

Crete Community Needs Response Plan

2019 - 2022

Members of the 2019 Crete community needs response plan committee

- Joy Stevenson, Library Director, Crete Public Library
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- Steve Hensel, Chief of Police, Crete
- Gloria Keck, Friends of the Crete Public Library
- Esther Beile, Friends of the Crete Public Library
- Pam Busboom, Friends of the Crete Public Library
- Fabiola Dimas, Board Member, Crete Public Library
- Jan Sears, Board Member, Crete Public Library
- Ryan Hinz, City Council Member, Crete

Community Profile

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

In 2017, the U.S. Census Bureau estimated Crete's population to be 7,082. Of that total, 55% are Caucasian (3,914); 38% are Hispanic or Latino (2,661), and 6% are Asian (401). The remaining 1% includes African American and mixed-race community members.

The largest age group categories include:
20 to 24 years (12.3% or 856 residents)
15 to 19 years (11.4% or 793 residents)
25 to 29 years (6.8% or 470 residents)

64% of Crete residents speak English only; 29% speak Spanish as their first language. The remaining percentage includes Asian and Pacific Island languages and other Indo-European languages.

According to the 2017 ACS Table S1901, Crete's 2017 median household income of \$44,051 is about 78% of Nebraska's \$56,675 median household income. Crete's 2017 mean household income of \$49,418 is about 67% of Nebraska's mean household income of \$74,309. The 2017 poverty rate of 18% for Crete was over that of the U.S. (14.6%) and Nebraska (12.0%).

Education

Crete Public Schools (CPS) includes an elementary, intermediate, middle and high school. 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 University is also located in Crete. 73% of Crete residents are high school graduates or higher; 13% 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 University. 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, 60% are employed while 2% are unemployed. For families with children under the age of 17, 72% have both parents in the labor force.

Local Activities

Crete has 10 parks available to the public. There is also an outdoor swimming pool. Four State of Nebraska recreational areas are located near Crete. Doane University 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, constructed a dog park in the east area of town. The city of Crete Departments is 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 Rotary, Sertoma, Fortnightly Club and Lions. There are also thirteen churches in Crete serving a diverse group of residents. The City of Crete and the Crete Chamber hosts an annual Pumpkin Festival in October.

Crete Community Needs Assessment Plan Process

The Crete community needs response plan committee met in May 2018 and:

- Determined that the primary research vehicle will be focus groups
- Developed the seven questions to ask
- Determined the broad age groupings for the focus groups
- Determined the individuals to contact to participate in the focus groups

Stevenson and Ramos conducted six focus groups comprising of:

- Teens
- Young parents
- Community members not born in America (two groups)
- Retirees/empty nesters (two groups)

The seven questions asked at the focus groups:

1. Age Range
2. Where do you live and for how long
3. When you are talking about Crete to others, what three things do you boast about most often?
4. When you are talking about Crete to others, what three things do you complain about most often?
5. Describe the changes you have observed in Crete over the last five years.
6. What are the three most important issues facing Crete today?
7. If you could, what are the three things that you would change in Crete over the next five years?

The second meeting for the Crete community needs response plan committee was held in October 2019. The raw data from the focus groups were reviewed and summarized. Then the group brainstormed for the SWOT analysis and determined the goals and objectives to address community needs that the library can address.

Summary of focus group findings

Positive features of Crete include:

- Small-town feel
- Good school system
- Doane University
- Diverse

Negative aspects of Crete include:

- Lack of affordable housing
- Lack of stores/services
- Lack of indoor facilities, like a community rec center
- Poor infrastructure lack of sidewalks/poor roads

Changes in Crete over the past five years

- More schools
- New swimming pool
- Downtown looking better
- More diverse

Most important issues facing Crete today

- Poor infrastructure (sidewalks, roads, RR crossings)
- The need for Crete to remaining a welcoming place
- Lack of affordable and relevant housing

Things that should change over the next five years

- Better Infrastructure (sidewalks, roads, RR crossings)
- More recreational fields (inside and outside)
- Entice more businesses to open

Crete Public Library Profile – 2018-2019

Mission, Vision and Values

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

Vision Statement: Crete Public Library: Traditional service blended with emerging technologies.

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.

History

Like many small towns, women's organizations sprung up after the Civil War, and Crete was no exception. In 1878, the Crete reading room was established by the Red Ribbon Club, a temperance organization. The library moved several times, ending up in the City Hall in 1891. The Woman's Club of Crete was the volunteer librarians and in 1912, the library had 4,521 books and a circulation of 20,500.

Crete had a population of 2,400 in 1913 when John Tully approached the Carnegie foundation about getting a library. The Crete News on September 25, 1913, extolled its citizens to support the project, writing, "Let Crete citizens continue to lead and may her 4,000 good citizens boost, push, pull and boost."

The Carnegie gift was \$10,000, the architect was J. W. Salmon of Lincoln and the builder was John Kenst. T.H. Miller, president of the Crete State Bank, donated eight of

the lots that eventually became the Post Office, City Hall and the library. What is now called City Park, was first known as Miller Park after Mr. Miller's generous donation.

The library and the city continued to grow and by 1967, the need for expansion became acute. However, the additional space was not completed until 1985. Recently, the library was once again facing an acute shortage of space, and a bond issuance was approved in November 2016 that will provide the funds to construct a brand-new library, community center and technology space where the old Tabitha hospital once stood. This new facility will be completed in December 2019.

Facilities

The current facility comprises of the 1914 Carnegie and the 1985 expansion for a total of 8,444SF. The new facility will include a 15,000SF library and a 5,000SF community room. The new library will have a children's program room, a children's reading garden, a technology room, a teen room, an adult reading room, a 10-person meeting room, and three study rooms.

Budget

The 2019-2020 library budget is \$505,000 with most of this budget coming from the city property tax, for a per capita budget of \$71.44. Crete's population is 7,069 and the library considers patrons from the city of Crete and all of Saline county to be residents for library cards. The Friends of the Crete Public Library provides an additional \$10,000 annually to enhance library programs and services.

Statistics

For the 2017-2018 Annual Report, Crete Public Library reported:

- 44,408 visits from individuals from Crete, Saline County, and beyond
- 23,005 print books, AudioBooks, and DVDs in the library
- That patrons downloaded 38,291 eBooks and AudioBooks

These statistics varied less than 1% compared to the previous year.

Library services

By the end of FY 2018, Crete circulated 33,516 adult resources and 39,085 youth resources, comprising of print, audio, and video materials. Crete has seven public computers and provided computer access to 4,158 visitors. Free Wi-Fi is available 24/7 and it was accessed an estimated 7,000 times.

Five laptops are available to use in the library and 130 cake pans can be checked out. Passive activities are always available and 43 board and card games can be enjoyed while in the library.

With the assistance of the Friends and Doane University, 146 years of Crete newspapers have been digitized and are available on the library website.

Library programs

By the end of FY 2018, Crete engaged 5,904 children at 144 library events, and 935 adults at 187 library events.

248 children signed up for the 2019 Summer Reading Program and 76 returned their reading logs (31%). Participation in the summer reading programs was up from the previous summer and additional middle school programs were added – like an escape room.

The library holds a special “reading With Friends” literacy program in July designed to help those children at risk of losing their English literacy skills over the summer. In 2019, 23 children and an equal number of volunteers participated. There are many more children who want to participate, and in the new facility, we expect to double the number of Reading With Friends participants in the summer of 2020.

Lego programs have been added for those days where school is let out early. Middle school book talks take place periodically throughout the school year and after school groups (Cardinal Nest and Cardinal Crew) come to the library on a bi-weekly basis during the school year.

Three facilities for the elderly are visited on a weekly basis where programs and book drop-offs occur. Twice in 2018-2019, two Nebraska Humanities speakers held programs for the community.

Library staff and hours

The staffing level at the Crete Public Library consists of five full-time and four part-time staff. The library was open for 2,652 hours annually, starting at 10:00am six days a week and closing at 5:30pm (three days a week) and 7:30pm (three days a week). Library hours are the same throughout the year and once in the new facility, it will open at 9:30am six days a week.

Additional support

Approximately \$1,000,000 was raised from individuals and local businesses in support of the new library and the Friends contribute around \$10,000 annually.

Library SWOT Analysis

Internal Strengths

The library staff is considered one of the library’s greatest strength. Always friendly and accommodating to patrons.

With the opening of the new library in January 2020, the library’s size will increase threefold. This will allow the library to overcome some of its weaknesses, such as the lack of meaningful programs for school-age children and adults.

The current level of funding is sufficient for the existing library, including staff FTEs and other materials.

The size of the collection is sufficient for the existing facility, and there is the potential to increase it for the new facility.

Current outreach programs and services are a strength, and the future of outreach opportunities will continue to grow in the new building.

The number of interactions between the library and other community organizations will increase in the new building as these organizations will have a space to hold meetings and other events and will allow the library to work with community organizations in offering more programs and services.

The library has a strong Friends group that supports the library financially.

The library board has advising status and had struggled with the change from governing to advising. New members have joined the board, breathing new life into governance.

Internal Weaknesses

The library is weak in its number of volunteers.

Space – this is the Crete Public Library’s greatest weakness. Due to lack of space, the library struggles to provide the programs and services that the community wants. It also limits the size of the collection and forces the library to weed more than necessary.

While there is an overall increase in the 2019-2020 budget, it is inadequate for the new facility; in particular, it is insufficient in staffing allocation. The number of FTEs will not increase when the new facility opens in January 2020 and in order to obtain an FTE increase, need must first be demonstrated.

There is a need to shift some of the collections budget for electronic resources.

Current services offered are insufficient and there is the expectation of more services offered in the new library. The desired increase in services will not be hampered by lack of space, but by the lack of staff.

The current level of programming is quite insufficient for the community. The desired increase in services will not be hampered by lack of space, but by the lack of staff.

The level of technology currently being offered is a weakness, and the future is unknown due to the insecurities of future funding.

The current climate of community relations is weak mainly due to lack of space.

The Friends of the Crete Public Library is not welcoming to non-trustee members and therefore is considered a closed group. It is understood that this contributes to a lack of volunteers.

External Opportunities

Within the economic sphere, Crete's future seems bright. There are a number of housing development projects being planned, leading to growing levels of population and larger tax revenue.

The location of the new library is both a threat and an opportunity. The opportunity is that it is closer to the three higher-ages schools – those starting in 3rd grade. This provides the new library the opportunity to provide more programs and services for youth aged eight and older.

The technological infrastructure would be considered an opportunity. Several ISPs are in Crete and there are more expected to come.

In general, the social climate would have to be considered an opportunity. There is not a lot of non-sport activities for school-aged youth and the new library will provide a needed place to hang out.

There is an air of excitement within the community for the new facility. Increased level of interaction from community members, such as the schools, girl and boy scouts, 4-H, book groups and other community organizations.

External Threats

The economy can also be considered a threat as Crete is quite dependent upon four organizations to sustain its level of economic development. These are Smithfield Foods, Nestle Purina Pet Foods, Bunge Milling and Doane University. If one of these organizations were to close, there is a potential of an economic slowdown in Crete.

The location of the new library is also a threat. Its location is further away from the elementary school building as well as the parochial school, St. James. These students were able to walk to the old library and it is unclear at this moment if the existing programs for this age group will continue in the new library.

The library has always competed with other school-based activities and this will not dissipate with the opening of the new facility.

The Role of the Library

While Crete Public Library cannot assist in overcoming some of the negative aspects of Crete, such as the lack of affordable housing or the quality of the streets, there are some community concerns that the library can address over the next three years.

Community Need 1: To have more indoor programs for patrons of all ages

Goal: The Crete Public Library will offer more programs to patrons of all ages.

Objectives and timelines

End of March 2020 – determine the specific needs of the community regarding their desired library programs including the establishment of a teen advisory council (TAC)

End of August 2020 – to have offered one adult summer program, one on-going adult program, and one on-going teen program

End of 2020 – to have offered one-two Saturday programs (If staffing is available)

Community Need 2: To have more indoor services for patrons of all ages

Goal: The Crete Public Library will offer more services to patrons of all ages.

Objectives and timelines

End of March 2020 – determine the specific needs of the community regarding their desired library services.

End of August 2020 – based on the results of the survey to purchase and offer these services – such as VR, 3D printing and analog to digital conversion machines.

Community Need 3: To have a community facility that is open and welcoming

Objectives and timelines

End of November 2019 – policies and procedures established for reserving communal spaces

January 2020 – New library is open to the public and it includes many welcoming nooks and spaces, along with a small “café” space with a vending machine and coffee

End of the first quarter of 2020 – offering more programs and services.

Community Need 4: To have indoor recreation activities

Goal: While the new facility will not include an indoor pool, gym, etc... there are some things that the library can do to address this need

Objectives and timelines

End of March 2020 – determine the specific needs of the community regarding their desired indoor recreation activities

End of 2020 – to have offered one-two low-impact programs, such as Yoga

End of 2020 – to have held at least one program on nutrition or other health-related topics – both in Spanish and English

Evaluation

Library staff will take the lead in the design and implementation of the goals listed above. Support will come from the library board and Friends. These objectives will be reviewed on a quarterly basis in 2020, and on a semi-annual basis in 2021 and 2022.