

LEROY COLLINS LEON COUNTY PUBLIC LIBRARY



# Strategize to Energize

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Inside the Essential Libraries Initiative





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# Today's Discussion

## TOPICS TO BE COVERED

About Us

Strategic Planning Overview

Developing the Strategic Plan

Implementing the Strategic Plan

Assessing and Evaluating

Wrap-Up



# About Us

## LEROY COLLINS LEON COUNTY PUBLIC LIBRARY

- Seven locations throughout the county.
- Sit within County Government.
- Serving almost 300,000 permanent residents.
  - Nearly 66,000 students between two major universities and one state college.
- Robust Friends of the Library.
- Active Library Advisory Board (Focus Group, not a governing Board).
- Strategic Plan is called the Essential Libraries Initiative (ELI).



# Strategic Planning Overview

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Tactics is knowing what to do when there is something to do; strategy is knowing what to do when there is nothing to do.

Savielly Tartakower, Polish-French Chess Player

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# Strategic Planning

## PURPOSE

The Essential Libraries Initiative served as a re-envisioning of the Library System to address the changing needs of residents and trends in library use.

The ELI included:

- Enhancements to programs and services.
- Capital improvements.
- Position reclassifications.
- Policy revisions.



# Key Information

## Who

- County Administration was involved in every step of the process.
- The County hired a professional company to conduct surveys, facilitate listening sessions, and complete in-depth analysis of the results.

## Timeline

- The process took two years from the research phase to implementation.



# Developing the Strategic Plan

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# Identifying Community Needs

## Engaging Community Stakeholders

- Listening session with 25 representatives from a broad range of non-profits and other agencies. Attendees:
  - Ranked proposed library programs.
  - Made recommendations.
  - Discussed how the Library could better partner to address community issues.

## Targeted Community Listening Sessions

- Listening sessions for the community scheduled at all library locations in March 2020; however, only three occurred.
  - Main.
  - One of the library's rural branches.
  - Teen Advisory Board.





# Identifying Community Needs

## Community Survey

An extensive, community-wide survey was developed to gather feedback from the community at large. Over 4,700 surveys were completed. The survey included:

- Multiple choice questions about demographics, perceptions of the Library and staff, needs of the community, and reactions to the Library's proposed focus areas.
- Additional question for respondents without a library card to dig further into why they don't have one.
- Open-ended question to gather any additional feedback respondents wanted to share.



Do you have a library card?

	ALL	GENDER		RACE				AGE			ZIP CODE		
	ALL	F	M	W	B	H	O	18-34	35-54	55+	Leon County (NET)	Outside of Leon County	Outside of Florida
Base	3,583	2,452	1,011	2,509	503	134	247	596	1,076	1,699	3,299	102	36
Yes	77%	80%	71%	81%	67%	80%	69%	64%	76%	83%	78%	64%	49%
Yes, but I don't know if it's still active	12%	12%	12%	11%	14%	7%	17%	14%	15%	10%	12%	8%	24%
No	10%	8%	16%	7%	17%	10%	13%	20%	9%	7%	9%	29%	28%
Don't know	1%	1%	2%	1%	1%	2%	1%	3%	1%	1%	1%	0%	0%

More than three-quarters of respondents (77%) have a library card; an additional 12% say they have a card, but don't know if it is still active.

- Women (80%) were more likely than men (71%) to have a library card.
- White (81%) and Hispanic (80%) respondents were more likely to have a library card than black respondents (67%) or those identifying as “Other” (69%).
- The likelihood of having a library card increases with the age of respondents.

	ALL	ZIP CODE																
	ALL	32301	32302	32303	32304	32305	32306	32307	32308	32309	32310	32311	32312	32313	32314	32315	32317	32362
Base	3,583	366	7	581	221	134	16	5	396	492	114	256	490	14	4	1	252	5
Yes	77%	74%	55%	76%	66%	79%	14%	56%	80%	88%	65%	76%	82%	44%	71%	100%	87%	56%
Yes, but I don't know if it's still active	12%	14%	35%	14%	13%	13%	33%	0%	9%	8%	11%	14%	11%	10%	15%	0%	9%	15%
No	10%	11%	10%	9%	20%	7%	44%	44%	9%	3%	23%	9%	5%	41%	14%	0%	5%	30%
Don't know	1%	1%	0%	1%	1%	1%	9%	0%	1%	1%	1%	1%	1%	5%	0%	0%	0%	0%

Two ZIP codes that appeared to have the highest ratio of respondents *lacking* a library card were 32310 (23%) and 32304 (20%).

Please tell us why you don't have a library card:

	ALL	GENDER		RACE				AGE			ZIP CODE		
	ALL	F	M	W	B	H	O	18-34	35-54	55+	Leon County (NET)	Outside of Leon County	Outside of Florida
Base	310	161	136	171	91	15	33	108	83	103	263	22	10
Everything I would need at a library I can get from somewhere else	25%	22%	30%	35%	17%	40%	18%	31%	23%	22%	29%	6%	7%
Library hours are too restrictive, or they don't match my schedule	13%	14%	13%	11%	16%	7%	12%	18%	13%	6%	13%	22%	15%
Getting a library card is too inconvenient	11%	11%	12%	11%	11%	13%	18%	13%	11%	9%	11%	10%	22%
I don't feel welcome at the library	1%	1%	1%	1%	0%	0%	12%	2%	0%	2%	1%	0%	8%
Other	58%	61%	52%	53%	62%	47%	49%	52%	59%	64%	54%	68%	70%

The leading specific reason respondents did not have a library card was that “everything I would need at a library I can get from somewhere else,” chosen by 25% of respondents.

- White respondents (35%) were significantly more likely than black respondents (17%) to choose this option. While Hispanic respondents appear to have an even greater likelihood of selecting this option (40%), the low response rate among Hispanic respondents (15 responses) means that this rate is not statistically different from the population.
- The next most common reason, “library hours are too restrictive, or they don't match my schedule,” was mostly driven by respondents ages 18-34, with 18%.

5	Listening Session	Continue to expand the Library's digital collection.
6	Listening Session	Continue to establish partnerships with local partnerships to work toward common goals.
7	Listening Session	Create more coworking spaces as well as spaces for community meetings and gatherings.
8	Listening Session	Considering placing coffee shops at libraries.
9	Listening Session	Ensure Library spaces and building are accessible to all.
10	Listening Session	Consider partnerships with other organizations to promote library card registration (Clerk of Courts, Leon County Schools, etc.)

190	Survey	I often wish the library carried more older books. Many times, books that I have wanted to get cannot be found at our library - particularly children and youth books. We need fewer popular/trendy books (fare akin to Dork Diaries) and more well-written classic books. With more higher-quality reading materials available, our community's children have more options to read books that challenge/build both their characters and their thinking.
237	Survey	The book collection is woefully outdated and inadequate.

# Researching Library Trends

## Library Tours

County staff, representatives from the Knight Creative Communities Institute, and Friends of the Library visited five award-winning library systems across the Southeast Region. These library tours were funded through a grant from the Knight Foundation.

## Research Publications

County staff explored the Aspen Institute's report "Rising to the Challenge: Re-Envisioning Public Libraries", which outlines practical steps libraries can take to boost their public profile, create new opportunities, and foster conversations about becoming centers of learning, innovation, and creativity.



# Making it Accessible

LERROY COLLINS  
LEON COUNTY  
PUBLIC LIBRARY  
*Learn. Engage. Innovate.*

## ESSENTIAL LIBRARIES INITIATIVE

UPDATED OCTOBER 2024

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**Leon County Board of County Commissioners:** (From left) District 3 Commissioner Rick Minor, At-Large Commissioner Nick Maddox, At-Large Commissioner Carolyn D. Cummings, District 4 Commissioner Brian Welch (Chairman), District 2 Commissioner Christian Caban (Vice-Chairman), District 1 Commissioner Bill Proctor, and District 5 Commissioner David T. O'Keefe.

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## LEON COUNTY GOVERNMENT ESSENTIAL LIBRARIES

**VINCENT S. LONG**  
COUNTY ADMINISTRATOR

On behalf of Leon County Government, I am excited to present Leon County's Essential Libraries Initiative (ELI). The ELI re-envision's County libraries to better serve our community's changing needs both now and in the future. According to the Aspen Institute, libraries are no longer book warehouses. Rather, they are critical social infrastructure and integral to the community's continued resilience and overall well-being.

Approved by the Board of County Commissioners in June 2021, the ELI guides the Library System's daily actions to serve and support citizens as they learn new skills, engage with the community, and pursue creative interests for the whole family. Part of the ELI also includes renovations to library facilities, including a \$3.4 million capital improvement project at the Main Library focused on modernizing more than 40,000 square feet of space with new meeting rooms, a workforce development hub, and so much more.

Leon County has long recognized the significant role our libraries have in serving and supporting citizens of all ages and abilities. As the needs of the community evolve, demands for digital content, gathering spaces, and interactive programming continue to grow. To better align our priorities with the needs of the people we serve, the County gathered input from thousands of citizens and community partners to develop the ELI, ensuring continued relevance of County libraries. The plan you are now holding serves as a road map to grow that relevance in many different ways.

From engaging programming to facility enhancements, citizens can already see the ELI being implemented throughout our Library System. And as we plan for the future, we will continue to engage our citizens in transforming County libraries into centers of learning, engagement, and innovation.


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**PAMELA MONROE**  
DIRECTOR,  
LERROY COLLINS LEON COUNTY  
PUBLIC LIBRARY SYSTEM

The Essential Libraries Initiative (ELI) is a visionary plan for our Library System that was created with your input and designed to meet your needs. Using information gathered through internal reviews, research on best practices of award-winning libraries, interdepartmental collaboration, and a wide range of community feedback, this exciting strategic plan leads the way to a vibrant, community-focused Library System. We appreciate the participation of so many in the planning process. The ELI focus areas and priorities are direct results of listening sessions with citizens, community partners and stakeholders, and close to 5,000 survey responses from library users and non-users alike. We are so excited for the opportunity to engage and serve even more citizens with new, relevant programs, materials, and services. Since 2021, we have implemented action items and enhancements to library facilities, including the renovation of the downtown Main Library, which will continue to allow us to meet the current and emerging needs of the citizens we serve. As you explore the ELI, we hope you'll see how it is shaping the library to positively impact our community for generations to come.

# Making it Accessible


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**FOCUS AREA**  
**LITERACY AND LIFELONG LEARNING**

To serve as a resource in developing the skills needed to be successful socially, intellectually, financially, and technologically at any age by promoting traditional and non-traditional forms of literacy. (L)

Priority	Action Items
<b>L1</b> Champion adult and youth literacy as the foundation for learning and discovery.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Host literacy programs and events that support the library's collection and resources to encourage youth and adults to access and use the library's materials.</li> <li>Curate and maintain an up-to-date collection of books and materials that help reinforce literacy skills at home and contribute to a love of reading.</li> <li>Offer a robust summer reading program that keeps youth and adults engaged with reading skills development and encourages patrons of all ages to make reading a lifelong habit.</li> </ul>
<b>L2</b> Provide technology training for all ages to ensure a digitally literate community.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Offer basic and intermediate digital literacy training programs to all ages.</li> <li>Help decrease the number of residents impacted by the digital divide by providing access to resources.</li> </ul>
<b>L3</b> Support lifelong education for seniors and retirees with programs that entertain, educate, and provide connections to community resources.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Partner with local organizations to develop workshops and events focused on the interests and financial, mental, and emotional well-being of seniors and their caregivers.</li> <li>Host programs that help promote social connections through a shared interest, such as book clubs, crafts, and games.</li> </ul>
<b>L4</b> Develop early learning resources for parents and guardians to teach their children the skills they need to succeed in school.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Host story times and programs that model early learning skills using the five early literacy practices of Sing, Talk, Read, Write, and Play.</li> <li>Create and provide book lists and early literacy tip guides that help caregivers reinforce early literacy skills.</li> </ul>
<b>L5</b> Support K-12 students in developing core academic and learning success skills: literacy, problem solving, creativity and innovation, teamwork and collaboration, and communication.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Offer students one-on-one tutoring, homework clinics, and demonstrations of the library's online study tools.</li> <li>Provide engaging programs and activities that help develop academic skills.</li> </ul>




# How to Scale

## Engage Community Stakeholders

- Identify local organizations and groups that align with your library's mission and goals and host a focus group discussion to explore partnership opportunities.
- Schedule a town hall style meeting and invite the community to come provide input into what the library is offering.
  - Hot Tip: Have a list of vetted questions to help guide the conversation.
- Approach a community survey with your goals in mind. Research survey questions used by other libraries or institutions that fit your purpose.

**Cost: Time**

**A complaint is a gift.  
It presents an  
opportunity to  
improve the library.**



# How to Scale

## Library Tours

- If traveling long distances is a challenge, identify other systems within a couple hours that offer services, programs, or resources that interest you and schedule a visit.
- Identify award-winning libraries around the country and dive into their websites. Reach out via email to request more information about their offerings or space.

**Cost: Travel and/or Time**



# Implementing the Strategic Plan

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# Enhancements to Programs

## Focus Areas

To align the Library's services with the community's needs and priorities, the Essential Libraries Initiative (ELI) identified four key focus areas:

- Literacy & Lifelong Learning
- Business & Workforce Development
- Civic & Community Engagement
- Arts & Humanities

All services, programs, and resources fit in at least one focus area.



# Enhancements to Collection

Maintain effective collection management procedures to keep materials relevant and reflective of the community's evolving needs.

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## The Library:

- Underwent a weeding project for the first time in years.
- Adopted the use of Collection HQ to assist with collection development based on the user habits of our community.
- Expanded non-traditional items.



# Enhancements to Collection

Established a Library of Things to encourage sustainable practices and a sharing economy.

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## Primary Categories

- Musical Instruments
- Electronic Devices
- Recreational Items
- Tools

The Library of Things is sponsored by the Friends of the Library.





# Position Reclassification

To align the Library's staffing with the needs of the community, some positions went through a classification process. As a result, the following positions were created:

- Innovation Officer
- Community Resources Specialist
- Outreach Information Professional

The Library has continued to realign positions and the organizational structure to better meet the needs of the community and ensure equitable job duties and staff support.



# Community Resources Specialist

Realigned positions to create a full-time social work position on staff to assist patrons in connecting with resources.



## Provided referral services for:

- Affordable House
- Career Skills Training
- Mental Health Services
- Food/SNAP Benefits
- Government Services
- Healthcare/Marketplace
- Citizenship
- Reemployment

## Coordinated with services providers to:

- Set up monthly tables in the library for easy access to services.
- Provide programming at various library locations.





# Capital Improvement

Facility improvements were identified as a key part of creating a welcoming environment that facilitates new patterns of interacting, learning, and accessing information.

Recognizing that the needs of communities evolve over time, emphasis was put on flexible spaces.



# Renovation at Main

Renovation priorities were identified for the Main Library based on the needs in the ELI.



## Priorities

**Coworking Spaces:** New conference, meeting, and coworking spaces are being added.

**Simulator Lab:** A heavy machinery simulator lab will assist community members in preparing for their driving tests.

**Podcast Room:** An all-inclusive podcast room will provide an opportunity for patrons to learn and use the technology needed for audible content creation.

**Designated Teen Spaces:** A computer lab was reallocated to a designated teen space on the first floor. The Teen Lab has two televisions, video game consoles, computers, and modular furniture.

**Family Computer Area:** A computer has been added to the baby board book room for caregivers of young children. This space will undergo renovation in the future, but has served as a pilot for the need of a designated family computer area. →

# Renovation at Main

Renovation priorities were identified for the Main Library based on the needs in the ELI.



## Priorities

**Flexible Spaces & Furniture:** There is emphasis placed on flexible, modular furniture and spaces to help the library adapt to future needs.

**Security Enhancements:** To ensure patrons feel safe at Main, the Library has increased on-site security and added cameras to reduce blind spots.

**Cafe Space:** A designated eating space will be created during the first floor renovation to help establish the library as a “third space.”



# Enhancements at Branches

The Essential Libraries Initiative includes a phased, multi-year plan to assess each Library location.



## Priorities

Meeting & Program Rooms

Designated Teen Spaces

Security Enhancements

Flexible Spaces & Furniture

**Outdoor Space:**By enhancing the outdoor space around certain branches, the Library can increase its usable space creatively





# Policy Revision

The Library revised, and continues to assess, policies to ensure they provide plain-language direction to the community on library usage.

- Patron Code of Conduct
- Loan of Library Materials



# How to Scale

## Enhancement to Programs

- Create annual goals for the library's programming based on your community's needs and interests.
  - Brainstorm with staff and other stakeholders.

## Position Assessment

- Regularly review staff positions to ensure they are relevant and equitable. Check to ensure:
  - Staff in like positions are performing an equitable amount of work, and that workloads are reasonable.
  - Duties and responsibilities are still meeting the needs of the library and community.
  - Temporary tasks did not become unintentional permanent tasks.



# How to Scale

## Capital/Facility Improvements

- Evaluate your space with a fresh eye. Consider the following:
  - Is there wasted space that could be used creatively?
  - Are there ways to refresh the area without major renovation?
  - Has your patron behavior changed over the years, making the current layout less likely to meet their needs?
  - Is there outside space that could become an extension of the library?



# Assessing the Strategy

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# Continuously Assessing

## Statistics

- The library uses statistics, in part, to:
  - Measure program success.
  - Improve collections and services.
  - Identify community needs.
  - Optimize staff priorities.

## Surveys

- The library uses program surveys and comment cards to:
  - Gain an understanding of program outcomes.
  - Solicit patron feedback on services and programs.





# Continuously Assessing

## Staff Observation

- Library staff observe patron habits to:
  - Gather insights into patron behavior that might not be captured any other way.
  - Assess how patrons use the space to identify changing needs.

## Analysis

- The library analyzes quantitative and qualitative data to:
  - Compare the numbers to the personal stories to evaluate outcomes.
  - Identify opportunities for growth and gaps in services and resources.
  - Make decisions on future services and resources.



# Wrap - Up

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# Take Five

1. Strategic planning helps provide a cohesive vision for the library.
2. Engaging with community members, staff, and stakeholders to actively seek feedback can build trust and ensure library services remain relevant.
3. Strategic planning is scalable! Start small if resources are limited by identifying three to four priorities to start with.
4. Exercise curiosity and creativity to rethink how the library serves the community. Look for opportunities to enhance and nurture the things your library does well, and opportunities to grow and try something new.
5. Focus on outcomes - not just outputs.





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# Resources

[Essential Libraries Initiative](#)

[Rising to the Challenge: Re-Envisioning Public Libraries](#)