Blakesburg Public Library
"Building Dreams and Community"

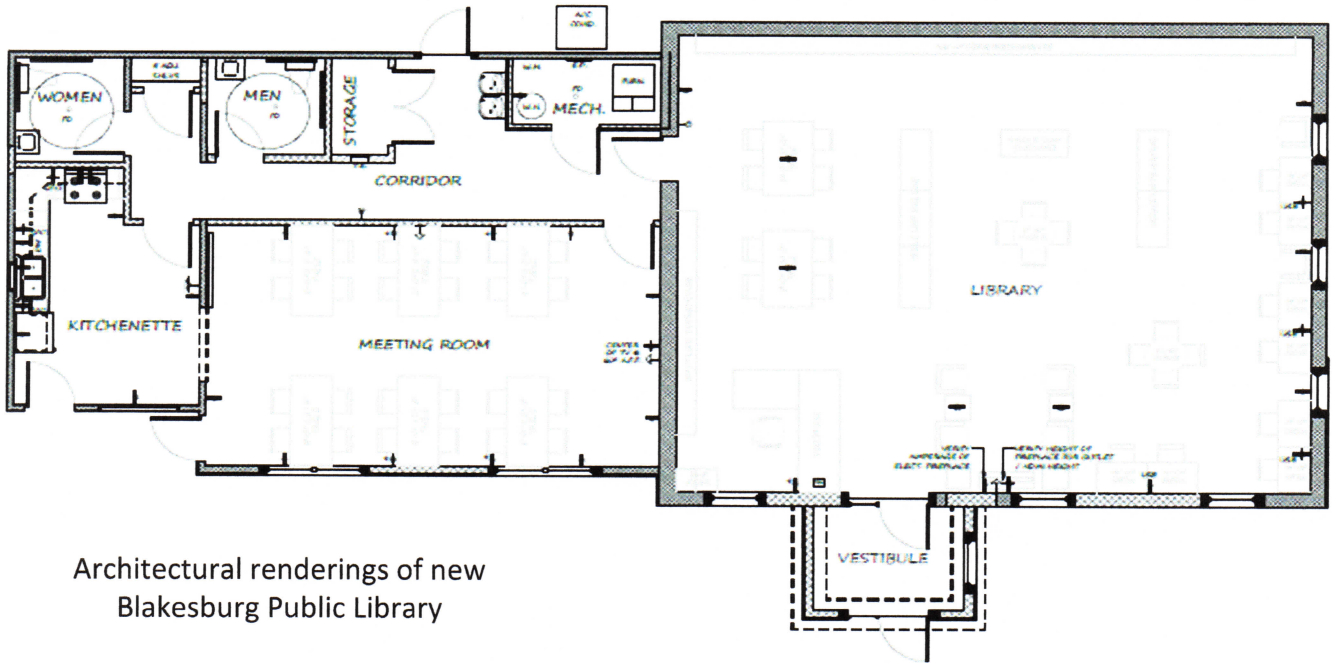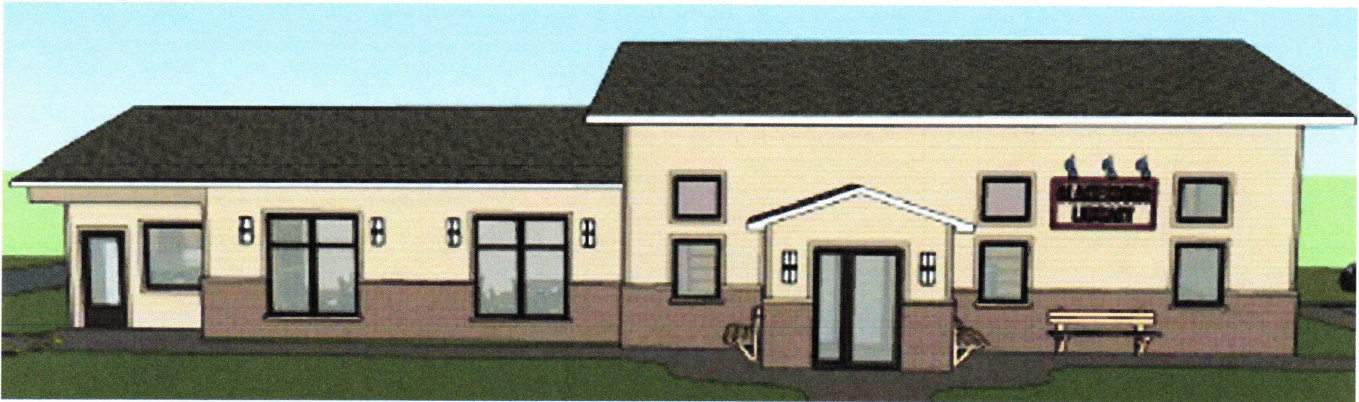# Strategic Plan

2020-2025

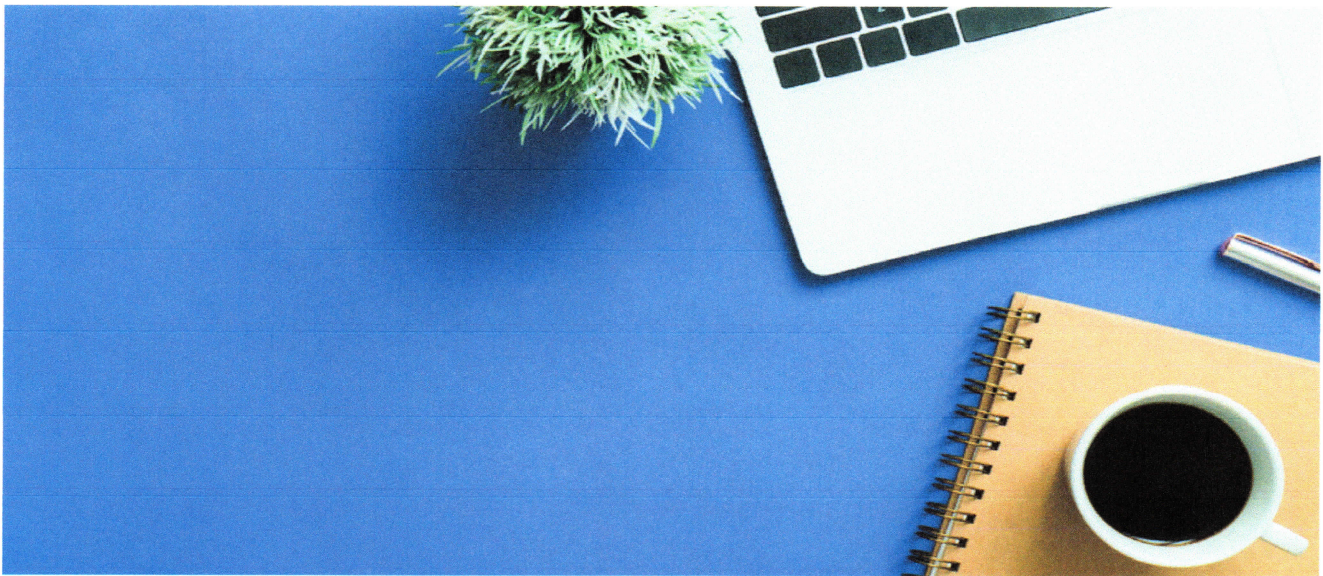### Adopted 12/18/19

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Blakesburg Public Library

INTRODUCTION

As the library prepares to begin a new chapter in its long history, the need for a strategic planning process came into focus as part of the library's 2020 vision. The library had several reasons to begin this undertaking, including preparing for a future move into a new library, meeting revised accreditation standards from the State Library of Iowa in 2020, bringing a sense of focus to library services and programs, and becoming more aware of both the community's and the library's strengths and opportunities.

Beginning in the summer of 2018, the members of the Library Board of Trustees, State Library Southeast Regional Consultant Becky Heil, Library Director Cheryl Talbert and members of the Blakesburg Community met to discuss the community's strengths, wants and needs. This strategic plan to guide the library from 2020 through 2025 grew out of those conversations.

This endeavor would not have been possible without the support and participation of Library Trustees Sonni Deevers (President), Penny Fisher (Secretary), Kathy Hunt, Ed Hannan, and Michael Potts (Board Members); Becky Heil, and members of the community including: Alice Benge, Boyd Brittain, Abby DeWild, Helen Hannan, Ilene Johnson, Jason Leffler, Jentry Leffler, Vera Miller, Dale Rowland, Patty Rowland, Kevin Smith, Helen Theulen, and Johnathan VanGorp.

The library Trustees and staff would like to thank everyone involved for their time and effort in bringing this project to fruition. Your participation is greatly appreciated.

COMMUNITY ANALYSIS

The library employed a couple of methods to compile information about the community including retrieving statistical data from various sources, referring to library statistics, and working with community members to discuss community strengths and weaknesses, wants and needs.

The city of Blakesburg falls into the category of being economically disadvantaged. According to data, the 2016 median income for Blakesburg was $37,083, well below the state median of $52,716 and the national average of $53,482 (http://www.usa.com/blakesburg-ia-income-and-careers.htm).

A United Way study indicated that 18% of the households in the 52536-zip code area are below the Federal Poverty Level and another 26% meet the ALICE threshold. ALICE is an acronym for Asset Limited Income Constrained Employed. According to the ALICE standards, these households earn more than the Federal Poverty Income Level, but less than the basic cost of living for the county (https://www.unitedforalice.org/iowa), resulting in food insecurity and inability to meet basic needs. Just over half (56%) of Wapello County residents are above the ALICE threshold.

The School Digger web site notes that 37.7 percent of students in the Eddyville-Blakesburg-Fremont Community School District qualify for the federal free and reduced lunch program (https://www.schooldigger.com/go/IA/schools/0495000668/school.aspx). Since these children do not have access to meals in the summer, the library partners with the Loving Shepherd Food Pantry to provide simple, nutritious lunches and snacks during the summer months.

There is no cable television service available in Blakesburg, and internet connections range from telephone dial-up, cell phone hot spots, and satellite Wi-Fi service. A digital divide exists within the community as many residents lack a computer or internet access in their home. The library addresses this need by providing eight public access computers with internet access, as well as Wi-Fi access for patrons with their own devices who may have used up their minutes or monthly data allotment and would not have access without the library's services.

Although the Eddyville-Blakesburg-Fremont school district is a 1:1 school, providing each student with an I-pad or laptop computer, not all children have internet access at home, so many bring their device to the library to use the Wi-Fi for school assignments.

Community residents use the library computers to complete work-related training or continuing education courses, conduct research for school homework or projects, and to prepare for college entrance or occupational exams and complete employment-related work including job searches, creating resumes, completing applications or filing unemployment claims. In addition to scanning, printing and faxing services, patrons use library computers to access email, use word processing and other applications, and for recreational purposes.

Blakesburg is home to an elementary school, but junior and senior high school students attend classes in Eddyville, and there is an active home-schooling community in our consolidated school district. Because there are limited activities and programs for city residents, including youth programs, the library provides meeting space for two 4-H groups and Boy Scout or other organizations including the Library Board of Trustees, the elementary Parent-Teacher Organization and the Blakesburg Historical Preservation Society and Loving Shepherd Small Town Christmas committee. The library also provides a variety of public programming events and collaborates with other organizations to provide entertainment and educational opportunities.

Blakesburg was organized in 1844, and is considered a "bedroom" community with most residents working in area cities (Ottumwa, Albia, Eddyville, Oskaloosa, Centerville, etc.). Agriculture, ag-related industries and education are the top employers in the community.

Blakesburg is home to two churches, an historical museum, antique airfield museum, a food pantry, several small businesses, several home-based businesses, and has an active garden club, historical society, Lions Club, community choir, and several youth service and sports organizations.

DEMOGRAPHIC DATA

Community Data. The Blakesburg Public Library serves all members of the community, from birth to old age, from all socio-economic, religious and ethnic backgrounds. The official 2010 census for Blakesburg was 296 citizens, while the 1850-2010 Biennial Censuses & 2018 Annual Population Estimates put the total city population at 289.

The population is 98% white and is evenly split between male and female. People aged 45-54 make up almost 17% of the population, while the next largest groups are those 55-64 and persons 65-72 making up just under 14% each. Residents aged 20 to 24 comprise just under 8% of the population, and those 25-34 make up around 12%. Those from birth to age 19 (combined multiple age ranges) comprise about 20% of the community members. http://www.usa.com/blakesburg-ia-population-and-races.htm). Unemployment is low at 3.5 percent, and the cost of living is 27.9% less than the national average (https://www.bestplaces.net/city/iowa/blakesburg).

The residents of Blakesburg are educated, with 42% of adults having obtained at least a high school diploma or equivalent, and an additional 41% having some post-secondary education including 1% with a Master, Doctorate or Professional degree. Of those with post-secondary training, 34% have some college or an Associate degree and 7% hold a Bachelor's degree. More than two-thirds (67%) of the adults are married, 19% are divorced, and 17% have never been married. All but around 20% of the residents were born in Iowa, and 98% speak English as their primary language (http://www.usa.com/blakesburg-ia-population-and-races.htm).

Library Data. the library had 1,828 visitors (6.2 per capita based on 296 population) in FY19. It circulated 1,497 items (5.05 per capita), which, based on the industry standard of $25 per item, saved its citizens $37,425 if they would have purchased those items. The city's allocation to the library was $4,500 in FY19 ($15.20 per capita), so the residents received a fabulous return on their investment. The library's physical collection consists of 7,752 items (26.18 per capita) worth an estimated $193,800. The library has over 400 library card holders, including city and rural residents, and other libraries, which also borrow items from the library's collection through interlibrary loan.

The library had 858 uses of its computers in FY19 (2.89 per capita). In addition, the library had 1,561 visitors to its web site, and circulated 384 e-books (including e-audio books), and retrieved 94 full-text articles from the library's research databases from the virtual library – these people receive available services 24/7/365 without having to come to the library. The library provided 42 individual programs last year, with 377 people in attendance.

LIBRARY MISSION STATEMENT

"Building Dreams and Community." The Blakesburg Public Library is dedicated to supporting lifelong learning and access to information, knowledge and ideas. It strives to meet its mission of building dreams and community by providing resources, technology, programs, facilities and staff to ensure an educated, enlightened and enriched community.

Our Vision

To be the welcoming heart of our community where all are welcome to learn, discover, create, dream and make connections to help them achieve their goals. To hold the community as the heart of the library, providing services, programming and collections with the community in mind. The library's mission and values guide its daily work and form the foundation for planning.

Our Values

The Library Board of Trustees, staff and volunteers, are committed to the values upheld by the American Library Association and the Library Bill of Rights. The library values:

1. Intellectual freedom – the right of library users to read, seek information and speak as freely as guaranteed by the First Amendment.
2. Equal access to information in a variety of formats for all patrons and technology required for digital access.
3. Fiscal responsibility to the citizens of the community and county.

4. Professionalism and service to community; providing opportunities for Trustees and staff to grow professionally through staff development.
5. Respect for diverse viewpoints and individual differences.

6. Integrity, honesty, ethical behavior, and transparency in all actions and communication.
7. Relationships with community organizations, businesses and civic leaders in order to participate in community growth and improvement.
8. Confidentiality to protect user privacy while respecting individual rights and responsibilities.
9. Providing an accessible, comfortable and welcoming facility.
10. Providing collections, services and programs that reflect community needs and promote life-long learning.

PLANNING PROCESS

The Strategic Planning Process began on April 17, 2018, with the Board of Trustees meeting with State Library Southeast Regional Consultant, Becky Heil to discuss the process. At this meeting Becky explained the process as outlined in *Strategic Planning for Results* by Sandra Nelson. The Trustees worked with Becky to identify possible community stakeholders to invite to future planning sessions, and set dates for those meetings. The Trustees and Library Director identified 43 possible stakeholders from various community service organizations, city government officials, educators, business and financial services employees. This group included city and rural residents, and represented various ages, and genders, and people from different religious backgrounds and political parties.

On June 13, the first stakeholder meeting was held with 12 community members in attendance. Following introductions, Becky Heil facilitated conversations to focus on community aspirations, strengths and challenges or needs.

On July 18, the second stakeholder meeting was held with approximately 10 stakeholders in attendance. At this meeting Becky Heil directed the stakeholders to focus on what the library might be able to do to address community needs. The library director presented demographic and library service data including budget, programs, materials, statistics. The group discussed different service responses.

The Library Trustees met with Becky Heil on November 19, 2018, to receive information based on the community meetings and address the service responses and goals based on community input. The board voted on three service response areas and assigned the library director to write the plan. The Trustees reviewed the draft of the plan on November 19, 2019; and voted to adopt the final plan at its December 18, 2019 meeting.

GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

Service Response I: Know Your Community/Be an Informed Citizen.
Know Your Community: Community Resources and Services.
Residents will have a central source for information about a wide variety of programs, services, and activities provided by community agencies and organizations.
Be an Informed Citizen: Local, National, and World Affairs
Residents will have the information they need to support and promote democracy; fulfill their civic responsibilities at the local, state and national levels; and fully participate in community decision-making.

Goal 1: Citizens find information about the community through library resources.

Objective 1.A: The library will compile a community calendar to post on its web site including school, city government and community service organization meetings and events.
> **Target audience**: All community members.
> **Timeframe:** Begin compiling community meeting and event information in January 2020, update the calendar on the library website on a monthly basis before the 1st of each month thereafter.
> **Measure:** The number of times community events calendar is accessed.
> **Staff:** Library Director.

Objective 1.B: The Library will update the library's web site using the new program to provide links to community resources and information in a more user-friendly format. Library Director will schedule training with state library via webinars as they become available in Southeast Iowa.
> **Target audience:** All community members.
> **Timeframe:** 2020 – 2021 to complete website update; then ongoing with monthly event updates as needed.

Measure: Completion of updated library website and number of times the library website is accessed.
Staff: Library Director.

Objective 1.C: The Library will host a community bulletin board for organizations and individuals to post public information about upcoming events meeting public display policies, as well as the library to post a printed copy of its virtual calendar of events.
    Target audience: All community members, especially organizations with upcoming events.
    Timeframe: In January 2020, clean bulletin board weekly to remove dated material.
    Measure: Maintain statistics on how much the bulletin board is used.
    Staff: Library Director and Assistant(s), Library Board of Trustees.

Goal 2: Volunteers find a way to connect with service organizations.

Objective 2.A: The library will compile a list of community service organizations with contact information for each group.
    Target audience: All community members.
    Timeframe: Begin gathering organization data and contact information in March 2020, complete list to post on library website by June 30, 2020.
    Measure: Number of organizations included in the library's community service list, and number of times the list is accessed on the website.
    Staff: Library Director and Assistant(s).

Objective 2.B: Library will host volunteer fair to pull together group of people who want to become involved, and have them complete form to list their interests, and areas in which they can help (computer skills, physical labor, planning, publicity, fund-raising, tutoring, technology, etc.). Compile a list of volunteers to share with organizations seeking assistance and provide list of organizations who need volunteers to individuals seeking volunteer opportunities.
    Target audience: All community members.
    Timeframe: July 2020, create a volunteer skills form. August 2020, hold a volunteer fair at which participants can complete a volunteer skill assessment form, learn about organizations needing volunteers, and try to connect a group requiring a certain skillset. Also provide a forum for organizations to detail the types of volunteer services they need. This should help connect volunteers and organizations who need them.
    Measure: Number of organizations included in the library's community service list, and number of times the list is accessed on the website.
    Staff: Library Director and Assistant(s).

Goal 3: Residents and newcomers to the community have access to brochures promoting community events and organizations.

Objective 3.A: Library will display organization informational brochures on its bulletin board or in a literature rack so patrons can help themselves to the information they need.

Target audience: All community members.

Timeframe: Raise funds to purchase a literature rack beginning September 2020, have it installed and available to the public by January 2021.

Measure: Number of brochures made available to the public; track how often brochures need to be replaced to see if patrons are accessing/using them.

Staff: Library Director and Assistant(s).

Objective 3.B: Library will teach a class on how to use Word or Publisher to create brochures or other marketing materials for individuals or community service organization members so they can create brochures to be distributed at the library and at their own site.

Target audience: Community service organizations and others seeking to learn how to create brochures or other marketing materials.

Timeframe: Hold series of three classes beginning in March 2021 through May 2021.

Measure: Maintain statistics on how many participate in the classes; survey participants to have them evaluate the effectiveness of the instruction.

Staff: Library Director.

Service Response II: Make Decisions/Understand How to Find, Evaluate and Use Information.

Make Informed Decisions: Health, Wealth, and Other Life Choices. Residents will have the resources they need to identify and analyze risks, benefits and alternatives before making decisions that affect their lives.

Understand How to Find, Evaluate, and Use Information: Information Fluency. Residents will know when they need information to resolve an issue or answer a question and will have the skills to search for, locate, evaluate and effectively use information to meet their needs.

Goal 4: Adults will acquire information technology skills.

Objective 4.A: Library will offer monthly programs related to digital technology and resources. This series of courses for adults will include basic computer and internet skills, accessing databases, email, social media, cyber safety, and applications such as Google Docs, Word, Publisher, Excel, and how to locate, evaluate and use information from the internet to answer their information need.

Target audience: Adults in the community who would like to learn or improve technology skills.

Timeframe: March 2020 prepare course schedule; June 2020 market upcoming course; August 2020 start monthly courses; continue through cycle of courses. Offer the series each year through 2024, revising as needed.

Measure: Number of courses offered; number of participants; participant evaluation/survey forms for feedback; measure adult computer usage to see if it increases over prior period.

Staff: Library Director.

Objective 4.B: Library will promote use of BrainFuse and other programs such as TechBoomers.com so adults can learn technology and computer skills through self-paced courses and self-directed learning.

Target audience: Adults.

Timeframe: By May 2020, will create or print marketing materials to promote these programs and offer one-on-one basic instruction on how to access the programs for drop-ins.

Measure: Maintain statistics on numbers seeking additional information and accessing the programs.

Staff: Library Director, Assistant(s) and Library Board of Trustees.

Objective 4.C: Library will schedule Tech Times as part of its annual Summer Reading Program so adults can drop in during any of the scheduled times for individual technology assistance using the library's resources or their own device.

Target audience: Adults.

Timeframe: Beginning summer of 2020, and continuing through 2024.

Measure: Maintain statistics on the number of adults who take advantage of Tech Time to learn new skills, or increase their knowledge and abilities to use technology.

Staff: Library Director and Library Assistant(s).

Goal 5: Teens find programs to promote healthy eating and healthy activities.

Objective 5.A: Library will develop and promote a physical and virtual collection of teen resources related to health, exercise, and nutrition so students can read and learn about healthy choices.

Target audience: Teens and young adults.

Timeframe: Beginning July 2020, focus collection development on teen health resources. Purchase and catalog new materials by June 2021, add website and update websites continuously through June 2025.

Measure: Maintain circulation statistics on teen materials circulated.

Staff: Library Director and Library Assistant(s).

Objective 5.B: Plan physical activities for teens such as Wii-U gaming events including Dance Party, Wipe-Out, and sports games, geo-caching, bowling, archery, etc.

Target audience: Teens and young adults.

Timeframe: Beginning fall 2021, schedule quarterly events to engage teens and youth in physical activities.

Measure: Maintain statistics on the number of participants in the events; survey the participants to obtain their evaluation of the events to assist with future planning.

Staff: Library Director and Library Assistant(s).

Objective 5.C: Collaborate with County Extension Service, Public Health Nurse, Hy-Vee Dietician or other volunteer to hold an event or series of events to promote healthy snacks and meals in which the participants will prepare a dish or snack.

Target audience: Teens and young adults.

Timeframe: By June 2022 (or when we are in the new library facility with full kitchen facilities and meeting room so we have space for this event.

Measure: Maintain statistics on the number of events, the number of participants in the events and through participant evaluation of each events.
Staff: Library Director and Library Assistant(s).

Objective 5.D: Investigate the possibility of starting a combination book club/exercise group at the library.

> **Target audience:** Teens, young adults and/or adults.
> **Timeframe:** By June 2022 (or when we are in the new library facility so we have space for this event, for as long as we have participation.
> **Measure:** Survey library participants to determine the level of interest in a weekly exercise group with monthly book club. If there is enough interest, we will work with a volunteer to present information on a variety healthy exercise plans, weight-lifting techniques, yoga, and exercise/fitness goal-setting, then plan a schedule, hold events, and maintain statistics on the number of events, number of participants, and the level of satisfaction with the program based on participant evaluations.
> **Staff:** Library Director and Library Assistant(s) and volunteer(s).

Goal 6: School age kids will become cyber-safe, savvy internet users.

Objective 6.A: Post Library Internet Policy and Tips for Cyber Safety near youth computers.

> **Target audience:** School age children
> **Timeframe:** By March 2020.
> **Measure:** Successfully completing the posting of materials to teach youth about cyber safety. **Staff:** Library Director and Library Assistant(s).

Objective 6.B: Invite a member of local law enforcement to speak at a public event on cyber safety and cyber-bullying. Library Board of Trustees will coordinate refreshments and associated cyber safety activity to reinforce learning.

> **Target audience:** Youth and their parents.
> **Timeframe:** Spring 2021.
> **Measure:** Maintain statistics on the number of participants and participant evaluation of the event.
> **Staff:** Library Director, Library Assistant(s) and Library Board of Trustees.

Service Response III: Visit a Comfortable Place.
Visit a Comfortable Place: Physical and Virtual Spaces. Residents will have safe and welcoming spaces to meet and interact with others or to sit quietly and read and will have open and accessible virtual spaces that support networking.

Goal 7: Youth will have a safe and comfortable space that is age appropriate.

Objective 7.A: The library will provide a variety of spaces for adults and youth that is inviting, welcoming, comfortable, clean, safe, and suited to activities such as gaming, computing, reading quietly, studying, collaborating, and communicating with their peers and others.

> **Target audience:** Teens, young adults and children.
> **Timeframe:** January 2020, re-imagine and re-arrange, if needed, the current library space to best facilitate youth and adult areas and furnishings, and continue working with Friends of Blakesburg Public Library Executive Board and Curtis Architecture and Design to plan youth library spaces in the new library, which we hope to move into during the 2022 fiscal year. Youth spaces will feature appropriately sized and visually appealing furnishings; will purchase new lounge chairs, café tables, etc., as needed for the new facility.
> **Measure:** Completion of reorganizing current youth space in library and successful move into new facility. Will maintain statistics on youth visits to the library and use of the various spaces.
> **Staff:** Library Director, Library Assistant(s), Library Board of Trustees and Friends of the Blakesburg Public Library Executive Board.

Objective 7.B: The Library will create a maker space to spark creativity of youth and adults.

> **Target audience:** Children, teens, and adults.
> **Timeframe:** August 2020, library will seek grant opportunities to fund a Maker Space grant to purchase materials and equipment to create and organize the materials in a Library Maker Space that will appeal to youth and adults. This will be an ongoing project through 2024, as the library adds new materials, equipment and tools to the Maker Space.
> **Measure:** This goal will be measured by successful completion of the creation of a Maker Space, and continued support of building the collection of materials and equipment available for patron use. Statistics on use of the materials and equipment can be maintained to measure success of the Maker Space. Surveys can be implemented to help determine future Maker Space needs.
> **Staff:** Library Director and Library Assistant(s).

Goal 8: Local artists have a place to display their work.

Objective 8.A: The new library facility will feature a gallery where local artists will be encouraged to display their work.

> **Target audience:** All members of the community.
> **Timeframe:** Estimated time frame to move into new facility is by June 2022; at that time begin marketing availability of gallery space, reach out to local artists, and publicize art exhibits and receptions via the library's web site, social media, posters and local news media. This will be ongoing through 2025 and beyond.
> **Measure:** Maintain statistics on the number of art exhibitions and attendance at receptions so patrons can meet the artist.

Staff: Library Director, Library Assistant(s) and Library Board of Trustees.

Objective 8.B: Collaborate with local school district to display student artwork and hold reception for the student artists.

> **Target audience:** School age-children and teens, their parents, friends and family and the general public.
>
> **Timeframe:** Estimated time frame to move into new facility is by June 2022; at that time begin marketing availability of gallery space, reach out to local artists, and publicize art exhibits and receptions via the library's web site, social media, posters and local news media. This will be ongoing through 2025 and beyond.
>
> **Measure:** Maintain statistics on the number of art exhibitions and attendance at receptions so patrons can meet the artist.
>
> **Staff:** Library Director, Library Assistant(s) and Library Board of Trustees.

Goal 9: Citizens find a variety of both formal and informal meeting spaces.

Objective 9.A: The Library will provide formal and informal spaces for patrons to gather to communicate, collaborate, to spend time quietly reading, and provide space for public meetings and private use consistent with library policy.

> **Target audience:** All community members.
>
> **Timeframe:** The library will create/revise a meeting room policy for use beginning January 2020, and for when the library moves into the new library (anticipated by June 2022). The new facility will have a separate public meeting room.
>
> **Measure:** Library staff will maintain statistics on the public meeting room by outside groups, both non-profit community organizations and private use.
>
> **Staff:** Library Director and Library Assistant(s).

Goal 10: Work with other community organizations to collaborate on community service project and facilitate public communication.

Objective 10.A: Library will continue to collaborate with current community partners (Loving Shepherd Food Pantry, Blakesburg Historical Preservation Society, Blakesburg Ball Parents, Boot and Blue Jeans 4H Club and Clover Kids 4H Club, Eddyville-Blakesburg-Fremont Community Schools, etc.) and seek out new possibilities for collaboration for programs and services.

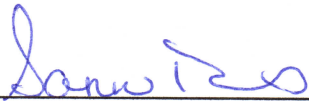> **Target audience:** All community members.
>
> **Timeframe:** Present through 2025 and beyond.
>
> **Measure:** Library will maintain statistics on the number and types of collaborative events with partners, and number of attendees at collaborative events.
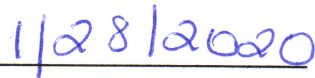>
> **Staff:** Library Director, Library Assistants and Library Board of Trustees.
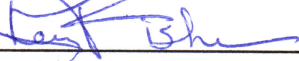
Signature Page

This Strategic Plan was undertaken by the Library Director, Board of Trustees, State Library Consultant and members of the community from summer of 2018 through the fall months of 2019. The Board reviewed a draft of the strategic plan to make recommendations for changes. The final draft of the Strategic Plan was adopted at the December 18, 2019 board meeting. The plan will be reviewed each year at the regular monthly board meeting each April to allow for revisions and planning for the upcoming fiscal year. By signing this document, the Board of Trustee Members and Library Director affirm that they will complete their assigned tasks to assist in completing the library's goals and objectives contained within the plan.
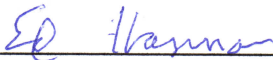
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Sonni Deevers, Board President   Date

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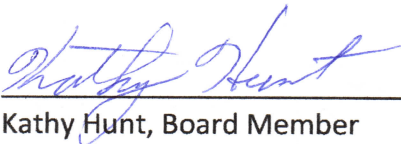Penny Fisher, Board Secretary   Date

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Ed Hannan, Board Member   Date

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Kathy Hunt, Board Member   Date

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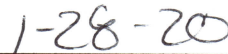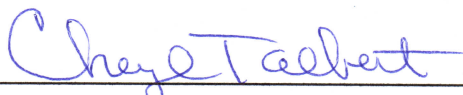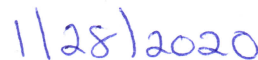Theresa DeWitt, Board Member   Date

_____   1/28/2020
Cheryl Talbert, Library Director   Date