

# **Community Needs Response Plan**

**Gothenburg Public Library**

**1104 Lake Avenue**

**Gothenburg, NE**

**2018-2023**

**Reviewed and Adopted by the Gothenburg Library Board  
September 11, 2018**

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# Community Needs Response Planning Process

## Planning Team Members

Staff: Mary Koch (Library Director)

Library Board Member: Dennis VanOverbeke

Community Stakeholders: Gary Fritch (Retired Superintendent of Schools/Former City Councilman)

Deb Egenberger (Director Chamber of Commerce)

Donna Portiner (Building Blocks Director)

The Gothenburg Public Library staff, board members, and patrons assisted in the development of this community needs response plan. The Planning Team analyzed a recent survey that focused on the early childhood system of care, prenatal health care, family resources in the community for children's social and emotional development, and opportunities to participate in activities provided by the local school district in Gothenburg. The survey was placed online and hard copies were available at the library and various locations throughout the community. Three hundred twelve surveys were returned.

The Planning Team analyzed the survey responses to determine the strengths and needs of the Gothenburg community. The goals and objectives found in this strategic plan were developed from the data collected through the surveys and personal observations and from a need to further develop and expand a goal from the last strategic plan.

## Mission Statement

The Gothenburg Public Library believes it is essential to provide free and equal access to services and resources to meet the informational, recreational, educational and technological needs of the community. The library will serve as a center for learning and enrichment for all residents of all ages on an equal basis. The library's collections will offer access to a variety of points of view on various issues.

# Community Profile

## Demographics

Gothenburg is located in Dawson County in south central Nebraska. Interstate 80 is located on the south edge of town and is the main east-west highway that serves the community. Nebraska State Highway 47 travels through the center of town from North to South. Gothenburg is located 40 miles east of North Platte and 60 miles west of Kearney.

The population of Gothenburg is 3574. The breakdown by race is 3430 white, 99 Hispanic, 12 African-American, and 33 other. The median age is 37.7 years. Children and teens 19 years of age and under constitute 29.2% of the total population. The largest population is found between the ages of 20 and 64 (51.3%) with citizens 65 and over comprising 19.3% of the population. Gothenburg has, in recent years, experienced an increase in the number of young families moving back to the community. This is reflected in the increase in the enrollment at the public school. According to the community profile worksheet, 99% of the population speaks only English. The other 1% speaks Spanish. There has been a slight increase in the Hispanic population over the past five years. Eighty nine percent of the population have a high school diploma or higher.

## Education

The educational needs of the community are served by one public school and one private school. The enrollment in the public school is 456 elementary students, 133 junior high students, and 307 high school students. The private school has an enrollment of 15. A \$12.3 million bond issue was passed in 2001 which resulted in a new junior – senior high school building completed in 2004. The elementary school was also remodeled and additional classrooms were added. In 2011 the cafeteria, kitchen and concession areas were remodeled. The public school provides a junior-senior high library and an elementary library for students and staff. The track and field complex, with partial funding from the Cindermates organization, was upgraded into a state of the art complex.

Building Blocks child care and preschool was built in 1992 as a result of the Baldwin Filter recruitment. It can serve up to 88 children, furnishes two meals a day, and is open from 6 a.m. to 6 p.m.

Swede Academy is associated with the Gothenburg Public Schools and was funded through an early childhood grant. It opened in 2016 and attendance was half days but is now full days. It can serve 15 children and is open from 8:05 to 2:30 p.m. The Academy serves brunch and lunch. Children must meet five criteria in order to attend free.

Learning Adventures Preschool and Daycare has been operational since September, 2015. They are open from 6:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m. and offer a Christian based education.

## **Economics**

Economic activities center on agriculture and industry. The largest local employers are Parker Hannifin Corp. (145), Gothenburg Public Schools (120), Gothenburg Memorial Hospital (140), and All Points Cooperative (40). Baldwin Filters, a company employing 200 people is closing its Gothenburg plant in late 2018. Three Fortune 500 companies (Monsanto, Frito Lay, and Parker Hannifin Corp.) have operations in Gothenburg. Economic growth has added over five hundred jobs in the community. Gothenburg has a local sales tax with one-half percent designated for economic development and recruitment. This additional tax was passed in 1986 before there was a state law allowing all cities to set aside sales tax funds for economic development.

Electricity is provided with the city as the system operator and NPPD as the wholesale supplier. Gas is made available by several companies and residents are allowed to select their supplier each spring. Several options are available for phone, cable and internet. High speed fiber has been installed and Pinpoint gives residents an additional option for phone, cable, and internet.

The average household income is \$59,696 with 11.6% of the population living below the poverty line. Two hundred and sixty eight school age children were receiving free/reduced price lunches during the 2017-18 school year.

Taking into consideration the percentage of residents living at or below the poverty line and the number of youth utilizing the free/reduced lunch program, there is a large population with little or no disposal income. This makes the library's resources more valuable.

## **Parks and Recreation**

The City of Gothenburg has seven parks. Facilities in the parks include four ball fields with electronic scoreboards, dugouts, lighting, concession stand, roofed shelters, restrooms, one swimming pool, two tennis courts/basketball courts, and playground equipment.

Lake Helen is located in the northwest part of town and provides another park area for residents and visitors. Fishing and a hiking trail are part of this site. A shaded campground with horseshoe pits, restrooms and showers is located adjacent to Lake Helen. The Girl Scout and Boy Scout cabins are located at the campground. A \$1.7 million renovation of Lake Helen was completed in 2017. The City of Gothenburg, Nebraska Game and Parks, Nebraska Department of Environmental Quality, and the Central NRD all cooperated in designing and funding the project. The lake has been stocked with bass, blue gill and trout and provides fishing and boating for the community.

Gothenburg Memorial Hospital added a Wellness Center/YMCA in 2018. It includes an indoor swimming pool offering year-round swim opportunities. Access to the YMCA is available to the public for a monthly membership fee.

Wild Horse Golf Club opened in 1999. The 18 hole course located two miles from town attracts over 10,000 outside rounds played each year. The course has received many national honors including a number one rating by Golf Magazine in 2007.

The immediate area has an abundance of opportunities for those who enjoy fishing and hunting. Private and state lakes along with Jeffery Lake (12 miles) and Johnson Lake (25 miles) provide fishing and boating opportunities. Deer, turkey, duck and goose hunting along the Platte River allow the hunter a chance to enjoy the outdoors.

The city has three museums and one theatre. The Pony Express Station, Gothenburg Historical Museum and Sod House Museum attract over 25,000 visitors each year. Community volunteers operate the Sun Theatre/Community Playhouse where current movies are shown on Friday, Saturday, and Sundays.

## **Community Involvement**

The Gothenburg Chamber of Commerce, Gothenburg Improvement Company, and the City of Gothenburg work together for business and industrial development in the community. Two Rotary Clubs, a Lions Club, Boy Scouts, Girl Scouts, Teammates Mentoring Program and numerous local organizations provide opportunities for residents to become involved in community activities.

Gothenburg has fourteen churches of various denominations. The churches work together to support the community. In addition to their religious leadership, the ministerial association operates the local food pantry.

Resources for public communication include a weekly newspaper, *The Gothenburg Times*, a radio station (KRVN) located in Lexington, and newspapers located in North Platte and Cozad.

## **Library S.W.O.T. Analysis**

### ***Internal Strengths***

- The library staff is very friendly and helpful. They go out of their way to find the information requested.
- The addition to the library was completed in 1999 and the exterior was designed to complement the original Carnegie library. The original part of the library was also extensively remodeled at this time. The library is ADA compliant and the overall condition of the building and mechanical systems is excellent. The library is located on Lake Avenue immediately north of the downtown business district. It houses a community room which is available for public use outside of normal library hours. Most library patrons have indicated the library's hours meet their needs.
- The library has a ten station public access computer lab. Two other public access computers are available in the children's library and there are two dedicated online card catalog stations. The city has been committed to replacing a certain number of computers each year so there are always some new computers available. The library also offers free Wi-Fi access.
- The library is funded by the City of Gothenburg. Additional revenue comes from state aid, Runza's "Great Books for Great Kids" yearly fundraiser and from memorials and donations. The Gothenburg Library Foundation has

provided funding for some of the “extras” not covered by the budget such as programming, landscaping and a microfilm reader.

- Every attempt is made to develop the collection in a way that reflects the needs and desires of its users and that is responsive to evolving technologies.
- The library has a copier, laminator, fax machine, die cut machine, binding machine and microfilm reader available for public in-house use.
- The library offers a Story Hour program for preschoolers during the school year, a children’s Summer Reading program, and a Golden Sowers program. The library also offers delivery services for the homebound, or, if a family member prefers to pick them up, selection of materials for shut-ins. A selection of large and regular print and audio books are taken monthly to Stone Hearth Estates, a retirement/assisted living facility. The library also offers informative and entertainment programs for the public and a monthly adult craft class.

### ***Internal Weaknesses***

- At times, a little short-staffed. Addition of another part-time assistant will hopefully take place in the near future. Newer staff lack the familiarity with our collections that our now retired assistant library director possessed although they are making satisfactory progress in that regard.
- Parking is very limited and when there is a large meeting or workshop being held in the community room or a funeral at the church across the street, there are no nearby parking spaces for patrons, many of whom are older. This severely limits regular library usage on those days. There is also a lack of proper storage space.
- Although total funding is above average for peer group, budget for collection development is below average.
- Difficult to find effective programming for the very busy young adult population.

### ***External Opportunities***

- All age groups have indicated a desire for more cultural/educational/entertainment opportunities outside of local sports and the movie theater.



- Older adults have growing need or desire for technology.
- The rural population surrounding Gothenburg still have very limited options for fast internet access. This provides the opportunity for the library to provide internet access for them.
- Community is close-knit and has a “can-do” attitude.

### ***External Threats***

- Farm economy has slowed, and Gothenburg is very much an agriculture based community.
- Closure of the Baldwin plant in the immediate future takes jobs and revenue from the community and leaves a large facility vacant.
- Lack of quality affordable housing makes it difficult to recruit new business to Gothenburg and for young people to return to the community.
- Lack of adequate retail business forces many people to go out of town to shop for certain items.
- Constant change in technology.
- Many parents seem to have devalued the importance of reading. With the rise of all the various sports camps, fit-kids and children’s running club, the library’s programs, and especially the summer reading program have difficulty competing with athletics.

## **Community Needs**

A community survey indicated 66 2/3% of respondents were very satisfied and 30% satisfied with living in Gothenburg. Quality of life in Gothenburg was rated at 5 (the highest) by 53% of respondents and 4 by 37% with 10% giving it a rating of 3. The needs for better quality and affordable housing and for more retail business were the overwhelming top responses. Observation and personal conversations suggest that in this regard very little has changed in the last three years. The planning committee believes that these concerns are being addressed by the City, Chamber and the Gothenburg Improvement Company, as well as, the county economic development entity, Dawson Area Development, and that the difference the library could make in addressing these two needs is very limited.

Community need #1 was determined by analyzing the responses from the survey done by the Gothenburg Early Childhood Coalition in the spring of 2018.

Community need #2 is a continuation and expansion of one of the goals from the last Strategic Plan. The library has made considerable progress in meeting this need but the planning committee and library staff believe there is still much that can be done.

### ***Community Need #1***

Many parents in the community see the importance of early childhood education in a number of developmental areas for both adults and children, but they are unaware of the information and services available.

**Goal #1: The library will provide information, resources and services for parents and the community meeting the needs/interests of children from birth to kindergarten in easily accessible formats.**

**Objective 1:** Develop a collection of educational materials for parents on such topics as pregnancy, developmental benchmarks, breastfeeding, stress management, behavioral and mental health wellness, etc. and make it easily accessible to parents and community members in a centralized area. This would be a multi-step process with ultimate goal being information made available in a parent information area.

**Objective 2:** Regularly publicize programs, educational materials, new books and videos and other resources designed to enhance early childhood development through a newsletter, social media posts, newspaper stories, etc. Make all daycare and preschool providers aware of the resources the library has and collaborate to help parents understand what is available. Participate in community activities aimed at engaging parents and children.

**Objective 3:** Maintain participation levels in Story Hour through an updated presentation that entices children to participate. Coordinate with daycare and preschool providers to make it easy for them to include their children in the programs. Implement a program such as 1000 Books Before Kindergarten.

**Objective 4:** Provide a traveling reading service to daycare and preschool providers in which a library staff member goes to the childcare site to share books and activities with younger children.

**Objective 5:** Develop “discovery kits” on various subjects with age appropriate print/non-print materials that daycare and preschool providers could check out as a unit for an extended period of time. Kits would also be available to homeschooled and individual parents. Completion of this objective is contingent on being able to find a suitable way to display and/or house them due to physical limitations of the children’s library.

## **Community Need #2**

A variety of entertainment, cultural and educational activities and programs can make a small, rural community feel more inviting, for both young professionals and retirees and all ages in between. We have made progress in meeting that goal and comments received by the library staff and board members lead us to conclude that it is a worthwhile endeavor. We believe that the library can best meet this need by expanding and further developing the following goal in order to better serve the needs of residents of Gothenburg and the surrounding area.

**Goal #2: The library will continue working to increase educational, cultural and entertainment programming for the community. The library is dedicated to promoting life-long learning for our local patrons.**

**Objective #1:** Provide a minimum of four programs a year with a desired goal of one program per month. The Nebraska Humanities Council will remain a resource, as well as, other local and regional programming opportunities that become available. Cost of individual programs and funding resources will be a determining factor in number of programs offered. Library staff will be primarily responsible for selection of the programs.

**Objective #2:** Further develop and strengthen cooperation with the Sun Theatre/Community Playhouse to provide a mutually beneficial collaboration ultimately benefiting the Gothenburg area. This will be an ongoing effort for both entities.

**Objective #3:** Communicate effectively with the public to increase attendance. The library will continue to seek out new and more effective ways to make the

public aware of programs and activities. This will start immediately and be a continuously ongoing effort. Responsibility for effective communication and library advocacy will rest with each library staff member and each member of the library board of trustees.

**Objective #4:** Expand and develop new programs within the library. Adult and child craft classes, a stitchery group, book club(s), adult coloring group, computer classes for those 55+, beginning bridge, art classes, etc. are possibilities. Outside “experts” will be recruited as needed. Community interest and staff and room availability will all be determining factors in what the library can offer at certain times

**Objective #5:** Develop a “mini-makerspace.” Space constraints will be a limiting factor when considering equipment for a makerspace. Consideration will need to be given to type of space—mobile or can an area be found within the library for a dedicated makerspace.

## Evaluation

The library staff will develop and implement the goals and objectives mentioned above and will also be primarily responsible for keeping any statistics and other information necessary for their evaluation. Verbal and written feedback from the community and program participants will be reviewed carefully. The strategic plan shall be reviewed annually in January by the library board of trustees. The board will determine if satisfactory progress is being made and whether the goals remain relevant and attainable or if they need to be adjusted or additional goals added.

Successful implementation of the goals will result in a library that is more connected and responsive to community needs and that will remain vital to the citizens of Gothenburg.