

In October 2016, under the guidance of the Niles Public Library District's (NPLD) strategic planning committee consisting of the library director, assistant director, one library board members and six staff members, the Library began the strategic planning for years 2017 – 2021. Library consultants Rob Cullin and Kimberly Bolan of Kimberly Bolan and Associates, LLC facilitated the process.

### The Process

The Library's strategic planning process included the following key areas.

- 1) **Gathering community input and data**, which involved showing Niles staff and residents (both users and non-users) the possibilities for the Library as a thriving 21<sup>st</sup> century library, and then gathering their input and ideas. In addition, benchmark, demographic, SWOT, and collection analysis were completed.
- 2) **Developing solutions** by compiling all gathered data and input and then working with the planning team during a Strategic Retreat to establish key strategic areas, specific goals, and related investments required to implement the goals to help the Library thrive over the next three years and beyond.
- 3) **Providing a path to results** by developing a plan that the Library staff and board can live, breathe, and readily implement on a day-to-day basis.

In total, twelve stakeholder sessions were conducted for the Niles Public Library District between on November 9 and 10, 2016. Focus group participants included the general public, parents, educators, community leaders, the business community, staff members, and trustees. Participants included frequent library users and infrequent and non-users and ranged in ages and backgrounds. Overall, 77 stakeholders participated in the discussions regarding the NPLD's services and strategic future. In addition to the stakeholder sessions, an online survey was conducted between *November 8 – December 10, 2016*. 340 surveys were completed. Survey participants included a mix of library users (88%) and infrequent and non-users (12%). Survey takers ranged from 13 to over 7 years of age; 48% being 55 years of age or older, 46% being between 26 and 55 years of age, and 6% being between 13 and 25 years of age.

### What We Heard

The community focus groups and online survey explored several topics including customer service, youth services, adult services, senior/boomer services, outreach, programming, technology and digital services, the website, meeting space, collections and resources, and overall 21<sup>st</sup> century public library trends. Detailed summaries of all stakeholder feedback and online survey results were provided in separate documents to NPLD's leadership. All stakeholder input, data analysis, and follow-up exploration work led to the strategic focuses, goals, and investments outlined on page 2 of this document.

### Evaluation & Collaboration

With the goal of achieving all outlined goals over the next five years, NPLD administration, staff, and board of trustees will regularly evaluate their progress and achievements. Objectives set forth in this plan will be accomplished as outlined and will be reviewed on a monthly basis at the Library's board meetings. This balanced and systematic process also emphasizes that the resulting plan will be iterative and evolve substantially over the next several years. A strategy screen and work plan will be created by the team in order to best carry out and assess the plan.

The keys to Niles Public Library District's implementation, evaluation and, ultimately, the success of its strategic plan will be:

- A thorough understanding of the plan as well as active involvement in implementing the plan by staff and the board of trustees
- Frequent and ongoing communication between administration and staff
- Frequent and ongoing communication between NPLD's staff and its community
- Active collaboration between NPLD's board of trustees, administration, staff, outside organizations, and the community

Our Mission:

Engage, Inform, Enrich, Educate

| Strategic Focus                          | Goal   | Investments  | Outcome   |
|--|--|--|---|
| Exceptional Customer Service             | To enhance the library user's experience   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Upgrade wayfinding/navigation throughout the physical space</li> <li>• Improve internal and customer-facing processes, improving efficiency and ease of customer service interactions</li> <li>• Enhance onboarding experience for new library users</li> <li>• Develop consistent standards for customer service</li> </ul>  | The Library is easy to use for all of its patrons   |
| Expanded Community Engagement            | To provide library services to all residents regardless of their physical location | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Develop a task force to gather information and explore options for expanded service in the Northwest part of the District</li> <li>• Evaluate service model and staffing levels throughout the library with the goal of freeing resources for Community Engagement</li> <li>• Commit more resources and attention to Community Engagement, in particular non-users and the underserved</li> <li>• Explore community partnerships and establish the Library as a central hub of information for the community and its agencies</li> </ul>                | Library services provided to the entire District  |
| Focused Staff Development                | To give staff the expertise to work with the community effectively                 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Develop a program strategy emphasizing quality, flexibility and adaptability</li> <li>• Train staff to develop and rely upon data and analysis in evaluating success of collections, services and programs</li> <li>• Increase staff's awareness, and understanding of cultural differences, developing tools and techniques for working with patrons of specific cultures</li> <li>• Consider best ways to provide library services and collections to non-English speakers</li> </ul>   | Programs, services and collections that best meet the needs of the community                              |
| Enhanced Community Awareness & Alignment | To connect the right people with the right content at the right time the right way | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Finalize Library name change and related branding</li> <li>• Focus energy on targeted marketing               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Define most likely target segments</li> <li>• Define best practices for each segment</li> <li>• Implement new targeted communication across relevant marketing channels</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Evaluate intent, scope and content of print newsletter</li> <li>• Evaluate promotional mechanisms for effectiveness</li> <li>• Identify barriers to customer service and communication</li> </ul> | A community of users who are better aware of library services via the channels that most meet their needs |