HARNETT COUNTY
PUBLIC LIBRARY
MASTER PLAN

2018-2023

February 27, 2018
Acknowledgments
We offer a sincere thanks to so many community members who offered the generosity of their time and insights in developing this plan. That long list includes the following individuals.

County Commissioners
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Chairman Gordon Springle

County and Municipal Officials
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Why Conduct a Master Plan / Feasibility Study?
Harnett County’s population increased 14.1% from 2010 to 2016 (114,678 to 130,881), making it one of the fastest-growing “micropolitan” areas of the country.

As the county has grown, so has the demand for library services. Today, residents make over a quarter of a million visits to our libraries annually, checking out 338,000 items. Nearly 18,000 county residents have enjoyed over 690 library programming events annually.

Numerous research studies show the powerful benefits libraries provide to rural communities: for children; for economic growth; for access to government services, including health services; for access to technology and the internet; for community events.

County and municipal leaders acknowledge the importance of library services to our growing community. With their support, library leadership, including the Board of Directors and Friends of the Library, sought a new vision for the library system to meet the needs of 21st century patrons.

In doing so, our governmental leaders recognize that much of our growth has occurred in the western third of the county, and commissioned a feasibility study of developing a Western Harnett library branch. Through an LSTA grant from the State Library of North Carolina, this Master Plan and Feasibility Study was developed.

The purple areas denote the 3-mile road service areas for HCPL branches (53% county coverage)
The density of new home growth since 2015 is indicated by the yellow, orange, and red.
How Did We Conduct the Planning Process?
Over the last year, we have worked with our municipal and county leaders, patrons, staff, board, friends, and other county residents to create a community-based plan.

In all, over 700 county residents provided their feedback to the Master Planning process, both patrons and non-patrons.

What Vision and Mission Guided our Efforts?
Our strong foundational Vision and Mission statements were enhanced to meet our community’s priorities.

**HCPL Vision Statement**
Supporting the love of reading, the joy of lifelong learning, and the search for information, ideas, and knowledge

**HCPL Mission Statement**
The library’s mission is to cultivate lifelong learning, empower individuals, and strengthen our community.
WHAT WE LEARNED

Our community is passionate about our county’s storied history and our bright future! Over 700 people and county leaders participated in surveys, focus groups, and interviews to tell us that:

• Harnett County citizens are deeply involved in their community, including our libraries, faith organizations, community festivals, our county’s parks and outdoor beauty, gardening, and creative arts

• Our people find our libraries to be an integral resource for education, community, and economic empowerment

• County residents feel welcomed and valued by our professional library staff

• In a changing world, people find the answers they need within our libraries’ collections, programming, and knowledgeable employees

• The demand for exemplary library services and collections continues to increase, especially in the growing western part of our county
SUMMARY OF GOALS & OBJECTIVES

GOAL 1
Empower the Economic Development, Student Success, and Personal Growth of Our Communities
A. **Strengthen** support of our Entrepreneurs, Workforce, and Job Seekers
B. **Partner** with local schools to enhance young people’s 21st century literacy and life skills
C. **Fuel** our county’s passion for Reading, Personal Growth, and Learning

GOAL 2
Create Consistently Exemplary Patron Experiences
A. **Consolidate** the county’s branches into a unified library system
B. **Provide** more hours of library access across the county
C. **Develop** county-wide programming for children, teens, and adults
D. **Bring** library resources to where people are
SUMMARY OF GOALS & OBJECTIVES

GOAL 3
Create Library Spaces that are Welcoming to All
A. Enhance our library grounds, buildings, and interiors
B. Grow collections of materials of cultural relevance and significance
C. Configure spaces to provide flexible learning environments equipped with cutting-edge technology
D. Develop a Western Harnett Library Branch

GOAL 4
Develop and Build Strategic Collaborations to Strengthen the Library and our Communities
A. Partner with county government and organizations to develop a “One-Stop Shop” for patrons
B. Identify additional outreach venues through partnerships
C. Seek collaborative opportunities to showcase the best of our community
SUMMARY OF GOALS & OBJECTIVES

GOAL 5

Build a Collaborative and Supportive Work Environment that Encourages Innovation

A. **Build** library staff and institutional capacity to innovate

B. **Challenge** employees to respond creatively to library opportunities and challenges

C. **Utilize** rigorous analysis of user data to provide a positive patron experience
GOAL 1

Empower the Economic Development, Student Success, and Personal Growth of Our Communities

A. Strengthen support of our Entrepreneurs, Workforce, and Job Seekers
   • Serve as a hub of information and assistance for job seekers and local businesses
   • Offer on-demand computer training and job training assistance
   • Partner with Small Business development agencies to link companies with financial and business support
   • Provide flexible spaces for meetings and conferences

B. Partner with local schools to enhance young people’s 21st century literacy and life skills
   • Expand efforts to instill a love of reading and learning from babies to teens
   • Work with Teen Advisory Board to develop compelling teen materials and programs, such as “Maker Spaces” or Teen Game Rooms
   • Partner with public, private, charter, and early college schools and homeschoolers to: (1) provide books to children on regular basis; (2) offer supplementary curricula materials; (3) offer access to library databases through school ID; (4) offer Life Skills classes

C. Fuel our County’s Passion for Reading, Personal Growth, and Learning
   • Build community around Harnett’s love of books and book-related programming
   • Partner with community organizations to offer information and classes to support personal growth
   • Develop additional literacy-based and educational programming to meet community needs
Harnett County is growing, and we need dynamic entrepreneurs and skilled workers. Some families lack internet access, and our libraries are critical resources for connecting people to today’s workforce opportunities.

Our citizens told us they look to the library for more hands-on computer classes and job search support. Free small business coaching and support, and flexible spaces for small meetings, would support our workforce. The library may offer online links to Small Business Administration opportunities and loans.

We met dozens of parents who find the library’s children’s books and programming indispensable to developing their child’s love of reading. Staff members want to create programming to keep teens just as excited about the library. Serving the needs of the homeschool community as well as schools can continue to bring books and programming to young people through multiple venues.

Longer term, the library will consider a partnership with Harnett County Schools utilizing NC Cardinal’s Student ID Project initiative which provides K-12 students access to electronic resources including online research databases, e-books, and e-audiobooks.

Harnett’s people have dynamic and varied interests that the library and its partners are well-positioned to serve! Our community seeks library classes on Health and Wellness, Cooking, Gardening, Genealogy, Financial Planning/Money Management and other topics.

To fuel our community’s love of reading, the library may consider Author Events, book-related Movie Nights, and additional community reading programs.
GOAL 2

Create Consistently Exemplary Patron Experiences

A. Consolidate the county’s branches into a unified library system
   • Establish Consolidation Planning Team to develop unified policies and procedures
   • In consolidated county system, increase programming, personnel, and branch book budgets while preserving local autonomy

B. Provide more hours of library access across the county
   • Consolidation may budget for additional personnel to support increased hours at all branches

C. Develop county-wide programming for children, teens, and adults
   • Under consolidated system, supplement local programming through coordinated Children’s, Teens, and Adult programming from main branch

D. Bring library resources to where people are
   • Consider implementation of “Pop-Up” libraries as independent locations or at partner locations across the county
   • Purchase bookmobile to provide services across county
Consolidate the 6 branches into a unified Harnett County Public Library System. We frequently heard that patrons expect an outstanding and consistent experience in every branch of the library. Nearly half of all respondents ranked the purchase of more books and additional programming and events as top priorities. Many staff and citizens wanted more library hours.

Today, the Main library offers many “back office” services and systems to the branch libraries. With consolidation, Harnett’s citizens would benefit from economies of scale that allow for expanded collections and staff.

Additionally, consolidating library expertise and resources would lead to more effective deployment of library staff and assets throughout the county. At the same time, local flavor would be maintained as branch libraries continue to select collections based on their local patrons’ needs.

With increased staffing, branch libraries would be able to offer more hours of service, which would especially benefit working families.

Children’s, Teen, and Adult Programming at the Main Branch could be expanded to supplement each of the branch libraries’ programs. Main Branch staff could rotate among the different libraries on a set schedule each week.
GOAL 3

Create Library Spaces that are Welcoming to All

A. Enhance our library grounds, buildings, and interiors
   • Enhance or develop new library branding and logo for all branches
   • Increase street signage at branch locations
   • Consider funded, pro bono, or volunteer committee options for refreshing library branch landscaping, grounds, or interiors

B. Grow collections of materials of cultural relevance and significance
   • Increase collections of materials related to the interests of 2017 Community Survey respondents
   • Consider offering unconventional items for checkout, including those related to patron interests and educational needs, such as gardening tools and microscopes (if liability considered)
   • Grow collections in the languages of new residents

C. Configure spaces to provide flexible learning environments equipped with cutting-edge technology
   • Replace older furniture and tables/desks with flexible options to meet needs of varying groups
   • Update all libraries to provide access to contemporary technology and innovation

D. Develop a Western Harnett Library Branch
   • Short-Term: Establish 2,000-5,000 square foot library in rental facility near family-friendly organizations
     • May supplement with 1-2 “Pop-Up” libraries in area
   • Medium/Long-Term: County may build 8,000-10,000 square foot stand-alone library or build county government center including library branch
Establish a Western Harnett Branch. Nearly 48,000 people in western Harnett live without local library service; many are over 15 miles from the nearest branch. The success of the Boone Trail Recreational Library shows the demand for and value of a western library branch.

Nearly 16% of our survey respondents were residents of western or southwestern Harnett. Most emphasized the great need for library services. We met one grandmother who drove 45 minutes each way to take her grandson to Storytime every week.

In addition to meeting demand, a new branch can be a good long-term investment for the county. Research suggests that a $1 investment in library services can accrue a $4.99 return on investment to a community.

Recognizing the time and expense of building a new branch, we suggest both short and longer-term solutions. The need is too great to wait.

Key to the proposed branch’s success is easy accessibility, ideally near other family-friendly establishments. In the short-term, a 2,000-5,000 sq ft branch might be sited:
- NC87 near future YMCA
- Spout Springs Shopping Mall near Highland Middle School
- Centennial Parkway near Lexington Woods and future Rainbow Rascals Day Care

In the medium/long-term, the county may consider building an 8,000-10,000 sq ft. standalone library or developing a western county government services building, which includes a library branch. While utilizing county land is most cost-effective, the location should be in a high-use corridor or one anticipating future growth.
GOAL 4

Develop and Build Strategic Collaborations to Strengthen the Library and our Communities

A. Partner with county government and organizations to develop a “One-Stop Shop” for patrons
   • Consider partnerships and joint programming with county agencies and nonprofits
   • Dedicate a kiosk to information regarding government or nonprofit services
   • Host a “Government/Nonprofit Services Day” to disseminate information about agencies
   • Offer monthly free legal clinics through local partnerships

B. Identify additional outreach venues through partnerships
   • Seek opportunities and partnerships to enhance early childhood initiatives
   • Identify partner spaces to offer programming and outreach

C. Seek collaborative opportunities to showcase the best of our community
   • Partner with county organizations to deliver library programming throughout community
   • Seek partnerships to display community’s artwork or other projects
Especially in rural counties, partnering to share expertise and resources makes the most of precious assets. Harnett is fortunate to host numerous government, nonprofit, and private organizations which enrich the lives of our citizens.

However, in a county so vast, getting to various locations involves significant time and effort. The library may wish to position itself as a “One-Stop Shop” for information on services available to county residents.

The library might invest further in strategic partnerships with county agencies, including health, social services, veteran services, schools, youth services, economic development, etc. to educate and support residents.

At the same time, the library’s expertise may enhance early childhood efforts of various organizations, particularly reading and literacy. The library may also help parents of young children to get linked to other services.

Partnerships with other agencies, such as county parks, theaters/art spaces, day care/senior care facilities, can offer outreach and programming outside the library’s doors.

Our citizens enjoy celebrating their community. The library might showcase displays of local artists’ work, student art work, Science Fair winners’ projects, etc. With some planning, the library might host small performance art shows.

GOAL 4
GOAL 5

Build a Collaborative and Supportive Work Environment that Encourages Innovation

A. Build library staff and institutional capacity to innovate
   • Seek out or develop cutting-edge professional development opportunities for employees
   • Increase staff to meet county’s demands for new services and programming, especially with Consolidation and Western Branch
   • Acquire new space to house additional staff as needed

B. Challenge employees to respond creatively to library opportunities and challenges
   • Tap into staff expertise to manage development of protocols, policies, and systems to manage new demands

C. Utilize rigorous analysis of user data to provide a positive patron experience
   • Conduct periodic public opinion research to identify new community needs
   • Continue ongoing analysis of circulation trends to target patron preferences & needs
   • Strengthen outcomes for library users by utilizing data and information gathered from patron satisfaction surveys
Our six libraries’ staff are the core strength of our library system. Many people spoke warmly of the HCPL employees, praising them for their knowledge and professionalism.

The challenges of evolving service demands, as well as potential Consolidation and the development of a Western Harnett branch, will rely heavily on staff expertise.

To support staff, HCPL may seek out or create innovative professional development that equips employees with the technical skills and knowledge to navigate these challenges.

Additionally, the library may budget for additional staff to support demands for more hours of service and increased “back office” support.

Just as the Staff Master Planning Team provided critical insights to the development of this plan, employees possess a wealth of knowledge that can support these transitions.

Harnett County Library already collects and analyzes significant patron data. The library may wish to continue collecting user preference and satisfaction data in the form of surveys, focus groups, or interviews on an annual or biennial basis in order to stay informed of changing demand.

GOAL 5
As a state-funded library, the Harnett County Public Library system already collects significant data which can be utilized to measure implementation effectiveness.

At a baseline, we would recommend review of the following performance metrics.

### Performance Metrics (by library branch)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Circulation</th>
<th>Patron Satisfaction</th>
<th>Outreach (OR)</th>
<th>Staff Productivity</th>
<th>Technology Utilization</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• By New Patrons and Active Borrowers</td>
<td>• Patron Satisfaction Surveys</td>
<td>• Children's Programs</td>
<td>• Door Count</td>
<td>• PC Reservation Sessions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Holds sent/received Intra-Harnett and through Cardinal</td>
<td>• Patron Evaluation of New Programs</td>
<td>• Children's Attendance</td>
<td>• Hours Open</td>
<td>• Envisionware Print jobs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Items Added/Deleted</td>
<td>• Staff Satisfaction</td>
<td>• Adult Programs</td>
<td>• Reference Questions Answered</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• # New Patrons</td>
<td>• Adult Attendance</td>
<td>• Tech/Computer Questions</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Meeting Room Programs</td>
<td>• Job/Career Questions</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Meeting Room Attendance</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Programs by Branch</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Attendance by Branch</td>
<td></td>
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KEY IMPLEMENTATION MILESTONES

To begin implementation of key recommendations, we recommend the following high-level milestones/metrics based on the Master Plan Approval date, with timing to be adjusted as county priorities, library staffing, and budgeting allow.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Key Implementation Recommendations</th>
<th>Proposed Date</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Consolidation</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Finalization of Financial Step-Down (75-50-25)</td>
<td>Month 3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Final proposed budget and staffing plans</td>
<td>Month 4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Agreement among Municipal and County Officials</td>
<td>Month 6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• County Commissioner Approval</td>
<td>Month 6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Hiring of new staff as needed</td>
<td>Month 9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Transition of branch employees to county</td>
<td>Month 9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Establish Staff teams to develop uniform Policies &amp; Procedures</td>
<td>Month 10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Development of Library Programming expansion plans/schedule</td>
<td>Month 11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Consider refreshing HCPL “brand”</td>
<td>Month 12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Full Implementation of Consolidation</td>
<td>Month 12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Western Harnett Branch</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• County Commissioner Approval of Western Harnett budget</td>
<td>Month 3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Establish Staff Team/Board to support expansion</td>
<td>Month 3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Development of proposed budget &amp; staffing plan</td>
<td>Month 4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Site selection/negotiation for short-term rental location</td>
<td>Month 6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Selection of retrofit vendors/contractors</td>
<td>Month 6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Retrofit space as needed for library use, including technology</td>
<td>Month 9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Consider Long-Term configuration (Stand-alone library or part of government complex)</td>
<td>Month 12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Consider Site Selection for proposed configuration</td>
<td>Month 15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Develop Request for Proposal &amp; select Architect</td>
<td>Month 18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Finalize configuration and site selection</td>
<td>Month 24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Develop Request for Proposal for Bids</td>
<td>Month 26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Selection of construction Vendors</td>
<td>Month 30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Building of configuration</td>
<td>Month 36</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
KEY IMPLEMENTATION MILESTONES

To begin implementation of key recommendations, we recommend the following high-level milestones based on the Master Plan Approval date, with timing to be adjusted as county priorities, library staffing, and budgeting allow.

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Key Implementation Recommendations</th>
<th>Proposed Date</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Strategic Partnerships</strong></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>• Establish Staff Strategic Partnership Committee</td>
<td>Month 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Develop list of potential governmental, nonprofit, faith, business, etc. partners and/or venues through which to expand library programming and outreach</td>
<td>Month 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Identify locations in library to promote “One-Stop Shop” for information about county services</td>
<td>Month 3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Develop list of benefits to partnering with library, perhaps brief brochure</td>
<td>Month 4</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Contact organizations to discuss potential partnerships</td>
<td>Month 6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Meet with local organizations to promote partnerships with library</td>
<td>Month 6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Continue to work with partners to expand programming opportunities</td>
<td>ongoing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Build Staff and Institutional Capacity</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Provide ongoing updates to staff re status of implementation, especially of potential Consolidation &amp; Western Branch</td>
<td>Month 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Establish Staff Development Committee</td>
<td>Month 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Canvass staff and managers about training and development needs</td>
<td>Month 3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Work with State Library or other libraries to identify training resources</td>
<td>Month 6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• As needed, increase budgets for training</td>
<td>Month 6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• As needed, increase budgets for staffing &amp; space</td>
<td>Month 6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Provide training to staff</td>
<td>Month 9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Locate/negotiate space for additional staff</td>
<td>Month 9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Hire new staff as needed to support transitions</td>
<td>Month 10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Canvass staff and managers re ongoing support</td>
<td>ongoing</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Research reviewed in the course of this Master Plan includes the following:
• US Census Data, US Census Quickfacts
• Harnett County GIS (https://gis.harnett.org)
• Pearl C. Akanwa, “Public Library Services to Children in Rural Areas,” Library Philosophy and Practice, 2013
• Brian Real, Ph.D., and R. Norman Rose, “Rural Libraries in the Untied States,” American Library Association, 2017

Background information regarding the community stakeholder research is also available upon request.

Please note: Illustrations on pages 6-7 are courtesy of Creative Commons.