

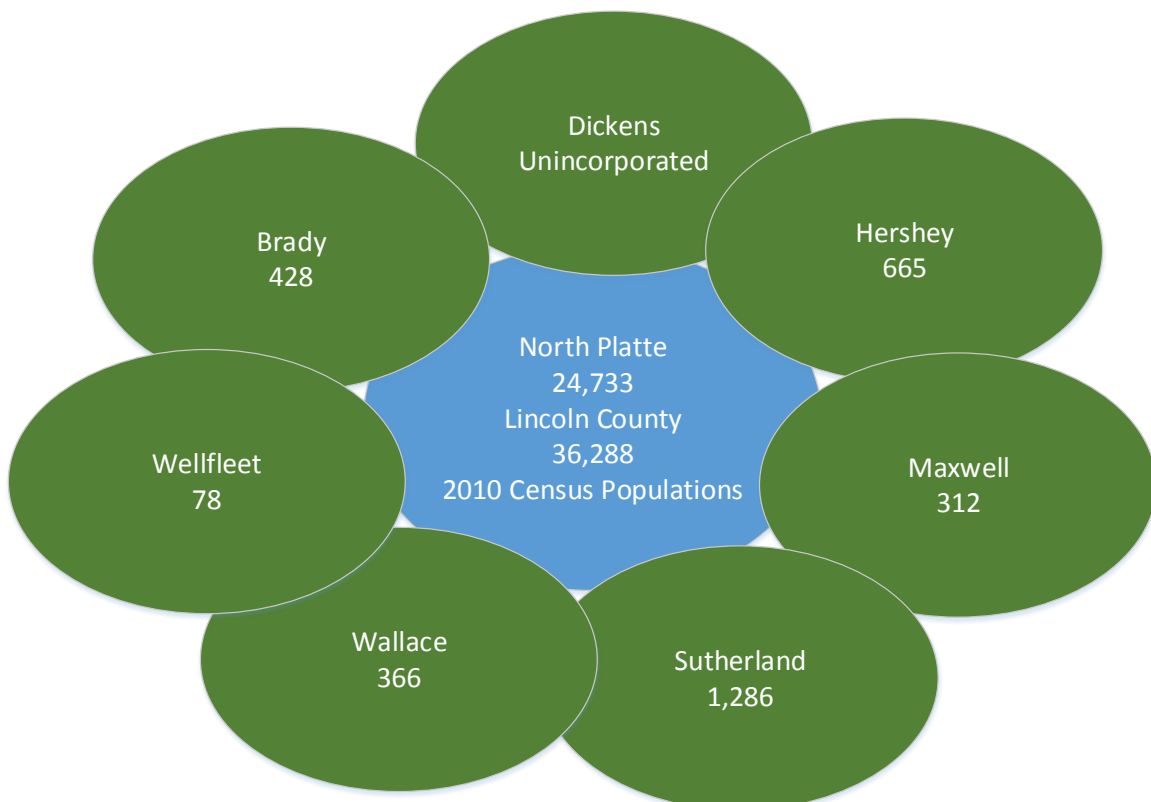


North Platte Public Library

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North Platte Public Library Strategic Plan 2016-2018

Serving North Platte and Lincoln County



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STRATEGIC PLAN DEVELOPMENT CREDITS

The North Platte Public Library staff, North Platte Public Library Advisory Board members, and our customers and patrons assisting in the development of this strategic plan. Special thank you to Richard Miller, Library Development Director for the Nebraska Library Commission, for providing Strategic Planning Workshops throughout the State of Nebraska and offering advice whenever requested.

MISSION STATEMENT

The North Platte Public Library exists to ensure access to the accumulated knowledge of the world. This enables individuals to pursue personal enrichment and take informed action.

COMMUNITY PROFILE

North Platte is located in western Nebraska at the intersection of Highway 83 and Interstate 80 and the confluence of the North and South Platte Rivers which form the Platte River. North Platte is a large railroad community with the Union Pacific Railroad as the largest employer.

POPULATION

The population of **North Platte** is 24,733 based on the 2010 census. The median age is 38.7 and the breakdown of age is:

- 27.4% of residents were under the age of 20
- 18.4% were age 20 through 34
- 11.6% were age 35 through 44
- 27.4% were age 45 through 64
- 15.3% were 65 years of age or older

The gender makeup is 49.3% male with a median age of 35.4 years, and 50.7% female with a median age of 39.1 years. The median household income is \$43,156. This represented a 26.26% increase over from the 2000 census, which reported a median household income of \$34,181. North Platte has 2,710 veterans.

The population of **Lincoln County** is 36,288 based on the 2010 census. The median age is 39.2 and the breakdown of age is:

- 27.6% of residents were under the age of 20
- 17.5% were age 20 through 34
- 11.8% were age 35 through 44
- 27.6% were age 45 through 64
- 15.4% were 65 years of age or older

The gender makeup is 49.4% male with a median age of 38 years, and 50.6% female with a median age of 40.5 years. The median household income is \$45,181, an increase of 23.55% over the 2000 census median household income of \$36,568. Lincoln County has 3,224 veterans.

EDUCATION

There are five pre-schools and many home-based preschools available in North Platte. There are 18 schools within the city limits: North Platte Public Schools (11 Elementary schools, 2 middle schools and 1 high school); St. Patrick's School (1 Grade School and 1 Middle/Senior High School); Our Redeemer Lutheran Schools (Grades K-5); Platte Valley Christian Academy (Grades K-5). North Platte also has Mid-Plains Community College for students seeking higher education opportunities. Approximately 91% of the population has completed high school or have higher education.

LANGUAGE AND ETHNICITY

96.3% of the population speaks only English in the home. Of the remaining 3.7%: 2.9% speak Spanish. 98.5% of the population is one race, white only is 94%; 7.1% identifying as Hispanic.

EMPLOYMENT

52.1% of the population 16 years and older are employed. The unemployment rate is 2.8% as of June 30, 2015. 92.3% workers (age 16 years and over) drove their own vehicle. The mean travel time for workers is 12.7 minutes. 11.9% of the North Platte population are living below the poverty level.

CULTURAL SUMMARY

North Platte offers a lot in the area of recreation. North Platte has:

- Two (2) swimming pools (1 outdoor, 1 smaller indoor)
- Twelve (12) parks (1 large and 2 medium-sized)
- Four (4) golf courses (1 municipal course, and a 9-hole disc course at Cody Park)
- One (1) baseball field and 7 youth baseball fields
- One (1) softball complex
- Ten (10) soccer fields
- Ten (10) lighted tennis courts
- several on and off road bike and hike trails (including a loop around North Platte and Lake Maloney)
- Two (2) dog parks
- One (1) skateboard park
- One (1) splash pad
- One (1) recreational complex (indoor courts, weights and fitness equipment, classes and programming)
- Home of Platte River Fitness Series offering organization for 29 area fitness events in 2015 including mile, 5K, 10K, half marathon, marathon, triathlon, adventure, and relay event types

There are several state recreational facilities in North Platte. These include: Buffalo Bill Ranch State Historical Park; Buffalo State Recreation Area; Lake Maloney State Recreation Area, the North Platte Fish Hatchery.

Local attractions include the: Lincoln County Historical Museum; the Golden Spike Tower; 20th Century Veteran's Memorial; and Fort Cody.

North Platte is supportive of the Arts. They have a Community Playhouse (4 productions per year) and several Art groups (Creativity Unlimited Arts Council; North Platte Art and Gift Gallery). The Sandhills Symphony performs in North Platte twice a year and the performers are from the Sandhills area. North Platte has a Municipal Band that performs weekly in the summer. The community also hosts a Town Hall lecture series, a concert association, Fort Cody Summer Concert Series (NRoute Entertainment), and North Platte Country and Blue Grass Festival. North Platte is also home to the Prairie Arts Center.

And finally, NEBRASKAland Days, the state's official celebration, has taken place every June in North Platte since 1965. Events during NEBRASKAland Days include PRCA Buffalo Bill Rodeo,

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Summer Jam Concert Series, and Miss Rodeo Nebraska Association coronations. The rodeo has an especially long history in North Platte dating back to Buffalo Bill Cody's first Old Glory Blowout on July 4, 1882. Additionally, in 2005, the Original Town Association began a celebration called Rail Fest. It became an annual event until 2016 when they announced the 2016 event was cancelled. Rail Fest was created to recognize and celebrate the significance of the Union Pacific Railroad and its workers to the community of North Platte. These events and venues continue to bring thousands of tourists into North Platte each year.

LIBRARY SWOT ANALYSIS (STRENGTHS, WEAKNESSES, OPPORTUNITIES, AND STRENGTHS)

INTERNAL STRENGTHS

Programming – the library offers many programs for people of all ages. These include Wee Read, Story Time, Teen Café, Summer Reading Programs, technology classes, and guest speakers, entertainers, and historians. Many of our youngest participants start because their parents remember good times during library programming in the past.

Collections, Information and Technology Access – over 100,000 items are available for checkout in many different formats including digital books, digital audio books, digital music, large print, DVD, music CD, books on CD, media packs, travel packets. The library also provides access to several electronic resources that support the areas of education, home and hobby, genealogy, children's science, and consumer research. The library provides over 25 stations for access to the library's catalog, internet, productivity and photo software, and printing (color and black/white). One (1) station in the facility is specifically adapted for challenged individuals and includes visual and motor skill adaptive software and hardware in compliance with ADA. A public hotspot is available for those wishing to bring their own devices for internet and resource access. Separate wireless access is provided for classes and meetings. As a conservative community, North Platte has chosen to filter all stations within the facility against easily accessing offensive or illegal material online.

Facility Location and Staffing – located in the downtown and at the heart of government service facilities, the library is open 66 hours per week during the school year (Labor Day through Memorial Day) and 60 hours per week during the summer. The library's interior was last updated in 2007 which included a new centralized circulation desk. The library's exterior was last updated in 2011 which removed outdated building embellishments, ineffective weather awning, and damaged flower bed; and included contemporary EFIS detailing, and lighting updates. There are seventeen (17) library employees (14.75 FTE) with a combined longevity of 212 service years at the library.

Supporting Organizations – the library has strong local support from the Friends of the Library, the North Platte Public Library Foundation, North Platte Genealogical Society, Nebraska Humanities, Lincoln County Museum, various volunteers and the general public. Without these strong supporters we would have been unable to update the interior and exterior of the library, provide a robust array of electronic resources in the area of genealogy, bring in very talented entertainers and humanities speakers, share programming venues, re-upholster tired furniture, replace portions of the library's windows, and raise funds for future facilities and programming.

INTERNAL WEAKNESSES

Facility Parking – there are three (3) public parking spots (2 handicapped) next to the building. On street parking and the shared public parking lot to the west is frequently full. The small lot next to the building and the staff parking area (7 spots) behind the building have uneven surfaces and pose a potential liability during the winter months when they cannot be cleaned of ice and snow efficiently and effectively. The number of relatively close parking spots are insufficient to meet the needs of the community using the library and its employees, especially during larger programming events.

Facility Mechanicals – the library has recently struggled with an inoperative elevator, inefficient and half functional air conditioning system, cracked equipment pad and broken valves and coils plagues the heating system. The entire HVAC systems are at or beyond end of life and repairs are frequent and becoming harder to accomplish. The flat membrane roof although still under warranty, springs frequent leaks during bad weather especially in the spring and summer months with rain combined with hail and wind can damage the liner. These leaks in the past few years have caused minor damage to ceiling tiles, lighting fixtures, collections, and carpeting squares.

Technology Hardware Replacement Funding – keeping computers and servers operational has become an issue when funding normally allowing scheduled replacements of technology equipment is used instead to keep facility mechanicals running. The library is now repurposing other department's end of life equipment to make repairs to its end of life equipment. Professional support is no longer available for a majority of the libraries public computing stations and servers. The staff side of the network is slightly better, but not on par with best practice replacement cycles.

Nonexistent Marketing Plan – a marketing plan or consistent policy is not in place. The library does a relatively good job of marketing its events through facebook but needs to embrace other social media platforms. The library needs to do a better job of marketing its services, not just events. Branding of marketing materials also lacks uniformity.

Safety and Space Concerns – the library provides free local phone service intended to free up business phones by allowing the public to call for pickups and rides. The county jail is located next door and frequently released inmates utilize our local only phone. Being an all-female staff, some employees have expressed concern about their personal safety due to dead end stacks (also related to space issues), lack of a second exit from staffing cubicles, and the general perceived increase of agitated or alcohol/drug behavior among some customers. There is not enough meeting room space for library programming and public requests to use the meeting room. Library programming takes precedence but staff must pre-plan events and rarely is the room available for impromptu tours, for example.

EXTERNAL OPPORTUNITIES

Local Education Collaboration - North Platte Community College / Mid-Plains Community College (MPCC) has a long history of providing cost effective education for local students. They are a resource for the entire community but we rarely collaborate on collections and digital access products yet frequently refer our customers back and forth. MPCC ranked 3rd only to Library Service and Cody Park in overall quality in our survey. If we collaborate more, we could bring each other to the top of the Educational and Recreation Overall Quality in

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North Platte. Ninety-eight (98) percent of our survey respondents think of the North Platte Public Library as a part of the educational system. Cross promotion of our services, similar or dissimilar, would be an advantage to the community and the respective institutions.

Local Event and Facility Archives – in the past the library has clipped and maintained files of various local events, facilities, crimes, statistics, etc. Cody Park, North Platte Recreation Center staff, and Athletic Competition Events all ranked highest in our survey of overall quality of Recreation Services. Libraries are not typically thought of with the term recreation unless it involves reading but libraries are good at maintaining records. North Platte Public Library could maintain the history for the community's athletic events.

Take Internet Access to the People – Survey results indicated that 71% reported they had internet access and 66% reported they had a home computer. Coincidentally, 60% reported they use a computer at the library for their internet access. At a time when most advertising, news casts, and political jurisdictions would have you believe internet access is omnipresent, North Platte continues to indicate that 30-40% do not have reliable or consistent internet access. Cody Park is undeniably one of North Platte's strongest recreation attributes, the library could work with the City to provide hot spot access to Cody Park. The park hosts the North Pole Village in the December and activity at the park is fairly steady year round.

Construction, DIY, and Flipper Resources – the local news continues to bring to the attention of the community and region, North Platte and Lincoln County's current housing market shortage. According to the Nebraska Department of Economic Development (<http://www.neded.org/files/research/cities.htm>) the population of North Platte in 2010 was 24,733 and total housing was 11,450. There were 890 or about 7.8% vacancies compared with the state which had a 9.5% vacancy rate in 2010. According to the Nebraska Department of Economic Development (<http://www.neded.org/files/research/hous10.htm>) the number of estimated housing units in Lincoln County in 2013 was 16,567 and of those 1,500 were vacant indicating a vacancy rate of 9.1%. Compared to the vacancy rate for the entire state of Nebraska during the same time of 9.3%. In 2015, the United States Census Bureau (<http://www.census.gov/housing/hvs/data/ann15ind.html>) indicated that the national housing vacancy rate was 12.9%, a difference of 3.8-4.0% indicating a potential housing shortage for the entire state. The Lincoln County Comprehensive Plan 2012-2030 (<https://www.co.lincoln.ne.us/wp-content/uploads/2015/06/complan.pdf>) shows that in 2009 Lincoln County had an existing housing stock of 16,230 and 7,397 or 45.6% were constructed either earlier than 1939 or between 1970-1979. Meaning nearly 50% of the existing houses in 2009 are now approaching either 50 or 75+ years in age and will be or are in need of maintenance, updating, or renovation.

EXTERNAL THREATS

Surprise Mechanical Failures - Unplanned and emergency mechanical expenditures pulls funding resources away from programming, services and technology maintenance. These surprise expenses are usually not cost effective in the long run as eventually systems that have been band-aided too many times will require replacement. The library is at this point in 2016 with the entire HVAC system.

Hostile Economy – Lincoln county, like the entire state of Nebraska, is heavily dependent on the agriculture economy. When grain or cattle industries see a downturn in their economy,

that eventually ripples through to our funding status. The lack of revenue for city and county governments to support the library's funding requests can be tied to the state of the economy. During agriculture down swings, we are forced to not only remain even, but cut budgets. When we are forced to cut budgets, we instinctively go to our services and materials lines even though the largest portions of our budget are tied to staffing and facilities. The library looks for smaller things to control, hoping the budget cuts are temporary. The library has seen several years of cutting and it is becoming evident in the age of public technology equipment.

CAVE Dwellers – every community usually has a small group of likeminded and vocal citizens that others consider them Citizens Against Virtually Everything (CAVE). It does not matter what options are presented, this group tends to find fault with every option. North Platte has such a group and they vocalize a distrust of government and never want to spend a dime on “non-essential” services like libraries and recreation facilities. There is an ongoing continuous effort to correct misinformation suspected to be rooted in CAVE Dwellers and spreads within the community. Any sort of bond issue seems to intensify CAVE Dwellers objections, giving the impression that a civic group could prepare ahead of time for the onslaught. This is not necessarily so as the objections and outcries can be so eccentric that a positive problem solving group would have never even considered the protest.

Tweakers, Misfits, and Life – the people of Lincoln County passed a bond issue to build a new 45,000 SF detention center in November 2008. The new detention facility, which is next door to the library, opened in 2011 with 125 beds and can be expanded to 175 beds. The Lincoln County Detention Center houses inmates from federal, state, regional, and local justice districts. As a result of budget negotiations during construction that were intensified by a hostile national economy, there is a desire to charge for any and all jail services, including local phone calls. So upon release, word of mouth, has lead formerly incarcerated and their associates to utilize free local phone service, computer access, and restroom facilities at the library. Decentralized and community based mental health practices have placed individuals into the community that are not always medication compliant. Individuals going through civil process, divorce, life crisis, mental breakdowns, or substance and medication issues can display unpredictable behavior. Events in the news concerning world-wide terror or multiple homicide / mass murder have everyone thinking more about safety. We develop scenarios, train, and discuss plans of action routinely, but life happens and we cannot be prepared for everything. Focusing on the inability to prepare for every bad thing can drive staff and the public to feelings of anxiety and insecurity.

COMMUNITY NEEDS

COMMUNITY NEED #1 – A SAFE AND SECURE LIBRARY FACILITY

Goal #1: Security and Surveillance Systems

1. FY 2016-2017 – Prioritize budget requests for and acquire a multi-camera surveillance system complete with digital recording and archival features.
2. August 2016 – Provide in-service self-defense training to any staff member wishing to participate.
3. FY 2017-2018 – Prioritize budget requests for main facility doors to have electronic key card access, allowing the library to “replace” and disable door access as necessary.

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4. August 2017 – Provide in-service library security specialist speaker to discuss actions and threats in a public library setting.
5. In 2018, evaluate the need and feasibility for a silent panic button at public service desks.

Goal #2: Library Policy Review, Update, and Creation

1. January – August 2016 – Review and update the North Platte Public Library Policy Manual with library administration and staff, and library advisory board members.
2. January – August 2018 – Review and update the North Platte Public Library Policy Manual with library administration and staff, and library advisory board members.
3. By December 2018 – complete a draft, if not finalize, a Disaster Response chapter in the North Platte Policy Manual.

Goal #3: Replace HVAC Systems so Safety Valves and Environments are Functional

1. FY2015-2016 – Funding was obtained to replace the entire HVAC systems.
2. By June 2016 – Obtain revised written quote for work amendments and change orders.
3. By December 2016 – Have the new air conditioning and heating systems installed and functional.

COMMUNITY NEED #2 – INCREASE AWARENESS OF LIBRARY RESOURCES

Goal #1: Develop a Marketing Plan

1. ASAP - Specifically hire one (1) part-time library staff member with graphic design certification and/or background.
2. By August 2016 – Identify and develop library staff to champion various social media platforms. Everything does not have to be duplicated everywhere and the more diversity we have of staff posting on social media the more likely we will be successful in reaching a larger audience.
3. By September 2016 - Develop a North Platte Public Library informational program that can be given to community clubs and service organizations by the Library Director.
4. By October 2016 - Develop a logo that can be utilized on all promotional materials generated for library programming and services formatted for print and web.
5. By June 2017 – Develop info graphics that can be utilized in budget sessions, public relations, and supporting organization meetings the helps to explain the resources and corresponding usage stats of the library. Anticipate this as an annual goal to correspond with budget sessions.

COMMUNITY NEED #3 – SUPPORT SOLUTIONS TO THE HOUSING SHORTAGE

Goal #1: Provide Access to Online and Print Home Owner/Builder Resources

1. FY 2016-2017 – Fund continued access to Home Improvement, Consumer Reports, Small Engine and Automotive Repair resources.
2. By December 2016 – Develop a marketing plan for all electronic resources funded by North Platte Public Library.
3. FY 2017-2018 – Evaluate usage of this specific group of online resources and seek any new distributors of content areas similar to these that can support solutions to the community's housing shortage.
4. By January 2017 – Evaluate print collections in the area of building, electrical, and plumbing codes for updating. Also evaluate the areas of home improvement, house building plans, and curb appeal. Anything that might make a vacant unit more attractive or help in renovation or creation of new housing units.

Goal #2: Collaborate with Local Officials and Leaders to Provide Housing Related Handouts and Guides

1. By September 2016 - Identify and approach local leaders and officials including the Lincoln County Community Development Corporation Director; City of North Platte Planning Administrator; and the Lincoln County Board of Realators® for programming, handouts, guides and assorted other material with possible topics of:
 - a. Tips on selling your home
 - b. Basic repairs to your home
 - c. Sources of funding for construction and/or renovation of your home
 - d. HUD housing options and guidelines
 - e. FHA, veterans, and other home loan programs and how you can apply.
 - f. Low cost curb appeal ideas
 - g. Required and option home purchase / selling steps
 - h. Maintenance tasks for a healthy home
 - i. Landlord / tenant Statutes
 - j. How to get along with your neighbors

EVALUATION STRATEGY

Library Administration, with staff support and assistance, will investigate, develop, and implement the objectives provided above within the timelines indicated. The Library Advisory Board and Library Staff will evaluate the progress of the goals as the objectives require to maintain effectiveness. Plans are theoretical intentions until they become reality. Timeline flexibility may be required as operational priorities shift.

This Strategic Plan as a whole will be reviewed and updated every other year on the even-numbered years, beginning each January in conjunction with the review of the Library's Policy Manual. The survey and focus group assessments, community needs, goals and objectives will be overhauled during this time.

NOTES – INTENTIONALLY BLANK