

Ferndale
AREA DISTRICT LIBRARY



**Strategic Plan
2026-2030**

Introduction

To guide this effort, the Board approved the formation of a **strategic planning committee** composed of managers/administrators, board members, and library staff, with representation from each department. This committee led the planning process and data collection entirely in-house, dedicated to ensuring that library services are thoughtfully aligned with the community's aspirations and needs.

This report summarizes the learning outcomes, insights, and programmatic impact of library initiatives from November 2025 to April 2026.

On April 18, 2026, the Strategic Planning Committee recommended adopting three key strategic priorities for the period 2026-2030. The priorities are:

PRIORITY 1: Expand Accessibility

Provide convenient, community-driven, and equitable access to physical and digital resources for all patrons.

PRIORITY 2: Connect People to Information

The library and its staff facilitate access to information in a variety of formats through intentional material selection, diversified programming, and functional infrastructure.

PRIORITY 3: Invest Responsibly

Intentionally support the sustainability of library spaces, staff, and services.

Overview of the Planning Process

1. By conducting planning and data collection in-house, the library leveraged staff expertise and institutional knowledge at every step. This approach enabled immediate contextual understanding, nimble method adjustments as needed, and a holistic view of how our patrons perceive our programs, services, and resources, as well as our staff in their roles in respective departments. It also fostered deeper staff engagement, strengthened collaboration across roles, and ensured that the insights generated reflect the community's real experiences and priorities—capturing nuances that might be lost with external consultants.
2. A ten-person Strategic Planning Committee was assembled, including members of the Library Board, the Library Director, the Head of Marketing, and representatives from each department.
3. The Strategic Planning Committee convened on October 2, 2026, to map out a comprehensive timeline and tactical approach for gathering community insights. This process began with a mixed-method survey—available both online and in print—that captured 625 responses over a two-month period. The survey explored how community members use the library, which materials they check out, and how often they visit.
 - Following the survey, the Committee hosted a series of thoughtfully designed Community Engagement Sessions throughout mid-winter, intentionally reaching a diverse mix of age groups and demographics. These sessions used carefully crafted questions to elicit feedback across four key areas and invited participants to share personal anecdotes about their library experiences.
 - Community members were encouraged to reflect on programming, the library's role in the community, opportunities for growth, and perceived service gaps. They also provided input on the library as a physical space—its functionality, its resources, and its green technology initiatives. This layered approach yielded rich qualitative and quantitative insights, laying a solid foundation for future planning.
4. The committee met in-person bi-monthly through the end of 2025, then monthly into the late winter of 2026. By November 5, patron survey questions were refined and approved, with both online and print versions launching on November 17 and remaining open through January 17, 2026. December focused on promoting the survey—assisted by The Friends of the Ferndale Library—and on drafting a staff survey and planning “town hall-style” community engagement sessions. Between January and March 2026, the committee finalized focus areas and questions for the community sessions, hosting three events at Ferndale High School (Jan. 13), the Ferndale Library (Feb. 2), and Urbanrest Brewing Co. (Mar. 4), while the patron survey closed January 17.

5. **Data Analysis:** We used a structured approach to process data from our print and online surveys and three engagement sessions.

For the quantitative data (surveys), we engaged OrangeBoy, Inc., a leading provider of data analytics and customer engagement solutions. (OrangeBoy also provides our library access to its Savannah community engagement cloud-based platform, which we use for messaging, reports, and more.) They provided 20 pages of thoroughly analyzed data, presented in clear bar graphs, along with a detailed overview of Ferndale's current demographics. The results were organized to show frequency of use, prioritized materials and services, ratings of our building's and resources' accessibility, and other key metrics.

For the qualitative data (engagement sessions), a four-person in-house subcommittee was formed, including two members of the Strategic Planning Committee and one department head, supported by a lead facilitator. Each member brought practical experience in qualitative data analysis, which proved invaluable in meticulously organizing notes, shorthand keywords from whiteboards, and a previously shared staff survey. The subcommittee categorized and synthesized this information into coherent themes, distilling patrons' feedback into a clear summary for the full committee to review at its retreat.

6. **Retreat to Draft Strategic Plan:**

- Our full committee, including the entire library board of directors, admin (director and assistant director), and all department heads, met on Saturday, April 18, for a structured retreat to draft our current Strategic Plan.
- The retreat began with a review of the purpose and objectives, followed by a thorough recap of our pre-analyzed data. Participants examined the project's Learning Report and discussed key insights, surprises, urgent issues, and opportunities. The group then revisited individually identified priorities, clustered them by theme, and selected the top three organizational priorities.
- Focus-area discussions explored the importance of each priority, considered challenges and opportunities, and generated directives, actionable goals, and potential success indicators.
- The retreat concluded with a review of all priorities, confirmation of goals, further discussion of any gaps, and clarification of next steps, including soliciting suggestions from all departments on activities that would help us achieve our priorities.



MISSION

The Ferndale Area District Library strengthens the community by providing access to materials and services that inform, enrich, entertain, and empower.

HOW WE DO IT

We serve as a hub for learning, creativity, and connection, welcoming everyone in our community. We offer materials, resources, and programs designed to meet diverse needs, supported by a staff dedicated to thoughtful, caring service. Our spaces are accessible and inclusive, and we shape our offerings based on patron feedback. We are grateful for the support of our community, patrons, and the Friends of the Ferndale Library, all of which allow us to continue meeting Ferndale's needs.

VISION

The Ferndale Area District Library is a leader in building and sustaining Ferndale as a creative city that attracts and nurtures talent, mobilizes ideas, stimulates innovation, and encourages diversity. The library is a center of cultural vitality and participation that enhances the quality of life for all Ferndale residents.

STRATEGIC PRIORITIES

EXPAND ACCESSIBILITY

Provide convenient, community-driven, and equitable access to physical and digital resources for all patrons.

CONNECT PEOPLE TO INFORMATION

The library and its staff facilitate access to information in a variety of formats through intentional material selection, diversified programming, and functional infrastructure.

INVEST RESPONSIBLY

Intentionally support the sustainability of library spaces, staff, and services.

STRATEGIC PRIORITIES AND GOALS

EXPAND ACCESSIBILITY

Provide convenient, community-driven, and equitable access to physical and digital resources for all patrons.

- GOAL 1 Improve and expand access to library materials and services to be easier and more comprehensive for the entire community.

- GOAL 2 Actively assess and respond to the evolving needs of the community through intentional information gathering.

CONNECT PEOPLE TO INFORMATION

The library and its staff facilitate access to information in a variety of formats through intentional material selection, diversified programming, and functional infrastructure.

- GOAL 1 Advance the library as a hub of information sharing.

- GOAL 2 Improve digital and technological functionality.

INVEST RESPONSIBLY

Intentionally support the sustainability of library spaces, staff, and services.

- GOAL 1 Maintain responsible stewardship of the library space, services, and identify avenues for improvement

- GOAL 2 Create opportunities for skill building and foster a culture of support for staff.

PRIORITIES, GOALS, OBJECTIVES & POTENTIAL ACTIVITIES

The Ferndale Area District Library's goals address the strategic priorities and aspirations identified by participants during the planning process and retreat. These goals serve as a roadmap for our staff over the next four years. These goals do not cover all of the Library's work, but they establish the strategic focus of this plan. The objectives are performance measures that indicate "how much" and "by when." The potential strategies are specific activities that the Library will undertake to achieve the objectives and goals. The goals will remain constant while objectives and potential strategies may evolve.

STRATEGIC PRIORITY 1: Expand Accessibility

Provide convenient, community-driven, and equitable access to physical and digital resources for all patrons.

GOAL 1 Improve and expand access to library materials and services to be easier and more comprehensive for the entire community

Objectives

- Reduce facility repair incidents through timely identification and response.
- Strengthen data-informed decision-making around facility improvements.
- Review and assess the library website for usability and accessibility.

Potential Activities

- Identify and engage organizations to conduct ADA accessibility assessments of facilities and resources.
- Improve readability of spine labels.
- Review library furniture for accessibility needs and implement targeted improvements where appropriate.
- Assess and address barriers to patron experience, including *parking, payment options, and exterior dropbox access*.
- Advocate for and coordinate improvements to physical, operational, and online access points that impact patron use.
- Facilitate/offer drop-in and appointment-based "how-to" sessions to help patrons independently use Libby, Hoopla, and other library digital resources.

GOAL 2 Actively assess and respond to the evolving needs of the community through intentional information gathering.

Objectives

- Increase the diversity and reach of community feedback collected each year.
- Implement service or program changes in direct response to community feedback.
- Increase traffic and usage.

Potential Activities

- Conduct semi-annual *Community Engagement Sessions, surveys, & polls*.
- Track usage rates while considering all Ferndale demographics.
- Conduct semiannual reviews of patron comments and incident reports to identify trends and opportunities for improvement.
- Review program attendance and conduct program exit surveys to identify evolving community interests and needs.
- Conduct usability assessment of library website with staff and stakeholders.
- Identify opportunities and outlets to encourage increased usage.
- Continue community engagement events that include brief informational talks and Q&A about library services and principles.

STRATEGIC PRIORITY 2: CONNECT PEOPLE TO INFORMATION

The library and its staff facilitate access to information in a variety of formats through intentional material selection, diversified programming, and functional infrastructure.

GOAL 1 Advance the library as a hub of information sharing.

Objectives

- Develop our collection of community-focused resources.
- Promote the library's role as an information center via outreach and daily library operations.

Potential Activities

- Create physical space within the library for flyers, social service directories, and community outreach opportunities.
- Make all library spaces easily visible and legible to patrons without requiring direct staff interaction.
- Maintain collection and track usage.
- Ensure analog collections are current, accurate, and relevant to our community.
- Rely on staff expertise in collection development and provide opportunities for continuing education.
- Offer off-site physical collection services.
- Diversify programming to include lectures and other educational offerings, as requested by patrons.
- Create cohesiveness and a collective understanding of the library's role through continuing professional development opportunities for staff.
- Offer curated tours highlighting key collections and services (e.g., Library of Things, seed library, art, and catalog) to increase awareness and deeper use of resources.

GOAL 2 Improve digital and technological functionality.

Objectives

- Improve the quality and usage rate of digital information resources.
- Improve on-site technological infrastructure.
- Develop the Library's web presence and improve finding aids to facilitate connection to collections and materials.

Potential Activities

- Investigate and assess web service providers for the Library website.
- Ensure digital collections are current, accurate, and relevant to our community.
- Track usage statistics of digital collections.
- Improve Ethernet speed and decrease downtimes.
- Improve the Wi-Fi coverage area.
- Upgrade public- and staff-facing technology hardware and software.
- Broaden staff training in digital tools and expand tech lending options (e.g., laptops, tablets, iPads) to improve patron tech support and access.

STRATEGIC PRIORITY 3: INVEST RESPONSIBLY

Intentionally support the sustainability of library spaces, staff, and services.

GOAL 1 Maintain responsible stewardship of the library space, services, and identify avenues for improvement.

Objectives

- Establish an evaluation process for library space needs vs. space constraints.
- Define and annually reevaluate building priorities through a sustainable lens.
- Track and assess building maintenance needs semi-annually.
- Decrease building reports.
- Maintain LEED certification.
- Define and allocate the responsibility of facilities management.

Potential Activities

- Collect and analyze data on space usage.
- Use occupancy and utilization data to inform areas of improvement.
- Coordinate with local partners to explore space adjustments and service improvements.
- Create role description for facilities manager.
- Offer interdepartmental training to help staff understand what other departments do, and allow for versatile/responsive coverage when needed.

GOAL 2 Create opportunities for skill building and foster a culture of support for staff.

Objectives

- Identify and facilitate more opportunities to foster staff engagement.
- Increase the retention of employees.
- Annually survey the staff to prepare for and facilitate effective training
- Track patron FAQs.

Potential Activities

- Design and implement an improved staff onboarding process to encourage knowledge sharing.
- Analyze current data and establish a benchmark to measure staff retention.
- Establish an approach to support staff succession and development.
- Establish a committee to generate staff professional development surveys.
- Visit nearby TLN libraries to share ideas, learn from, and exchange best practices in policy, programming, or collection development.