



# Strategic Plan

2024–2026

Transforming Tomorrow,

Preserving our Past,

& Enriching Lives Today

# Executive Summary

Oxford Public Library's (OPL) leadership team set out to create a strategic plan that aligns library service with recent changes in local demographics, leadership, and needs in order to support the educational, enrichment, social, and informational needs of residents. OPL serves both Oxford Charter Township and the village of Oxford, which are jointly referred to as "Oxford."

Prepared in partnership with The Ivy Group, the plan is informed by research that encompasses Library users, non-users, partners, and stakeholders. Oxford residents primarily use the Library to check out books, movies, and other audiovisual materials and to attend programs. Research results confirmed the need for more space for children's services and the importance of traditional library materials. It highlighted changes in the community, such as anticipated growth in both households with young children and those with older adults living in isolation, indicating a need for alternative methods of material delivery.

To match service priorities with community expectations, diverse residents, leaders, and business owners were asked about their perceptions of OPL and the issues facing Oxford. Community leaders, stakeholders, and staff identified the need for access to comprehensive mental health resources for students, teachers, first responders, and parents. Facilitated conversations indicated a lack of knowledge in the community about the variety and value of OPL's offerings, as well as barriers to those offerings. Surveys pointed to the importance of children's services and the desire for more of what the Library is doing well. Market segmentation elucidated the types of households not using the Library and recommended tactics that would make OPL offerings more relevant, accessible, and convenient to both users and non-users. Staff members emphasized that the Library should expand its community partnerships and stressed regular, consistent internal communications between administration and front-line staff.

Community members felt OPL's most important role is as a source for books and other media. They prioritized space for children to play and explore, as well as the expansion of digital collections and anytime access to materials. In open-ended responses, residents asked for more Library programs that facilitate social interaction and exploration.

The following framework will allow OPL to transform tomorrow, preserve the past, and enrich lives today.

# Priorities

Oxford Public Library is a treasured part of the community, valued for its excellent youth services, beautiful building, and commitment to enriching the lives of residents. This strategic plan sets an aspirational course for the future while preserving the exceptional, foundational services that the community has come to expect from OPL.

OPL consciously engaged leaders, stakeholders, and community members, both in person and virtually.

Four major priorities emerged from these discussions:

- Evolving Delivery
- Transforming Spaces
- Supporting Youth
- Enriching All Ages

## Evolving Delivery

**IMPACT:** Residents gain access to critical library resources any time, anywhere.



**INITIATIVE:** Bring dynamic offerings to residents in ways that reduce barriers and reinforce the Library's value to Oxford.

- **Be as convenient and accessible as possible** – adapting delivery methods to accommodate new consumer habits, commuter patterns, and the changing digital landscape.
- **Serve more people, more efficiently** – launching off-site kiosks, a user-centered website, and pop-ups timed with Oxford's largest events.
- **Anticipate shifting community expectations** – continuing to iterate on successful initiatives with responsive programs and services.

# Transforming Spaces

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**IMPACT:** OPL is filled with engaged, delighted users.



**INITIATIVE:** Reimagine OPL facilities to provide revolutionary library services.

- **Stimulate learning through play** – increasing the footprint of children’s spaces and emphasizing a vibrant, flexible atmosphere.
- **Convene all aspects of Oxford** – promoting the Library as a comfortable, welcoming gathering place.
- **Collaborate in purpose-driven zones** – devising innovative ways for students and workers to connect and incubate ideas.

# Supporting Youth

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**IMPACT:** Oxford students thrive academically, socially, and emotionally.



**INITIATIVE:** Integrated, intergenerational programs and services set the standard for innovative early literacy and youth services.

- **Prepare every child to excel in kindergarten** – building critical skills through meaningful play and exploration.
- **Be the cornerstone of academic achievement** – fueling student success with high-tech, collaborative, and comprehensive opportunities.
- **Prioritize acute needs** – building resiliency in response to the devastating events of November 2021.

# Enriching All Ages

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**Impact:** People are connected, knowledgeable, and happy.



**INITIATIVE:** Open access to OPL’s wealth of tools, spaces, and expertise enhances the vibrancy of Oxford.

- **Nurture wonder** – championing lifelong learning by sparking both self-directed and guided creative journeys.
- **Deliver transformative experiences** – delighting users with responsive collections and programs that foster interest in culture, hobbies, and entertainment.
- **Cultivate connections** – welcoming all as the essential destination for shared experiences.

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*Thank you to everyone who contributed their time and ideas to this strategic planning process.*

# Appendices

## Project Methodology

To prioritize the issues facing the Oxford Public Library and to understand the service area at the sidewalk level, the strategic planning team engaged with internal stakeholders, community leaders, and members of the public. The strategic planning team used interviews, conversations, and surveys to collect personal accounts from individuals who reflect Oxford's composition and leadership. Data analysis organized this valuable input, defining Oxford's greatest needs and painting a picture of responsive, relevant library service.

## Data Analysis

Methodologies that rely on quantitative data offer a reliable snapshot of the issue under consideration. They allow measurements to be precisely compared, and thus they transform numbers into insights.

### Environmental Snapshot

The consulting team reviewed and analyzed Census Bureau demographic data, previous OPL reports, economic development documents, plus SEMCOG (Southeast Michigan Council of Governments) and other regional information to create an environmental scan of the forces shaping Oxford.

### Market Segmentation Study

Claritas' MyBestSegments lifestyle systems define every household in the U.S. by distinct types, called "segments," to provide a comprehensive picture of who lives where and what they are like. The largest segments in Oxford are called Country Squires, Campers & Camo, Big Fish, Small Pond, Golden Ponds, and Traditional Times. Descriptions of each segment can be found at [claritas360.claritas.com/mybestsegments](https://claritas360.claritas.com/mybestsegments). The study identified key demographics, lifestyle characteristics, consumer behavior, and media preferences of library users and non-users. These insights can guide decision-making for services, collections, and programs and inform more effective marketing strategies. Claritas output data is proprietary; the license agreement does not allow for sharing raw data.

## Stakeholder Engagement

Those closest to an organization offer unique insight in their assessment of its strengths and opportunities. Oxford Charter Township Trustees, OPL staff and leadership, community leaders, and invited members of the public participated in facilitated discussions. Surveys open to both OPL staff and the wider community offered the opportunity for all to provide confidential feedback.

### **Oxford Charter Township Interviews**

In September 2022, Ivy Group consultants conducted Zoom and phone interviews with the seven Oxford Charter Township Trustees about local strengths and challenges and how OPL's strategic plan can address future needs.

### **Planning Session**

On October 10, 2022, Library administration, staff, and Board members met with the consultants to review consumer trends, discuss and prioritize areas of need, and conduct a SOAR (Strengths, Opportunities, Aspirations, and Results) exercise.

### **Staff Survey**

In December 2022, 20 of 26 OPL staff responded to an anonymous survey. The survey explored key issues, such as staff perceptions of facilities, customer service, and professional development.

## Community Engagement

Engagement with community members ensures that the assessment process is transparent and inclusive. The qualitative information gathered gives context to the hard data, explaining the "why" behind relationships and uncovering hidden needs.

### **Focus Groups**

Focus groups are effective for discovering how the Library is perceived in the community and how well its offerings meet local needs. On October 11, 2022, consultants conducted four in-person sessions at the Library, grouped into the following categories: business, media, and non-profit leaders; seniors; teens; and parents. A total of 32 people participated.

### **Town Hall**

The town hall publicized the planning process and signaled that it was open and inclusive. On October 11, 2022, consultants facilitated a discussion with 14 adults at the Library.

### **Community Leader Interviews**

Library leadership interviewed nine leaders of Oxford government and non-profit groups in January 2023 to determine community challenges and priorities.

### **Online Community Surveys**

From January 9 through February 12, 2023, the Library solicited community input via an online survey platform. 479 individuals participated and 44% took the opportunity to expand on how the Library might become a better resource for them. The survey identified the needs and preferences of the community with respect to public library use, probed reasons why households do not currently use library services, and solicited ideas to develop future priorities for Library offerings.

To achieve the goals outlined in the strategic plan, the Library will need dedicated resources such as:

- Funding for 21st century library furnishings
- Investment in remote delivery systems
- Funding to improve and expand communication efforts
- Staff levels and training that support exceptional customer service
- Recommitment to partnerships
- Capacity building for additional programs

These investments will support multiple strategies and priorities, leveraging expenditures into a high return on investment.



# Research Highlights

## Evolving Delivery

- 75% of community survey respondents were interested or very interested in expanding OPL's digital collection, and 44% were interested or very interested in 24/7 access to Library materials through kiosks or lockers.
- Town hall participants emphasized the need for convenient access to library materials through extended curbside service, home delivery and offsite kiosks.
- Community leaders suggested positioning the Library as a convenient resource, with accessible hours and more easy-to-access digital materials.
- Focus group participants asked for more seamless ordering and delivery of materials, such as kiosks, pop-ups, and extended curbside service, as well as grab and go options.
- 61% of staff surveyed recommend increasing digital and streaming media collections
- Over 92% of Oxford residents have broadband internet access at home.
- Market segmentation produced maps pinpointing potential off-site material delivery locations that are close to population centers and would serve populations with high need and low current Library use.

## Transforming Spaces

- Community leaders recommended expanding the footprint of the children's room within the existing building and creating more small meeting rooms for studying and tutoring.
- In addition to expanding the children's room, focus group participants recommended revising existing Library policies to allow for use that matches current consumer expectations, especially for phone and food use and increased noise levels.
- Town hall participants requested more small study rooms and easier booking of the existing meeting rooms.
- 61% of staff surveyed supported expanding the digital and streaming collections, while 36.8% disagreed that the OPL's website is user friendly.
- Market segmentation revealed that households with OPL users are more likely to have children.

## Supporting Youth

- Community leaders identified social-emotional learning and mental health needs resulting from the 2021 shooting at Oxford High School. They recommend that the Library focus on education and early literacy support; creating safe spaces with inviting activities for youth and their families; and partnerships with mental health providers.
- The Southeast Michigan Council of Governments predicts that 30% of Oxford households will include children in 2045.
- In the community survey, respondents were least satisfied with the current size of the children’s room (23% “dissatisfied”); they also identified space for children to play and explore as the most important library space to expand.
- 47% of respondents to the staff survey agreed that the children’s room needs improvement.
- Town Hall participants recognized the need for safe, free, indoor spaces for young children and suggested that expanding the children’s area would relieve overcrowding at peak times.
- Parents in a focus group praised the well-rounded opportunities for children of all ages. They raised safety concerns about crowding in the children’s room, suggesting that modifications to the existing space can make it safer and more responsive to children’s educational and social needs.
- Teens in a focus group praised the youth staff. They prioritized space to socialize and to study in small groups.
- The two largest segments in Oxford, comprising 36% of households, have a mix of children at home, but neither has a library card use rate over 45%.

## Enriching All Ages

- 76.5% of staff survey respondents strongly agreed that the Library supports educational achievement within the community.
- Township leaders encouraged the Library to work more closely with partners, such as the school system and the Parks and Recreation department, to leverage learning and enrichment opportunities without increasing expenditures.
- Focus group and town hall participants, as well as community leaders, value enrichment opportunities and want high-demand programs repeated more often, with more events held on evenings and weekends.
- According to the community survey, most users value the Library for access to materials (80%) and programs (48%) that support lifelong learning.

- The Southeast Michigan Council of Governments predicts that 28% of Oxford households will live alone by 2045, increasing the physical and cognitive risks that come with isolation.
- Three of the largest segments in Oxford have below average technology use, indicating a role for the Library to play as a source for internet access and digital literacy resources.