



North Platte Public Library

120 W. 4th St.
North Platte, NE 69101
308-535-8036

North Platte Public Library Community Needs Response Plan 2019-2022

Serving North Platte and Lincoln County

Reviewed and Adopted by the North Platte Public Library Advisory Board

September 26, 2019

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COMMUNITY NEEDS RESPONSE PLANNING PROCESS

PLANNING TEAM MEMBERS

Library Staff: Cecelia Lawrence (Library Director) and Sara Aden (Library IS Manager)

Library Board Members: MaryAnn Agler, Robert Barnhouse, Elyse Bohling, Lewys Carlini, Connie Huebner, Dixie Francis, Andrea Hongsermeier, Colleen Parker, Dr. Richard Raska, Sky Seery, Sandy Stoll, and Gayla Ward.

City Council Representative: Andrew D. Lee

The North Platte Public Library staff, library advisory board members, library patrons and residents of North Platte assisted in the development of this community needs response plan. The planning team focused on the priorities outlined in a *2016-2020 Community Health Improvement Plan: 2018 Annual Report* completed in 2018 by the West Central District Health Department; and the *Nebraska Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan (SCORP)* completed in 2015 by the Nebraska Game and Parks Commission. Library administration analyzed the Priorities outlined in both plans and compared the goals and objectives of these plans with the results from the 2015 North Platte Education and Recreation Survey conducted by the North Platte Public Library.

The Community Needs in this Community Needs Response Plan were updated and changed to reflect the current North Platte Community need to find a solution to a deteriorating City of North Platte Recreation Complex and outdoor swimming pool.

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

DEMOGRAPHICS (Source: American Fact Finder 2013-2017 American Community Survey at <http://factfinder.census.gov>)

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. Great Plains Health is the largest employer.

The population of Lincoln County is 35,185. The median age is 40.4. There are 49.2% males and 50.8% females in the county. The county is comprised of 24% under the age of 18; and 22.1% age 62 and older. The Lincoln County median household income is \$55,875 and the median owned home value is \$130,000.

North Platte has a population of 24,135 people with a median age of 38.1 and a median household income of \$50,422. Between 2016 and 2017, the population of North Platte declined from 24,311 to 24,135, a 0.724% decrease and its median household income grew from \$46,404 to \$50,422, an 8.66% increase.

The median property value in North Platte is \$115,300 and the home ownership rate is 56.3%. Most people in North Platte drive alone (86.3%) to work, and the average commute time is 11.9 minutes. In households with workers over age 16, 2.2% did not have access to a vehicle, while 37.1% had access to 3 or more vehicles.

EDUCATION (Source: DataUSA at <https://datausa.io/profile/geo/north-platte-ne>)

There are ten pre-schools (including one public pre-school) and many home-based preschools available in North Platte. There are 15 schools within the city limits: North Platte Public Schools (9 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). North Platte also has Mid-Plains Community College for students seeking higher education opportunities. Approximately 91.89% of the population has completed high school or have higher education.

In 2016, Mid Plains Community College awarded 445 degrees. The student population of North Platte skews towards women with 918 male students and 1,358 female students. Most students are White (375 or 85.8%), followed by Hispanic or Latino (27 or 6.18%), unknown (14 or 3.2%), and Black or African American (11 or 2.52%). The most popular majors in North Platte are: Liberal Arts & Sciences (233 or 52.4%); General Administrative Assistant & Secretarial Science (44 or 9.89%), and Emergency Medical Technicians (EMT Paramedic (25 or 5.62%).

LANGUAGE AND ETHNICITY (Source: American Fact Finder 2013-2017 American Community Survey at <http://factfinder.census.gov>)

Of the languages spoken by North Platte Citizens, 95.6% of the population speaks only English in the home. Of the remaining 4.4% of the population, 3.62% speak Spanish.

The population of North Platte identifies as 87% White only, 10.2% Hispanic or Latino, and a 1.3% Black or African American. The remaining 1.5% is comprised of more Asian than Native American/Alaskan Native. Only 1% of the population identifies as more than one race. Of the languages spoken by North Platte citizens, 95.6 of the population speaks only English in the home. Of the remaining 4.4% of the population, 3.6% speak Spanish. Among North Platte citizens over age 18, 99.97% are United States Citizens.

EMPLOYMENT and ECONOMY (Source: DataUSA at <https://datausa.io/profile/geo/north-platte-ne>)

The economy of North Platte: 11,600 people are employed. The largest industries in North Platte:

- Health Care & Social Assistance (1,992 people);
- Retail Trade (1,953 people); and
- Transportation & Warehousing (1,677 people)

The highest paying industries are Professional, Scientific, & Technical Services (\$73,750), Utilities (\$65,208), and Transportation & Warehousing, & Utilities (\$63,443).

Electricity is provided through the City of North Platte's Municipal Light and Water Department. Natural Gas is available through Northwestern Energy. Several options are available for phone, cable and internet. High speed fiber has been installed through most (not all) of the North Platte Community.

Median household income in North Platte is \$50,422. Males in North Platte have an average income that is 1.37 times higher than the average income of females, which is \$42,865. The poverty rate is 15.7%

RECREATION, PARKS AND CULTURE

North Platte offers a lot in the area of recreation and Parks, including:

- 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)
- One (1) 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;
- Dusty Trails Horseback riding
- Tanking and Kayaking

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 and Culture. They have a Community Playhouse (4 productions per year) and Creativity Unlimited Arts Council. Twice a year, arts and craft shows are held known as "Arts in the Park". The Sandhills Symphony performs in North Platte twice a year and the performers are from the Sandhills/Western Nebraska regional 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), Music on the Bricks, and North Platte Country and Blue Grass Festival. Vocalists enjoy singing in Heartland Singers or Sweet Adeline's. Budding writers and poets are always welcome to a weekly Open Mic night in the downtown at the Espresso Shoppe.

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, 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. These events and venues continue to bring thousands of tourists into North Platte each year.

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

INTERNAL STRENGTHS

Programming – the library offers many programs for people of all ages. These include Wee Read, Story Time, Teens Explore, Summer Reading Programs, makerspace workshops, 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 95,000 items are available for checkout in many different formats including digital books, digital audio books, large print books, DVD's, books on CD, and 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/wifi 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 eighteen (18) library employees (15.85 FTE) with a combined longevity of 221 service years at the library.

Supporting Organizations – the library has strong local support from the Library Advisory Board, 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 organizations and 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 the library's windows, and raise funds for future facilities and programming.

Permanent Makerspace – the library applied for and was granted an Innovation Studios Grant through the Nebraska Library Commission in 2017. Once notified that we would be a recipient of the grant, the Library made the decision to install a permanent 480 square foot room to house the grant equipment and our new makerspace area, named "Creation Station." This room saw high usage during the 2018 grant period. After the grant equipment left in January 2019, the community raised over \$50,000 to purchase their own community maker equipment. The Library now offers the following equipment to the public for innovation, creation and entrepreneurial usage: 3D printer, heat press, embroidery machine, vinyl cutter, laser cutter, Lego mindstorms, button-maker, and a

laminator.

INTERNAL WEAKNESSES

Facility Parking – there are three (3) public parking spots (2 handicapped) next to the building. On street parking has a time-limit of 30 minutes. The shared public parking lot to the west is frequently full. 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 small lot in front of the library with 3 public parking spots was re-paved in 2018. 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 struggled with aging mechanicals over the past twenty years. The entire HVAC systems are at or beyond end of life and repairs are frequent and becoming harder to accomplish. A new HVAC system was installed in 2017; however there are still occasional issues with the cooling part of the new system. The flat membrane roof, although still under warranty, springs leaks during severe weather especially in the spring and summer months. The last major leak was in June and July of 2019. 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 – Some employees have expressed concern about their personal safety due to dead end stacks, lack of a second exit from staffing cubicles, and the 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.

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 or digital access products yet frequently refer our customers back and forth. Cross promotion of our services, similar or dissimilar, would be an advantage to the community and the respective institutions. Likewise, the Lincoln County Historical Museum and Prairie Arts Center are both potential collaborative organizations. More could be done to collaborate with these organizations.

Take Internet Access to the People – 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.

Community Health Improvement Plan – West Central District Health Department (WCDHD) facilitated a Community Health Assessment on behalf of the North Platte Community in 2015-2016 using a process called Mobilizing for Action through Planning and partnerships (MAPP). The MAPP process provides an evaluation of the local community health system using four assessments and involving community partners, community members, and an examination of local health data. After the completion of the Community Health Assessment, community partners examined the results of the assessment as well as the Nebraska State Health Improvement Plan and Healthy People 2020 to make sure their local plan was in alignment with the state plan.

The Nebraska State Health Improvement Plan (SHIP) priorities are:

1. Obesity
2. Health Equity
3. Depression and Suicide
4. Integrated Health System
5. Healthcare Utilization and Access

The Community Health Assessment priorities are:

1. Community Ownership – leads to collaboration and engagement to protect and promote health and well-being.
2. Affordable and Equitable Access to Care and Services – Quality healthcare and equitable opportunities are accessible, affordable and provided for all to develop and live life to the fullest potential.
3. Health Lifestyles and Well-Being – Utilizing partnerships and education in an approach to seek health solutions for all ages and make available recreational and education resources to promote a healthy lifestyle.

Through the Priority for Healthy Lifestyles and Well-Being, an alliance was made between the City of North Platte, North Platte Trails Committee, and North Platte Recreation Center and the West Central District Health Department. Out of this collaboration the following goals were made in 2017:

1. Complete gaps and improve the trails in the North Platte Trails System
2. Develop a Coordination and Awareness sub-committee to work on publicity and information about activities and facilities.
3. Build a healthy community by studying, advocating and recommending wellness and recreation enhancements to existing facilities.
4. Build financial resources for wellness and recreation enhancement and development through North Platte Parks, Recreation, and Wellness Foundation

Library administration believes they can be a partner agency for goal number 3, "Build a healthy community by studying, advocating and recommending wellness and recreation enhancement to existing facilities".

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 continues to monitor and plan for

mechanical system maintenance and replacements to limit this threat.

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 downturn 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 because our employees are our greatest asset. The library looks for smaller things to control, hoping the budget cuts are temporary.

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 and Lincoln County has several CAVE groups and they vocalize a complete distrust of government and never want to spend a dime on "non-essential" services like libraries or recreation facilities. There is an ongoing continuous effort to correct misinformation suspected to be rooted in CAVE Dwellers and spreads within the community/county.

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 adjacent (across an alley) 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. So upon release, word of mouth, has lead formerly incarcerated and their associates to utilize free library services, including local phone service, computer access, and restroom facilities. 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 more aware of personal and community 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. UPDATE: The surveillance system was purchased, but has not been fully installed.
2. August 2016 – Provide in-service self-defense training to any staff member wishing to participate. UPDATE 2019: Staff turnover and feelings of security with the partially installed surveillance system has made this objective obsolete.
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. UPDATE: Funding limitations and budget priorities have moved this request lower on the list of needs. This objective should remain on the list in the hope that by 2021/2022, this change will be budgeted for and implemented in 2022.
4. August 2017 – Provide in-service library security specialist speaker to discuss actions

and threats in a public library setting. UPDATE: In November 2018, the City has instituted a City-Wide Safety Committee and library staff are required to attend sessions that related to security, active shooters, and personal safety. This objective should remain on the list so that at some point in the future a security specialist can still come to address security issues and needs with the library staff and library administration.

5. In 2018, evaluate the need and feasibility for a silent panic button at public service desks. UPDATE: This is not a budget priority at this point in time. However, when the library addresses electronic key card access in 2021/2022, a silent panic button option should be revisited during the budget process.

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. UPDATE: Review was completed with minimal changes.
2. January – August 2018 – Review and update the North Platte Public Library Policy Manual with library administration and staff, and library advisory board members. UPDATE: The every-other-year review was started in 2018; however the makerspace room construction combined with the 20 weeks of offering the Library Innovation Studio made completion of the policy manual review process impossible. After 40 weeks of trying to review the policy manual, the decision was made to stop the review process and start the policy review again in 2020. Issues that arose were addressed and “spot” amended into the existing policy manual.
3. By December 2018 – complete a draft, if not finalize, a Disaster Response chapter in the North Platte Policy Manual. UPDATE: Due to staff shortages, fundraising activities, makerspace grant and subsequent new service, no progress has been made on the Disaster Response chapter in the North Platte Public Library Policy Manual. This objective should remain and the Disaster Response needs to be written by 2022.

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

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

COMMUNITY NEED #2 – INCREASE AWARENESS OF LIBRARY RESOURCES

Goal #1: Develop a Marketing Plan

1. As soon as the budget allows: - Specifically hire one (1) part-time library staff member with graphic design certification and/or background. UPDATE: Library administration were unable to get a qualified graphic designer candidate. However, an existing employee in the Technical Services Department did step forward and is taking Graphic Designer classes and have been doing limited graphic design work for special library events.
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. UPDATE: Library administration was working towards this goal, but staffing changes forced a change to encourage more library staff to post to facebook. Still encouraging staff to become more engaged in and “post” on other social media platforms.

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.
UPDATE: The Library Director developed two informational programs on makerspaces and current library services; and gave this program several times. This objective needs to be updated with the completion of the new Creation Station and a more focused plan to speak to more community groups needs to be implemented.
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.
UPDATE: A Creation Station Logo was utilized for promotional materials; however a Library logo has not been designed as of yet. This objective date needs to be updated to 2020.
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.
UPDATE: This objective is still relevant and desirable; date needs to be updated to June 2020.

COMMUNITY NEED #3 – Find a Solution to a deteriorating Recreation Complex Facility Owned by the City of North Platte and outdoor Cody Swimming Pool.

Goal #1: Support information dissemination from the established North Platte Area Wellness & Recreation Alliance, a task force formed by Mayor Livingston in 2016. This goal is in effect from 2019 – 2022 or until a community solution is affirmed.

1. Utilize the Library's existing website and social media to share electronic information coming from the Wellness & Recreation Alliance.
2. Disseminate pertinent information from the Alliance through the Library's existing Friends of the Library Newsletter, Library Advisory Board, and NPPL Foundation Board along with any liaisons with those organizations.
3. Provide a distribution point for any print materials produced by the Alliance.
4. Provide free meeting space for Alliance public forums, information sessions, or Alliance Task Force meetings. Note that Library programming will continue to take priority over other bookings.

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 Community Needs Response 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 reviewed and updated during this time.