

EVERGREEN STRATEGIC PLAN

Fall 2025 Edition 1.2

Introduction

This Strategic Plan was originally conceived in 2019 as a 5-year plan. The plan consists of three Goals, which are broad categories of need that were identified. Within each Goal are then identified a number of Objectives, which are somewhat more concrete expressions of how to achieve the Goals. The Goals and Objectives comprise the Strategic Plan proper as determined through interviews and workshops with stakeholders including the Board, library staff, and patrons.

The library's staff, in conjunction with the Board, have taken this plan and come up with specific Initiatives to try to satisfy each objective, which will be identified in the appendix of each iteration of the Plan. The Initiatives are intended to be actionable, measurable projects that will make tangible progress in achieving the larger Objectives and Goals of the Plan. These Initiatives will certainly change significantly over time, though the Objectives and Goals might remain unchanged.

At the end of the five years conceived when the Plan was created, we reevaluated the Plan. It was determined that the Goals and Objectives are unlikely to change over time. Rather than scrapping the whole process and starting over, it makes more sense to maintain the existing Goals and Objectives until we feel that they are satisfied. In reality, we feel that the three Goals are likely to always be primary factors guiding the strategic direction of the library. The Objectives are also broad and important enough to warrant continued focus over the foreseeable future. The Initiatives will change, but the Goals and perhaps even the Objectives might never lose their applicability.

So we are proceeding with this as an "evergreen" Strategic Plan. This means that we will continually evaluate the plan from top-to-bottom. However, we don't expect the Goals to change any time soon. We probably don't expect the Objectives to change any time soon, either. As initiatives are carried out, they can be dropped from the appendix as new ones will surely be identified and added regularly. Similarly, if new Objectives or Goals become obvious, those can be added to the Plan itself.

We might feel that it's necessary to engage in surveys, workshops, or other research periodically, to evaluate the ongoing validity of Goals and Objectives and look for new ideas worthy of adding to the Plan. However, we believe that this Strategic Plan is as valuable today as when it was conceived and will continue to provide the guidance that we need from it in this living form.

Goal I: Bridge the gap between what the library does and what the community thinks the library does

Objective A: Enhance marketing and communications efforts to effectively communicate the library's offerings and value to all current and potential users

Objective B: Embrace new and non-traditional methods of communicating with the public relevant in today's evolving communications landscape

Objective C: Ensure long-term sustainability and viability by targeting increased engagement of teens and emerging adults

Goal II: Expand community access to and familiarity with technology

Objective D: Enhance the functionality and leverage the potential of the FabLab as a vital hub for community creativity

Objective E: **Provide greater access to technology through outreach (e.g. senior center, Bethshan)**

Objective F: **Develop staff expertise through increased training on general and emerging technology usage, staying up to date on emerging technologies, and looking for ways to incorporate new technologies in daily operations**

Goal III: Increase connection between the library and the community it serves

Objective G: Identify and seize opportunities for collaboration and expanded partnerships with community organizations to maximize reach to residents

Objective H: Explore opportunities to bring library service outside its doors and within the community

Objective I: Promote and facilitate charitable and planned giving

Appendix 1: Active Initiatives

Initiative 1: Maintain a consistent brand

Description: Make it easy to connect with patrons and to communicate our mission by having a clear, guiding logic behind all of the information that we put out about ourselves and what we do.

- i: Clearly identify the library's "brand" and work to promote it in the community. (Projected implementation: ???)
- ii: Hire a PR consultant or part-time staff member to manage brand implementation, website, newsletter, etc. (Projected implementation: 2027?)
- iii: Create and maintain a formal style guide and train staff in its effective use. (Projected implementation: ???)
- iv: Implement the style throughout all marketing materials and throughout the building in the form of signage and meaningful decor.
- v: create a mascot and motto (butterfly, "always growing")
- vi: create department-specific color schemes within each logo

Objective(s) Addressed: A, B, C, I

Current Status: Square 1

Initiative 2: Implement a coherent and effective marketing strategy

Description: Behind many of these initiatives is a need for a clear, coherent understanding of who we are as a library and how we go about presenting ourselves to the community. We should develop a professional-caliber marketing strategy that includes everything from branding and logos to strategies and talking points that are present in all of our marketing modes and materials.

- i: Develop marketing materials that reflect the library's brand and adhere to the current style guide. (Projected implementation: Spring 2026)
- ii. Update the newsletter – dedicated space for FabLab, update format, change paper type
- iii: Roll out a broad-spectrum marketing campaign that promotes the library and its services. (Projected implementation: Summer 2026)

Objective(s) Addressed: A, B, G, H, I

Current Status: We have done an admirable job of turning our logos into a fairly coherent design for our website, flyers, social media, etc. We need to be diligent about maintaining our brand in all marketing materials. This Initiative should remain active.

Initiative 3: Maintain a high-quality, easy-to-navigate website

Description: Connect with patrons online with a website that is easy to navigate, presents information about our services, and provides easy access to our online collections.

i: Maintain current website. Ensure that all information is up to date. Ensure that all links are up to date. Delete links to services that are no longer available in a timely manner. Add links to newly available services in a timely manner. (Projected implementation: ongoing)

ii: Redesign and update the look and functionality of the website periodically to match library branding and to stay current with trends in web design. (Projected implementation: ???)

Objective(s) Addressed: A

Current Status: This is an ongoing process and makes sense to remain an active initiative at this time. At some point in the near future, probably in conjunction with Initiative 5 below, it might make sense to start over with a new website design.

Initiative 4: Maintain a robust social media presence

Description: Reach patrons by providing an innovative presence on popular social media platforms.

i: Maintain official library accounts on Facebook, YouTube, GoodReads, TikTok, and other relevant social media platforms. Consistent branding should be maintained across all platforms. (Projected implementation: ongoing)

ii: Regularly post interesting content of different types that actively engages users and successfully communicates the mission and services of the library. It should include information about library programs and services, but it must include much more as well. (Projected implementation: ongoing)

iii: Work closely with rebranding to provide consistency in publicity to patrons

iv: Increase staff involvement (outside of just the social media committee)

Objective(s) Addressed: B, C

Current Status: This is an ongoing process and makes sense to remain as an active initiative at this time. As certain platforms wax and wane in popularity, we will continue to adjust where our time and energy is directed.

Initiative 5: Expand local high school outreach

Description: Create connections with all public and private high schools that serve Palos Heights residents, analogous to the kinds of outreach efforts currently made in preschools and elementary schools, to create awareness of library services relevant to high school students and to further support the schools' educational goals.

- i: Maintain relationships with administrators and teachers at Shepard, Stagg, Chicago Christian, and other relevant high schools to offer our services and to find out how the library can best support them. (Projected implementation: ongoing)
- ii: Meet regularly with volunteer coordinators at each school to share upcoming volunteer opportunities and ways for the library to support students (Projected implementation: ongoing)
- iii: Connect with art teachers about opportunities to display artwork at the library (Projected implementation: dependent on creation of gallery space)
- iv: Hold a reception to celebrate young artists

Objective(s) Addressed: C, H

Current Status: YTS has made significant progress in reaching high schoolers. Outreach is strong, and programming continues to see increasing participation. This continues to be a difficult demographic to reach, so it is appropriate for this Initiative to remain active.

Initiative 6: Expand programming for “new adults”

Description: Design programming to better reach 18-40-year-olds.

- i: Public Services and Youth and Teen Services collaborate to develop innovative, fun, interesting programs that will appeal to this age group. (Projected implementation: ongoing)
- ii. Seek inspiration from other libraries and programming groups that have had success with this age group
- iii. Capitalize on the popularity of YA novels and their adaptations as well as other cultural events by integrating them into programs of different types
- iv. Form partnerships with PH businesses and colleges to host programs and partner with for content
- v. Cross promote to parents attending YTS programs
- vi. Host gaming evenings of different types
- vii. Promote programming via methods that effectively reach this demographic
- viii. Create dedicated newsletter space for this demographic

Objective(s) Addressed: C, G

Current Status: Public Services is doing a nice job of reaching this demographic with effective programming and marketing. We are seeing increased foot traffic from Trinity and Moraine Valley students. This also continues to be a difficult demographic to reach, and there is a lot more that can be done here. It is appropriate for this Initiative to remain active.

Initiative 7: Expand access to “maker” tools

Description: Develop and provide regular and guided access to a variety of maker tools.

- i: Safety for staff – included in training

- ii: Safety for Patrons – make sure staff are available to assist and guide
- iii: Training for staff – Experienced staff members will train new staff on the use of each machine and on potential safety issues
- iv: Training for Patrons – MK’s user guides for each device, intro videos for each machine
- v: Tools/Access for staff – ensure dedicated staff time to learn and use each machine
- vi: Tools/Access for patrons – ensure plentiful patron time with an easy method for making reservations and receiving appropriate staff support

Objective(s) Addressed: D, E

Current Status: The FabLab has allowed us to provide access to some great maker tools.

We have good equipment that patrons are interested in. Staff are trained in using the tools. We have regular programming and allow appointments for patron use of the machines. We continue to add new equipment over time.

While there are small things that we can and will continue to do to enhance our offerings, I believe that we can consider this Initiative satisfied.

Initiative 8: Become the community’s center for all things local history

Description: Build upon our Local History Room and 75th Anniversary research to establish a thorough and easily accessible historical archive for Palos Heights.

- i: Continue to build our collection through calls for community donations, whether we keep items or scan and return them (Projected implementation: ongoing)
- ii: Add a link to our website to the ISL online repository- (Projected implementation: Summer 2026)
- iii: Create more picture displays from our photograph archives and display them in more places
- iv: Digitize oral history tapes and transcripts – make available to public
- v: Create new oral histories in audio and video format with an eye toward “modern history” with subjects talking about current experiences for use by later generations
- vi: Create programs or other ways of opening up the room and providing access to our materials by more people

Objective(s) Addressed: A, B, C, G, H

Current Status: Public Services is doing a nice job of continuing to build our local history collection. All physical items in the collection have been cataloged. We are in the process of digitizing those as appropriate. A portion of our digital collection is available online through the state’s historical repository. We still plan to create and host our own repository. And we have a lot more work to do in terms of collecting local stories and artifacts. It is appropriate for this Initiative to remain active.

Initiative 9: Implement a polished “planned giving” strategy

Description: Facilitate long-term planned giving to the library so that gifts like those from Mrs. Zanardo become more regular.

- i. Connect with other libraries and professionals to discuss best practices, successful programs
- ii. Donations: have a section on website, e-newsletter, QR codes, let donors select where their money will go
- iii. Update donor wall – move it where 1st floor display case is, butterfly theme, colored theme for different donor levels
- iv. Larger signage for legacy donations
- v. Special reception for donors to large projects

Objective(s) Addressed: G, I

Current Status: As this is an ongoing process, it is appropriate for this Initiative to remain active.

Initiative 10: Initiate annual/ongoing fundraising campaign

Description: We should establish the library as a consistent and aggressive (but not too aggressive) fundraising presence in the community so that when people think of charitable entities to donate to, we are one of the first that comes to mind.

- i: Set ambitious but realistic annual fundraising goals. (Projected implementation: ongoing)
- ii: Correspond with all donors in a timely manner about the effect that their donation has on current projects. (Projected implementation: ongoing)
- iii: Establish an annual fundraising cycle. (Projected implementation: ???)
- iv: Cultivate relationships with all donors in a persistent, up-beat, low-pressure manner. (Projected implementation: ongoing)
- v: Create a new donor wall. (Projected implementation: ???)

Objective(s) Addressed: I

Current Status: As this is an ongoing process, it is appropriate for this Initiative to remain active.

Initiative 11: Be a presence in the local arts scene

Description: Continue to support local artists and arts initiatives in all of their forms.

- i: Partner with local artists and arts groups to bring exciting and enriching programming to the area. (Projected implementation: ongoing)
- ii: Partner with local schools to promote their arts programs. (Projected implementation: ongoing)
- iii: Partner with local artists to support their growth. (Projected implementation: ongoing)

iv: Create a new display area, possibly by removing the kids' quilt and/or the first-floor display case. Display art within the library on a rotating and regular basis.

(Projected implementation: ongoing)

Objective(s) Addressed: G

Current Status: We have made some good progress on this initiative in recent years, hosting displays from local artists from time to time. As this is an ongoing process, it is appropriate for this Initiative to remain active.

Initiative 12: Create effective co-working spaces in the library

Description: Create spaces within the library that support effective co-working environment.

i: Create more shared workspaces where people can meet and collaborate, access useful technology and resources. (Projected implementation: ???)

ii: Make available resources and technology that will help people be productive, eg online meetings. (Projected implementation: ongoing)

iii: Develop professional expertise among staff that allows them to provide information support. (Projected implementation: ongoing)

Objective(s) Addressed: I

Current Status: While we provide some good collaborative spaces, we could do more. As this is an ongoing process, it is appropriate for this Initiative to remain active.

Appendix 2: Past Initiatives

Initiative: Expand access to “maker” tools

Description: Develop and provide regular and guided access to a variety of maker tools

Step i: Significantly improve the organization and ease-of-use of the Media Lab.

(Projected implementation: Fall 2020)

Step ii: Enhance the capability of the media lab by further developing the technical capabilities of the space with things like soundproofing, professional quality media production equipment, and programming and staff expertise to put these tools to use.

(Projected implementation: Fall 2020)

Step iii: Invest in other maker tools such as a 3D printer, Raspberry Pi kits, vinyl and laser cutters, and other equipment as is practical.

(Projected implementation: Spring 2021)

Step iv: Ensure that staff is fully trained in the use of all equipment.

(Projected implementation: ongoing)

Step v: Create programming to effectively demonstrate the safe use of the equipment.

(Projected implementation: Spring 2021)

Step vi: Create training videos that can be accessed online by patrons to demonstrate safe use of the equipment.

(Projected implementation: Fall 2021)

Step vii: Develop “open shop” times when people can use the equipment with minimal supervision.

(Projected implementation: Spring 2021)

Objective(s) Addressed: D, E

Current Status: The FabLab has allowed us to provide access to some great maker tools.

We have good equipment that patrons are interested in. Staff are trained in using the tools. We have regular programming and allow appointments for patron use of the machines. We continue to add new equipment over time.

While there are small things that we can and will continue to do to enhance our offerings, I believe that we can consider this Initiative satisfied.

Initiative: Implement universal staff training on all library technology offerings.

Description: Implement a thorough training program to ensure that all staff are fully trained in the use of all library technologies relevant to their positions.

Step i: Develop a training program that will encompass all current technologies in the library and can be easily supplemented as new technologies are implemented in the future.

(Projected implementation: Fall 2020)

Step ii: Implement this training program with current staff to ensure full training.

(Projected implementation: Spring 2021)

Step iii: Implement this training with all new staff to ensure future staff expertise.

(Projected implementation: ongoing)

Step iv: Ensure that training is continuously under development for new technologies, for current technologies as they continue to evolve, and as new resources become available to better assist with training on current technologies.

(Projected implementation: ongoing)

Objective(s) Addressed: F

Current Status: We have good training protocols in place both for regular technology that staff encounters in their duties and with FabLab equipment. I believe this Initiative is satisfied and can be removed going forward.

Initiative: [Expand our STEAM experience for youth patrons](#)

Description: Fully use our maker equipment and other STEAM resources to provide regular, innovative, exciting programming both active and passive, that provides transformational STEAM experiences for youth patrons.

Step i: In addition to developing a strong collection of maker tools, acquire a significant collection of STEAM resources.

(Projected implementation: Spring 2021)

Step ii: Develop engaging active programming to create staff-guided experiences for youth patrons.

(Projected implementation: Summer 2021)

Step iii: Develop engaging passive programming and STEAM kits for use in the library requiring little to no staff supervision for use.

(Projected implementation: Summer 2021)

Step iv: Develop STEAM kits that can circulate and be used outside of the library.

(Projected implementation: Summer 2021)

Step v: Create STEAM-based experiences that can be taken by library staff and used outside of the building in various outreach settings.

(Projected implementation: Spring 2021)

Objective(s) Addressed: D, E

Current Status: YTS has done an excellent job of creating STEAM programming and incorporating FabLab and other technologies into our programming. We have STEAM kits available. I believe this Initiative is satisfied.

Initiative: [Simplify the process of getting a library card](#)

Description: One barrier to connecting with the library is the perception that getting a library card is an onerous process, requiring multiple forms of ID and proofs of residency. This perception is not entirely without merit. We should simplify the registration process and bring it into the 21st century.

Step i: Streamline the library card registration/renewal process so that it requires as

little documentation and as little paperwork as possible.

(Projected implementation: Fall 2020)

Step ii: Create an easy way to sign up for a library card online. Create a web form that will allow people to sign up for a card and upload required documentation and receive a response via email or text that includes a temporary card number that can be used immediately. Their new card number will be sent to them within 24 hours.

(Projected implementation: Spring 2021)

Step iii: Create off-site card registration and information booths at various locations including schools, recreation department, city hall, college, assisted living, etc.

(Projected implementation: Fall 2020)

Objective(s) Addressed: A, B, H

Current Status: While we are waiting for SWAN to upgrade its system for allowing off-site account access, we have otherwise done a good job of simplifying the process of getting and renewing library cards, as far as the law permits. We now offer cards for kids and online signups. This process is as easy as we can make it at this point, and will continue to get easier in the future. I believe this initiative is satisfied.

Initiative: Become a “fine free” library

Description: One of the biggest barriers to maintaining positive relationships with patrons and losing patrons entirely is the antiquated fine system. In the best circumstances, making people pay fines shames them. In the worst circumstances, people leave and never come back or refuse to use the library in the first place so that they don’t have to deal with fines at all. For kids, fines eliminate their ability to use the library until someone else pays their fines for them. It will also solidify our reputation as being patron-focused above all else and as a leader among libraries.

Step i: Create a responsible “fine free” system (not difficult to do as many libraries, including Chicago, already do this). (Completed: Spring 2021)

Step ii: Create a plan to offset the anticipated loss in revenue, dollar for dollar, via more aggressive fundraising (Completed: Spring 2021)

Step iii: Implement a fine free program for youth patrons, so that staff and patrons have some time to get used to the new system and so that our most vulnerable patrons have their library privileges reinstated. (Completed: Spring 2021)

Step iv: Roll out a universal fine free program, including extensive PR and “we want you back” campaign (Completed: Spring 2021)

Objective(s) Addressed: A, I

Current Status: This initiative is complete.