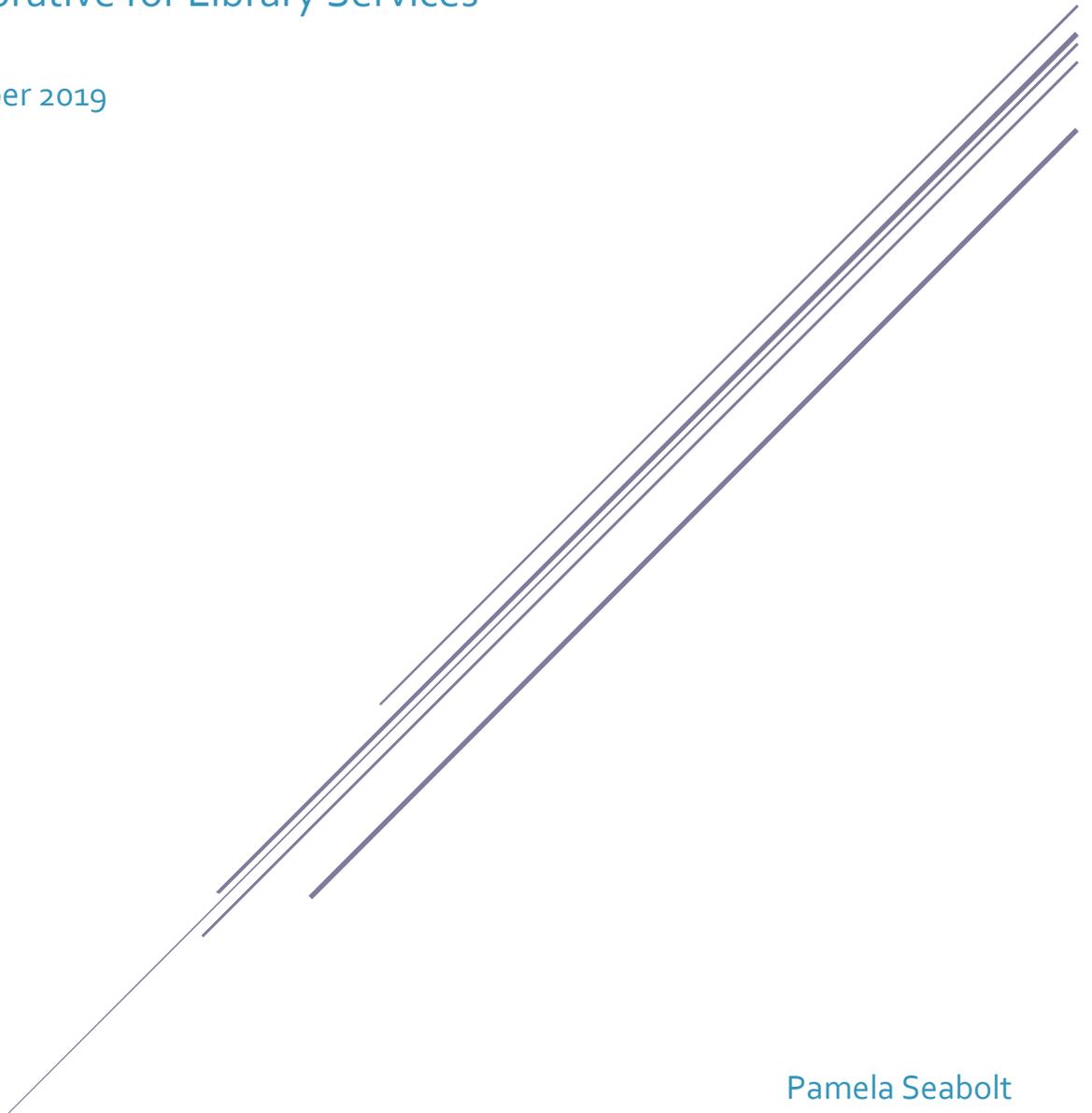


COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT REPORT

Prepared for the Delphi Public Library by the Midwest
Collaborative for Library Services

September 2019



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Summary of Community Interviews

The library used one-on-one interviews with a wide variety of community residents and community leaders. The interviews were based on the Harwood Institute model of community engagement, which seeks to “Turn Outward” to the community to determine their aspirations, and in turn to prioritize services that are in alignment with the true needs of the community.

Community interviews were conducted between September 5 and September 20, 2019. The interviews were conducted by library staff and community representatives. These were opportunities for residents to discuss their aspirations for the community, the concerns they have about reaching those aspirations, and to identify areas where the library might help. 45 community leaders and members were interviewed.

The notes from the interviews have been summarized in a blended community narrative and public knowledge summary. The community aspirations and community concerns have also been organized in word cloud illustrations with words that community members used to describe their aspirations and concerns. Additionally, information on how the interviewees believe the library can help the community to reach its aspirations are organized, themed, and aligned with specific aspirations or concerns that they might address.

Community Narrative

Community members openly shared their aspirations and concerns. The following is a narrative of the information, summarized in a blended form of the Harwood Institute models of the “Community Narrative” and “Public Knowledge Summary.”

Delphi Public Library Community Narrative Public Knowledge Summary

The Delphi Public Library community aspires to be a growing community that is connected, engaged, safe, and where people of all backgrounds, regardless of race, religion, socio-economic status, or age are accepted and supported. The community wants to be diverse, involved, aware, educated, progressive, and thriving with a variety of opportunities for a good quality of life where people take pride in their small town.

Connected and Supported – A desire to be connected and supported was talked about in almost every interview. The aspiration of being connected was talked about in a couple of different ways. First, people had a desire to be connected with each other and feel like they are a “part of something.” But the community also expressed a desire to be connected so that they felt supported. One of the most voiced concerns was a feeling of division in the community, and a desire to have a support system so people did not have to “act alone” or feel as if they were excluded from some groups in the community. Some felt that generational differences and technology played a part in the feeling of being disconnected. There was a desire for people from the town, surrounding rural areas, and farming communities to come together to grow and work together and contribute to the quality of life in their small town. People talked frequently of a yearning to maintain a good quality of life that included a community that takes pride in itself and that celebrates being a family friendly small town that maintains sustainable growth where people can connect with each other.

Engaged and Involved – A desire to be engaged and involved was also expressed. The community wanted ample opportunities to come together to engage with each other through social activities. The community had a desire for more cultural experiences, that would both allow the community to be a cultural destination but would also create new experiences and opportunities for recreation for residents. The community also wanted to be involved, and this was expressed as an aspiration, but also as a concern. People wanted to have opportunities to be involved and informed of decisions by community leaders, as well as opportunities to be involved in community efforts such as historical preservation, cultural experiences, and social activities. Many wanted cultural experiences that included specific suggestions of an ArtFest and supporting the Delphi Opera House.

The community also expressed a desire to get young people engaged and involved in the community, which could help foster positive experiences and a sense of “community pride” in order to retain more young adults and young families. The community also expressed a concern that organizations, community groups, and people were not collaborating as effectively as they could, which was contributing to the division in the community. There was a desire for people to come together and work together for the benefit of the community, and specifically for community leaders and organizations to meet regularly to share ideas and generate innovative ideas to address community issues.

Growing – The community wants to be a progressive and growing community, and this was expressed in various ways. The community wanted to see more business and industry in order to create sustainable growth. People also expressed the desire to have access to basic necessities in the community so people wouldn’t need to leave and so that locally owned businesses were supported. Concerns were also expressed around the growth and development of the community in that the community wanted to maintain and build on what growth had been happening. Many felt that developing a system that mentors young leaders will help provide continuity and sustainability. Some also expressed a desire to be progressive with technology and take advantage of new opportunities that new technology can create. A

concern for a lack of industry and small businesses to support local jobs was also heard throughout the interviews, as well as a desire for more affordable housing with adequate housing in residential areas. People also conveyed that they wanted people in the town to have a sense of “community pride” by maintaining properties and cultivating an attractive town so that it could be a destination spot for those seeking historical, cultural, and social experiences.

Safe and Aware – There was also an aspiration to live in a safe community that is aware of what’s happening in the community. People felt like they lived in a safe community but concerns about safety were also expressed in a few ways. People wanted to maintain a safely walkable community by being able to walk in neighborhoods without fear of vehicle traffic. Safety of trails and parks was also expressed, and a desire for cameras and other security features on trails and in parks was discussed. They also wanted to foster awareness of issues and concerns in the community. Specific examples of this included being aware of issues of drug addiction and those who struggle with homelessness. This also included helping to foster awareness of services available in the community and directing people to those services. Communication was also expressed as a part of awareness in making sure that opportunities for assistance were known to people in the community.

Educated – Education was an aspiration that was expressed in a couple different ways in the interviews. First, people wanted to have and maintain quality schools so that children in the community would receive a quality education. They also expressed a desire for education around issues in the community and world, such as diversity, inclusion, addiction, and homelessness.

Diverse, Inclusive, Accepting – The community wanted to be diverse, inclusive, and accepting of people of all backgrounds, regardless of race, religion, socio-economic status, or age. People felt there is a lack of diversity in the community and expressed it as a concern. They wanted a community where all people were accepted and made to feel welcome and encouraged to be involved and participative.

Aspirations



Concerns



How Can the Library Help?

Community interviewees were asked how the library can help achieve the community aspirations and address community concerns. The responses were compiled and loosely themed, followed by some of the specific suggestions under each category. Some suggestions could fall under more than one category. The suggestions could be a combination of activities the library already conducts, or ideas for new activities. Under each category are listed some of the community aspirations and concerns that might be addressed by theme.

Enrichment

Many see the library as being the heart of the community and already providing opportunities for enrichment to all ages in the community, beyond traditional classroom learning. People wanted to see the library continue to provide excellent enrichment opportunities that can bridge the gap between responsibilities and recreation, and even offer more. The community trusted the library to provide a safe space for children to learn while not in school. Specific suggestions for adult enrichment topics included health, living/being healthy, and gardening.

The conversation around the library's opportunities to provide educational enrichment addresses the community's **aspirations** of being Supported, Educated, Recreation, and Family Friendly; and speaks to the community's **concerns** around Development, Safety, and Awareness.

Experience the Arts

The community saw the library as the ideal institution to provide opportunities to experience the arts. People appreciate that the library facilitates the Red Brick Theater productions and partnering with the Delphi Opera House but would like to have more opportunities for all ages to be enriched in the arts including music, art, and literature. The community would like to have more opportunities to display art publicly, and a specific suggestion was to provide longer term arts instruction that culminates in an art show at the library. Suggestions were also made to have artists or performers as guest speakers at the library.

The conversation around the library's opportunities to provide enrichment in the arts addresses the community's **aspirations** of being Supported, Educated, Engaged, Growing, Diverse, Involved, Inclusive, Recreation, and Family Friendly; and speaks to the community's **concerns** around Development, Disengaged, Uninvolved, Disconnected, and Awareness.

Supporting Seniors

The library is also positioned to continue to provide support to seniors with specific enrichment opportunities for them. The community wanted help in learning to spot scams and navigate financial choices. They also wanted assistance with technology and their digital life. Specific suggestions were how to use cell phones and organizing digital photos to save and print.

The conversation around the library's opportunities in supporting seniors addresses the community's **aspirations** of being Supported, Educated, Connected, Quality of Life, and Recreation; and speaks to the community's **concerns** around Development and Awareness.

Foster Love of Reading

Conversation from the community happened around the library fostering the love of reading in the community, especially for children. Reading programs for kids that promote the importance of reading and introduce children to books and literary characters in new and different ways was discussed. A specific suggestion was to host a book club for children in collaboration with the school. Promoting a love of reading throughout a person's lifetime and throughout the community was also important, and some suggestions to achieve this were to provide access to more online materials and to sponsor little free libraries around the community.

The conversation around the library's opportunities to provide educational enrichment addresses the community's **aspirations** of being Supported, Educated, Engaged, Quality of Life, Aware, Progressive, Recreation, and Family Friendly; and speaks to the community's **concerns** around Development, Disengaged, Collaboration, and Awareness.

Supporting Small Business and Economic Development

Many felt the library could play a unique role in supporting small businesses and economic development. First, the community felt the library should have a growth mindset. Part of the library's role could be facilitating and participating in more festivals that promote awareness of the community, help bring people to the community, and give people a reason to visit Delphi. The library might also partner with the town to provide incentives that bring new businesses to the community or support current small businesses. The library might also help by bringing in speakers that educate and inspire people to take pride in their community and discuss how they can participate in improving and supporting growth in the community. The library might also provide opportunities on topics such as financial literacy, economic development,

leadership training, supporting and developing leaders, and helping the local workforce continue to develop their skills.

People also felt that the library is the access point for those who do not have adequate access to the internet, allowing people to utilize the library's resources to job search, socialize, and continue to be involved in the community. To help with this goal, the library should strive to provide more computer access and higher speed internet.

The conversation around the library's opportunities to provide educational enrichment addresses the community's **aspirations** of being Supported, Growing, being Educated, Engaged, Involved, Aware, and Progressive; and speaks to the community's **concerns** around Development, Jobs, Uninvolved, Disengaged, Collaboration, and Awareness.

Library as Community Leader and Partner

The library is seen as the perfect platform to help provide opportunities to be a connection point for people in the community. People see the library as providing public spaces for the community to meet and connect, and see the library as able to partner with the town and provide space to host more community events or small festivals. They also talked about trusting the library to provide opportunities for people to create networks and connect with each other. The community also felt the library was a trusted place to engage people around issues that are important in the community and help find common ground. People felt that the library, the Chamber of Commerce, local non-profits, community organizations, and community leaders could collaborate in an effort to address current problems in the community

There was also conversation around the importance of the library being more participative and present in community events by making more civic connections, having staff serving as representatives on community committees or boards, and attending community meetings, and by participating in local festivals and events. Some specific ideas included a program for kids on how to get involved in the community that include a community service project, work with or partner with the local Food Bank possibly by creating an opportunity for the community to donate, collaborate with other local libraries to provide opportunities, and foster the relationship with the school and provide more programs in collaboration with them.

The conversations around the opportunities for the library as connector and platform for engagement addresses the community's **aspirations** of being Connected, Supported, Engaged, Progressive, fostering Community Pride, being Aware, Involved, Safe, and Growing;

and speaks to the community's **concerns** around being Divided, Inequality, Awareness, Development, being Uninvolved, Addiction, being Disengaged, and being Disconnected.

Leader and Platform for Inclusion and Diversity

People felt that the library should be a leader in and serve as a platform to facilitate diversity and inclusion in the community by their ability to reach out to all people. Suggestions for the library being a leader in diversity and inclusion efforts included having bilingual staff, by providing library publicity in Spanish, providing Spanish language materials, and providing opportunities for diverse people to be involved at the library. The community also felt that the library can support diversity by facilitating conversations and providing information around community issues that have been stigmatized (for example, those who have been in the criminal justice system). Other suggestions to support diversity included providing exposure to other cultures through art that culminates in creating a piece of art from those cultures; providing support to those learning another language including help in navigating job interviews, and accessing the internet; and providing opportunities for people to listen and practice reading, writing, and speaking other languages (specifically Spanish). It was also suggested to evaluate the hours the library is open to ensure that the library is accessible to everyone.

The conversations around the library's opportunities to be a leader and platform for inclusion and diversity addresses the community's **aspirations** of being Connected, Supported, Inclusive, Diverse, Engaged, Accepted, and Educated; and speaks to the community's **concerns** of having a Lack of Diversity, Awareness, Development, Inequality, and Collaboration.

Center of Community Information and Communication

The community felt that the library could be the hub of information for the community and help promote awareness. This was expressed in a couple different ways from the community. First, people felt the library could be the center of community information and provide information on available opportunities and needs in the community. The library could also provide a directory of community organizations to help connect people in need or let them know where they can go in a crisis. The idea of the information hub was also expressed as the library providing new and innovative ways to communicate. Some specific suggestions were providing in-person communication from the library to youth, possibly through the schools, have an app for the library, and provide more of an online presence.

The conversation around the library's opportunities to be a community information hub addresses the community's **aspirations** of being Connected, Supported, Aware, Engaged, and Involved; and speaks to the community's **concerns** of Awareness, being Disconnected, Uninvolved, and Disengaged.