



# **ST. JOSEPH COUNTY PUBLIC LIBRARY**

## **Branch Master Plan**

DRAFT REPORT | JANUARY 19, 2023

**Public  
Library**  
ST. JOE COUNTY

# FACILITY PLANNING GOALS + VISION

The St. Joseph County Public Library (SJCPL) is conducting an assessment of its current branch facilities to produce a comprehensive Branch Master Plan to guide planning, renovations, and improvements for the next ten years.

This work intends to assess and evaluate existing locations, spaces, and assets and to identify how best to address deficiencies and plan for future growth in order to empower SJCPL to respond appropriately to changes or shifts in community demographics, technology development, emerging library services, aging facilities, and other future needs.

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## SYSTEM SNAPSHOT

9 Branch Locations

585,000 Annual Visits

1,400,000 Annual Circulation

4,600,000 Minutes of Computer Usage

25,000 Program Attendance

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### Mission

We connect members of our diverse community to information, resources, culture and each other.

### Vision

We imagine a community where everyone can achieve great things and live life to the fullest.

# STRATEGIC APPROACH

The SJCPL 2022-2024 Strategic Plan outlines five key goals for the system to prioritize in the coming years – each of which offer a unique response for the specific branch locations as they continue to serve the needs and opportunities found in their local communities.



## 1. GROW AND SUSTAIN READERS

- Strengthen early literacy success for our community's children.
- Connect and engage deeply with our community's readers.
- Build collection diversity.



## 2. BUILD A STRONGER COMMUNITY

- Develop services, programs and partnerships that address community needs.
- Create services that resonate with our diverse community.
- **Develop a plan for the future of Library branches that addresses the unique character of each neighborhood.**
- Create an organization where equity is embedded in our culture.



## 3. SPARK CURIOSITY TO LEARN.

- Develop formal learning support initiatives.
- Provide technology skills training geared toward creative expression.
- Expand local and family history offerings that support learning about our community's shared history.
- Provide programs across the Library system that advance learning goals.
- Expand the use of the Bendable platform across the community.



## 4. EXPAND ACCESS

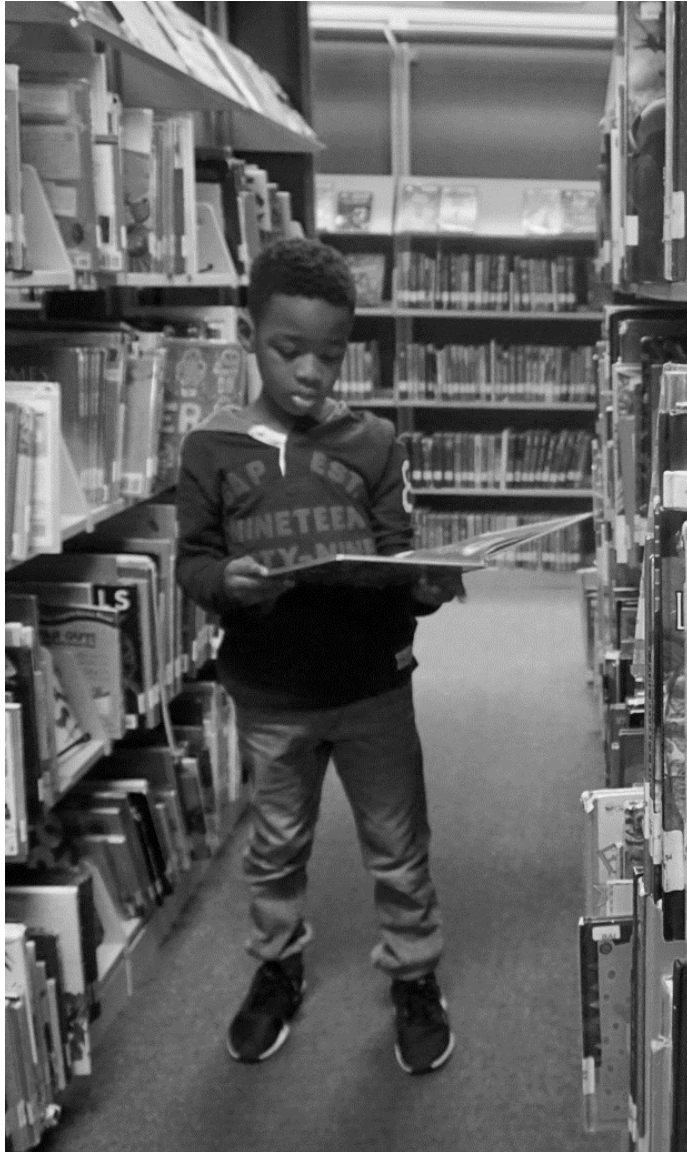
- Grow the use of the library as a community and cultural center.
- Broaden and redefine outreach service.
- Improve digital equity in our community.



## 5. ENSURE LIBRARY SUSTAINABILITY

- **Develop a 10-year Branch Master Plan to ensure vibrant structures capable of being maintained.**
- Evaluate administrative systems to ensure long term organizational health.
- Develop a robust program for development and fundraising.
- Develop and implement environmentally sound practices.

# PLANNING APPROACH



The Facility Plan is grounded in both staff and community engagement, as well as spatial and library science research to ensure that the library's physical realities, its equity aspirations and patron priorities are all at the forefront.

The planning process was led by MKM architecture + design, an architecture and planning firm dedicated to enhancing community health and well-being through design. The planning team included a multi-disciplinary team of architects, engineers, interior designers, and programmers with many years of experience collaborating on library and community projects that advance equitable and inclusive places.

Over a six-month period, the team's multi-pronged approach looked at the various locations throughout the library's service areas through multiple lenses:

- Peer Research
- Engagement
- Facility Assessment
- Community Context

All of these inputs were woven together to formulate the Master Plan recommendations and framework.

## INPUTS



### PEER RESEARCH

Comparisons to peer library facilities, community health data, and national best practices.



### ENGAGEMENT

Community needs and priorities were identified through engagement with over 700 residents, 90 library staff and dozens of service providers who participated in focus groups, one-on-one interviews, advisory meetings and surveys.



### FACILITIES ASSESSMENT

Assessments of building conditions, staff interviews, existing programming and circulation.



### COMMUNITY CONTEXT

Spatial Analysis of the county's most vulnerable and underserved, community-wide capital investments, and population trends.

# COMMUNITY ASSESSMENT

## RACE

St. Joseph County, IN is home to a population of 271k people, from which 96.2% are citizens. As of 2020, 6.31% of St. Joseph County, IN residents were born outside of the country (17.1k people). In 2020, there were 5.72 times more White (Non-Hispanic) residents (195k people) in St. Joseph County, IN than any other race or ethnicity. There were 34k Black or African American (Non-Hispanic) and 12.1k White (Hispanic) residents, the second and third most common ethnic groups.

## INCOME

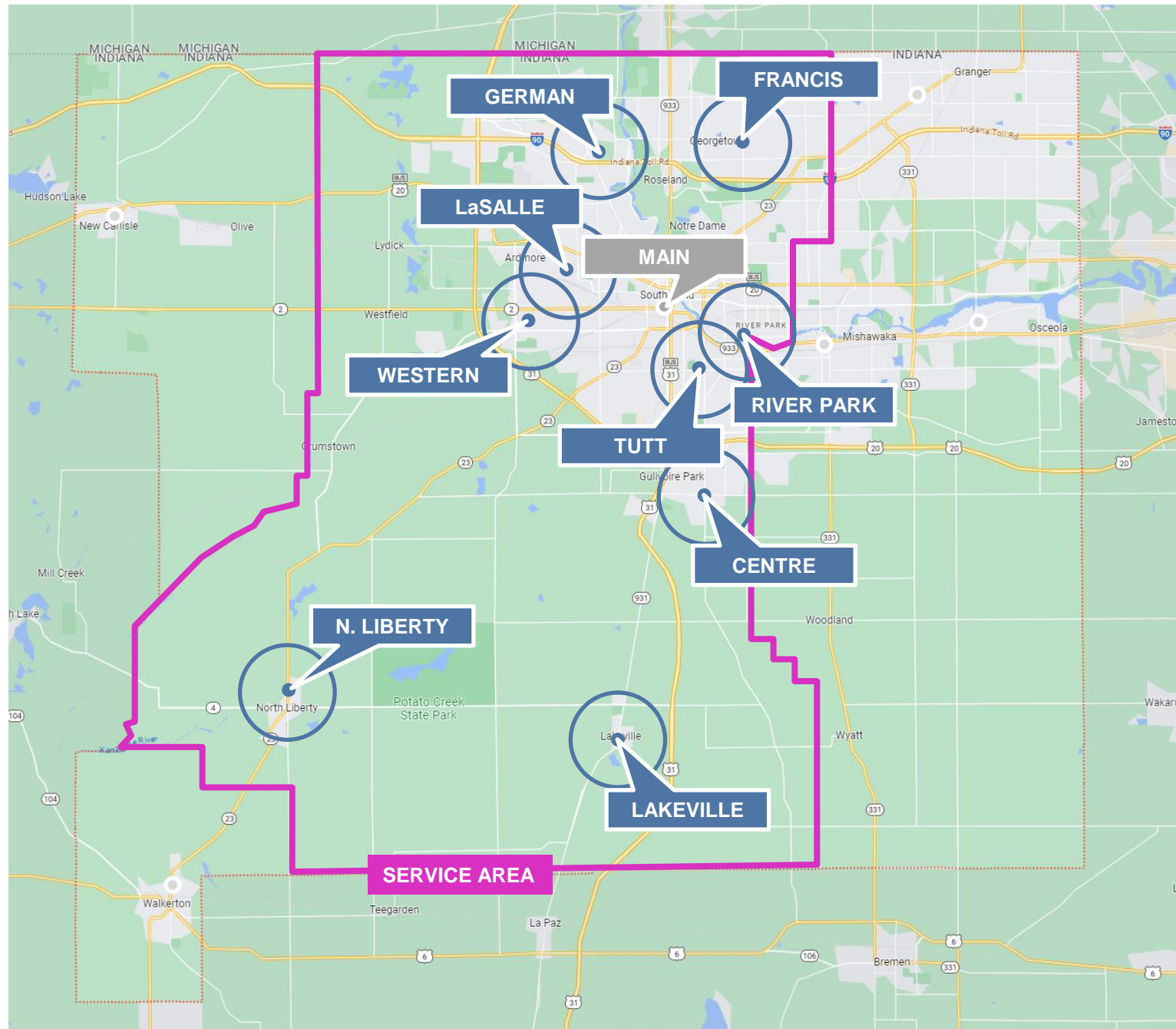
The economy of St. Joseph County, IN employs 129k people. The largest industries in St. Joseph County, IN are Manufacturing (21,987 people), Health Care & Social Assistance (19,105 people), and Educational Services (18,482 people), and the highest paying industries are Utilities (\$65,650), Management of Companies & Enterprises (\$51,705), and Transportation & Warehousing, & Utilities (\$51,382).

## HOUSING & LIVING

The median property value in St. Joseph County, IN was \$134,800 in 2020, which is 0.587 times smaller than the national average of \$229,800. Between 2019 and 2020 the median property value increased from \$129,000 to \$134,800, a 4.5% increase. The homeownership rate in St. Joseph County, IN is 67.9%, which is approximately the same as the national average of 64.4%.

Median household income in St. Joseph County, IN is \$54,433. In 2020, the tract with the highest Median Household Income in St. Joseph County, IN was Census Tract 113.04 with a value of \$126,146, followed by Census Tract 114.03 with value of \$104,875. In 2022, 12.7% of the population was living with severe housing problems in St. Joseph County, IN. From 2014 to 2022, the indicator declined 0.902%.

Throughout the county, 16.5% of the population is over the age of 65, 60.1% are of working age (18-64) while 23.5% are under the age of 18.



# FACILITY ASSESSMENT

## BRANCH SNAPSHOT

9 Locations | 31 Yrs. Average Age | 105,000 Total Square Feet

The planning team performed an assessment of the HVAC, plumbing, and electrical systems serving each branch location. Prior to visiting the buildings, an in-depth review of the original system bid document drawings were conducted, followed by an interactive visit to each site accompanied by building maintenance staff. During these physical assessments, each facility's systems were observed in operation to document any apparent issues or concerns.

Following this review, a report was identified that summarizes the systems, documentation of the issues, suggested renovations, probable cost budgets, and suggested prioritization at each location.

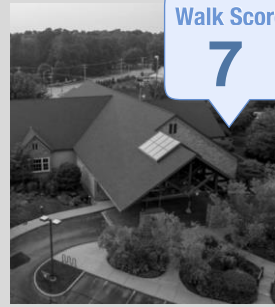
### Key considerations include:

- Aging HVAC infrastructure (even within newer facilities)
- Low lighting levels
- Inoperable amenities (i.e., fountains)

### WALKSCORE

- 90-100 **Walker's Paradise** (Daily errands do not require a car)
- 70-89 **Very Walkable** (Most errands can be accomplished by foot)
- 50-69 **Somewhat Walkable** (Some errands accomplished on foot)
- 25-49 **Car Dependent** (Most errands require a car)
- 0-24 **Car Dependent** (Almost all errands require a car)

For more see [www.walkscore.com](http://www.walkscore.com)



**Centre**  
(1999)



**Francis**  
(2009)



**German**  
(2009)



**Lakeville**  
(1990)



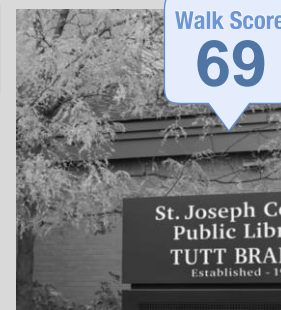
**LaSalle**  
(1983)



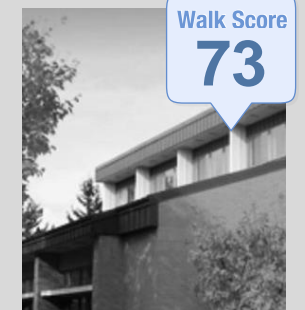
**North Liberty**  
(1986)



**River Park**  
(1983)



**Tutt**  
(1983)



**Western**  
(1983)

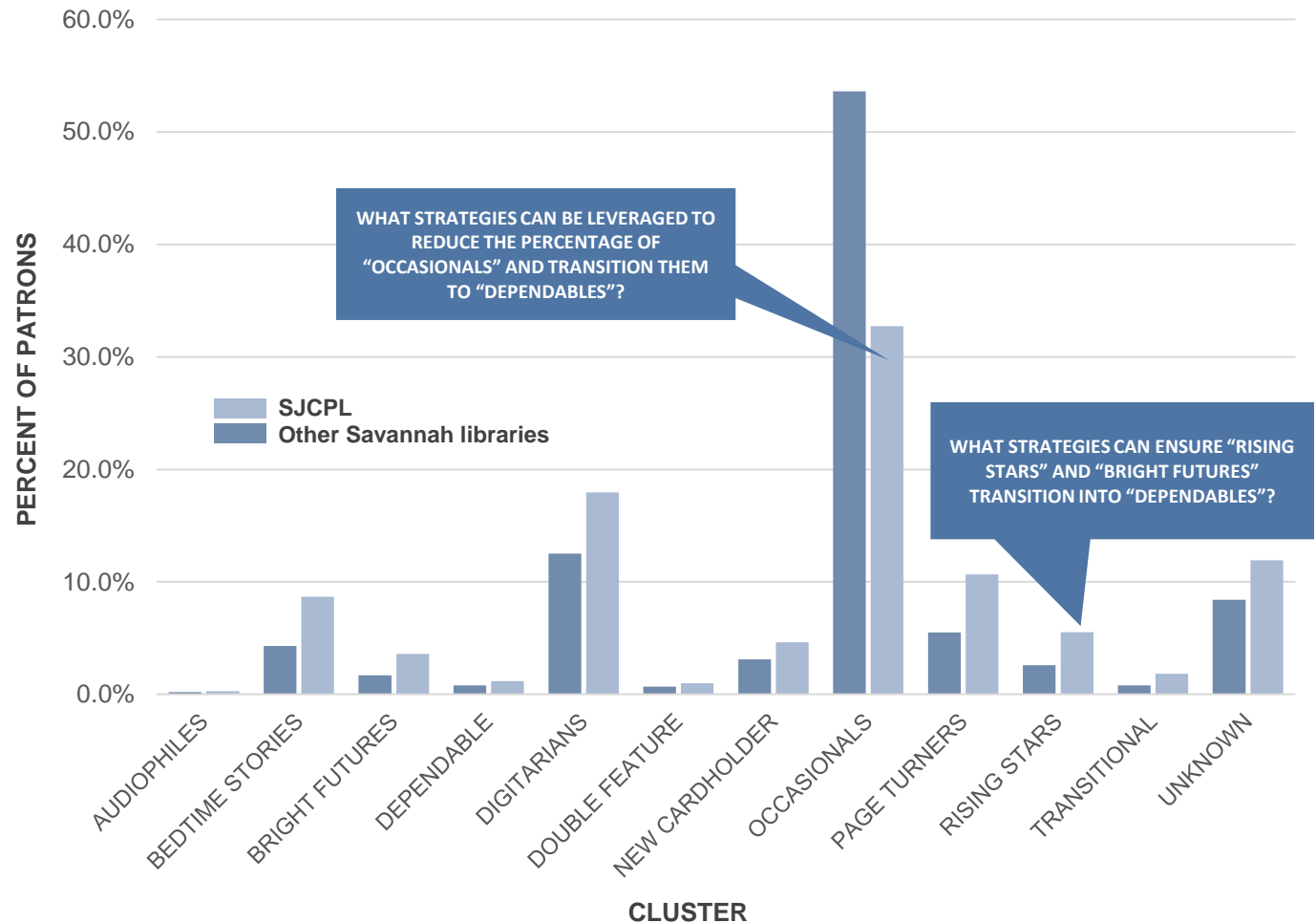
# PATRON DEMOGRAPHICS

## CLUSTER SEGMENTATION

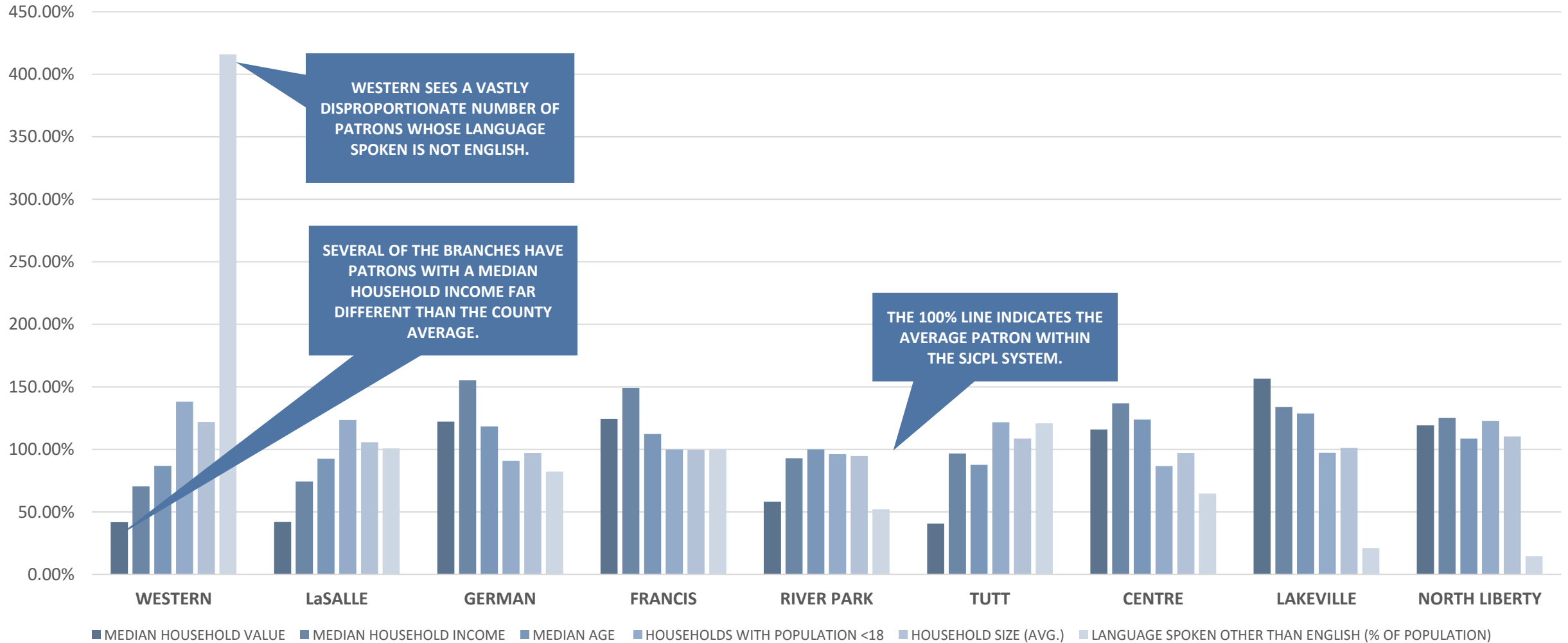
It can be helpful to understand how patron behavior compares to other library systems. A common way to determine those trends is to analyze cluster segmentation – data that recognizes that every customer is different and that their needs are better served if services and marketing are personalized or targeted relevant to each customer’s behavior. It also allows an organization to focus and effectively allocate resources and maximize cross-promotional opportunities to improve customer engagement. Other benefits of customer segmentation include identifying new products and services that might appeal to each type of customer cluster or improving products and services to meet your customers’ needs and expectations.

<b>Cluster Name</b>	<b>Behaviors</b>
Audiophiles	Primarily borrow physical audiobooks
Bedtime Stories	Adults who borrow children’s materials
Bright Futures	Teens between the age of 13-17
Dependables	Use a mixture of physical circulation types – Adult print, DVDs, etc.
Digitarians	Primarily use digital resources - Overdrive, Hoopla, etc.
Double Feature	Primarily borrow A/V (DVDs, CDs, etc)
New Cardholders	Signed up within the past 12 weeks
Page Turners	Primarily borrow adult and teen print
Rising Stars	Youth between the age of 0-12
Staying Connected	Public computer users
Transitionals	Borrow both digital and physical circulation
Occasionals	Have not used their library card in at least 12 weeks to a year prior
Inactives	Have not used their library card in more than 12 months

## ALL SJCPL LOCATIONS vs. SAVANNAH LIBRARY CLUSTERS



# PATRON DEMOGRAPHICS

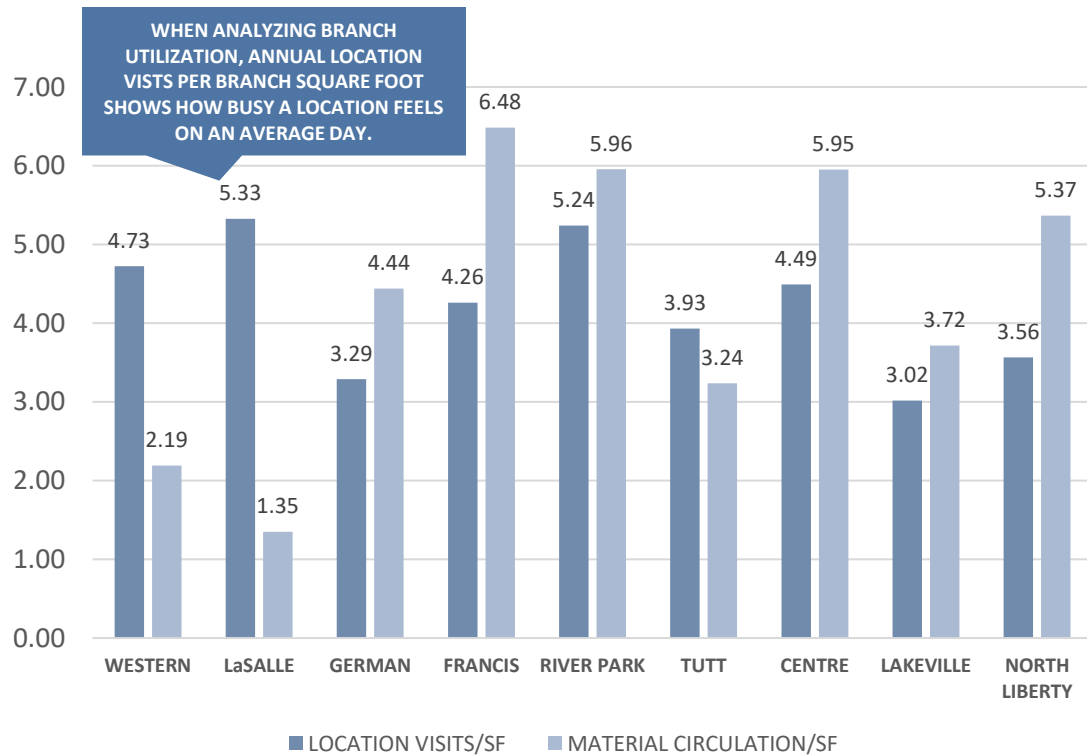




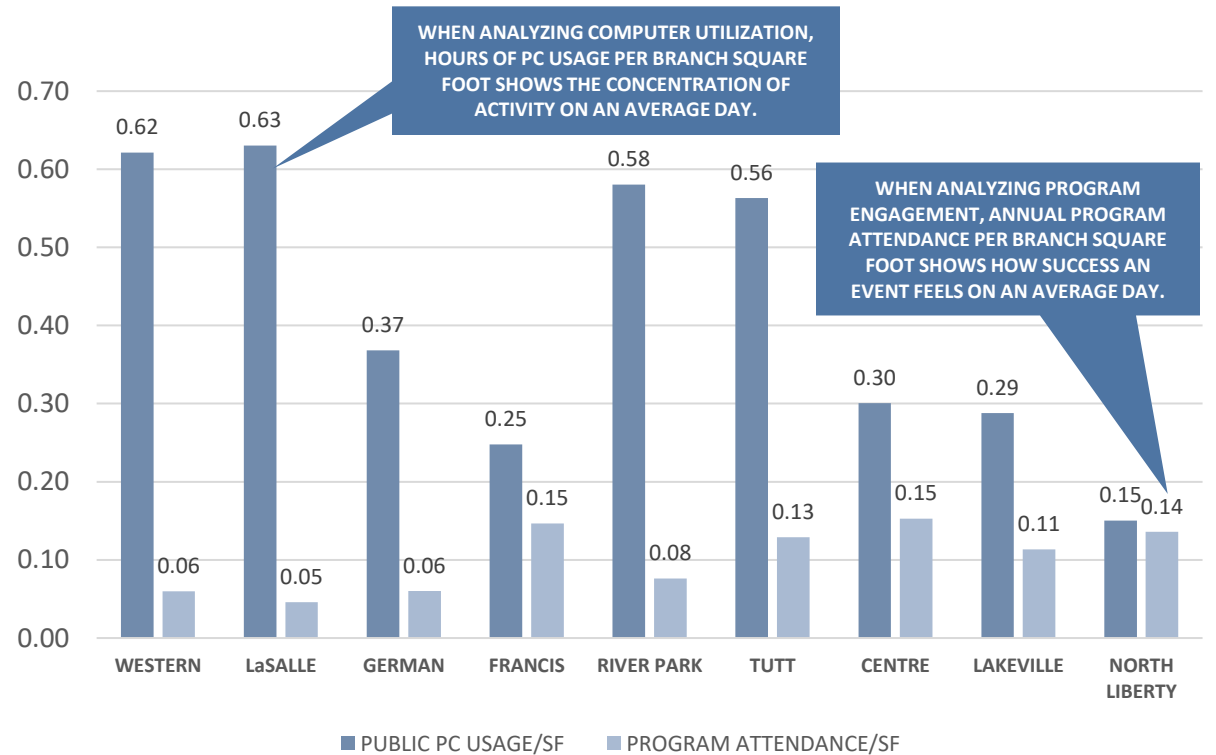
# FACILITY USAGE

When exploring the specific use of each location, libraries often analyze metrics such as foot traffic and collection movement. However, if we look at the utilization of each of these indicators by their per capita use (i.e., square footage), it often shows a different story – illustrating how “busy” each location can often feel to the patrons and staff.

**BRANCH ANALYSIS (ANNUAL VISITS AND MATERIAL CIRCULATION)**



**BRANCH ANALYSIS (ANNUAL PC USAGES AND PROGRAM ATTENDANCE)**



# ENGAGEMENT

2,400+ SURVEYS | 3 FOCUS GROUPS | 9 STAFF WORKSHOPS | 3 TOWN HALLS

## TOP SPACE PRIORITIES

- Not surprisingly, 77% of the respondents felt that readily accessible collections are extremely important to the Library.
- This is followed by 72% for accessible parking, 42% for environmentally sustainable buildings, and 41% for technology access.
- Least important are the need for large meeting spaces for over 20 people and digital creative spaces/makerspace.

## KEY DEMOGRAPHIC INFO

- 2,284 respondents completed the survey.
- Respondents were geographically well spread out across the area by zip codes. Of responses, over 75% of the responses were generated from Francis, Main, Centre, German, and River Park.
- Age range was well distributed. About 28% of respondents were over 65 years old, 19% were 36-45, 15% were 26-35, 16% were 56-65, and 14% were 46-55. While 6% were under the age of 26.

## LIBRARY ACTIVITY

- 75% of respondents visit the library once a month or more, 36% visit weekly or more.
- 50% of users typically spend 30 minutes at a location, while 40% spend an hour or more during each visit.

*“I love the library! Our whole family uses it regularly! We always find just what we need!”*

-Survey respondent

*“Free and open libraries are foundational to a healthy democracy.”*

*“I find the Libraries in our community an essential resource and very well run.”*

-Survey respondent

*“We need multiple locations with space for hands on guided or self-taught hobbies (crafts, design spaces endeavors, sewing, music, gardening becoming eco friendly in everyday living).”*

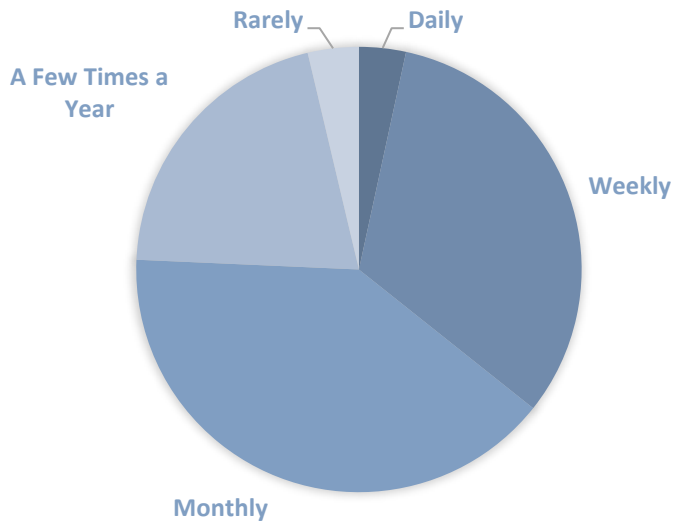
*“I absolutely love the library. Y'all are doing an amazing job.”*

-Survey respondent

# ENGAGEMENT

**SYSTEM-WIDE SURVEY RESULTS – 2,484 RESPONSES FROM THE COMMUNITY!**

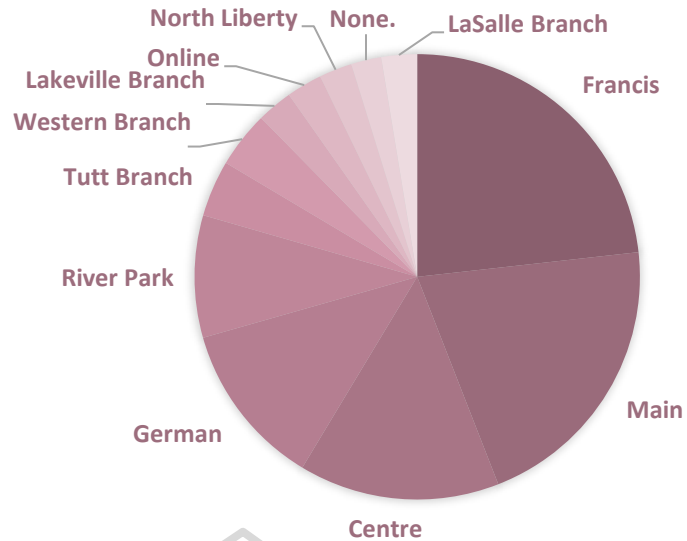
*How often do you visit the library?*



**35%** of survey responders visit a SJ CPL location at least once a week, **75%** at least once a month.



*Which location do you use most often?*



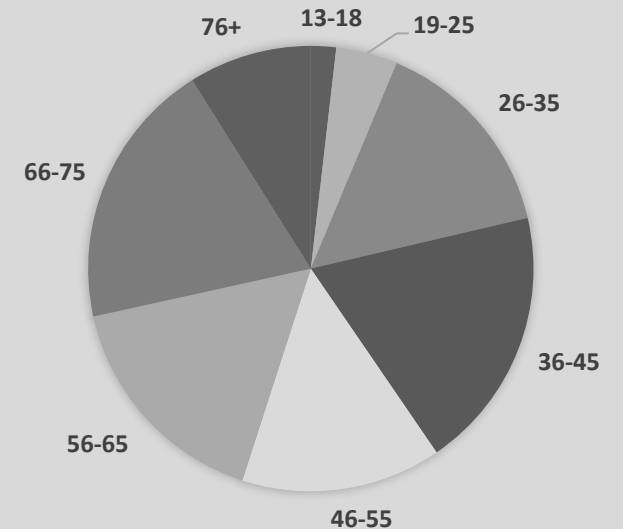
**94%** of survey responders were classified as “PROMOTERS” – expressing a high willingness in recommending the library to others.

**REASON FOR VISIT**

**FIND A BOOK/MAGAZINE**

- FIND DVD, CD, OR AUDIOBOOK
- ATTEND A PROGRAM
- USE PRINTER/COPIER/FAX
- ATTEND A MEETING
- TO STUDY
- MEET WITH FRIENDS
- USE A COMPUTER
- USE WI-FI

*SURVEY RESPONDENT PROFILE (by age)*



# ENGAGEMENT

## SYSTEM-WIDE SURVEY RESULTS – 2,484 RESPONSES FROM THE COMMUNITY!

*Who strongly or somewhat agrees with the following statements?*

STATEMENT	%
It is clean and well maintained.	<b>97.9%</b>
Parking is readily available.	<b>96.1%</b>
It is an important part of my community.	<b>95.7%</b>
Staff are knowledgeable and helpful.	<b>95.6%</b>
It is a physical comfortable place to visit.	<b>95.5%</b>
It is easy to navigate.	<b>93.8%</b>
It has adequate space for my needs.	<b>93.7%</b>
It is a welcoming and safe place.	<b>93.0%</b>
The open hours are adequate for my needs.	<b>89.0%</b>
It has up-to-date technology.	<b>86.6%</b>
The collection is adequate for my needs.	<b>86.6%</b>

*What parts of the library are extremely or somewhat important?*

STATEMENT	%
Easily accessible collection	<b>97.7%</b>
Accessible parking	<b>94.9%</b>
Sustainable, energy-efficient buildings	<b>84.1%</b>
Technology access	<b>78.1%</b>
Good pedestrian or bike access	<b>75.3%</b>
Interactive spaces for children 0-12	<b>74.4%</b>
Outdoor spaces	<b>70.2%</b>
Interactive spaces for Teens 13-18	<b>69.9%</b>
Medium-sized meeting rooms for 10-20 people	<b>69.0%</b>
Study rooms for 1-4 people	<b>64.9%</b>
Digital creative spaces/makerspace	<b>61.7%</b>
Large meeting rooms for 20+ people	<b>60.5%</b>

# THE VALUE PROPOSITION OF THE PUBLIC LIBRARY

The emerging value proposition of the public library is built around three key assets – *people, place* and *platform*: \*

**PEOPLE.** The public library is a hub of civic engagement, fostering new relationships and strengthening the human capital of the community. Librarians are actively engaged in the community. They connect individuals to a vast array of local and national resources and serve as neutral conveners to foster civic health, facilitating learning for children and adults alike.

**PLACE.** The public library is a welcoming space for a wide range of purposes—reading, communicating, learning, playing, meeting, and getting business done. Its design recognizes that people are not merely consumers of content but creators and citizens as well. Its physical presence provides an anchor for economic development and neighborhood revitalization and helps to strengthen social bonds and community identity. The library is also a virtual space where individuals can gain access to information, resources, and all the rich experiences the library offers. In the creative design of its physical and virtual spaces the public library defines what makes a great public space.

**PLATFORM.** The public library is user-centered. It provides opportunities for individuals and the community to gain access to a variety of tools and resources with which to discover and create new knowledge. The platform enables the curation and sharing of the community’s knowledge and innovation. A great library platform is a “third place” —an interactive entity that can facilitate many people operating individually and in groups—and supports the learning and civic needs of the community.

\***SOURCE:** *Rising to the Challenge: Re-Envisioning Public Libraries*, The Aspen Institute (2014)



*“Persistent education and learning are the reality... the library as people, place and platform is the new knowledge institution that can serve all those needs.”*

*- Lee Rainie*

# COMMUNITY HEALTH & WELL-BEING

As this value proposition evolves over time within the community, it is a reality that is coupled with the growing research connecting the built environment with neighborhood health and well-being.

Beyond the conventional duty of providing resources and programming, libraries need to strengthen their ability to serve as social hubs for people of all ages and abilities. More precisely, they need to operate as an effective “third place” – the place beyond the realms of (1) home and (2) work. As Ray Oldenburg defined it in his book, *The Great Good Place*, “The third place is a generic designation for a great variety of public spaces that host the regular, voluntary, informal, and happily anticipated gatherings of individuals beyond the realms of home and work.” In embracing the role as a third place, specific attention is given to how the library operates as a gathering place and how the physical structure impacts the health of the neighborhood it looks to support.

A reason public libraries are seen as such important third-place institutions is that they and their librarians have gradually taken on other functions well beyond lending out books. In many communities, librarians are also ad hoc social workers and navigators. They help local people figure out the complexities of life, from navigating the health system to helping those with housing needs. This “go-to” role has influenced library programming and events, with libraries providing advice and connections to health, housing, literacy, and other areas.

Other sectors, such as healthcare, increasingly see public libraries as a critical link to improving community health and well-being. For instance, the National Library of Medicine is helping local librarians to be more effective local navigators by regularly hosting webinars and training sessions for local librarians on how to navigate social services, aging, mental health, welfare and public assistance, housing resources, health care, and employment resources.



# PRIORITIZING THE ROLE AS AN ANCHOR INSTITUTION

In many communities, libraries are combining the access and trust characteristics of a third place with a growing interest in eliminating health disparities – using partnerships with other institutions to connect people with services and help. Additionally, through localized initiatives, the role of the modern public library is moving beyond identifying as an information hub or a social node and gravitating towards the necessary function of an *anchor institution*.

“Main Street public libraries became local agents, physical and figurative, through which their communities’ citizens – elite as well as common – accomplished two tasks for local harmony. First, the libraries provided public space to demonstrate and teach social behaviors and responsibilities acceptable to the community. Second, they provided literary space through collections and services that offered models for successful living, problem solving, and an orderly life at the same time they peacefully mediated a set of ever-shifting cultural values constantly influenced by inside and outside forces.”\*

Anchor institutions are deeply rooted economic engines in the communities they serve, holding significant social capital. They are often trusted leaders in their communities, well positioned to help lead multi-sector work aimed at eliminating health disparities. By leveraging their economic power, good will, and human resources, anchor institutions can make significant advancements in the promotion of health equity. It’s a role that works to respond to specific and urgent challenges facing many communities – one that will shape the planning, development, and management of public libraries for the next several years.

\* Wayne Wiegand, “Main Street Public Library,” *American Libraries Magazine*, September/October 2011, p. 16



# GUIDING PRINCIPLES

The master plan will measure strategies through the adoption of three guiding principles:

## **a** COMMUNITY FIRST

Ensure that each branch provides equitable access to a variety of meaningful services and resources that reflect each community.



### Key considerations

- Multimodal access with effective wayfinding and signage.
- Increased accessibility and adoption of universal design
- React to specific needs and opportunities within local community
- Increase access to collection and programming

## **b** SMART FUNCTION

Equip each branch with nimble functionality to allow staff to react to the unique needs and opportunities in each community.



- Flexible meeting and programming rooms.
- Combination of interior and exterior programming space(s)
- Movable furniture and shelving
- Sustainable and energy-efficient infrastructure

## **c** INSPIRED DESIGN

Prioritize the creation of spaces that provide engaging experiences that inspire patron activity and increase library usage.



- Locations that possess a neighborhood identity (i.e., public art)
- Provide active “third-place” environments that leverage placemaking strategies that focus on fostering spaces that are active, social, accessible, and comfortable.
- Create locations that evoke a sense of creativity and embrace their role as opportunity incubators.



# SYSTEM-WIDE RECOMMENDATIONS

In response to the existing facility assessments and guiding principles, a series of system-wide recommendations were developed for application across all facilities to align strategic initiatives and (where appropriate) provide brand consistency within the patron experience.

- **Meeting Room Activation:** Prioritize the exposure of activity within the library by providing meeting rooms that offer visual access to patron traffic and a direct connection to the library's interior spaces.
- **Functional Technology:** Implement a technology integration plan segmented by facility size. Additional considerations should be given to an enhanced building management capabilities, lighting, security, and audiovisual capabilities.
- **Enhanced Wayfinding:** Invest in enhancing the visibility and approach to the entrance at each location – including interior/exterior signage, lighting, etc.
- **Accessibility:** Explore what amenities should be considered to help support people of all ages and abilities (i.e., ADA entryways) and provide staff specific use amenities (i.e., lactation pods within each staff area).
- **Outdoor Spaces:** Provide enhanced outdoor area with wi-fi access (where possible) and a strategic investment in native landscape species.

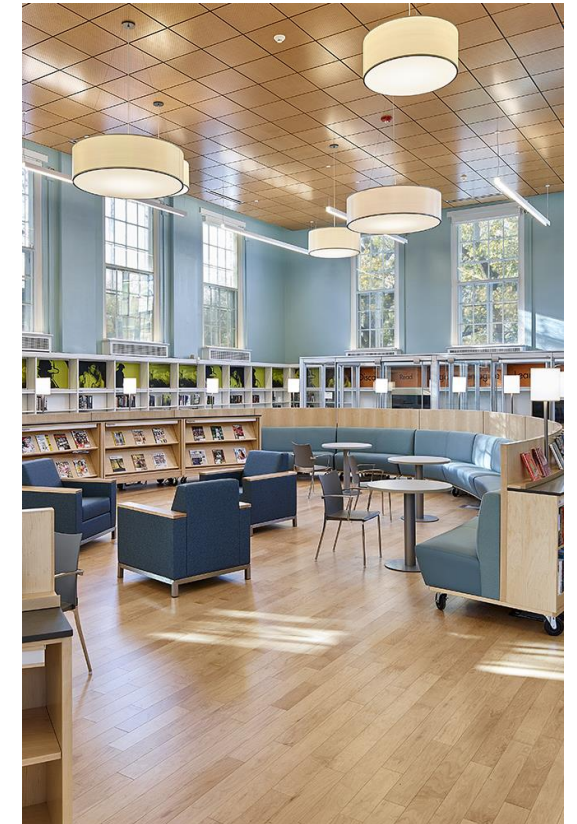


# SYSTEM-WIDE RECOMMENDATIONS

In addition to identifying changes to the existing buildings, careful consideration was given to the evolution of the shelving at each location. The following table outlines the general projections for the growth and reduction of shelving over the next ten years. While some increases aim to support readership growth, reductions often provide opportunities for increased spaces to host additional services and programming.

## Shelving Protections

		Western	LaSalle	German	Francis	River Park	Tutt	Centre	Lakeville	North Liberty
<b>Children</b>	Existing	541	539	665	1108	627	656	638	165	422
	Change	75%	75%	100%	125%	100%	75%	125%	100%	100%
	<i>Proposed</i>	406	404	665	1385	627	492	798	165	422
<b>Young Adult</b>	Existing	116	91	115	328	88	98	178	48	36
	Change	75%	75%	100%	90%	75%	75%	110%	100%	100%
	<i>Proposed</i>	87	68	115	295	66	74	196	48	36
<b>Adult</b>	Existing	1296	1264	1984	3067	1245	1457	2337	461	565
	Change	75%	75%	100%	100%	110%	75%	110%	100%	100%
	<i>Proposed</i>	972	948	1984	3067	1370	1093	2571	461	565
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>Existing</b>	<b>1953</b>	<b>1894</b>	<b>2764</b>	<b>4503</b>	<b>1960</b>	<b>2211</b>	<b>3153</b>	<b>674</b>	<b>1023</b>
	<b>Change</b>	<b>75%</b>	<b>75%</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>105%</b>	<b>105%</b>	<b>75%</b>	<b>113%</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>100%</b>
	<i><b>Proposed</b></i>	<i><b>1465</b></i>	<i><b>1421</b></i>	<i><b>2764</b></i>	<i><b>4747</b></i>	<i><b>2063</b></i>	<i><b>1658</b></i>	<i><b>3564</b></i>	<i><b>674</b></i>	<i><b>1023</b></i>
<b>Building Size</b>		10,200	10,200	15,600	23,600	10,200	10,200	17,000	4,000	4,250
<i>Shelving/SF</i>		<i>0.14</i>	<i>0.14</i>	<i>0.18</i>	<i>0.20</i>	<i>0.20</i>	<i>0.16</i>	<i>0.21</i>	<i>0.17</i>	<i>0.24</i>



# LOCATION-SPECIFIC RECOMMENDATIONS

Location-specific recommendations celebrate the qualities, culture, and needs for each individual facility and recognize the improvements and investments will be carried out incrementally. Tangible action steps are proposed for each branch and are organized into Quick Wins, Moderate Steps, and Substantial Moves. The different strategies give the library the flexibility and information to seek out additional funds for particular projects, as well as direct funds as they become available to locations in a systematic and equitable manner.

**Quick Wins:** Quick wins can be made immediately and at little or no cost. These are recommended for all locations. They can be used to make quick and visible programmatic and/or physical improvements that can energize staff and patrons and create immediate impacts.

**Moderate Steps:** Moderate steps are strategic investments that can be made at moderate costs. They can dramatically increase functionality, attract new users or increase outreach and impact vulnerable groups.

**Substantial Moves:** Substantial moves radically rethink service delivery at locations and include recommendations that impact both physical and programming resources. Implementing these strategies will require longer timeframes, capital investments and staff time but result in lasting community benefits.



## **1. Quick Wins**

Cost: Low (<\$20k)

## **2. Moderate Steps**

Cost: Moderate (\$20-\$500k)

## **3. Substantial Moves**

Cost: High (>\$500k)

# PRIORITIZING IMPLEMENTATION

TIER	LOCATION	SITE	BUILDING	FF&E	Notes
1	WESTERN	●	●	●	Pursue replacement facility within existing neighborhood and explore reuse of existing structure and/or sale of asset.
	LaSALLE	●	●	●	Pursue expansion of existing building or replacement facility within existing neighborhood and sale of existing facility.
	INFRASTRUCTURE	●	●	○	Capital improvements repairing/replacing facility assets exceeding expected lifetime (mechanical equipment, roofing, etc.) throughout all locations to increase energy efficiency and sustained operation.
2	CENTRE	◉	◉	●	Update interior finishes, provide new study room(s), and re-envision outdoor spaces.
	RIVER PARK	◉	◉	●	Rearrange interior organization of the building to provide additional usable square footage for children's/teens, provide new study room(s), and explore reconfigured circulation desk and staff area(s).
	TUTT	◉	◉	●	Rearrange interior organization of the building to provide additional usable square footage for children's/teens, provide new study room(s), and explore reconfigured circulation desk and staff area(s).
3	FRANCIS	○	○	●	Update interior finishes in meeting rooms, provide new study room(s), increases shelving capacity, and update mechanical infrastructure.
	GERMAN	○	○	●	Update interior finishes, provide new study room(s), provide enhanced staff entry, and update mechanical infrastructure.
	LAKEVILLE	◉	○	●	Update interior finishes, provide enhanced staff entry, reconfigure lobby, and update mechanical infrastructure.
	NORTH LIBERTY	○	○	●	Update interior finishes, patio area, and update mechanical infrastructure.

- Modest Improvements
- ◉ Substantial Improvements
- Replace

**NOTE:** Locations within each specific tier are listed in alphabetically order.