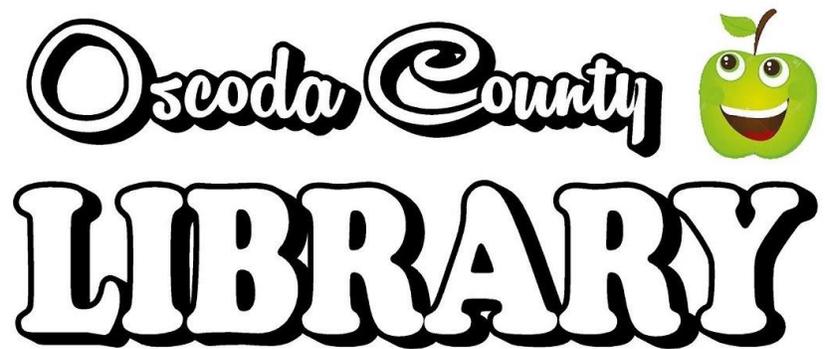


Oscoda County Library  
Strategic Plan  
2020-2025



Oscoda County Library  
Strategic Plan  
2020-2025

Adopted by the Oscoda County Library Board of  
Trustees  
December 9, 2019

Strategic Plan Facilitator:

David Votta  
Midwest Collaborative for Library Service

# Table of Contents

Acknowledgements	4
Community Planning Committee Members	5
Board of Trustees	5
Executive Summary	6
Overview of the Planning Process	7-8
Strategic Plan Overview	9-10
Goals and Objectives	11
Appendix A: Organizational Competencies	
Appendix B: Community Report	
Appendix C: Strategic Planning Committee Retreat—Strengths and Aspirations	

# Acknowledgments

The development of the strategic plan took many hours and the dedicated effort of many people. We would like to extend our sincere thanks to all those who helped make this plan a reality:

- The Oscoda County Library staff for their contributions to the process, and who will ultimately make this plan succeed.
- The members of the Library Board of Trustees for their participation and support of the process.
- The members of the Strategic Planning Committee for their time and expertise in interviewing community leaders and participating in a time-consuming planning meeting.
- The community leaders who agreed to be interviewed for this process, as well as the community members who attended Community Conversations and shared their aspirations for the community.

# Strategic Planning Committee Members

Dawn Stenzel  
Tammy Emig  
Deb Shumaker  
Amy Knepp  
Beth Barron  
Valerie Wyse  
Janae Layle  
William Kendall  
Al Chaney  
Nancy Crane

## Board of Trustees

Dawn Stenzel, President  
Tammy Emig, Vice President  
Deb Shumaker, Secretary  
Stephanie King, Treasurer  
Wayne Nutt, Trustee

# Executive Summary

In order to guide this effort, the Board elected to work with consultants at the Midwest Collaborative for Library Services of Lansing, MI to facilitate a strategic planning process that would help to align library services with the aspirations and needs of the community. Based on the work of The Harwood Institute for Public Innovation, community members were asked, “What kind of community do you want?” and “How can the library help?”

The Strategic Planning Committee recommended that the Library Board adopt five strategic areas of focus for the period 2020-2025. The key focus areas are:

## **Expanding technology services and non-traditional collections**

Community members will receive increased support and programming regarding their use of technology, and a growing, circulating collection of physical items to enhance their work, play, and day-to-day living needs.

## **Outreach and services to targeted populations**

Underserved populations which traditionally experience difficulty accessing library services will be furnished with tailored services to meet their unique requirements.

## **Continuous building/facilities improvement**

Library visitors will encounter accessible and dynamic spaces in and outside the library, which are ever evolving to meet the communities’ developing needs.

## **Supporting formal education**

Oscoda County Area School students, home schoolers, and Amish school students will be provided support, programming, and resources related to their curriculum and academic success.

## **Facilitating life-long learning and creative exploration**

Community members will have increased access to life-long learning and creative outlet opportunities through strategic partnerships with local agencies and individuals willing to share their expertise and time.

# Overview of the Planning Process

1. The Library Board approved working with consultants from the Midwest Collaborative for Library Services (MCLS) to facilitate the creation of a new strategic plan that would be based on community needs. MCLS, based in Lansing, MI, is a non-profit, member-driven organization whose mission is to facilitate sharing resources and to collaborate with other organizations to benefit Michigan and Indiana libraries. MCLS utilizes a planning process based on The Harwood Institute for Public Innovation's "Turning Outward" approach. "Turning Outward" is a process that entails taking steps to better understand communities; changing processes and thinking to make conversations more community-focused; being proactive to community issues; and putting community aspirations first.
2. A ten-person Strategic Planning Committee was assembled, which included representatives from the Library Board, the Library staff, and community members.
3. At an initial meeting with the consultants, the Strategic Planning Committee brainstormed a list of community leaders to interview, as well as a strategy to invite community members to participate in Community Conversations. The participants needed to represent as many groups and stakeholders in the Oscoda County Library service area as possible.
4. Strategic Planning Committee members were each assigned community leaders to interview. The interview was based on The Harwood Institute's "Ask" exercise, which entailed asking five simple questions to get a sense of people's aspirations for the community and how the library might help the community to achieve those aspirations. 27 community leaders participated in the interviews.
5. MCLS consultant David Votta conducted 5 Community Conversations with 19 community members. These conversations were 90-120 minutes long and were about what they wanted their community to be, what challenges they face in realizing these aspirations, and how the library might help.
6. MCLS consultants compiled the information from the community leader interviews and the Community Conversations to identify themes. This information was used to create a "Public Knowledge Summary" to present the information that was gathered.
7. In addition to the "public knowledge," MCLS consultants created a data package that included a benchmarking report, five-year library usage statistics, and demographic information. Consultants benchmarked data points from the Oscoda County Library against six other Michigan libraries of similar size and six other national libraries of similar size with similar annual expenditures to understand how the Oscoda County Library stands in relation to its peers. Additionally, consultants compiled and analyzed

library usage statistics over a five-year period, examining uses such as circulation of materials, library visits, collection holdings, program attendance, etc. in order to identify trends. Lastly, consultants reviewed demographic information, including population projections and poverty levels.

8. The Strategic Planning Committee met on September 25 to review the data package, and community input summary. This was followed by the group participating in a SOAR analysis of the Library, identifying strengths, opportunities, aspirations, and results. The strengths provided the basis for the development of the Library's core values. Aspirations became the basis of the Library's Vision Statement, and opportunities resulted in the identification of five key strategic focus areas.
9. On October 10, the MCLS consultant returned to the Oscoda County Library to work with the Library's leadership team on the creation of a tactical plan to address the key strategic priorities that were identified by the Strategic Planning Committee. The group answered the questions for each priority: "What will the patron experience?"; "How will the community benefit?"; "What activities might occur?"; "What will success look like?"; "What organizational issues will need to be addressed including facilities, technology, policies, staffing, etc.?" This work created the basis for the development of goals, objectives, organizational competencies, and strategies that make up the five-year Strategic Plan.

# **OSCODA COUNTY LIBRARY**

## **Vision**

*Our vision is to offer a dynamic environment of core community resources which provide life-long learning opportunities that are affordable and accessible to everyone.*

## **Core Values**

**At the Oscoda County Library:**

**We are an engaged and knowledgeable staff with a diversity of backgrounds, that truly cares about the trust the community has given us.**

**We provide excellent services through a diversity of programming, relevant collections, and information technology access and support.**

**We demonstrate integrity and ethical, financial responsibility every day by furnishing everyone in our community with equitable access to resources.**

**We maintain a safe, clean, and accessible community hub utilized by generations of residents and visitors.**

## **Community Aspirations**

**Educated - Safe - Healthy - Prosperous - Supportive and Caring**

## **Key Strategic Priorities 2020-2025**

### **Expanding technology services and non-traditional collections**

Community members will receive increased support and programming regarding their use of technology, and a growing, circulating collection of physical items to enhance their work, play, and day-to-day living needs.

### **Outreach and services to targeted populations**

Underserved populations which traditionally experience difficulty accessing library services will be furnished with tailored services to meet their unique requirements.

### **Continuous building/facilities improvement**

Library visitors will encounter accessible and dynamic spaces in and outside the library, which are ever evolving to meet the communities' developing needs.

### **Supporting formal education**

Oscoda County Area School students, home schoolers, and Amish school students will be provided support, programming, and resources related to their curriculum and academic success.

### **Facilitating life-long learning and creative exploration**

Community members will have increased access to life-long learning and creative outlet opportunities through strategic partnerships with local agencies and individuals willing to share their expertise and time.

# GOALS, OBJECTIVES, STRATEGIES

## KEY PRIORITY 1:

### Expanding technology services and non-traditional collections

#### **Goal 1: Provide opportunities to indulge in hobbies and leisure pursuits before making a financial commitment**

##### Objectives:

- The circulation of physical items and technology items will increase
- X% of patrons who checkout a physical object from the library will say they would have little or no access to the object/technology otherwise.
- X% of people who use the makerspace will say they learned a new skill or hobby.
- X% of people who took a STEAM program/class will say they learned something new or useful.

##### Potential strategies:

- Explore developing a “Library of Things” with non-traditional items (NTI) tools, cooking utensils, hunting and fishing equipment, musical instruments, and technology items such as tablets, laptops, and metal detectors
- Expand and train staff dedicated to technology and non-traditional items (NTI) usage
- Staff a makerspace where patrons can experiment with craft, artistic, building, technology resources, and NTI items
- Technology will be available in the library for patrons to try with guided assistance
- Teach classes related to the Library of Things-NTIs and technology
- Expand STEM and STEAM programs/classes

#### **Goal 2: By curating a space, inside the library and out, local communities of practice will develop where like-minded individuals are empowered to create and learn about common interests**

##### Objectives:

- X% of people will say the library is a safe place to socialize without judgement.
- People will say the library fosters an environment where they can support one another in their creative efforts and leisure pursuits.
- X% of craftspeople, artists of all formats, and those interested in niche pursuits that participate in related library programming will say they teach and learn from one another.
- People will say they met others who share their interests

##### Potential strategies:

- Hold and promote loosely structured activities/groups related to the NIT and technology resources – game nights, knitting/textile circles, maker clubs
- Host (or co-host/facilitate) formal events – Craft fairs, local art exhibits and contests, fishing contests

- Train staff in relevant technology, NTI, and resources to assist those interested in learning
- Pair children’s events/programs equivalents so caregivers can attend without needing childcare

**Goal 3: Community members will become more familiar with technology**

Objectives:

- People will say they are more willing to try new technology
- Circulation of technology items from the collection will increase
- After trying new technology at the library people will say they are more likely to utilize new technology

Potential strategies:

- Invest in adding a minimum of two new technology items per year
- Explore creating a technology “petting zoo”
- Hire/train staff as technology navigators
- Teach classes on technology
- Provide contact/information on experts/support, locally and otherwise, who can assist with technology
- Provide support hours for patrons to “walk-in” for technology help

**KEY PRIORITY 2:**

**Outreach and services to targeted populations**

**Goal 1: Those with limited mobility and requiring transportation accommodations will be provided library services and resources**

Objectives:

- People will have increased access to books and other circulating physical items
- People will say the library delivers a variety of services and programs
- Program attendance will increase
- Circulation will increase

Potential strategies:

- Investigate how services will be brought to the community through a bookmobile or other delivery service
- Explore partnering with other service agencies, such as meals on wheels, to assist in delivering materials
- Programs will be brought to the community such as senior centers, senior apartments, preschool, where the Amish would meet
- Explore partnering with OCATS and/or the schools transportation service to provide transportation for community members to off-site programs or the library

**Goal 2: By meeting people where they are, targeted populations will feel more engaged and connected to the greater community**

Objectives:

- People will say they feel empowered that their input is directing decision making at the library
- There will be a X% increase programs and services will be tailored to meet the newly surfaced needs

Potential strategies:

- Surveys and other communication feedback tools will be provided and collected from people in expanded formats to suit the communities' needs
- Targeted programs will be provided with programming related to responses from the surveys/feedback tools
- Use various communication channels to connect with, social media, snail mail, in-person, newsletter, the community and marginalized groups connected and engaged

**KEY PRIORITY 3:**

**Continuous building/facilities improvement**

**Goal 1: Provide library spaces that are accessible, comfortable, and safe; with room for NTI collections and a variety of programs in a flexible environment**

Objectives:

- Community members of all abilities will say the library space meets their needs
- X% of people will say there is an increase in library space flexibility
- Organizations and agencies will request use of library space for their programming

Potential strategies:

- Investigate making all library spaces ADA compliant
- Research a space needs assessment
- Review possibilities for building expansion or a new facility, both the main branch and the Fairview location
- Examine possibilities for a parking lot expansion
- Investigate utilizing modular/easily moveable furniture and rolling shelving units

**Goal 2: Visitors will feel an enhanced sense of community congregating at the library**

Objectives:

- People will request library space for group/community meetings
- Organizations and agencies will say the library is a hub of the community
- There will be an increase in the number of people using the library as a gathering place

Potential strategies:

- Provide a variety of comfortable and flexible spaces that account for individual quiet space, collaborative space, and social interaction, such as sofas; a fireplace, and modular furniture that can adapt to changing needs
- Connect with local agencies and organizations to inform them that the library has space available for meetings

- Invite agencies and organizations to the library for meetings to showcase the space
- Develop programming that will utilize the comfortable space so people of all ages will experience it in a non-formal capacity

**Goal 3: Through the development of new spaces patrons will be able to experiment with technology and NTI collections**

Objectives:

- X% of patrons will say they are more willing to try new technology
- People will say they are familiar with technology and NTI collections

Potential strategies:

- Investigate creating a maker/craft lab
- Investigate developing a recording studio
- Explore developing a space where people can try and learn about NTI collections
- Provide staff trained in the technology and NTI materials to guide patrons through their use of the resources

**KEY PRIORITY 4:**

**Supporting formal education**

**Goal 1: Provide students with resources that align with school/homeschool curriculums**

Objectives:

- Schools and home school parents will say the library is a valuable community asset that bolsters student achievement
- After using library services students will say their academic success has increased

Potential strategies:

- Connect with the schools begin building relationships
- Work with school partners to obtain their curriculums
- Partner with schools to provide information regarding assignments
- Expand collection development scope to provide school texts/resources on reserve
- Prioritize staff being familiar with curriculums and resources
- Provide tutors/homework help that are familiar with the school curriculum and assignment requirements
- Align summer reading programs with forthcoming school assignments

**Goal 2: Provide students and educators information organized to bolster student success**

Objectives:

- X% of school partners/educators will say that students who regularly used library services will have improved their test taking ability
- Students who use the library resources will say the tools and support provide a more streamlined research process for school projects
- Student drop-out rate will decrease

Potential strategies:

- Create a MeL school page/index with a section on test taking and market that to educators and students
- Develop short links to templates for research projects/papers
- Provide easily discoverable and usable indexing and citation tools
- Train staff on the utilization of resources
- Proctor exams

**Goal 3: By providing a curated list of resources and programs that support non-scholarly markers of college readiness, students will be empowered to enhance their portfolios and chances to be accepted into higher education**

Objectives:

- There will be an increase in students who participate in leadership programs
- Students who attended a college readiness event who said they felt more prepared to pursue higher education

Potential strategies:

- Partner with 4H on a variety of programs that align to prepare students for higher education
- Host career engagements/events for students to interact with and learn from professionals
- Facilitate mentorship opportunities for students to produce items for their portfolio
- Develop technology programs/templates where students can create materials to add to their portfolios – photography software, GIS, CAD

**KEY PRIORITY 5:**

**Facilitating life-long learning and creative exploration**

**Goal 1: Community members will have opportunities to explore creative pursuits**

Objectives:

- Provide spaces where art of multiple formats can be created
- Provide spaces where art can be displayed
- Investigate partnerships where art and other creatives pursuits can be a component or focus of community events
- Incentivize the creation of art in all formats

Potential strategies:

- Provide art supplies at the library
- Investigate developing a studio(s) where art can be created
- Investigate developing gallery space and/or partnerships with other local agencies who could provide space
- Explore options for partnerships for festivals, craft shows, poetry slams, exhibits, and other places community members can showcase their work
- Develop contests that can be judged by community members where residents can win prizes for their creations

- Circulate art kits

**Goal 2: The library will utilize the talents, skills, and expertise of community members, local agencies, and businesses to develop learning opportunities and experiences**

Objectives:

- People will say they are learning life-skills from the library programming
- % of program attendees will say they intend to apply what they learn
- % of program attendees will say they are learning something helpful

Potential strategies:

- Develop list of local experts/volunteers who would donate their time knowledge
- Develop list of local agencies and what services they provide
- Explore partner opportunities - 4H
- Utilize the NTI collections as subjects for programming (fly rod poles = classes on tying flies)
  - Provide ancillary materials related to the programs and NTI collections
- Increase general collection in areas related to NTI collections and subjects of programs
- Investigate options for kitchen facilities, including off-site, related to food related programs and classes
- Increase programming while reducing staff resources by utilizing partners and community members

### Organizational Competencies

#### Staffing/Organizational Structure

- *CDL licensed staff member*
- *Permanent driver – back-up driver*
- *Outreach coordinator*
- *Navigator for MeLCat*
- *Security*
- *Dedicated IT staff/dept*
- *Better trained staff on use of technology and NTIs*
- *Cataloger trained to accommodate new items*
- *Staff for providing public training on items or staff to facilitate training from community members*
- *Volunteer coordinator*
- *Volunteers to assist with programming*
- *Volunteers to present/teach/facilitate*
- *Additional training – wide variety of interests*
- *Technology experience*
- *Qualified staff*
- *Liaisons*
- *Tech navigators*
- *IT*
- *Assistant director*

#### Finance/Funding

- *Millages*
- *Grants*
- *Donations*
- *Insurance on vehicles*
- *Partners*
- *Funds for travel, supplies*
- *Fundraising – Philanthropy*
- *Endowment*

#### Policies

- *Vehicles – driving/drivers*
- *Legal – use of non-traditional items and technology*
- *Liability*
- *Consent forms*
- *Flexible time and locations to check-out*
- *Coordinator*

- *Volunteers*
- *Lending*
- *Partnerships*
- *ADA compliance*
- *Criminal background check*
- *Kitchen*
- *Community areas*
- *After hours*
- *Makerspace*
- *Bookmobile*

### **Facilities**

- *Garage*
- *Storage for Non-traditional Items (NTI) – main level storage*
- *Fiber*
- *Space and set-up for technology lab*
- *Space for Makerspace – not all high tech. Bicycle repair, loom, sewing machines, woodshop, smithy, etc*
- *Kitchen*
- *Sound-proof room – conference room*
- *Larger/dedicated programming space*
- *Nursery (kids and plants)*
- *Green house*
- *Dedicated Fairview branch*
- *Addition to main*
- *Expanded parking lot\**
- *Landscape*
- *Curb appeal*
- *Story-Walk*
- *Architect*
- *Drive up service*
- *Dedicated theater*
- *Lots of storage*
- *Comfortable “living room” area*
- 
- 

### **Technology**

- *Computers on bookmobile (?)*
- *Wi-fi*
- *Cataloging*
- *Timeclock*
- *Vehicle tracking*
- *NTI cards – with potential metadata about what patrons are trained to use (certifications for patrons before they use dangerous items?)*

- *Catalog computer to search NTI (?)*
- *3D printers and other tech to check out*
- *Special software CAD, GIS, etc. and dedicated computers to run those programs*
- *Dedicated PCs, projector, screen, A/V, etc*
- *Smart technology throughout the building*
  - *Smart boards*
  - *Thermostats*
  - *Lighting*
  - *Security*
- *Tech/equipment/tools for kitchen*
- *Remote learning options*
- 

### **Partnerships**

- *Townships*
- *The warehouse*
- *M33 Access*
- *Hardware stores*
- *Churches*
- *Restaurants*
- *Amish*
- *Licensed contractors*
- *Stiner Museum*
- *Sawmill*
- *Senior community/center*
- *4H*
- *Banks/credit union*
- *School/college*
- *Chamber of Commerce*
- *Community center*
- *Lawyers*
- *Homeschool parents*
- *Schools – local, trade, colleges*
- *Businesses – local, regional*
- *Civic groups*
- *Community foundation*

### **Marketing**

- *Multiple distribution channels to deliver the news of the services, items, and programs/classes*
- *Radio stations*
- *Facebooks*
- *Newspaper*
- *Schools*

- *M33*
- *Website*
- *TV*
- *Face to face*
- *Poster plastering*
- *Digital signage*
- *Podcast*

### **Collections**

- *Bookmobile collection*
- *Other dedicated collections that are transportable*
- *Collections that might exist in partner locations – senior center, day cares, etc.*
- *All NTI items – (As examples: fishing poles, kayaks, copper kettles, sewing machines, science kits, craft supplies, musical instruments, tools, telescopes)*
- *Tech items – tablets, laptops, fish detectors, metal detectors*
- *Materials specific to programs*
- *Books specific to activities*
- *Database of community members/experts*
- *List of websites of local services*
- *Database of items for every location – makerspace and Library of Things*
- *Items that align with school and home school curriculums*
- *Original cataloging for original things*
- *Tutoring materials*

### **Other**

- *Legal/liability around delivery*

# Summary of Community Conversations and Interviews

The library used a combination of both community conversations and one-on-one interviews with a wide variety of community residents and community leaders. The conversations and 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, prioritize services that are in alignment with the true needs of the community.

Five community conversations were held on August 27th and 28th, 2019. The conversations took place at the Oscoda County Community Center and the Oscoda County Library in Mio. The conversations were facilitated by David Votta of Midwest Collaborative for Library Services. 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. 19 community members participated in the 90-minute conversations. Additionally, the members of the library’s strategic planning committee conducted one-on-one interviews with various community leaders, seeking similar information to the community conversations. 27 community leaders were interviewed.

The notes from the conversations and 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 conversation participants and 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

Oscoda county residents 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.”

## **Oscoda County Library Community Narrative/Public Knowledge Summary**

**The Oscoda County Library community aspires to be educated, safe, healthy, prosperous, engaged, a community that is caring and supports one another, especially children, and a community where residents know their neighbors and retain a small-town feel and culture. The community wants to have great communication, be family oriented, friendly, accessible and respectful to everyone, no matter their economic or social status, and one that provides activities and creative outlets for residents of all ages.**

**Educated** – Education rose prominently as both an aspiration and a concern. Additionally, some made connections to many of the other aspirations mentioned. On a fundamental level there was discussion around the need to better educate school age children, that their reading, writing, and overall literacy skills needed to be raised exponentially. People talked about overcrowded schools where children with special needs were mainstreamed and not provided adequate supports. There was also discussion around a need to develop children’s soft skills, that the basic courtesy around human interaction was lacking, and that to be more successful children needed to learn and develop deeper and more nuanced ways to connect with people face to face.

Some talked about the need to address adult education, both in trade-skills regarding employment, and in life-skills, such as balancing a checkbook, or making healthy food choices. It was suggested that there are many skilled and knowledgeable people in the community who could, and would, be willing to share their expertise and skills, that part of this educational

need already had a solution built into the community. It just needed a platform, venue, and process to tap into that potential.

For both children and adults, education beyond scholastic and practical needs was discussed at length as well. Residents talked about wanting a space for people of all ages to come together and learn and practice music, visual arts, textiles, and other creative mediums. It was referenced that learning new creative skills throughout a person's lifetime would contribute to a healthier and happier populace, where more people are engaged and invested in remaining in the community.

A need for more people of all ages to be engaged in this education initiative, through volunteering and mentoring was cited as a first step, and that if more residents were involved it would be a sign that progress was being made.

**Safe** – Residents from many backgrounds talked about a desire for a safe community. Security from violent or malicious crime was mentioned frequently. Some connected the desire to retain the small town feel and culture as a protective barrier from crime. They cited examples of when people know their neighbors there is less crime. Others talked about crime already creeping in, or that it has always been present, but now it is just talked about more openly.

There was discussion around this problem being a cultural issue, that too many children are growing up in broken homes, and/or with substance abuse present, that there needs to be a return of a focus to a family-oriented community. Some said that too many children are currently being traumatized, but with a return to a family focus they could break the cycle of generational dysfunction. There was discussion around poverty being a catalyst for crime, and that there are not enough opportunities either for gainful employment or recreation to give residents something positive to do and/or work on themselves, even if it was just for fun.

**Healthy** – A desire to be a healthy community manifested several ways in the conversations and interviews. A healthy diet and access to fresh food came up many times. There was mention that some drive to West Branch or Gaylord for groceries. Compounding this concern was that a good portion of the community is on restricted budgets, and that transportation is

an issue for many of them. People talked about the irony of residing in a rural, agricultural area, but essentially living in a food desert. Some said that the Amish in the community have always had an answer to this. They grow and raise their food themselves, but that with all the stresses of modern life, most non-Amish do not have the time, energy or wherewithall to make this happen for themselves.

Access to better healthcare also came up as a concern. Some mentioned the lack of primary care physicians, therapists of many disciplines, and the distance to labs for testing, or even a hospital, as barriers to living a healthier life. Connected to the lack of healthcare were discussions around substance abuse, that some self-medicate, which leads to addiction, and without adequate physical and mental health supports it exacerbates the situation.

Some spoke of a desire for more recreational and educational activities to keep people engaged, moving, more fit mentally and physically, and overall healthier. Connecting many of these threads was a discussion around a currently underutilized community garden. Most people in the conversation did not know about the garden. That fact, the unknowing about the garden, was mentioned by others as an example of how the community has significant opportunity to improve its communication. Some suggested this community garden, if better leveraged and expanded, or duplicated, could be a place for people to grow their own healthy food, be more involved, engaged, meet their neighbors and improve communication. They said it would give families something wholesome to do together away from electronics and facilitate formal and serendipitous learning opportunities around gardening, canning, cooking, and more.

It was suggested that by knowing their neighbors better, and sharing their lives with them, it would foster a more caring and supportive community, making the overall community healthier and happier. It was discussed how 4-H, through MSU extension, has fairly recently returned to the area, that they are willing to partner with other agencies, and that they have many resources ready made to plug-in and help. Most participants in the conversation did not know about the resources 4-H could provide, or that they would be so willing to partner and work with other agencies. Again, it was referenced, that there is an opportunity to enhance the community's overall communication.

**Prosperous** – It was mentioned in one of the conversations that a “prosperous community would drive the engine that supports everything else”. Some said with successful local entrepreneurs and businesses there would be greater retention of students graduating from college, increased investment in education and infrastructure, expanded amenities to keep young families healthy and entertained, and growth focused to develop and retain a dynamic workforce. There was concern mentioned around “brain drain,” that too many upwardly mobile younger residents leave the community to pursue their career and build a family elsewhere, often in large cities and out of state. It was said that if there were more young, financially stable families, a viable middle class, there would be more investment in healthcare services, food and entertainment options, and a need for other support and infrastructure services, such as more construction, technology, and even the arts.

There was talk of a diverse community, where people from all backgrounds and economic statuses work together and are respected for their contribution to the local economy. This again was a place where mentoring cropped up. It was suggested that through a mentoring program, young entrepreneurs could work with experienced business owners and they could learn from one another, benefitting both parties.

Related to the mentoring program there was discussion around a desire for a support network for entrepreneurs and creatives, artists of all types, writers, visual artists, craftspeople, photographers, culinary artists, and more. Connected to education, the discussion touched on a need for a space to explore, create, and exhibit all manner of their creations, request assistance from others, and prototype their work.

A thread throughout these conversations again was a desire for better communication in the community. It was mentioned how there is resistance to change in some groups that hold power locally. There was a suggestion that the existing communication networks work for some and reinforce their positions, while keeping others on the outside. It was mentioned that this dynamic was very likely not intentional, rather the way things have always been done, so no malicious intent was suggested, but that it was still true. Some said that through better communication and coordination, businesses and other agencies could work together and help to bring the needed infrastructure, such as fiber cable, to a greater portion of the community.

This would give those who wanted it the opportunity to work from home and support their family, while keeping them local with better paying jobs

**Supportive and Caring** – Connecting all the other aspirations was a desire in a nearly every conversation and interview for a deeply supportive and caring community. Many said that already exists in different pockets and in individuals, but that it could be nurtured and developed even more. A greater support for children, their education, their overall health and welfare, their socialization and how they interact with others, was mentioned as a primary need to help develop the community into an educated, safe, healthy, and prosperous one.

When residents talked about supportive and caring they mentioned being friendly, intentionally progressive towards a better future, and respectful of everyone, no matter their status. There was talk of “haves and have nots,” and that in a more supportive and caring community the “have nots” would learn how to first support themselves, through formal channels and informally through their neighbors and a robust mentoring system. Then, through this education and other supports, they would in turn reciprocate that generosity, instill that mindset into their children, and grow a more vibrant and prosperous, supportive and caring community along the way.

# Aspirations



# Concerns

Poverty  
**Unhealthy**  
Outdated-mindset  
**Education**  
Apathy **Safety**  
Transportation  
Brain-drain

## APPENDIX C

### Oscoda County Library Strengths and Aspirations 9-25-19

#### Strengths

- Diverse programming
- Caring staff
- Friendly staff
- Trustworthy
- Knowledgeable staff
- Diversity of staff
  - Friendly
  - Therapist
- Ethical
- Affordable access
- Offerings on a small budget
- Community hub
- Safety
- Clean environment
- Continuity
- IT support
- IT access

#### Aspirations

(Bolded with an Asterix\* are the high-level aspiration derived from Affinity Mapping)

- **Accessible\***
- **Dynamic Environment\***
- **Life Literacy\***
- **Go-to core for community resources\***
- People think of us first
- Go-to for community events
- Go-to for supplemental education
- Go-to for answers
- Lists for community
  - Contractors
  - Electricians
  - Etc.

- Expand education offerings
  - Life skills
  - Financial literacy
- County versus district library
- Building expansion
- Expanded facilities
- Permanent facilities
- Expanded circulation section
- Travel and accessible
- Community outreach
  - Bookmobile
- Transportation