming

We prioritize creating a space where all people feel valued, included, safe, and comfortable.

People-First

We strive to enhance user experiences, meet individual needs, and respond to the evolving interests of our community.

Integrity

We are committed to being a trusted community partner and employer. We achieve this through transparent operation and communication.

Advocacy

We actively promote and champion literacy, education, and community.

Intellectual Freedom

We believe that individuals have the right to access and explore ideas and information without censorship, restriction, or interference.

Our Strategic Goals & Objectives

Goal One: Optimize and enhance library spaces.

Objectives & Action Items

1. Improve safety and accessibility

- Reconfigure the parking lot entrance doors and security gates to improve accessibility and aid the flow of traffic.
- Investigate options to improve the main staircase, creating a more welcoming entrance from the parking lot, improving sight lines from staff service desks, and enhancing safety for patrons of all ages.
- Install automatic openers at the lobby restrooms to increase accessibility.
- Enhance exterior lighting at the parking lot entrance and in the drive-thru lane.
- Create a staff safety manual and incorporate regular drills in staff training.

2. Revitalize library spaces to create positive patron experiences

- Expand the new materials section to include eye-catching displays, merchandise popular collections more effectively, and provide informal seating areas.
- Evaluate ways to add a permanent play and learn space for young children.
- Explore options for a multi-purpose room for library programs and activities.
- Add EV charging stations in the parking lot for patron convenience.
- Create a permanent book sale area for the Friends of the Library.
- Refresh youth services program spaces.

3. Provide a streamlined library experience to enhance the ease of using the library.

- Reconfigure library collections so like items are together, including moving large print books to the first floor.
- Consider the popularity, increasing or decreasing, of each collection and apply findings to collection locations and purchasing decisions.
- Repurpose space on the second floor to create a vibrant teen area adjacent to the youth services department staff.
- Consider improvements to the library's public service model, including the locations and types of service desks required to assist patrons most effectively.
- Design a new borrower services zone to include a self-service area with copiers, printers, fax machine, self-pick up of holds and self-check out stations.
- Update interior wayfinding signage and create new floor maps.

Goal Two: Foster inclusivity in library services, collections, and programming.

Objectives & Action Items

1. Expand services to the community and build relationships with people who are underserved

- Install exterior pick-up lockers to serve those for whom library hours of operation may be inconvenient.
- Participate in a minimum of four community events outside the library annually.
- Assist with food insecurity by offering summer lunches for children.
- Consider expanding services to offer after-school snacks or senior (55+) lunches.
- Expand vending machine offerings to meet patron demand.
- Eliminate a financial barrier to using the library by going fine free.
- Apply for a Guiding Ohioans Online grant to provide a Technology Trainer.

2. Develop collections, services, and programs that reflect the diverse and changing needs of the community

- Start a Library of Things collection to offer useful tools and equipment for patrons to borrow.
- Encourage solutions to the loneliness epidemic by increasing programs targeted to patrons 55+ years of age.
- Explore partnerships to expand programming to patrons with neurodiversity.
- Increase programming for babies, toddlers, and their grownups.
- Expand services and collections for families with young children by adding family computer workstations and developmentally appropriate kits for babies and toddlers.
- Explore the creation of a space for recording podcasts, participating in telehealth appointments, or other recording studio uses.

3. Embrace evidence-based decision-making to align our services with the needs of library users

- Conduct a demographic survey of our community to help inform staff decisions.
- Implement the use of comment cards (physical and digital) for ongoing patron feedback.
- Train staff to use existing vendor tools to make decisions on collections, programs, and services.

4. Empower staff with training and resources

- Provide quarterly staff training on topics requested by staff or recommended by department managers.
- Continue to update the employee handbook and library policies regularly.
- Update the performance evaluation tool to align with the strategic plan values.
- Refresh staff areas on the third floor.
- Develop a Person in Charge (PIC) training program for Librarians.

Goal Three: Boost community engagement and awareness.

Objectives & Action Items

1. Increase communication channels to build community awareness

- Resume publication of a quarterly mailed newsletter to Kent City School District residents.
- Create weekly What's Happening emails and/or social media posts to alert the community about upcoming programs.
- Build a new library website.
- Install a digital sign on River Street to promote library events and activities.
- Explore the addition of wayfinding signs to the library with the City of Kent and Kent Parks and Recreation.
- Work with community partners to launch a public art project at the library.

2. Implement a unified marketing approach

- Hire a full-time marketing or communications professional.
- Create a brand and style guide.
- Implement a comprehensive social media plan.
- Develop advertising and marketing initiatives to reach those that may not use the library.
- Hire a photographer to capture professional images of the library, staff, and patrons to use in print, digital, and social media campaigns.

About the Strategic Planning Process

Kent Free Library initiated its strategic planning process in October 2023, organizing the plan around three key strategic goals, each backed by specific objectives and actionable items. This plan serves as a comprehensive guide for decision-making and effective resource allocation.

Dedicated to serving its community, Kent Free Library actively involved local residents in the planning process through a Community Survey. The online survey garnered 517 responses, providing valuable insights. Feedback from this effort highlighted a high level of community satisfaction, with many praising the library's innovative programming, comprehensive collections, and welcoming environment.

The strategic plan was developed through collaborative efforts involving the Board of Trustees, library administration, management team, and library staff. The development process included the following sessions:

- **All-Staff Planning Session:** Staff worked in small groups to brainstorm ideas around themes such as relevancy, healthy solutions, diversity and inclusion, failure and innovation, and partnerships.
- **Board of Trustees Retreat:** The board formulated the library's mission, vision, and values, utilizing insights from the surveys and focus groups within a SWOTA (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Threats, and Aspirations) framework.
- **Leadership Team Retreat:** The team examined strategic goals through four library-specific perspectives (Patron, Staff, Internal Processes, and Organizational Resources), leading to the establishment of objectives to achieve these goals.

The themes identified from the community survey and planning sessions are interwoven throughout the strategic plan. These themes, supported by specific objectives and actionable steps, position Kent Free Library to serve the diverse needs of its patrons, enhance its programs and services, and foster a stronger, more connected community.

Planning Team

Board of Trustees

John R. Ryan - President
Amanda Metcalf - Vice-President
Kris Palcho - Secretary
Asad Khan
Peter C. Kratcoski
Erin Madonio Latina
Will Underwood

Administration

Stacey Richardson, Director
Leanne Shurtz, Fiscal Officer

Leadership Team

Michael Davis – Facilities Manager
Shelley Hall – Youth Services Manager
Anna Hood – Technical Services Manager
Kristen Pool – Adult Services Manager
Chris Tolin – Technology Coordinator
Mary VanDerlin – Borrower Services Manager

Staff

Library staff participated in this process and provided valuable input and important feedback to the leadership team.

Strategic Planning Facilitator: Northeast Ohio Regional Library System

Northeast Ohio
Regional
Library System



School | Public | Academic | Special
Maximizing Library Potential Together
www.neo-rs.org