

Strategic Plan 2025-2029

*Approved by the Stanwood Public Library Board of Trustees
September 3, 2025*



Stanwood Public Library

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www.stanwood.lib.ia.us

COMMUNITY

Stanwood is in Cedar County, in Eastern Iowa. As of 2023, the population of Stanwood was estimated to be 620. (1) The median age is 47.8 years and the population is comprised of 51.9% males and 48.1% females. (2) Residents of Stanwood are nearly all White with a small percentage of Hispanic, Latino, and African Americans. English is the predominate language.

The majority of the children of Stanwood attend North Cedar School District with elementary schools in Mechanicsville and Lowden and the Jr./Sr. high school in Clarence. Approximately 11.1% of the population is of school age. (2)

Stanwood is primarily a bedroom community with a small number of local businesses and employers. Such businesses include a bank, bar, restaurant, beauty salon, flower shop and dance studio, convenience store, Dollar General, auto repair shops, various contractors, lawn care, North Cedar Recycling, Rural Recycling Grinding and River Valley Cooperative. Median household income is \$58,750 (3) and unemployment is 2.2%. (3)

Citizens have access to public information in a variety of formats including area newspapers, cable access channel, and internet provider.

LIBRARY

The Stanwood Public Library was founded by the Junior Women's Club on March 11, 1948. Its first home was in a corner of the school library. Before it found a permanent home, the library was lodged in the old Legion Building, in the Stanwood Herald Building (where the post office now stands) and then in the Memorial Building. After 2 years in the Memorial Building, they moved across the street to the corner of Broadway and Elm, where the Cedar Communications building now stands.

On January 1, 1989, the library was put under the jurisdiction of the City of Stanwood. Land was eventually donated on the other corner of Broadway and Elm, and the board began raising funds for a new building. A groundbreaking ceremony took place in June 1996, and the library has been at its current location ever since. (5)

LIBRARY BOARD OF TRUSTEES

Joe Fontenot, President
Sue Thumma, Vice President
Deb Meyer, Secretary

Paul Knoll
Jenny St. John

Mary Davidson
Emily Ford

LIBRARY STAFF

Megan Mallie, Director
Carina Tharp, Assistant Librarian

MISSION STATEMENT

The mission of the Stanwood Public Library is to provide programs, materials, and services, in a welcoming space, to meet the needs of the community.

FOCUS GROUP MEMBERS

The Stanwood Public Library Board invited residents and stakeholders of Stanwood, Iowa to participate in the Strategic Planning focus group. The Library Board tried to ensure a diverse group of participants by gender, age, and discipline. Thank you to the following participants:

Todd Sawyer
Michael Tharp
Dick Meyer
LeeAnne Smith
Cathy Maxwell
Judy Lake
Becky Baker

Julie Meyer
Cathy Thomson
Colette Knoll
Beth Meyer
Rita Wolfe
Shannon Walshire
Rowdy Templer

And our Teen participants:

Kamryn Coppess
Caleb, Natalie & Parker Ford
Piper & Paige Rottman

Maddy & Ella Walshire
Rhiana & Tia Fulk

STRATEGIC PLANNING PROCESS

In August 2024, the Stanwood Public Library Board of Trustees initiated the Strategic Planning process for the Stanwood Public Library. The Library Board wanted the plan to reflect the needs of the community and to continue the work already in progress. It was decided to host a focus group with community members to assess the needs.

In October 2024, the Board compiled a list of names of potential participants. The goal was to compile a diverse group of people of varying genders, ages, and disciplines. A list of 52 individuals was created of library users and non-users, as well as City Council members. Invitations were mailed to these people inviting them to participate in the focus group. The focus group was also advertised and extended invitations to other city residents through public forums like Facebook and Nextdoor.

On October 30, 2024, the focus group met at the library with 14 participants present. Director Megan Mallie led the discussion while Board Secretary, Deb Meyer, recorded all of the responses. It was stressed that there were no right or wrong answers and that we appreciated all participants' complete honesty. Director Mallie led discussions in regard to the participants themselves, library services offered, programming, library space, staff, technology, our community, and moving forward.

On December 27, 2024, Director Mallie hosted a Teen Takeover Lock-in at the library. There were 10 teens present ranging in age from 12-17. The teens were presented with the same questions, and Director Mallie recorded their responses.

In August 2025, the Library Board met to review the focus group responses. They utilized the Public Library Association's *Planning for Results* model for guidance. After reviewing the information, the board voted on three service areas where they thought the library should focus:

- Satisfy Curiosity: Lifelong Learning
- Make Informed Decisions: Health, Wealth, and Other Life Choices
- Visit a Comfortable Place: Physical and Virtual Spaces

The Library Board used these service areas as the basis to create this strategic plan. The plan outlines goals and objectives that will help library staff meet the needs identified by the community.

SERVICE RESPONSES WITH BOARD GOALS

****Satisfy Curiosity: Lifelong Learning***

Residents will have the resources they need to explore topics of personal interest and continue to learn throughout their lives.

Goal #1: Teens will have expanded programs and services at the library.

Objective #1: Provide programming for teens/young adults about basic life skills (cooking, financial literacy, babysitting, getting a job, etc.). (Beginning of 2027)

Objective #2: Offer 'bring a friend night' to introduce new people to the library. (By Fall 2026)

Objective #3: Find new ways of advertising teen programs. (ex. TikTok, etc.) (By Fall 2026)

Objective #4: Provide new offerings in the library for teen interest. (ex. videogames, green screen, VR, Netflix etc.) (By Fall 2026)

Goal #2: Working adults will have access to informational and entertaining programs.

Objective #1: Offer additional programs during non-working times and weekends. (Beginning of 2027)

Objective #2: Provide new offerings in the library for adult interest. (ex. Bring a craft, scavenger hunts, escape rooms, speed dating, etc.) (Beginning of 2027)

Goal #3: Help patrons to learn about local and family history.

Objective #1: Provide more local history programming and tours. (By Spring 2027)

Objective #2: Investigate and subscribe to genealogy services for patron use. (ex. Ancestry) (By Summer 2027)

Objective #3: Provide databases and information regarding local cemeteries. (By Fall 2027)

Objective #4: Partner with the Historical Society for programming and local history information. (By Spring 2027)

****Make Informed Decisions: Health, Wealth, and Other Life Choices***
Residents will have the resources they need to identify and analyze risks, benefits, and alternatives before making decisions that affect their lives.

Goal #1: Residents will have access to information regarding their health and wellness.

Objective #1: Provide programming for all ages about health and wellness. (Beginning of 2027)

Objective #2: Partner with Cedar County Public Health to provide health and vaccine clinics for the community. (By Fall 2027)

Objective #3: Partner with the Cedar County Extension for programming on proper diets and food preparation. (By Summer 2027)

Goal #2: Residents will have access to resources that will promote a healthy lifestyle.

Objective #1: The library will offer blood pressure monitoring equipment and information in the library and for check-out. (By Winter 2025)

Objective #2: Work with city officials to create and manage a community garden. (By Spring 2027)

Objective #3: Offer fitness/meditation classes from a fitness expert or online resources. (By Spring 2027)

Goal #3: Residents will have access to food and necessities to prevent food insecurity.

Objective #1: Create new space for the food pantry and expand its offerings for the community. (By Fall 2026)

Objective #2: Install a Blessings Box outside of the library with food and supplies that can be accessed even when the library is not open. (By Summer 2025)

****Visit a Comfortable Place: Physical and Virtual Spaces***

Residents will have safe and welcoming physical places to meet and interact with others or to sit quietly and read and will have open and accessible virtual spaces that support networking.

Goal #1: Patrons will have access to a revamped library space.

Objective #1: Rearrange the current layout of the library based on the findings of the previous space needs assessment. Create separate, comfortable spaces for kids, teens, and adults. (By Fall 2026)

Objective #2: Continue the process of expanding the physical building and creating more user space and storage. (By Fall 2026)

Goal #2: Teens will have a comfortable space to hang out at the library.

Objective #1: Teen Take Over will help with the design of their space. (By Spring 2026)

Objective #2: Create work sessions for teens to help with the actual painting/decorating of their space. (By Summer 2026)

Objective #3: Investigate technology options just for the teen space (computer, videogames, tv, green screen, VR, streaming). (By Fall 2026)

Goal #3: Parents of young children will have a safe place for kids to enjoy their time at the library.

Objective #1: Create comfortable seating and an accessible space just for kids. (By Summer 2026)

Objective #2: Provide different play and learning opportunities in their section besides reading materials (Lego table, Wonderbooks, games, tents, etc.). (By Summer 2026)

Goal #4: Patrons will have access to reliable and efficient computers & internet service.

Objective #1: Replace current computers with faster, more efficient ones. (By Fall 2028)

Objective #2: Offer portable hotspots for patrons to check out and use at home. (By Summer 2028)