



Mid-Continent Public Library

Strategic Plan 2018





Mission

Mid-Continent Public Library's mission is to enrich our citizens and communities through expanding access to innovation, information, ideas, and inspiration.

Vision

Mid-Continent Public Library will provide the best library experience in North America.

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Joycelyn
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Board President



Steven V. Potter
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Mid-Continent Public Library sits at a unique place in its history. A combination of technological evolution, societal changes, community growth, and a once-in-a-generation reaffirmation by citizens create a moment in which the Library has an opportunity and an obligation to remake the system and prepare it to serve the region's needs over the coming decades. The intersection of new needs and new opportunities is exciting, but it also necessitates an organization that is at once nimble and steady, consistent and ever-changing.

This intersection between needs and opportunities provides a moment for the Library to build on its tradition of providing information and transformation to all. The strategic roadmap that follows aims to accomplish that task through a rededication to that which makes the Library special and unique, while also taking up the challenge to provide more value to the community than ever before.

What should this plan do?

1. This plan should prioritize activities necessary for the Library to help improve our community.
2. This plan should incorporate input from the community, Library customers, and internal stakeholders.
3. This plan should allow everyone on the Library staff and board to easily identify how their work fits into the strategic direction of the Library.
4. This plan should display, explicitly and implicitly, the values of the Library system.
5. This plan should build logically out of the framework provided by *The Purpose-Based Library*.
6. This plan should function, above all, as a directional document that reminds every stakeholder of the organization's aspirations.



Our Planning Model in Context

This is MCPL's fourth strategic planning document in its modern era. The first two plans of that era, in 2006 and 2010, were internally focused. Both plans concentrated on Library capacities and created lists of action items to determine success. The 2013 plan reflected the Library's shift toward looking outward to our customers and communities and developed goals that described the community benefits that would be created by Library work. Instead of lists of action items, this plan included key performance indicators that were developed to measure progress toward the goals.

Both of these types of plans had strengths and weaknesses. After experience with both, MCPL believes a middle path between the two is the way to ensure that the Library is focused on results in our communities, but also on tying all of the broader work of the system to those results.

Effective planning is a participative process. The Library, as a community institution, has a wide array of stakeholders whose participation is necessary to get to a truly comprehensive picture of where we need to go. Library staff have gathered information from across the stakeholder groups in the development of this plan. A brief description of each of these efforts is below. Additional details are available on the Library website.

Proposition L November 8, 2016

On November 8, 2016, district voters approved MCPL's first tax levy increase in 33 years. In the lead-up to the election, Library staff and volunteers spoke with individuals and groups across the Library system about the initiative, also collecting thoughts and input along the way. Because the vote took place during a presidential election, more voters were able to weigh in on the Library's future than ever before.

Community Needs Assessments March - April, 2017

The Community Needs Assessments were conducted in a very similar fashion to those that underpinned the 2013 strategic planning process. For the assessments, we gathered community leaders that represented different segments and viewpoints within certain geographies. Over the course of three workshop-style meetings, those leaders considered the strengths and weaknesses of their communities as well as the needs that would most affect their communities over the next several years. Finally, they developed thoughts on how the Library might best play a role in addressing those needs. In all, 31 community leaders took part in these meetings and offered a wide array of thoughts about the future of their areas. The Community Needs Assessment Report can be found at mymcpl.org/planning.



Branch Stakeholder Meetings

March - April, 2017

These meetings took place at 29 Library locations. All Library cardholders were invited to these meetings via email, social media, and by branch staff. In all, more than 500 cardholders attended the meetings. These groups weighed in on everything from community needs to current Library customer service. The meetings were a valuable contribution to help MCPL understand the value of Library services and the challenges faced by everyday users of Library resources. The roll-up report from these meetings can be found at mymcpl.org/planning.

Customer Surveys

March - April, 2017

For those unable to make the branch meetings, the Library offered an email survey featuring predominantly the same questions from the stakeholder meetings. In total, 1,042 responses to that survey helped round out the picture provided by the stakeholder meetings. The roll-up of these responses is included along with the stakeholder results at mymcpl.org/planning.

Staff Surveys

February - April, 2017

Library staff were engaged with the purpose of collecting their thoughts as well as what they have learned through interactions with customers. Meetings were conducted with staff at all 31 branches as well as two meetings with staff at the administrative center. A summary of information from these meetings can be found at mymcpl.org/planning.





Key Findings

- Stakeholders believe that the Library is crucial for the development of early literacy skills.
- Stakeholders see the Library playing an important role in economic development and the building of job skills.
- Stakeholders want the Library to be a hub of community activity, giving residents the opportunity to be more civically engaged.
- Stakeholders believe that the Library has a role to play in helping people develop creative skills and tell their own stories.
- Stakeholders say the Library needs to do more to communicate the vast array of Library services and resources.
- Stakeholders still see the provision of reading, listening, and viewing materials (in their many forms) as a central value of the Library.
- Stakeholders want the Library to be a place where citizens can find the information and tools to harness new technologies.
- Stakeholders see a need for each Library branch to reflect and enhance its own community.

Mission

Mid-Continent Public Library's mission is to enrich our citizens and communities through expanding access to innovation, information, ideas, and inspiration.

Vision

Mid-Continent Public Library will provide the best library experience in North America.

Values

Intellectual Freedom

The Library believes in the right of every individual to have access to quality information from all perspectives and in a format they find useful.

Inclusion

The Library believes in the right of every individual to access library services regardless of income, education, beliefs, identity, abilities, age, or race.

Innovation

The Library believes creative and collaborative methods are required to solve challenges in our community.

Service

The Library believes that the customer should be at the center of all that we do.

Stewardship

The Library believes the public and private dollars entrusted to us must be used effectively and efficiently to improve our community.

Trust

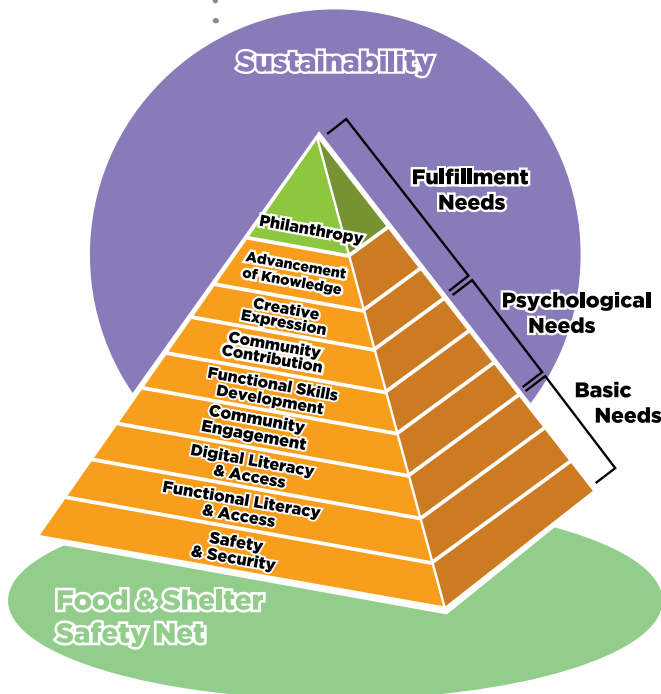
The Library believes trust underlies success, and that trust is built through integrity, fairness, and reliability.

The Plan

The model on the following page shows a comprehensive overview of what it takes to pursue the mission of the Library. Enriching citizens and communities is best done by addressing identified community needs that can be categorized using *The Purpose-Based Library Hierarchy* of Community Needs Pyramid (shown left). If the strategic model is an arrow pointing the way toward a better community, then the pyramid is the tip of that arrow.

As the model shows, the pyramid needs a healthy core to support it. The core is the set of traditional services the public counts on the Library to provide. The services include everything from checking out materials, to providing internet access, to simply being a public space where citizens can congregate. These core services represent the majority of interactions the Library has with its stakeholders. Thus, without proper focus on these services, the Library cannot hope to create positive community change.

All Library service—core and strategic priorities—is impossible to do well without well-conceived and well-executed inputs as a foundation. The foundation for great Library service is built from six pillars: collection, communication, facilities, finances, personnel, and technology. Each of these pillars plays a critical role in providing excellent core services and furthering the strategic priorities.



Huber's Pyramid of Community Needs
from *The Purpose Based Library*



Our Strategic Model

Organizational Pillars

The organizational pillars are the internal tools and resources required to achieve success in the core work and the strategic priorities. Each of the pillars is a distinctive element necessary to complete the structure underlying the Library's public service. Within the context of this Plan, each of these areas include guiding principles that help direct decision-making and action for that pillar.



Because the pillars will require the efforts and expertise of staff from all over the organization, each pillar has been assigned a facilitator or facilitators. The role of the facilitator is to organize the people and activities necessary for success within the pillar. Each facilitator is accountable to the rest of the administrative group for moving the pillar forward by convening the expertise necessary to plan, decide, and take action. In addition, each pillar has an advisor from the Board of Trustees. Through that connection point, staff can obtain Board guidance and feedback on budget priorities, values, and plans.



Collection

While the roles and expectations of a library have expanded greatly, to many in the community, the collection remains the most valuable component. As formats have proliferated and communities have grown, the need for collection diversity and depth has increased. While to many the term “collection” conjures images of books on

shelves, the modern library collection includes everything from virtual resources to live programming. At MCPL, part of providing great Library service is ensuring that customers have access to the content they need in the formats they want. To ensure the highest quality collection, the Library will follow these two guiding principles:

1. Collection management will emphasize access, balance, and responsiveness to community needs.
2. Collection stewardship will be a priority throughout the organization.

Facilitator: Chief Operating Officer

Board of Trustees Advisor: Board Chair





Communication

The Library is a large and complex system. At any one time, pursuing the mission and strategy will require multiple initiatives executed by teams of individuals and groups both inside and outside the organization. Success with these disparate initiatives, and with the Plan itself, will require excellent communication

both internally and externally. Providing great service to the public cannot be achieved if the community does not know what is being provided. To build the communication efforts necessary to achieve community and organizational goals, the Library will follow these two guiding principles:

1. An active and compelling public communication strategy is vital to ensure the public understands the services offered.
2. Successful internal communication requires curating and disseminating critical information both up and down the organization.

Facilitators: Internal Communications Director, Community Relations and Planning Director

Board of Trustees Advisor: Board Chair



Facilities

For much of recent history, libraries were built with the primary function of housing books. Libraries still do that, but they also host meetings, serve as tutoring locations, become small business incubators, and generally act as a hub of community

activity. As MCPL renovates and rebuilds Library facilities, this expanded role will be at the center of the planning. To create facilities that can respond to community needs, MCPL will follow these two guiding principles:

1. Appropriate Library spaces accommodate a diverse range of activities by multiple types of Library customers.
2. Properly equipped and maintained facilities create a great customer experience.

Facilitators: Chief Financial Officer, Chief Executive Officer

Board of Trustees Advisor: Building Committee Chair





Finance

Effective management of resources is a critical issue for libraries not only because those resources are entrusted to them by taxpayers and donors, but also because that management enables all of the

other primary components that go into providing great Library service. For MCPL, effective management of resources is developed with two guiding principles:

1. Budgets should be balanced and reflect the priorities and goals of the Strategic Direction.
2. The Library should always pursue growing private support to leverage taxpayer dollars.

Facilitators: Chief Financial Officer, Fundraising and Development Director

Board of Trustees Advisor: Finance Committee Chair, Fundraising Committee Chair

Personnel

No element of the Library System has more impact on the quality of service than the people. Whether staff provide direct service, provide the tools and expertise that improve that service, or provide the kind of support necessary to run any organization, having the right people in the right places is of paramount

importance. Effective personnel management means the Library will have people prepared to provide great service and will ensure those people have the support they need to do their jobs well. To ensure the System is managing personnel well, MCPL will follow these two guiding principles:



1. A proper personnel structure is one that puts people in the right places to achieve strategic priorities and provide excellent customer service.
2. Success comes from building a culture of service rooted in Library values.

Facilitators: Human Resources Director,
Chief Experience Officer

Board of Trustees Advisor: Personnel Committee Chair





Technology

A 21st Century library is driven by technology. At the same time the availability of technological innovations is expanding, the technology needs of communities is growing exponentially. Technological capacity is a part of every decision the Library will make moving

forward. To provide great service and achieve strategic priorities, the Library must invest in new technologies and ensure those technologies are accessible to the public. To build the community's capacity to utilize new technology, the Library will follow these two guiding principles:

1. A key element of all new technology initiatives is ease of use.
2. Constant evaluation of new technologies is necessary to ensure customers have access to the most useful tools of the future.

Facilitator: Chief Technology Officer

Board of Trustees Advisor: Technology Committee Chair



Core Services

The Library can help change communities by working on the strategic priorities laid out by this Plan. But the Library can also change the lives of individuals every day by providing traditional library services with attention to excellent service. Every person who walks through the doors of an MCPL branch or logs on to the Library's Virtual Branch is looking to improve their lives in some way. That means every interaction with a Library customer is an opportunity to transform communities one person at a time.

Expanding access to innovation, information, ideas, and inspiration can only be achieved by providing great resources and service to the 4 million visitors who walk into an MCPL branch or the 4 million who visit the Virtual Branch (mymcpl.org) each year. Core services are those things that make up the majority of

branch activity—**circulation, internet use, programs and events, reference sessions, meeting room use, and other traditional Library activities.**

They are also the digital equivalent of all those things. Which activities constitute core service will always be somewhat fluid as the Library changes to meet community needs, but we must always do our best to ensure that we are providing a great experience around whatever is part of the core. To do that, MCPL will work to expand the number of people who use these Library services, we will prioritize the quality of each interaction when people do use their Library, and we will monitor the total usage of core services. These measures will need to be evaluated regularly to ensure that the target numbers are congruent with the Library's current environment.



Measuring Core Activity

Active Customers

Baseline: 250,000

Goal: 320,000

Definition: Individuals who have used their Library account within the past 12 months to access physical and digital resources provided by the Library.

The goal is to have 40% of the individuals in our library district utilizing Library services. Planned activities to engage school districts and maximize the exposure of the fruits of the Library’s Capital Plan will support reaching this goal. Additionally, as the population in the library district changes, so should the goal of engaging our citizenry.

Supporting Statistics:

Market Penetration

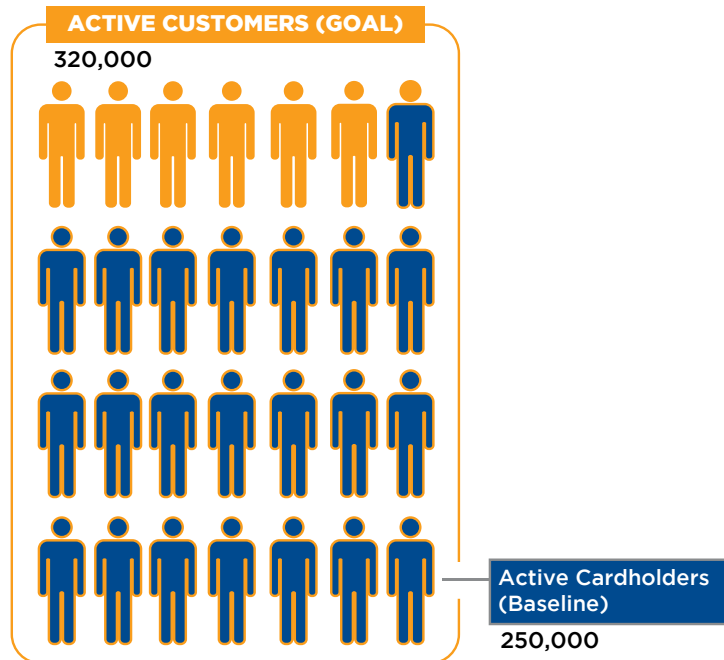
Percent of households with at least one active cardholder.

New Cardholder Registration

Number of new Library accounts created.

Cardholder Retention

Percent of new cardholders still active after one year.



Measuring Core Activity

Customer Satisfaction

Baseline: NPS = 91.8

Goal: NPS = 92.0 or higher

Definition: The Net Promoter Score (NPS) is a measure of the number of customers who, when asked, would support or promote use of the Library compared to those who are satisfied or dissatisfied with Library service and resources. The NPS is designed to measure how well the Library is both increasing promoters and decreasing detractors (NPS = % Promoters - % Detractors).

Compared to other industries, MCPL has a very high NPS: Apple has an NPS of 89, Walmart's NPS is 40. MCPL's NPS of 91.8 is based on surveying only 1% of Library users. Once the threshold is increased with the onset of this Strategic Plan, maintaining an NPS of 92.0 will be extraordinary.

Supporting Statistics:

Post-program Surveys

From customers immediately after Library events.

Virtual Branch Surveys

From customers interacting with our website.

Annual User Surveys

Reaching all residents, even those not currently using Library services.



$$\begin{aligned} & \% \text{Promoters} \\ & - \% \text{Detractors} \\ \hline & \text{Net Promoter} \\ & \text{Score} \end{aligned}$$

Measuring Core Activity

Customer Transactions

Baseline: 13.5 million

Goal 2018 - 2019: 12.5 million*

Definition: The Transactions Measure includes physical and digital circulation, attendance at Library-sponsored programs (in and outside branches), internet access using Library computers and Wi-Fi points, and the use of branch services (reference questions and meeting room attendance) and virtual resources (databases and Library-created content).

Of all the goals, this one will require the most annual adjustment—especially during the Capital Improvements Program. The goal considers that one-third of branches will be closed for one-third of each year—decreasing the physical activity included in this measure by an estimated 1 million transactions annually. After the first year of capital improvements, the goal should be reevaluated considering actual customer activity.

Supporting Statistics:

Physical and Virtual Door Count

– monitoring transactions per visit will be beneficial in understanding the use of our services

Pre- and Post-Improvement Measures by Branch

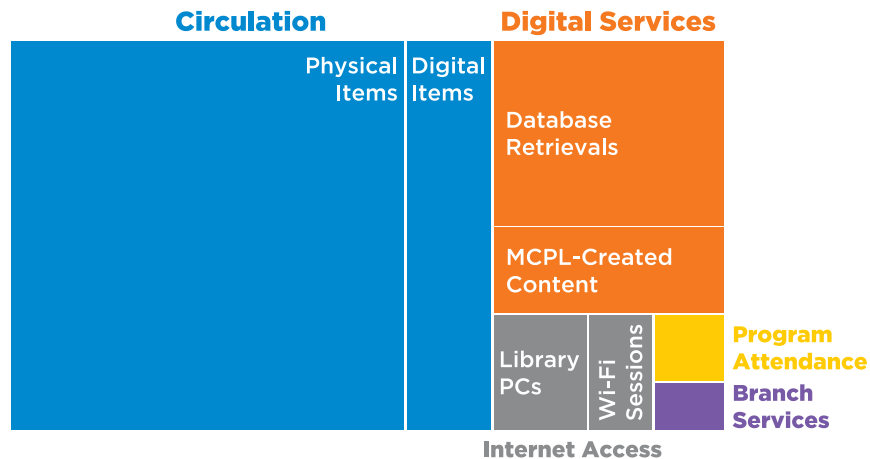
– monitoring this measure will help improve the annual goal



*The 2018 - 2019 goal accounts for branches closed for renovation during the year.

Customer Transactions

■ Circulation ■ Digital Services ■ Internet Access ■ Program Attendance ■ Branch Services



Strategic Priorities

As we have mentioned previously, a major influence on the development of this plan was the work laid out in *The Purpose-Based Library*. One of the premises of the book is that to be truly valuable to the community, the Library must start by providing faster and better access to materials and more efficient service. But to increase relevancy to the community, a library must find and address the gaps between where the community is and where it wants to be. The identification of these gaps takes place within the Community Needs Pyramid, which is a community-wide version of Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs. The strategic priorities laid out in this Plan are built to address the three distinct levels of the Community

Needs Pyramid. The lower section of the pyramid deals with basic skills development. The middle section deals with the development of skills that connect individuals to communities and build community capacity. The upper section of the pyramid is where the community and the individual move from the ability to consume and connect to the ability to create and give back. Communities vary greatly, of course, and each would prioritize their current needs at different places on the pyramid. Every community, however, has needs in each area of the pyramid. The strategic priorities set forth here are the best opportunities for MCPL to address these community needs with Library-appropriate responses.



Strategic Priorities

These are system-level priorities. Because each of our branches serves a different community, there may be different areas of emphasis within the priorities. In addition, it is important to remember that there are basic safety and security needs that may precede any of these priorities in some communities. The Library will always endeavor to recognize and respond to these needs if there are appropriate ways to assist.

Each priority is listed with indicators of community health. Because these

priorities are meant to address community-level needs, we need to monitor progress at the community level as well.

The indicators of community health in this plan are snapshots of how the community is faring in key areas. They are not measures of Library activity, but signposts to help direct Library activity. The measurements of Library effectiveness in these priorities will be captured through the core measures.

The three priorities begin at the bottom of the pyramid:



Strategic Priority #1

MCPL will cultivate literacy skills that prepare children and families for lifelong success.

Building a better community begins with ensuring a bright future for the community's youngest members. Focusing on literacy skills is the most important thing a library can do to help create that bright future. MCPL's early literacy efforts have two related, but distinct, parts.

The first is preparing kids for kindergarten. The Library is the only institution in the community open to all kids prior to kindergarten. MCPL will focus on building the skills that are the foundation of literacy and the related cognitive and social skills that ready a child for success in kindergarten.

The second piece of the Library's youth literacy priority is helping kids build and maintain the skills necessary to read at grade level. Reading at grade level is one of the best indicators of success later in life. MCPL will be a partner with schools and families to grow and maintain those skills during the school year and over the summer.

Literacy development that does not occur during childhood creates a need later in life. The Library must work with partners across the community to connect with adults who need to develop literacy skills and find or provide tools that can help bridge the gap.

Indicators of Community Health

- Percentage Ready for Kindergarten
- Percentage of Students Reading at Grade Level
- Summer Learning Effectiveness Study
- Adult Literacy Rate



Strategic Priority #2

MCPL will connect citizens to innovative services and resources that expand opportunity and build community.

Building better communities requires citizens to have the skills and opportunities to engage with their fellow citizens, institutions, and economies. There is much a Library can do to help in this area, but public input from the MCPL community suggested two priorities for the Library system—preparing citizens for economic opportunities and providing avenues for people to become more civically engaged.

Like most aspects of modern life, economic opportunity is experiencing change at an unprecedented pace. Preparing for a single career, acquiring a job, and remaining in that job until retirement is

a path that has nearly disappeared. In its place are job changes, industry shake-ups, and a need to acquire new skills. The Library, as the community's traditional source for lifelong learning, is well-positioned to help citizens navigate this new environment. Specifically, the Library can help those looking to explore their own path via entrepreneurship and those looking to progress down established paths by building skills and competencies.

Civic engagement is another challenge in modern society. As the pace of life increases and communities are built virtually, the ability and opportunity to connect to the physical community is challenged. The Library can help here because it remains one of the civic institutions most recognized and utilized by the population. That fact provides the Library with a unique opening to bring people together with other citizens and institutions to have discussions and do the work of building community.



Indicators of Community Health

- New Business Creation
- Regional Unemployment Rate
- Aggregated Individual Health Metrics
- Voter Participation Rate
- Volunteerism Rate

Strategic Priority #3

MCPL will build the capacity of individuals and organizations to create and share their stories.

The final stage of literacy is the ability for someone to develop and share their own ideas. The top of the community pyramid laid out in *The Purpose-Based Library* is the development of culture and knowledge. These two ideas come together in the third strategic priority. Libraries are all about the sharing of stories and ideas. It makes sense then that a proper role for the Library in building community culture is to help citizens learn to cultivate their own creative processes and share their own ideas and stories.

This priority is the most difficult to measure at a community level because there are fewer institutions engaged in these efforts and because creative pursuits are more difficult to quantify. For that reason, the community measures for Priority 3 are more internally focused than those in the other two priorities. However, we hope this list can evolve over the course of the plan and that we might be able to add other external data to these KPIs.



Indicators of Community Health

- Collaboration Growth Among Regional Cultural Partners
- Creation and Sharing of Original Content
- Individual Creative Works Published
- Participation in Regional Cultural Programming

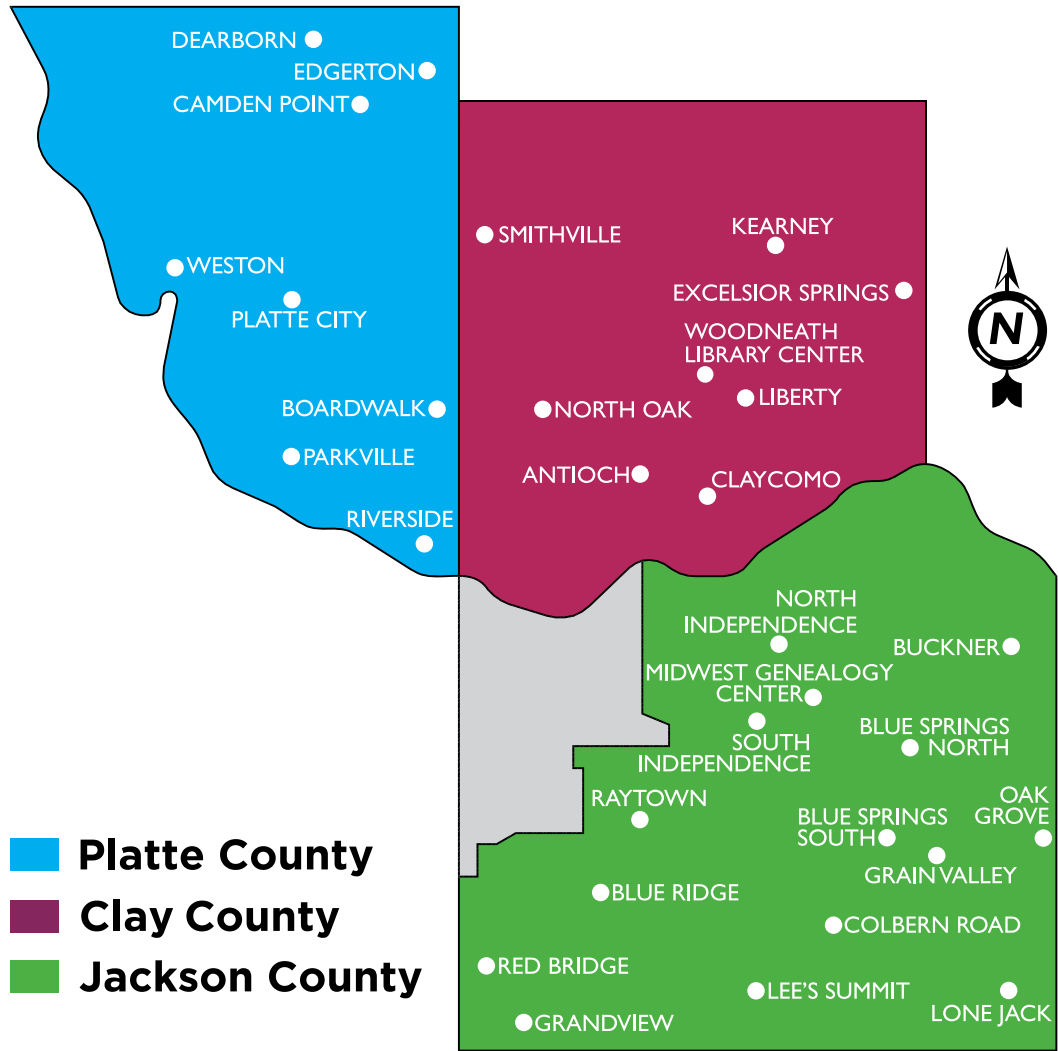


Conclusion

By the end of 2023, Mid-Continent Public Library will be physically renewed. The Capital Improvement and Replacement Plan that is proceeding simultaneously with this Strategic Plan will be concluding, and Library customers will have all the opportunities provided by 21st Century facilities. As the Library completes that work, we must also continue the broader renewal of the system that began just over a decade ago. As we strive to be a great library system, we recognize that organizational renewal will never be complete.

We will continue to serve our communities, and as they change, we will change. We will do what great libraries have always done—provide information, inspiration, innovation, and ideas. We will do that by building an excellent foundation upon which we can serve. We will do that by providing excellent core library service. Finally, we will do that by improving our communities through our strategic priorities.

We look forward to serving you over the next few years, and we thank you for playing a critical role in the evolution of our library system.



- Platte County**
- Clay County**
- Jackson County**



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