



# catawba county library system

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MAKING. LIVING. BETTER.

## Strategic Plan 2021-2025

Developed October 2019 to August 2020



Facilitated by  
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# Special Thanks

The library would like to thank everyone who provided critical input into our strategic planning process. We gathered the opinions of over 700 Catawba County residents through focus groups, community forums, surveys, and interviews. We especially appreciate the contributions made during this unprecedented time of global pandemic.

We are deeply grateful to the following organizations and agencies for their dedicated service to our planning effort.

- Catawba County Friends of the Library
- Claremont Friends of the Library
- Sherrills Ford-Terrell Friends of the Library
- Catawba County Library Board of Trustees
- Catawba County Library Staff
- Catawba County Interagency Council
- The Latinx Community Focus Group
- Racial Justice and Reconciliation Group
- Leadership Catawba and Catawba County Leadership Academy Graduates
- Cindy's Starlite Café
- Discovery High School, Mr. Wilson's Class
- Catawba County Public Health Department
- Catawba County Department of Social Services
- The Chamber of Catawba County
- ReThinking Libraries Consulting, Rob Cullin and Janet Nelson

We are excited about moving forward in connecting with and empowering our citizens in the coming years with these community-driven vision, mission, and goals at the forefront. Many goals are contingent upon funding availability, and these initiatives will be prioritized for local funding alongside other critical County services. The level of volunteerism, community support, and citizen engagement will also impact the pace of implementation. In light of this reality, we will take advantage of all local, regional and national funding sources and harness the community's volunteer energy to bring this vision to life in a way that acknowledges the County's current and future financial condition.

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# Catawba County Library System

## 2021-2025 Strategic Plan

**Vision** | We aspire to help people.... Connect. Explore. Grow

**Mission** | We commit to... Empowering lives and building community by bringing people, information, and ideas together

**Values** | We believe in...

1. Providing exceptional service with dignity and respect
2. Connecting people with empowering resources and expertise
3. Enhancing early and lifelong learning
4. Collaborating to build strong, inclusive communities
5. Ensuring equity in access, engagement, and employment

**Actions** | We help our community thrive by...

1. Inspiring children and adults with lifelong learning opportunities
2. Connecting people with the information they need when they need it
3. Connecting people to empowering, innovative digital and technology services
4. Strengthening community through outreach and partnerships
5. Engaging people with positive learning experiences, creativity, and storytelling
6. Fostering innovation, collaboration, and community connections

# Goal 1: Connect

The Library will build connections and expand personal and community horizons – bringing people, information, and ideas together – anytime and anyplace.

We will connect our community to information, resources, and ideas: physically and digitally, inside and outside the walls of our buildings. We will facilitate equitable access and a meaningful exchange of information.

**Connect** is about how we bring people together with empowering high-quality resources – and each other.

## Objectives:

- Community has access to resources and services when and where they need them
- Users attest to getting the information and assistance they need from the library to engage and live better lives
- Community-Library partnerships are strengthened and impactful
- Community members agree that the library contributes to making.living.better in Catawba County
- Community has enhanced awareness and engagement with the library

## Connect in action looks like...

- Citizens connected to the information and tools they need when and where they need them
- Library to Go and Outreach to underserved populations; potentially through library outpost or kiosk
- Collaborative work and partnerships focused on early literacy, workforce development, digital literacy
- Collaborative work and partnership with K-64 and schools, including all access cards
- Enhanced civic engagement and community conversations
- Improved community awareness through marketing and engagement efforts
- A welcome package for newcomers, including businesses, the Chamber, and Economic Development Corporation

# Goal 2: Explore

The Library will empower lives and build community with vibrant physical and digital destinations for exploration, learning, innovation, and growth.

We will enhance the quality of library facilities, spaces, technologies, and resources to entice exploration, spark curiosity, foster lifelong learning, and enhance quality of life.

**Explore** is all about fostering the community's passions for discovery, knowledge, and personal growth.

## Objectives:

- Equitable access to vibrant, welcoming library spaces that enhance quality of life
- Enhanced access to early literacy initiatives and engagement with early literacy spaces
- Community members have increased confidence in personal learning, skills, and abilities
- Increased access to and improved usability of robust digital resources and services
- Community members attend programs and agree that the library plays an essential role in early literacy, lifelong learning, digital literacy, and economic development
- Enhanced access to arts and culture resources and engaging programming for all ages
- Community has increased satisfaction and usage of library services, spaces, equipment, and resources

## Explore in action looks like...

- Libraries as destinations for interactive experiences, education, and civic engagement
- Robust user friendly and engaging web presence and portal to online content
- Access to the latest technologies for education, business and personal goals
- Interactive exploration and learning areas for all stages of life including early literacy, STEAM, maker-spaces, gardening, health and wellness, and small business.
- Enhanced and inclusive 21st Century facilities and spaces responding to diverse community needs

# Goal 3: Grow

The Library will foster empowering connections and partnerships within the community to help people and communities thrive.

We will bring together people, partners, and organizations - building community and helping drive equity of access, innovation, and sustainability.

**Grow** is all about collaboratively addressing critical challenges facing the community by providing equitable access to the tools, resources, and spaces people need to succeed and thrive.

## Objectives:

- Increased outward focus on building partnerships aligned with community needs
- Improved community health outcomes
- Advancement in workforce and economic development from impactful library contributions
- Significant gains in early literacy and educational attainment through library programming and resources
- Residents' quality of life will be positively impacted by the library
- Community organizations are positively impacted through collaboration with the library
- Library staff are actively engaged in pursuing community initiatives

## Grow in action looks like...

- More people using the library as a result of eliminating barriers to service (ex: eliminating late fees)
- Increasing county-wide internet access with equitable access to the latest and best technologies available
- Increasing capacity to achieve shared goals through enhanced partnerships with schools, public health, social services, chamber, CVCC, etc.
- Better prepared workforce through engaging and rewarding volunteer experiences at the library
- Equitable access to spaces and resources with a focus on reaching those currently underserved
- Robust programming and resources focused on mental health and well-being
- Facilitating community wide events including festivals, maker-fairs, job fairs, and entrepreneur fairs.
- Libraries as community conveners, bringing other agencies, municipalities and groups together
- Co-locating future or existing libraries with complimentary agencies like the Cooperative Extension to benefit from shared resources, training, programming, spaces, etc.
- More citizens and families reading through expanded access to reading materials found in Little Free Libraries and remote library access sites throughout the community
- Engaged Friends of the Library groups supporting library goals and advocating in the community
- Increased communication and advocacy with county and municipal leaders to further develop collaborative initiatives, spaces, resources, and funding
- Exploring options for expanding and diversifying revenue sources and fundraising opportunities, i.e., dedicated revenue sources, capital project funds
- Expanding grant funding opportunities with focus on sustainability
- Exploring the development of a community-based mentoring program

# The Process

The Catawba County Library System strategic planning process for 2021-2024 began in October 2019 and completed in August 2020, under the guidance of the Catawba County Library System's Library Director and Board of Trustees. Library consultants Rob Cullin and Janet Nelson of Kimberly Bolan and Associates (KBA) facilitated the process.

## The Process: The Library's strategic planning process included the following key areas:

**Gathering and analyzing community input and data:** This project began with the collection of data including benchmarking, demographic analysis, and collection analysis. In addition, Library staff and Catawba County residents were involved in exploring ideas and possibilities for the library as a thriving 21st-century library. In-person stakeholder sessions were conducted by KBA in October and December 2019. Participation was diverse and included the general public, parents and caregivers, educators, community leaders and partners, senior citizens, students, Library staff members, and library advisory board members. Frequent library users and infrequent and non-users were involved and ranged in ages, ethnicity, and backgrounds. These stakeholders participated in the discussions regarding the Library's services and strategic future. In addition to the stakeholder sessions, an online survey was conducted in February 2020. Those surveyed included a strong mix of library users as well as infrequent and non-users. Participants ranged from 12 to over 76 years of age.

**Developing solutions:** Due to the coronavirus pandemic, the originally planned in-person Strategic Planning Retreat in April 2020 was moved to July and August 2020. During the retreats, all data and community input, along with updated staff input, was reviewed with a planning team of ten people, consisting of the library director, staff members, library advisory board members, and community members and leaders. Using the data, the group worked to establish essential strategic areas, specific goals, and related investments required to implement the goals. The envisioned plan is designed to help the library thrive over the next five years and beyond.

**What We Heard:** The community focus groups and online survey explored numerous topics, including customer service, youth services, adult services, outreach services, programming, technology and digital services, facilities/buildings, collections and resources, and overall 21st-century public library best practices. Detailed summaries of all stakeholder feedback and online survey results were provided in separate documents to Library leadership and reviewed in depth during the Strategic Planning Retreat. All stakeholder input, data analysis, and follow-up exploration work led to the strategic focuses, goals, and investments outlined in this document.

**Evaluation & Collaboration:** With the goal of making progress in the defined areas and outcomes over the next three years, Library and county administration, staff, and advisory board will regularly evaluate their progress and achievements. Objectives set forth in this plan will be accomplished as outlined and will be reviewed regularly with these stakeholders. This balanced and systematic process also emphasizes that the resulting plan will be iterative and evolve substantially over the next several years.

**Roadmap for Success:** This plan provides a path to results, as illustrated in this document and companion annual work plans. The intent is to guide the library with a plan that can live, breathe, and be readily implemented on a

day-to-day and year-to-year basis. Each year an annual work plan will be developed, providing specific measurable objectives aligned with the overall strategic plan.

**The keys to the Library's implementation, evaluation and, ultimately, the success of this strategic plan will be:**

- A thorough understanding of the plan, as well as active involvement in implementation by staff, county administration, and library advisory board
- Frequent and ongoing communication between administration and staff
- Frequent and ongoing communication between the Library and the community
- Active collaboration between the Library's advisory board, administration, county leadership, staff, outside organizations, and the community