



Strategic Plan 2024 – 2029

Approved by the Board of Trustees on June 25, 2024

An Introduction to the District

A Generous Beginning

Public library services in Lockport Township were first offered in 1922, when the Lockport Woman's Club started a volunteer library in Lockport, Illinois. The first library location was Pilgrim Hall, which was rented for \$25.00 a month. Several unsuccessful attempts were made to establish a tax-supported town library and eventually voters approved the establishment of the Lockport Township Public Library in 1929. After being housed in several locations, the library trustees purchased the Boyer residence in 1932 for \$19,000.00 and remodeled it for \$15,000.00—quite an accomplishment and commitment in 1932! A small addition was built in 1938 at a cost of \$1,931.00.

Responding to Growing Communities

In 1965, responding to changing needs and a growing community, the library trustees voted to sell three-quarters of the library's property to the First National Bank of Lockport, and to build a new two story building on the remainder of the land. At that time, the library owned 33,135 books and circulated 122,135 items per year. The new 16,500 square foot library building was built for \$257,459.00 and opened to the public in 1966. Federal LSCA funds were used for a portion of the cost. In 1969, the library trustees agreed to expand services to Crest Hill. A plot of land in Crest Hill was donated and a 7,600 square foot library building was constructed at a cost of \$221,710.00. Federal funds were also used for this project.

Recognizing the need for better service coordination and greater cost efficiencies, the Crest Hill and Lockport libraries separated from the Lockport Township government and became the two branches of the Des Plaines Valley Public Library District in 1981. For many years the new District's boundaries continued to be those of Lockport Township. That changed when the City of Crest Hill experienced some limited growth into unincorporated areas of Joliet Township, Troy Township, and Plainfield Township, with the library District boundaries expanding to follow along with this growth.

Romeoville

During the 1990s and early 2000s, huge growth in population occurred throughout the area. The Village of Romeoville, formerly contained almost completely within DuPage Township to the north, grew southward into open land in northwest Lockport Township. Thus by 2006, around two thirds of the Village of Romeoville's residents lived within Lockport Township and supported the Des Plaines Valley Public Library District through their property taxes. However, these residents self-identified with Romeoville more so than Lockport or Crest Hill and therefore preferred to use the Fountaindale Public Library District's Romeoville Branch (located in the older part of town, in DuPage Township, to the north of 135th Street).

In 2008, a transfer of territory was achieved with the Fountaindale Public Library District transferring over to the Des Plaines Valley Public Library District all of the parts of Romeoville

that were contained within DuPage Township as well as all of the areas that would likely someday be a part of the village of Romeoville (such as the large Carillon development).

Growth Beyond Expectations

With a view to population growth and increasing need for library services, the trustees of the Des Plaines Valley Public Library District authorized placement of a building bond referendum on the ballot in November 2008. This measure would have authorized construction of three new libraries to serve the greater Crest Hill, Lockport, and Romeoville communities. That ballot measure failed, as did a similar measure placed on the spring 2009 ballot.

In February 2010, the district voters approved a \$23 million building bond measure to construct a new Crest Hill branch library, completely refurbish and expand the Lockport branch library, and to purchase the Fountaindale Public Library District's old Romeoville branch library and to completely refurbish that facility.

New Name, New Facilities

In June 2011, the Board of Trustees voted to legally change the name of the organization to White Oak Library District, to capitalize on greater marketing capabilities and to signify a new beginning for these area libraries.

A complete overhaul was begun on the Romeoville Branch facility in April 2011, with that building being completed and put back into full service in June 2012.

Construction of the new Crest Hill Branch was begun in August 2012, with that facility being opened to the public in September 2013.

The Lockport Branch was closed and library services were temporarily moved to the Gaylord Building in downtown Lockport in February 2012. Removal of asbestos from the Lockport Branch facility began shortly after, in the spring of 2012. The remodeling and expansion of the building started in September 2012 and that facility was re-opened to the public in September 2013.

Strategic Planning Process

In July 2014 the White Oak Library District Trustees authorized Director Scott Pointon to move forward with a long range strategic planning process, engaging library patrons, library staff, and the Board throughout the process. In the months of September, October, and November 2014, two focus groups of library patrons and one group of front line public service library staff were engaged in a series of meetings designed to elicit honest opinions about library planning topics. These meetings touched on a wide array of subjects that led to a clear picture of what the District is doing well, what needs improvement, and what services or actions the District should be focusing on for the next five years.

Once this information was gathered, library management staff had the opportunity to review and add to what had been recorded. In December 2014 the Board of Trustees was presented with a first draft of the new strategic plan and in-turn gave valuable feedback on the process and the draft results. With all Trustee modifications incorporated, the final version of this plan was presented to the Board of Trustees for approval on January 27, 2015.

Annually thereafter, in each subsequent year the completed tasks were removed from the plan, incomplete goals were assigned to a later year, and new goals were added.

To update this plan in 2024, the Board of Trustees and the Director decided it was time to re-engage the public and staff in a series of formalized focus group meetings. These meetings were held in April 2024. The ideas and input gathered there informed the direction of this new plan. The intent of this plan is to once again provide a very flexible planning tool that allows for goals to be set and achieved. Through periodic evaluation of these goals and the progress being made, new goals can be developed as old ones are achieved.

Henceforth this five year strategic plan will be revised at the beginning of each fiscal year to have the expired year and completed goals removed, have any goals not yet achieved reassigned to a subsequent year, and have a new year tacked on to the end of the plan.

The intent is to insure that in any given year this strategic plan will look forward five years.

White Oak Library District Board of Trustees (as of May 2024)

Deanna Amann – President
Ann Lopez-Caneva – Vice President
Nancy Hackett – Secretary
Gayle Crompton – Treasurer
June Rokita-Kennedy - Trustee
Andrew Koroma – Trustee
Kelly Schneider - Trustee

White Oak Library District Management Team (as of May 2024)

Scott Pointon – Director
Evangeline Stephenson – Crest Hill Branch Manager
Jessi Wakefield – Lockport Branch Manager
Brandon Swarhout – Romeoville Branch Manager
Katherine Nelson – Business Manager
John Jozwiak – Facilities Manager
Patti Sacco – Human Resources Manager
Michael Pezan – Information Technology Manager
Tina Williams – Outreach Services Manager
Alexi Knebel – Technical Services Manager

White Oak Library District Mission Statement

The White Oak Library District is a community anchor, balancing stability and tradition with a continuous evolution of timely services, materials, and programming. By connecting people to a world of intellectual thought, accurate information, and reliable technology we promote literacy, lifelong learning, and personal success. As stewards of the public trust, we encourage community partnerships and fearlessly explore new opportunities. We strongly believe in the transformational power of our libraries and thus dedicate ourselves to preserve them for future generations.

Strategic Directions

These are large scale and “big picture” concepts that can be hard to quantify or measure but are crucially important to our success as a District.

The White Oak Library District will strive to:

- Exist as a tech-literacy leader for our residents
- Exist as a cultural hub for each community served, with our libraries becoming *the* place residents identify with most when considering cultural arts such as author visits, readings, musical performances, historical interpretations and lectures, film screenings, live performances, etc
- Use our library facilities and services to become the “third place” in our residents’ lives, a safe place where patrons will spend their most significant time outside of work/school and their home
- Become a socio-economic equalizer, allowing residents of varying income and educational levels to participate in and enjoy library services
- Make a compelling case for public support of high-quality library services, attracting new users at every turn while retaining existing users
- Meet the needs of our increasingly diverse patron base by improving services to immigrants, non-native English speakers, and those still learning English as a second language
- Ensure excellence in staffing by employing and retaining well-trained and professional personnel who are adept at providing library services
- Meet resident expectations for service excellence and convenience by reviewing policies and balancing fair and efficient service with an increasing focus on finding ways to say “yes” to our users
- Maintain our library facilities in excellent working condition
- Where possible and advantageous, develop and/or improve our physical facilities
- Improve our communities by collaborating with a wide range of public, private, and community service organizations
- Assist the local economy by providing services designed to encourage and assist small business success
- Develop the local workforce by providing assistance with job applications, resume writing, and developing job-critical technology skills
- Utilize Outreach efforts to reach all those who, for a variety of reasons, fail to take advantage of the library services we provide within our three physical facilities
- Support students through tutoring and other more formal educational assistance

Specific Targeted Goals

Assigned by fiscal year

July 1, 2024 – June 30, 2025

- Prepare and implement salary increases prescribed by the 2019 Illinois minimum wage law. Shelves will start at \$15.00 per hour as of July 1, 2024, and other salary classification levels will adjust accordingly.
- Extend our building hours to be open 9:00am to 9:00pm Mondays through Thursdays and 9:00am to 5:00pm on Fridays and Saturdays.
- Hire three new part time Children’s Librarians (i.e. one per branch).
- Utilize social media and billboard marketing to bring more people into our libraries.
- Attempt to secure federal grant funding to build the addition onto the Crest Hill Branch to house the Outreach Services Department and service vehicle(s).
- If federal grant funding is successfully secured, work with architects to design, bid, and build this addition.
- Work with City of Crest Hill leadership to develop collaborative programming and use of space in and around our adjacent facilities.
- Launch the **Crest Hill Fall Fest** event.
- Replace meeting room and event space A/V systems throughout the District and update exterior digital signage at the Crest Hill and Romeoville branches.
- Continue to explore the possibility of acquiring land adjacent to the Romeoville Branch.
- Evaluate relevant factors, and if warranted, conduct a 2025 referendum campaign to increase the District’s operating rate.
- Increase funding for e-content from Overdrive (Libby) and Hoopla.
- Add the content platforms **Kanopy** and **The Shelf** to our arsenal of virtual content.
- Hire a Spanish community liaison.
- Maintain and build upon all Spanish language collections.
- Maintain and increase marketing efforts to non-English speakers and expand ESL and Citizenship classes where possible.
- Maintain and increase collaborations with local immigrant support/service groups.
- Conduct two all staff in-service day training events.
- Implement sustained promotion of District services, programs, and assets to 5 new community groups, churches, schools, businesses, and other organizations through various means and formats, including social media as well as traditional marketing methods.
- Conduct a library card sign-up campaign to boost total number of card holders to 40,000.
- Continue to nurture and grow the adult volunteer program.
- Evaluate all business office and bill-paying practices to find greater efficiencies.
- Conduct a study to determine if any additional security cameras are needed and where they should be placed.
- Explore the possibility of selling excess land in Lockport

July 1, 2025 – June 30, 2026

- Expand Friday evening hours to a 7:00pm closing time.
- Reinforce and/or expand the **Crest Hill Fall Fest** event, bolstering our partnership with the City of Crest Hill in every way possible.
- Conduct a staffing study and create a plan to balance full time vs. part time positions for longer term retention of employees.
- Conduct an employee benefits study to determine if our benefits package is competitive.
- If funding was secured and the Outreach project completed the previous year, conduct a complete assessment of the Outreach Department and redefine as needed to include vehicle-driven services to daycares, preschools, and other captive audiences. Also, purchase new Outreach service vehicle(s).
- Increase staffing in our Children's Departments.
- Hire another person to assist with our marketing and graphic design efforts.
- Continue to increase funding for e-content and other virtual/remote services.
- Develop an affordable system to get professional staff more involved in community groups and the greater library community.
- Maintain and build upon all Spanish language collections.
- Maintain and increase marketing efforts to non-English speakers and expand Spanish community outreach as well as ESL and Citizenship classes where possible.
- Maintain and increase collaborations with local immigrant support/service groups.
- Conduct two all staff in-service day training events.
- Implement sustained promotion of District services, programs, and assets to 5 new community groups, churches, schools, businesses, and other organizations through various means and formats, including social media as well as traditional marketing methods.
- Conduct a library card sign-up campaign to boost total number of card holders to 42,500.
- Determine the need for and/or execute repainting of exterior siding at the Crest Hill Branch.
- Explore the possibility of adding locking exterior bike racks at each branch.
- Explore possibilities to convert existing spaces into additional study room spaces.

July 1, 2026 – June 30, 2027

- Continue to increase funding for e-content and other virtual/remote services.
- Continue to explore ways to increase alternative funding sources (i.e. funding other than property tax income).
- If an operating rate increase is approved by referendum vote in 2025, extend library open hours and increase library outreach efforts accordingly.
- If property adjacent to the Romeoville Branch was able to be acquired, engage architects to design/build library vehicle garage.
- Maintain and build upon all Spanish language collections.
- Maintain and increase marketing efforts to non-English speakers and expand ESL and Citizenship classes where possible.
- Maintain and increase collaborations with local immigrant support/service groups.

- Implement sustained promotion of District services, programs, and assets to 5 new community groups, churches, schools, businesses, and other organizations through various means and formats, including social media as well as traditional marketing methods.
- Conduct a library card sign-up campaign to boost total number of card holders to 45,000.

July 1, 2027 – June 30, 2028

- Conduct a library card sign-up campaign to boost total number of card holders to 47,500.
- Hire a digital instruction librarian.
- Continue to increase funding for e-content and other virtual/remote services.
- Continue to explore ways to increase alternative funding sources (i.e. funding other than property tax income).
- Maintain and build upon all Spanish language collections.
- Maintain and increase marketing efforts to non-English speakers and expand ESL and Citizenship classes where possible.
- Maintain and increase collaborations with local immigrant support/service groups.

July 1, 2028 – June 30, 2029

- Conduct a library card sign-up campaign to boost total number of card holders to 50,000.
- Consider a referendum “ask” as our building bonds will be retired in 2030.
- Maintain and build upon all Spanish language collections.
- Maintain and increase marketing efforts to non-English speakers and expand ESL and Citizenship classes where possible.
- Maintain and increase collaborations with local immigrant support/service groups.

Other considerations beyond 2029

- The Crest Hill and Lockport facilities’ roof warranties expire in 2033.
- Boilers, air handlers, and other large HVAC equipment at all locations will turn 20 years old in 2032-2033.