



Creating a Future of Boundless Potential

2024-2028 STRATEGIC PLAN



SAN MATEO
PUBLIC LIBRARY

SAN MATEO PUBLIC LIBRARY

55 WEST THIRD AVENUE

“The best way to predict the future is to create it.”

Peter Drucker, *Internationally renowned management consultant, teacher, and author*



Creating Our Story

When I became City Manager, my biggest priority was building community in San Mateo. One of the ways we do that is through our library services. The San Mateo Public Library is more than just a place to check out books and do research; it's the living room of our community, a safe, inclusive space where people of all ages come to connect over shared interests as well as grow together.

For many years, many predicted that libraries would become obsolete because of the internet, but libraries like ours have grown because we evolved into a multigenerational community hub for learning, collaboration and cultural activities. While the internet is a powerful tool, nothing can replace face-to-face conversations for building community, which is especially important at a time when so many people are divided or isolated.

I'm so proud of the work our strategic planning team has done to create a roadmap for the future to our libraries. I appreciate the countless hours they spent imagining new ways for our libraries to serve as gateways for connection and empowerment. I'm grateful for our incredible external and internal partners who help us remain vigilant in our mission to make knowledge accessible to everyone in our communities.

With their guidance, I'm confident that our library system will not only continue to thrive but serve as a model for the nation's public libraries because we are willing to take bold steps toward the future. I commend our Foundation, Library Board, Volunteers, City Librarian, Staff, and all the external and internal stakeholders who work with us to create a better tomorrow through our libraries.

Alex Khojikian, *City Manager*

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

We invited a group of committed library stakeholders, people with busy schedules, to dedicate nearly 20 hours to strategic planning for the San Mateo Public Library. Thankfully, they all said yes!

Strategic planning is most effective when the lens we use to examine ourselves is as sharp from the outside as it is from within our library. Our external and internal stakeholders made sure we began our journey by identifying real challenges and realistic goals. We then proceeded to dream big dreams by imagining, without limits, what we could do for our community if we set our sights on pursuing exciting, ambitious goals. We combined national library trends data with the thoughts and the direct feedback we gathered from our community members to build the foundation for our strategic plan. The voices we heard and the facts we obtained directly informed our work. I believe that today public libraries are centers of culture and community with the unique capacity to connect people of diverse backgrounds, perspectives, and interests. It is vitally important to find innovative ways to continue adapting this cherished and dynamic institution.



Is another pandemic looming and how can we be better prepared to weather it? What new technological tools will our patrons need from us at the dawn of the age of artificial intelligence? How do we continue to adapt our services to meet the needs of one of the most diverse and dynamic regions in the world? Our planning focused on considering these questions and scenarios. And as we look ahead, we will continue learning, and growing our services using this new strategic plan as a flexible map. We simply could not have done it without the time and talent of our stakeholders. I want to recognize and express my appreciation to all of those who helped us with the process.

James Moore, *City Librarian*

We honor and appreciate those who helped us in the Strategic planning process.

James Moore, *City Librarian*
Rukshana Singh, *Deputy City Librarian*
Marcia Mendonca, *Senior Management Analyst*
Aisha Washington, *Supervising Librarian*
Dyan De Jager, *Supervising Librarian*
Rita Morin, *Supervising Librarian*
Jonathan Jung, *Supervising Library Assistant*
Gary Welte, *Library Technology Specialist*
Eric Groth, *Librarian II*
Joseph Squillaciotti, *Librarian II*

Madison Reece, *Librarian II*
Marc Games, *Library Assistant II*
Daniel Coreтана, *Library Assistant I*
Jessica Sze, *Library Aide II*
Sheila Canzian, *President – Library Board*

San Mateo Public Library Foundation
Sarah Meier-Heredia, *Development Officer*
Alexandra Gillen, *Co-President*
Jeanne Back, *Co-President*
Vicky Stein, *Secretary*



Collect Data



Assess and Organize



*Establish
Strategic Pillars*

The Why & How of Our Strategic Plan (Our Process)

Why? Because an organization can only respond to its communities when it listens, learns, and builds a plan from what is learned.

How? We used data to tell us the story of libraries and added those stories to ours. These data points helped to lay a foundation for our strategic plan. We took a close look from within and without to determine where we're strong and where we need improvement. And to call out the challenges we could face as a public library. We put it all together to build a plan. Not a roadmap of tasks, but a guiding document that lets everyone connected with the library know who we want to become and what we want to accomplish.



DATA

We began our process with data to become grounded in library trends, nationwide and in our backyard. And to see where we are today.

A few innovative trends created to attract library patrons and serve communities captured our attention.

BERKELEY

- Every resident is within one mile of a library branch
- Tool lending program

LOUISVILLE

- Partnership with the local newspaper with their Mobile Newsroom

MEMPHIS

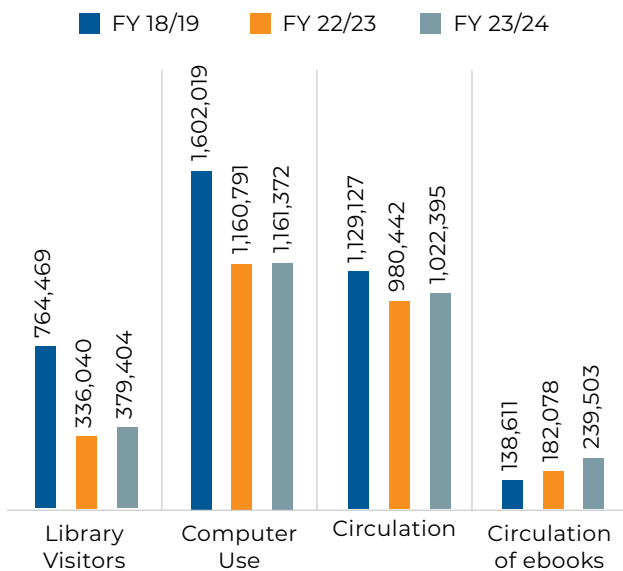
- In-house TV and Radio station

SUMMERLIN, LAS VEGAS

- Offers free WiFi to eliminate the Digital Divide
- Library and Performance Arts Center showcases local and national talent
- Yoga classes and Community Meetings

THE SAN MATEO PUBLIC LIBRARY TODAY

Over the past three years, we have seen upward trends and encouraging growth in library visits and the use of our services and programming. Post-pandemic challenges inspired us to make in-person programs and activities cool again.



STATISTICAL HIGHLIGHTS

(from 2023-2024 Annual Report)

Library Card Holders: 81,266 **(+6%)**

Reference Questions Answered: 55,639 **(+11%)**

Program Attendance: 23,851 **(+5%)**

Items Circulated: 1,022,395 **(+4%)**

Internet & Database Sessions: 1,161,372 **(+.05%)**

Library Visits: 379,404 **(+13%)**

Website Visits: 220,054 **(+6%)**

WHAT WE HEARD

We asked community members and internal and external stakeholders what they want from the library of the future, and how well they think we're doing today in preparing for it.



Longer hours, more locations, more events

Safe spaces for older patrons, improve the teen area

Bring back the café

A tool lending for gardening, cooking, sewing; tech tutoring; more books



"You offer great children's programs"

"I can find all I need online"

"Your staff is great"

"The library is clean and well-maintained"



ASSESS & ORGANIZE

Our strategy stakeholder team developed a SWOT analysis for an internal assessment of where we are today.

STRENGTHS	WEAKNESSES	OPPORTUNITIES	THREATS
Diversity of Offerings/ Programming/ Non-traditional Collections Community Spaces & Accessibility Staff Knowledge & Skills/ Excellent Customer Service/Welcoming Environment Inclusive/Cultural Committee	Need for Greater Investment Building Functionality/ In Need of Updating A Need for Marketing Strategies to Reach Those Who Don't Come to the Library/ New Patron Outreach Lack of Locations Near All Neighborhoods	New Funding Sources/ Grants Make the Library a Destination/Reimagine Spaces Marketing to Reach New Patrons/Connect with the Community Strategic Partnerships	Potential City Budget Challenges Access to Funding Competitive Hiring Environment/High Cost of Living External Climate: • Outdated Public Perception Increased Operational Costs

A PESTLE assessment was conducted by the team to identify external forces that could impact library operations.

POLITICAL	ECONOMIC	SOCIAL	TECHNOLOGICAL	LEGAL	ENVIRONMENTAL
Book Bans Media Literacy Polarization	Grants Inflation Corporate/ Strategic Partnerships	Distribution of Resources Demographic Care Most Vulnerable Population	AI E-books Rapid Development of New Technology	Potential Litigation	Climate Change Sustainability Aging Infrastructure Disaster Preparedness



OUR STRATEGIC PILLARS

Our Mission Statement reflects who we are. Our Vision Statement expresses our aspirations. Our Guiding Principles are the cornerstone of the San Mateo Public Library.

MISSION

San Mateo Public Library is a gateway to empowerment and understanding. We make knowledge accessible and offer free enriching experiences and welcoming civic spaces for people of San Mateo, Hillsborough, and neighboring communities.

VISION

To cultivate boundless potential through exploration, learning, and connection.

GUIDING PRINCIPLES

- Intellectual Freedom
- Adaptability & Innovation
- Equity of Access
- Embrace Diverse Perspectives
- Welcoming Environment





GOALS, STRATEGIES, AND OBJECTIVES

Goals and Strategies tell the story of what we want to achieve and how we plan to do it. We created goals based on our aspirations and the unique needs of our communities. Goals become reality through action plans, which we call strategies. Objectives give focus and meaning to action plans.

Goal #1: To promote literacy for all ages and abilities

Strategies

- Develop collections that support different learning abilities
- Increase visibility of programs and services
- Support community members in learning emerging technologies

Objectives

- The creation of a holistic and viewpoint-diverse collection of materials that offers value to patrons of all learning abilities.
- An increased number of new patrons visiting the library by offering fresh, relevant services that can only be found at SMPL.
- Effective and equitable outreach to community members using innovative communications tactics.
- Recognized as a leader on the Peninsula in neurodivergent offerings for all ages.

Goal #2: To create beautiful and functional community spaces

Strategies

- Invest in physical and digital infrastructure
- Invest in branch improvements
- Repurpose underutilized spaces

Objectives

- Energized support and engagement from Hillsdale and Marina patrons to collaboratively fund improvements for branch library facilities.
- Long-term partnerships are established with local businesses, corporations, and peer agencies.
- Recognized as a center of art and culture in the City of San Mateo.

Goal #3: To increase and secure stable funding

- | Strategies | Objectives |
|--|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Synergize with SMPLF's fundraising efforts• Elevate our storytelling to inform and inspire greater community support• Maximize grant opportunities | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Proactive fundraising tactics enable us to improve facilities and expand our programs and collections.• Partnering with the Library Foundation helps to produce programs and events that are responsive to San Mateo's community issues.• Revenue-generating opportunities are proactively pursued to amplify the library's impact in the communities we serve. |

Goal #4: To proactively engage community

- | Strategies | Objectives |
|--|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Partner with community groups to expand library reach• Listen and respond to community needs• Improve digital presence and strategy to reach new audiences• Optimize San Mateo Celebrates/National Library Week as vehicle to engage with broader community | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Services are tailored to the needs of our community, ensuring our patrons feel heard.• An increased number of library card holders, newsletter subscribers, and social media followers.• The <i>San Mateo Celebrates Festival</i> becomes a cornerstone cultural event that also generates funding for other library programs throughout the year. |





FULL CIRCLE: LITERALLY RISING FROM THE ASHES

The goal of the original San Mateo Public Library was simply to provide a “reading room” or place for leisure time socializing while improving minds. That was the modest vision that spurred the creation of the first version of the San Mateo Library.

It was established in one room of a small brick building called Library Hall. When fire destroyed the building, undaunted residents quickly built another library on the same site. Public support grew until in 1904, funded by citizens and administered by the city government, the San Mateo Public Library system we know today was created.

We continue to embody the past community spirit that, undaunted, resurrected the library from literal ashes because people knew that a place where community members could “socialize and improve minds” was essential to fostering a healthy, thriving community.

We also resolutely look forward by navigating a present and planning for a future that patrons of the “reading room”, could never have imagined. Community support and a commitment to service still define the character of the San Mateo Public Library and confirm that we will rise again and again to meet the challenges and boldly seize the opportunities the future holds.



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