

Crete Public Library Strategic Plan 2015-2018

The Board of Trustees, library staff members and local residents participated in developing this strategic plan. Board members, Library Staff and Friends of the Library members also participated in numerous informal conversations with community members regarding the library and its' services. These were incorporated into planning discussions and the eventual plan. This plan will be reviewed and evaluated at least semi-annually and at the discretion of the Board of Trustees and the Library Director.

Vision Statement

Crete Public Library: Traditional service blended with emerging technologies.

Mission Statement

Crete Public Library provides enrichment, enjoyment and education for all. We celebrate intellectual freedom and foster creativity and life-long learning.

To this end, Crete Public Library values:

- A comfortable and inviting environment that is conducive to learning and that also provides a wide variety of resources and services for community members.
- On-going staff development and a competent, friendly and helpful staff that offers assistance in the use of a variety of available resources and technologies.
- A continually updated collection of resources in a variety of available formats that is based upon community interests and needs.
- Outreach services based upon community interests and needs, thereby allowing for and supporting the expansion of resources beyond traditional library walls.
- An atmosphere that values all community members and serves all people with respect and courtesy.

Community Profile

Crete is a rural first-class city located in southeast Nebraska. While providing small town living, Crete is twenty-three miles from Lincoln, eighty miles from Omaha and 210 miles from Kansas City.

In 2013, the U.S. Census Bureau estimated Crete's population to be 7,049. Of that total, 62% are Caucasian (4,330) and 33% are Hispanic or Latino (2,326). The remaining 5% includes African American, Asian and American Indian community members.

The largest age group categories include:

5 to 9 years (8.3% or 585 residents) 15 to 19 years (14% or 988 residents); 20 to 24 years (13.4% or 599 residents); 35 to 39 years (8.5% or 821 residents).

70% of Crete residents speak English only; 28% speak Spanish as their first language. The remaining percentage includes Asian and Pacific Island languages and other Indo-European languages.

Education

Crete Public Schools includes an elementary, middle and high school. A new high school facility is currently under construction. CPS Special Programs and Sixpence are located in other facilities in the community. St. James Parochial School provides classes from Preschool through sixth grade. Doane College is also located in Crete. 74% of Crete residents are high school graduates or higher; 15% have achieved a bachelor's degree or higher.

Employment

Crete's large employers include Bunge Milling, Nestle Purina, Crete Public Schools, Crete Area Medical Center, Wal-Mart and Doane College. Smithfield Farmland Foods is also an employer in the area, but it is not located within the Crete city limits. Of the population 16 years and over, 56% are employed while 5% are unemployed. For families with children under the age of 6, 63% have both parents in the labor force. For families with children ages 6 to 17 years, 72% have both parents in the labor force.

Local Activities

Crete has seven parks available to the public. There is also an outdoor swimming pool. Four State of Nebraska recreational areas are located near Crete. Doane College frequently provides guest speakers or other cultural programs for Crete residents at no charge. There is a community garden that provides space for residents to garden each spring. City of Crete administration, in cooperation with Nestle Purina, recently constructed a dog park in the east area of town. City of Crete Departments are represented on Facebook, Twitter and the city's web site. Crete Public Schools provides after school programs for elementary and middle school children. There is a Chamber of Commerce and a weekly newspaper, *The Crete News*. Physical fitness facilities and a golf course are provided by private entities for membership fees. There are several community service groups, including Sertoma, Fortnightly Club and Lions. There are also thirteen churches in Crete serving a diverse group of residents. The City of Crete administration is working with the Crete Chamber to host the first annual Pumpkin Festival in October of 2015.

CPL S.W.O.T Analysis

Internal Strengths

- The library has a well-trained and helpful staff who provide pleasant, professional and personal service to library patrons. Staff represent CPL in the community in a positive manner and continually consider options to better serve the community.
- The library has developed a long standing working relationship with the parochial and public schools in Crete. A variety of programs for children and their parents are provided through this joint effort.
- The library provides ongoing outreach programs on a weekly basis for elderly members of the community. The library also seeks out opportunities to provide outreach programs for other ages and provides library information and activities at a variety of community functions.
- CPL's Public Library Board of Trustees who are committed to the library's evolving role in the community.
- Budgetary and advocacy support for the Friends of the Crete Public Library.

Internal Weaknesses

- The library's size (8,440 square feet) is not adequate for community demand or staff duties. Many adult and children's programs must be held off site in local churches or assisted living centers due to lack of library space.
- Expansion of current computer services and other emerging technologies is limited by current available space.
- There are few options for patrons wanting to study in a quiet space.
- The original portion of the building (1914) and the addition (1985) have been pulling away from each other for quite some time. Frequent repairs to furnaces, air conditioners, the brick structure itself and the roof are ongoing and costly.
- The library is not easily accessible to elderly patrons or others with physical challenges. Parking is also not adequate for patrons and the library's spaces often compete with people using City Hall and City Park.

External Opportunities

- Growing demand for wireless access (which CPL currently provides but may need to improve upon) and evolving information technology. For example, 3D printing, makerspaces.
- The need for additional basic computer classes, particularly in Spanish.
- City of Crete's economic development efforts to draw new businesses to Crete.
- Further development of CPL as a job information center.

External Threats

- The City Administration has been involved in downtown revitalization, but there continues to be many empty store fronts that have not been filled by newer businesses as of yet. The possibility of less sales tax would impact CPL's budget as well as all City of Crete departments.
- Within the next 3 years, the elementary school located 2 blocks from CPL will move to the larger Crete Public Schools campus on the east edge of Crete. This will most likely lessen the number of after school students who use the library regularly. It will also complicate established program efforts currently in place. Students at the current elementary school can walk to the library for weekly programs with their teachers. Once the elementary school is located in the east area of Crete, accessibility to such programs would greatly diminish.
- Some community members question CPL's relevancy in a digital age.
- Busy family schedules that might conflict with current library open hours.

Community Assessment

In November 2013, the City of Crete issued a survey as part of the ongoing Comprehensive Plan development. See full report at <http://www.crete-ne.gov/DocumentCenter/View/1775> Submitted questions regarding CPL services were not included in the survey. The library was included in a section asking respondents to rank community services. CPL ranked 1.94 on a scale of 1 (Excellent) to 4(Poor). Both a new public library and a new community-owned recreational/wellness facility were identified in the Crete Citizen Survey as a major need for the Community. The Library Board decided that important questions still needed to be presented to the citizens of Crete regarding a new library facility and current/potential library services. On March 25, 2014, CPL released a survey via Survey Monkey that was more comprehensive than the library questions included in the Comprehensive Plan survey. See the full report at <http://www.crete-ne.com/index.aspx?NID=381> In brief, we were surprised to learn that the majority of respondents prefer the old fashioned book over other resources. We also realized that we needed to explore other ways of reaching and informing citizens beyond the current patron base. For example, perhaps the strong working relationship the library has built with the local schools for the benefit of children and parents could be somewhat replicated to work with the business community and other local civic groups.

On Tuesday, November 11, 2014 Library Board members and staff met with Dr. Becky Pasco. Dr. Pasco guided the group through a consideration and discussion of current library services, future potential, and how we might plan for these ideas/programs even without a new facility. CPL's planning document (the precursor to this strategic plan) was thoroughly discussed. The interaction of Board members and staff was extremely helpful in determining current strengths and weaknesses.

Library Board members met with each City Council Member, the Mayor, the City Administrator and the Economic Development Director beginning in March 2015. Two Board members met with the City Administrator and the Economic Development Director. The remaining Board members met individually with the City Council and the Mayor. The questions asked and a summary of responses is below.

1. **How satisfied are you with living in Crete?** All respondents were very satisfied with living in Crete.
2. **What do you appreciate the most about living in Crete?** All appreciated the small town atmosphere and friendly neighborhoods. Many appreciated the proximity to Lincoln and Omaha.
3. **What do you appreciate the least about living in Crete?** The only response to this was regarding commuting to work in Lincoln.
4. **What do you think is the most critical issue facing this community today?** Many cited the growing pains in Crete over the past ten years. There was some concern that demands for public services could outpace public funds. The cost of changes to energy supply and related procedures due to Federal requirements was mentioned. Redeveloping the downtown area and providing possibilities for home owners to rehabilitate older homes was mentioned as well.
5. **What is your opinion of the quality of life in Crete?** Many respondents commented on being life-long residents. Some expressed an appreciation for the diversity in Crete and the economic and cultural opportunities. A majority mentioned that Crete is a family friendly town, providing a wide range of government and non-profit resources for families.
6. **Do you think the quality of life has improved during the past 5 years?** All said they believed it had. Examples included the new swimming pool, the new dog park, the new wastewater treatment plant and the large expansion of the public school campus.

7. **What role do you think Crete Public Library plays in Crete's quality of life?** Some commented that the library is good place for families to visit. Several wondered if the library was going to be replaced by eBooks and other online things. One said that his family used the library frequently but he himself did not. Others recognized that the Library Board and staff had been working toward a new facility for some time. For them, finding funding was the issue and a few suggested working with the Economic Development Director to obtain grants and other funding.
8. **What role do you think local government plays in Crete's quality of life?** Many indicated that local government support, programs and services are essential for the success of the Crete community and its residents. There were some comments that local government could not provide all things to all residents. However, working with local non-profits would help address this.

Crete Community Needs

Community Need - One

Residents enrolled in unemployment benefits and others searching for new employment often do not have personal Internet access for the necessary unemployment reports or for job searching.

Goal

Job seeking residents of Crete will have access to both print and online employment resources through library services.

Objectives

Crete Public Library will:

Evaluate and modify as necessary the current job resources listed on the library website by 11/1/15 and ongoing.

Update and add additional books and other resources related to job seeking and resumes by 12/1/15 and ongoing.

Modify Internet sign up time for job seekers as needed by 12/1/15.

Obtain information from the Nebraska Department of Labor regarding resources available through NEworks by 1/5/16.

Community Need - Two

Many Spanish speaking patrons are interested in Spanish language basic computer classes.

Goal

Basic computer classes for Spanish speaking patrons will be expanded to meet the demand. Advanced classes will be considered based upon demand.

Objectives

Crete Public Library will:

Recruit bi-lingual high school students to assist library staff with classes by 1/5/16.

Provide access to current computer and software manuals in Spanish by 1/5/16.

Explore options with Crete Public Schools Special Programs to work with Spanish speaking adults cooperatively by 2/1/16.

In addition to The Crete News and Facebook, advertise classes in local church bulletins by 2/1/16.

Provide additional bi-lingual staff time to provide additional computer classes for Spanish speaking adults by 3/1/16.

Community Need - Three

Crete residents have a continuing need for economical access to a wide variety of information resources.

Goal

Crete residents will have access to new resources in a variety of formats and programs based on community interests and needs.

Objectives

Crete Public Library will:

Explore and implement new information resources and technology formats to enhance residents' quality of life, ongoing but especially by 3/1/15 and 3/1/16 of the biennial fiscal year budgets.

(City of Crete's biennial fiscal budget is 10/1/15-9/30/16; 10 /1/16-9/30/17.)

Explore grant funding for additional adult interest programs by 3/1/16.

Continue to work with other libraries to secure less costly services when applicable, ongoing and as opportunities arise.

Community Need - Four

Crete residents deserve access to information and other related resources and technologies in a safe, contemporary facility that provides adequate space for current and future community use.

Goal

Build a new facility designed to meet the current and future information interests and needs of Crete residents.

Objectives

Crete Public Library will:

Reconsider site selection as City Park is no longer available, beginning 11/12/15.

Work with City Administration to locate funding sources for the building project beginning 11/12/15.

Format an in depth marketing plan to educate residents of the need for a new library facility by 3/1/16.

Consider community partners for space sharing of a new facility by 3/1/16.

Determine if another feasibility study should be completed by another architectural firm by 5/1/16.

Strive to have the library building plan included in City of Crete development plans by 5/1/16.

Explore funding options to pay for an additional feasibility study, if it is to be completed by 6/1/16.

Reconnect with fundraising firms and the USDA loan program to consider funding options by 7/1/16.

Evaluation

Crete Public Library Staff will be responsible for implementing these goals. Library Board members will be called upon for assistance as needed, particularly in terms of Community Need 4 – the Library Building project. Progress of programs and resource allocation will be recorded through monthly statistics and opinions expressed by patrons. Specifically, statistics regarding job seekers, programs for adults and Spanish language computer classes will be compared with numbers from 2014-2015. This will provide a benchmark for future efforts at increasing this attendance, if demand dictates, in the upcoming biennial fiscal budget year. The Strategic Plan will be reviewed and evaluated by the Library Board and Director each October and March of every year, with input from Library staff directly involved in specific goal implementation. Committee members listed previously may be called upon to assist with an evaluation of the Strategic Plan on an annual basis. The Library Board and Director may identify library patrons, public school staff, city government members or other community members to participate in the evaluation process. Success of efforts or needed improvements will be considered at each semi-annual evaluation. The Library Board may also consider new goals to explore and implement.

Of course, should new ideas or new patron interests arise prior to the semi-annual review, the Library Board and Director will consider these items in conjunction with reviewing the strategic plan.

Summary

Crete Public Library is a visible, helpful and necessary presence in the Crete community. Information services for the community continue to be hindered by the state of CPL's current facility. However, program and services development cannot be placed on hold until a new facility is available. While CPL is heavily used, it is hopeful that the preceding goals and their implementation will result in reaching even more community members.