



# **City of High Point Public Library**

## **Strategic Plan: 2020 – 2023**

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# **Executive Summary**

## **Library Areas of Focus and Goals**

### **Developing a Growth and Sustainability Plan for Facilities**

Goal 1. Individuals using the library will be able to take advantage of efficiently-designed areas adequate to meet the need for meeting and programming spaces.

### **Preparing for the Changing Demographics of Our Community**

Goal 2. ESOL residents and other special populations will consider the library a trusted place to meet their personal, educational, and professional goals.

### **Expanding Library Services in High Point Outside Our Main Facility**

Goal 3. Library customers in North High Point will enjoy enhanced and more convenient lending services at the Deep River Rec Center.

Goal 4. All High Point residents will have easier access to library services.

### **Enhancing Marketing and Communication – External**

Goal 5. Library customers will learn about library services and programs in a timely and effective manner.

Goal 6. Residents of High Point will support and promote the library, be knowledgeable about library services, and appreciate its benefit to the overall community.

### **Enhancing Marketing and Communication – Internal**

Goal 7. Library staff will be well-informed about library procedures, programs, and services.

## Introduction

In June 2019, the High Point Public Library received a federally funded LSTA (Library Services and Technology Act) grant to conduct a community needs assessment as part of a larger project to develop a strategic plan for the library. As the library’s grant application noted, “A new strategic plan is needed to insure that library services continue to align with our mission statement, meet our community’s needs and support the City’s strategic goals, especially in relation to the significant changes occurring in our City.”

### The Planning Process

The City of High Point Public Library chose to use a planning process based on the process outlined in the Aspen Institute report, *Rising to the Challenge: Re-Envisioning Public Libraries*, and the accompanying *Action Guide*, both of which have been supported by the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation.

This planning process was developed by the Aspen Institute Dialogue on Public Libraries, a working group of leaders from the library field, business executives, individuals from various levels of government, individuals from community development organizations, and education experts. That group came together to craft and articulate a shared vision for the future of public libraries, based on the following ideas:

- Libraries are critical partners in the educational ecosystem.
- Libraries are a gateway to lifelong learning.
- To be successful, libraries need to:
  - Align with community goals.
  - Provide access to content in all formats.
  - Ensure long-term sustainability.

The planning process focuses on the library as people, moving away from a focus on building collections to focus on “building human capital, relationships, and knowledge networks in the community”; the library as place; and the library as a platform that “supports the learning and civic needs of the community.”

Consequently, the planning process asked community stakeholders to identify the needs of the community served by the library and the ways in which the library can best meet those needs.

The process included a survey of the citizens served by the City of High Point Public Library, to which a total of 899 individuals responded.

### **Staff Planning Team**

A staff planning team, made up of members of the staff of the City of High Point Public Library, oversaw the planning process. The staff planning team included:

Jamie Beck	Julie Raynor
Edith Brady	Lorrie Russell
Kim Coleman	Mary Sizemore
Marcellaus Joyner	Jo Williamson
Ginny Lewis	Shelly Witcher
Mario Ramos	James Zola

The library’s planning process was facilitated by Dr. Robert Burgin, a library consultant with almost 45 years of experience in library education, library consulting, and library administration.

### **Community Needs Assessment**

The consultant provided the library staff planning team with a community needs assessment, based on demographic data for the town of High Point and Guilford County; a survey of the community served by the library; a survey of the library staff; library usage, funding, and technology data; meetings with staff members and library board members; and interviews with members of the local community through five focus groups and thirteen one-on-one interviews.

The demographic data reflect the fact that both High Point and Guilford County have higher levels of educational attainment than does the state as a whole and that both have large populations and are growing faster than the state as a whole. A higher percentage of the populations of both High Point and Guilford County is non-white than is the case statewide. Both High Point and Guilford County have younger populations than does the state as a whole. For the most part, both High Point and Guilford County are wealthier than is North Carolina as a whole.

Demographic trends for the past ten years show that, like the rest of the state, Guilford County and the town of High Point have experienced increases in the median age and in the

percentage of people 65 and above as well as decreases in the percentage of people below 18 and below 5. Relative to the rest of the state, the county and the town have seen less growth in levels of education, slightly more rapid population growth, greater growth in minority populations, and declines in economic well-being, as measured by unemployment and the percentage of individuals in poverty.

A survey of High Point citizens found that respondents most frequently used the library for adult books, public computers, books for children, DVDs, and free Wi-Fi. About half the respondents rated the ability of the library's resources and services to meet their needs as excellent, and three fifths rated the quality of customer service and support provided by the library staff as excellent. About one fourth of the respondents felt that some factor limited their use of the library, and the most frequently identified limit to library use was inconvenient library hours. Respondents rated books for adults, free Wi-Fi, books for children, the library Website, and books for young adults as the most important library resources and services.

A survey of library staff found that a very high number of staff regarded the library's ability to meet the needs of its customers as good. Staff identified the library's strengths as the staff itself, the library's programs, the library's collections, and the facility. Staff saw communication issues and problems related to the library facility as the greatest weaknesses. Staff saw the most important library services as books for adults, books for children, programs for children, and free Wi-Fi. Staff listed the top priorities for the library in the future as programs, technology, collections, the library facility, and staff. Staff members were also asked to indicate what would make their work environments better, and most had no suggestions for improvement or listed communication and the facility.

Data regarding library usage and funding show that the High Point Public Library is providing a very high level of library service to the citizens of the town of High Point and Guilford County, ranking among the top ten public libraries in the state in eleven of the fifteen measures examined. On the other hand, over the past ten years, usage and funding for the High Point Public Library have grown faster than they have for the average public library in the state in only three of the thirteen areas examined. A recent statewide assessment of the degree to which the library has been successful in providing public access to computer technology found that the High Point Public Library exceeds the peer group average on all three major areas and exceeds the peer group average on all but one of the ten benchmarks that make up those three areas.

Interviews with approximately 40 individuals, both one on one and as part of several focus groups, found strong support for and made recommendations related to business support,

children’s services, community involvement, the facility, the farmers market, the Heritage Center, marketing, programs, resources, staff, technology, and teens and tweens.

### **Developing the Plan**

The library’s staff team used the community needs assessment to recommend service priorities or areas of focus for the library’s strategic plan. The library’s staff team then identified goals, objectives, and action items for each of the focus areas and re-affirmed their support for the mission statement and values of the library.

*City of High Point Public Library*  
*Strategic Plan: 2020 – 2023*

**Mission**

Nurturing the joy of reading.  
Sharing the power of knowledge.  
Strengthening the sense of community.  
Enhancing cultural and economic vitality.

**Values**

Connection  
Diversity  
Fun  
Innovation  
Learning



***City of High Point Public Library  
Strategic Plan: 2020 – 2023***

***Areas of Focus, Goals, Objectives, and Action Items***

**Area of Focus: Developing a Growth and Sustainability Plan for Facilities**

**GOAL 1: Individuals using the library will be able to take advantage of efficiently-designed areas adequate to meet the need for meeting and programming spaces.**

**OBJECTIVE 1.1: The library will hire a space needs consultant by the end of FY 2022 to evaluate meeting and programming space and provide recommendations.**

**ACTION ITEMS:**

- Library staff will identify existing meeting and programming spaces.
  - Research Services manager will identify existing program and meeting spaces managed by the division. Manager will also offer ideas for potential meeting and programming spaces by suggesting potential reallocation of space on 2nd floor for future space needs.
  - Children’s Services manager will help evaluate space needs for programming, especially during the summer reading program.
  - Readers’ Services will evaluate more areas that might be designated for silent study and consider creating a small group study area through use of partitions or scheduling strategies.
- Library staff will collect data on use of spaces.
  - Research Services data for monthly/yearly use of programming and meeting spaces managed by Research will be turned in to library administration.
  - Public use – type of use and availability of space when requested.

- Administrative specialist will track the number of requests for public meeting space, purpose of request (meeting, program, etc.), and if space was available for the time requested.
- Children’s Services manager will help track requests for programming and meeting use requests for the children’s storyroom and for the Arts & Education Plaza.
- Readers’ Services will track demand for private study space requests by walk up customers at service desk.
- Staff use – type of programs and availability when needed.
- Administrative specialist will track the number of staff requests for meeting space, purpose of request, and if space was available for the time requested.
- Children’s Manager will help administration by tracking requests for staff use of the Storyroom and the A&E Plaza.
- Readers’ Services manager will continue to track and evaluate use of third floor spaces by other divisions and by city departments.
- Library will identify sources of funding for space needs study consultant.
  - Research budget proposal will be scrutinized for potential to contribute funding if needed.
  - Library director will explore outside funding sources for consultant.
- Library will select consultant.
- Library staff will share with consultant data collected on space usage.
- Consultant will present recommendations to library staff by January 2023.
- Library staff will prioritize recommendations in consultation with City Facilities Director.
- Library staff will work with the Facilities Director to include recommended projects in capital budget request schedule.

**OBJECTIVE 1.2: By March 2021, the Farmers Market Task Force will develop a three-year strategic plan.**

**ACTION ITEMS:**

- The Farmers Market staff will conduct a survey of market attendees once a month May-October 2020 to gather data on customers' experiences. The survey will be done on site and also sent to those receiving the monthly newsletter.
- The Market Vendors will complete a detailed survey to gather input on strengths and weaknesses of the Market at the conclusion of the 2020 Farmers Market in October 2020.
- The High Point Farmers Market Manager and Library director will research strategic plans of other similarly-sized farmers market by August 2020.
- The High Point Farmers Market Task Force will meet twice a month beginning in November 2020 to review other strategic plans, review attendance and sales data since 2018 and the results of the customer and vendor surveys.
- Data will be used to create a plan that addresses space, infrastructure, staffing and sustainability needs for the Market from 2021-2024.
- The plan will be presented to the Library Board and City Management.

## **Area of Focus: Preparing for the Changing Demographics of Our Community**

**GOAL 2: ESOL residents and other special populations will consider the library a trusted place to meet their personal, educational, and professional goals.**

**OBJECTIVE 2.1: By April 2021, the library will identify the special populations and ESOL communities that exist in High Point and where they are located.**

### **ACTION ITEMS:**

- Library staff will conduct demographic research on special populations and present to strategic planning team by December 2020.
  - Research Services staff will compile demographics and census data and map out areas of interest in the High Point community related to populations the library may want to serve.
- Library staff will analyze data.
  - Data compilation will include overlaying census and demographic data on maps to better visualize different populations and various areas of interest for the library to serve.
- Library staff will use data to prioritize special populations to which library services will be targeted.

**OBJECTIVE 2.2: By April 2021, the library will consult with like-minded organizations to learn more about serving special populations.**

### **ACTION ITEMS:**

- Research, Readers, Children's, and Museum staff will identify at least five appropriate organizations with which the library is already working that serve the targeted populations.
- These divisions will contribute contact information for current partners.

- These divisions will strengthen current relationships and expand knowledge base in existing areas of service.
- Using the High Point Non-Profit Resource Guide and input from the City's Human Relations Division, library administration staff will identify and reach out to relevant organizations with which the library does not have a working relationship.

**OBJECTIVE 2.3: By October 2021, the library will develop an outreach and programming plan for special populations.**

**ACTION ITEMS:**

- Supervisors will assemble a team of staff from all public service divisions to develop a plan to serve the targeted populations.
- The outreach and programming team will work with the identified community partners to gather feedback from the populations they serve through surveys, community meetings, one-on-one conversations, and any other means recommended by the partners.

## **Area of Focus: Expanding Library Services in High Point Outside Our Main Facility**

**GOAL 3: Library customers in North High Point will enjoy enhanced and more convenient lending services at the Deep River Rec Center.**

**OBJECTIVE 3.1: By December 2020, the library will install electronic lockers at Deep River Rec Center to allow customers to pick up holds 24/7.**

### **ACTION ITEMS:**

- Library director will identify sources of funding for the lockers.
- Library director will apply for LSTA grant if appropriate.
- Library director will include funding in FY 2020-2021 capital budget.
- Library director and assistant director will identify and research potential vendors.
- Library director will purchase lockers by September 30, 2020, if funds are available.
  - Lending staff will develop procedures related to using the lockers.
  - Lending staff will work with Assistant Director and Maintenance to implement these procedures.
  - LIS staff will handle any hardware/software set up.
- Library staff will gather statistics on the use of the lockers, including a survey of users by April 2021.
  - Readers Services staff will investigate outside sources to help staff developing effective surveys for gathering data for this and other action items related to the strategic plan.
  - Deep River service users will be surveyed in January 2021 and April 2021 to obtain information about satisfaction levels with the service and suggestions for improvements.

**OBJECTIVE 3.2: By June 2022, the library will use data from Deep River Rec Center usage and other demographic information to determine if additional library services are needed in North High Point.**

**ACTION ITEMS:**

- Library director will insure that the space needs consultant (see Objective 1.1) includes facility needs in North High Point as part of the facilities space needs study.
- Research Services staff will provide current demographic data for North High Point.
- Research Services staff will obtain any available data from the City's Economic Development Office and Planning Department on future business and residential development in North High Point.
- LIS staff will provide any needed ILS reports for circulation from this area/ZIP code.

**GOAL 4: All High Point residents will have easier access to library services.**

**OBJECTIVE 4.1: The library will determine the areas in High Point with the lowest library usage.**

**ACTION ITEMS:**

- LIS and Lending staff will run reports on library card use by ZIP code.
  - LIS and Lending staff will find or have created a report in LS2 to determine library card holders based on ZIP codes.
  - Lending staff will generate these reports as needed.
- Library planning team will develop additional methods to determine usage such as short in-house and online surveys.
  - Survey tool should be developed/reviewed by wide range of employees -not just managers or supervisors so that all aspects of library service and operations are included and repeated surveying is not needed.

- Research Services will provide an additional staff member to overlay compiled data on mapping to more graphically demonstrate ZIP codes and or neighborhoods in the city that are underserved based on card usage.
- LIS staff will work with PIO/Civic Plus to include surveys, etc. on the library website.

**OBJECTIVE 4.2: By April 2021, the library will create an outreach team representing all service areas of the library to visit at least ten neighborhood groups and community organizations to learn about barriers to library service.**

**ACTION ITEMS:**

- The outreach team will gather data during visits about how much and how the library is currently being used.
  - Supervisors will ask for staff volunteers to serve on the outreach team – focusing on staff with good people skills who have experience working with diverse populations.
  - Surveys will be translated in most common non-English languages. Let’s also “think outside the box” about how to reach these folks—not just neighborhood associations, but churches, and informal community groups.
  - Readers, Research, Children’s, and the Museum staff will explore opportunities to expand the list of groups to whom we have given presentations to in previous years by attending events that promote networking with outside agencies.
- The outreach team will identify and contact other organizations serving the populations underutilizing the library such as churches, neighborhood associations an informal community groups.
- The outreach team will report findings back to the planning team, who will use this data as a benchmark for determining effectiveness of outreach activities.

**OBJECTIVE 4.3: By April 2021, the library will review policies, procedures, and organizational structure to determine internal barriers that may hinder effectiveness.**



**ACTION ITEMS:**

- Library staff will identify three internal areas recognized as barriers to effective service.
  - An internal poll will be created for staff to get their input on what they perceive as the top three institutional barriers.
  - Library director will pursue the possibility of hiring a communications coach to provide staff training on effective communication.
- Library staff will hire an organizational consultant to study the current organizational structure, review the findings of the staff organizational audit, and make recommendations if any changes are indicated.
- Library director will identify funding sources for hiring a consultant to do an organizational audit.
- Research division manager will investigate divisional funding to see what funding can be re-allocated to help with funding to hire a consultant.
- Library staff will share recommendations with the assistant city manager and work to implement appropriate changes.

**Area of Focus: Enhancing Marketing and Communication – External**

**GOAL 5: Library customers will learn about library services and programs in a timely and effective manner.**

**OBJECTIVE 5.1: The library will track on a continual basis customer input about current programs and preferred means of receiving information from the library.**

**ACTION ITEMS:**

- Library programming staff will survey participants following at least 75% of unique programs.
- Each programming division will tailor surveys to their audience, but each survey will contain several standard questions, such as asking how the customer heard about the program.
- Each programming division will compile statistical data and submit reports to library administration for 75% of programming produced by the division.
- Strategic planning team will evaluate survey results quarterly to determine if any changes are needed in types of programs and information delivery methods.

**GOAL 6: Residents of High Point will support and promote the library, be knowledgeable about library services, and appreciate its benefit to the overall community.**

**OBJECTIVE 6.1: By June 2021, the library will create an advocacy team to visit at least ten community groups, neighborhood associations, churches, etc., annually to spread information about library services.**

**ACTION ITEMS:**

- ELMT team will solicit input from existing partners for suggestions on which community groups the advocacy team should focus.

- Library administration will consult with the City’s Housing and Community Development Department and Human Relations Division for suggestions of appropriate community groups.
- The strategic planning team will assemble an advocacy team knowledgeable about all aspects of the library. The team will be comprised of one member from each public service division.
- The advocacy team will create a boilerplate presentation as well as informational materials and displays about the library that is adaptable to different external audiences.

## **Area of Focus: Enhancing Marketing and Communication – Internal**

**GOAL 7: Library staff will be well-informed about library procedures, programs, and services.**

**OBJECTIVE 7.1: By October 2021, the library will develop a process for streamlining transparent and effective communication with staff.**

### **ACTION ITEMS:**

- Library staff will be surveyed quarterly to determine how knowledgeable they are about current library policies, procedures, current programs, and services.
- Library staff involved in professional development planning will develop regular activities and incentives that engage staff and keep them informed in a positive way.
- There will be “pre” and “post” surveys to determine the efficacy of training opportunities.
- Staff will be required to complete a staff development component through Niche Academy that includes some of the already available staff trainings and some new ones produced to focus on divisional programs and services.
- Readers Services supervisor will offer the “Tour Guide training” on a quarterly basis for new staff members.
- In addition to quizzing staff about library information, staff will be surveyed about their perceptions of internal library communication and solicit recommendations for improvement.
- Museum staff will offer an orientation/tour of High Point Museum for staff development opportunity and as part of new employee orientation.