

# Morton Grove Public Library—the Heart of the Community

## Strategic Plan: 2009-2012

**Vision:** Morton Grove Public Library will meet the needs of its growing and increasingly diverse community by providing services and partnering with other community organizations. All will be welcome to follow their interests, expand their dreams, learn new skills and interact with other members of the community to enhance their quality of life. The Board of Trustees and staff will work together to serve the public and respond to the changing role of libraries.

**Mission:** The Morton Grove Public Library will provide a place offering materials, programs, and services to assist the community in its pursuit of personal growth and lifelong learning.

**Background:** The Morton Grove Public Library (MGPL) serves the informational, professional, educational and recreational needs of Morton Grove's diverse, multicultural community. According to the 2000 census, the population is 22,451, with a median age of 44. The largest categories by racial makeup are:

White	73.8%
Asian	22.5%
Hispanic or Latino	4.5%
Black or African American	.6%

A significant social characteristic of the population for library planning/service offering is that 42.9% of persons over the age of five speak a language other than English at home. [http://factfinder.census.gov/servlet/SAFFacts?\\_lang=en&\\_ss=60053](http://factfinder.census.gov/servlet/SAFFacts?_lang=en&_ss=60053) See detailed demographic data in appendices.

The Morton Grove Public Library building of 31,000 square feet houses more than 147,000 items, ranging from current best-sellers to the latest in audio-books and DVDs, adult and children's fiction, non-fiction and reference materials, as well as more than 400 magazines

and newsletters. The collection of 128,600 books falls short of the 168,750 volumes recommended by Serving Our Public: Standards of Illinois Public Libraries (IL Library Association, Revised Edition, 2002).

Calculating the value of resources provided by the Library using the North Suburban Library System ROI (return on investment) calculator (<http://www.nsls.info/roi>), shows that the library is one of the most cost-effective resources in the community. During the first six months of 2009, the value to the community was \$3,382,996 if borrowed resources were to have been purchased new and if residents were to have paid for programs offered by the library. This is \$733,510 more than the 2009 library levy. Costs were estimated for magazines and newspapers, books for children and adults, DVDs and videotapes, program attendance and use of personal computers with Internet access.

## **Strengths**

A dedicated group of professionals work toward a common goal of serving the community; staff is knowledgeable, diverse and has a reputation for a high customer service orientation.

There is an increasing awareness of library offerings by the community due to frequent press coverage and library participation in school and village events

In 2009, the library has experienced record high circulation activity and program participation, likely due to the community taking advantage of public library resources during the economic downturn (9.5% increase for the first half of 2009 compared to the same period in 2008)

Outstanding programming is offered for all ages and demographic groups.

There is a well-developed collection of materials, including DVDs, audio books and juvenile materials.

The level of technology keeps pace with new platforms and

products; there is a strong commitment to computer instruction for library users.

The Director and Board President interact frequently with village leadership to ensure that the library is considered in village planning/development.

Funding and the library budget are stable with only moderate growth in the levy.

## **Weaknesses**

The library building does not accommodate the minimum collection standards recommended by the State of IL (an item has to be removed from the collection every time a new item is added).

The building, while compliant with ADA (Americans with Disabilities Act) standards, does not provide for access to current standards.

There is no room to expand the number of public Internet/computer workstations, space for group training is limited, and there is no suitable teen area or small group quiet study areas.

Parking is inadequate in spite of parking space being rented from a nearby church.

Library is not in a central location.

A low percentage of residents hold library cards

Marketing efforts are increasing; however, there is still insufficient marketing to businesses and community groups.

## **Opportunities**

The community is loyal, diverse and open to the library's message. Community demographics are changing with new construction in the village.

Morton Grove has been recognized as being a family-friendly

community.

There is an emerging, technology-savvy subset of the population that challenges the staff to meet changing user expectations.

Statistics reveal increasing use of e-resources, presenting an opportunity to promote 24/7 virtual access and offering training as needed

Significant shifts in the publishing industry from print to digital resources support 24/7 virtual access to complement physical collection.

Staff is proactive about keeping up with trends in technology, the profession and the community and view professional development as essential to meeting changing expectations of library users.

The library is filling a need for entertainment services lacking in the community or deemed to be expensive during the economic slow down.

The library provides unique services as a “third place” after home and work—for job search help, watching DVDs and other entertainment media, space for study and test taking, and other free educational and entertaining activities.

A degree of information illiteracy, particularly the expectation that everything is available on the Internet, gives an opportunity to explain, instruct and respond.

There is an opportunity to support ESL (English as a Second Language) instruction.

There are additional marketing opportunities—appropriate to the demographic makeup of the community and using appropriate outreach tools, including an interactive website.

## **Threats**

Commercial services (e.g., brick and mortar bookstores, online bookstores) and newer nearby libraries compete with resources and services offered by MGPL.

New and emerging media—such as broadband, MP3 players, e-book readers and social networking sites—compete for attention of the community.

Information illiteracy, while an “opportunity” for the library, is also a threat if the belief persists that all information is available on the Internet and residents do not seek out additional information.

Reading-adversity is fed by fascination with non-print media such as audio books and e-books.

There is an entrenched view in some sectors of the community that the library should continue to be primarily a warehouse of books.

## **Goals**

In order to achieve targeted growth and development, MGPL will concentrate on activities that fall into the following four broad areas for the next three years. These serve as a compass for action for trustees, management and staff. The broad goals outlined here also constitute a framework for evaluation should the library be faced with new technology developments, major changes to the overall economic climate, or local funding changes. Specific operating plans that support these goals will be fleshed out by the Director and the library senior management team, with the exception of the second goal which will be led by the Board of Trustees and the Director.

### **Goal 1: Community outreach and education**

The following initiatives will ensure that Morton Grove Public Library continues to be a vital community resource for residents.

The library will continue to expand its user base, taking into account age ranges from preschool to elderly. This will be accomplished by targeting people who come to the library as well as those who do not now come to library to achieve .5% per year growth in number of library card holders

A strategy to more effectively serve ethnic populations will be developed by library staff by end of the first quarter of 2010. The analysis will focus on how the library interacts with those segments of the community in which English is a second language and how it supports families in which parents do not speak English.

The library will continue to cooperate with school districts (public and private elementary, middle & high schools), integrating library programs with school programs.

The library will co-develop programs with village, park district, churches and businesses

In cooperation with village government, the library will work to educate the public on community issues.

The library will support job seekers with resume-writing help, computer skills development, and other literacy endeavors.

## **Goal 2: Ensure viability of the physical facility for current and future needs**

The Board of Trustees and the Library Director are committed to taking steps to ensure that the library building meets the needs of the community now and in the future. Priorities include the following:

Near-term, the Board will continue to maximize every existing space in the building, such as investigating the possibility of reclaiming some space in entry way and proposing ways to improve the youth services area where space is at a premium.

The Board will seek out additional parking space in the neighborhood since parking is inadequate.

The Board will fund an engineering study for objective assessment of limitations and possibilities in the current building by end of 2009 (pending approval).

The Board will contact government bodies regarding availability of stimulus funds

The Board will make early stage preparations if major reconstruction of the library or construction of a new library is recommended by engineering study, including:

The Board will give priority to green and LEED practices in all building-related activity.

### **Goal 3: Enrich the user experience**

The library will continue to create vibrant, engaging and interactive means to engage the public. The aim is to attract and delight visitors. This goal is tightly aligned with the goals of understanding ethnic populations and using technology to reach out to the community in innovative ways. Examples of how the library will endeavor to maximize the user experience include but are not limited to:

Increasing its ability to answer questions (leveraging databases and access to experts) by using technology and social networking software to expand methods for contacting patrons.(e.g., Twitter, Meebo, email, videoconferencing, interactive webpage)

Making the library more accommodating of various media formats, such as:

- Building staff technology skills and offer latest technology to visitors
- Equalizing availability of basic technology, e.g., loaner laptops, public Internet PCs
- Offering training to support visitor/patron use of library systems
- Adding self-serve capabilities (e.g., self-check-out for youth and adult areas)
- Offering walk-around reference—proactive and immediate interaction with visitors

- Responding quickly to technology trends (e-book readers, BlueRay) so that visitors are exposed to the latest technology

Expanding the collection of non-English language materials corresponding to Morton Grove demographics

#### **Goal 4: Expand marketing of the library**

Effectively promote library services, resources, and resulting impact on the community requires ongoing marketing efforts. An updated marketing strategy will include plans to:

- Proactively engage with the community on a quarterly basis to get feedback on general and/or specific library activities using focus groups, coffee times, spot surveys, and better use of the suggestion box
- Maximize and promote programming and resource offering
- Create paper and electronic marketing strategy/materials (including marketing components in a new website and leveraging video or multi-media (such as YouTube) outreach
- Nurture Friends group to play a vital role in outreach, advocacy and fund-raising
- Highlight virtual site as well as physical site to promote 24/7 availability of library resources
- Build awareness of additional services/programs that could be offered to the community if the facility were adequate

#### **Conclusion**

The four major strategic goals were developed by the Board of Trustees with input from the library director and senior management

team. Analysis of SWOT themes—particularly the opportunity to enhance service to ethnic populations, information industry/publishing trends, and known limitations of the library building led to these goals being prioritized over other initiatives.

For the next three years, this plan will be reviewed quarterly and adjusted as needed to ensure responsiveness to community needs, technology changes, and budget realities.

Approved by Board of Trustees October 8, 2009