

Pauline Haass Public Library: Strategic Plan 2026-2028

Please note: this version is intended for the Board and staff. While a public document, the purpose is internal use and reflects its audience. A community summary for public distribution can be found [here](#).

Summary for the Library Board

The 2026–2028 Strategic Plan positions the Pauline Haass Public Library for a period of significant organizational strengthening and preparatory work leading up to the planned 2030 facility expansion. The plan responds to two converging realities: **growth in the community and its use of library services with capacity limits within the current facility and staffing structure.**

In many ways, the organization is experiencing what the building itself has: we have outgrown the structure we were designed for. The library's physical walls are no longer sufficient for the volume of activity they contain, and likewise, the administrative and supervisory framework—built for a smaller, less complex operation—can no longer hold the responsibilities required to run the dynamic, increasingly complex organization we have become.

This plan addresses both realities. It prepares the organization to operate effectively in a renovated and expanded facility while ensuring we have the internal capacity to get there.

Four strategic pillars anchor this plan:

1. Community Engagement & Visibility

The library will deepen partnerships, broaden its presence in civic and business communities, and implement a unified communication campaign to build understanding of the library's value and facility needs. This includes sustained messaging, targeted outreach, and structured public engagement.

2. Access to Collections, Inclusion, & User Experience

The plan prioritizes modernizing collections, improving accessibility and navigation, expanding digital access, and mitigating the inefficiencies caused by space constraints. These improvements maintain service quality in the current building while preparing for more flexible and expansive services in the future.

3. Organizational Capacity & Staff Support

The library will invest in strengthening internal communication, improving evaluation and retention practices, and building the organizational capacity needed to sustain operations while preparing for expansion. Key needs include adding dedicated IT and marketing staff to handle specialized administrative functions, evaluating and potentially restructuring management roles to distribute

operational oversight more effectively, and ensuring leadership capacity is sufficient for both daily operations and strategic work.

4. Expansion Readiness & Facilities Planning

This pillar consolidates all future-focused work that prepares the library for a successful facility expansion. It includes safety and security improvements, structured pre-expansion planning, coordinated stakeholder alignment, governance preparation through a Board-led Expansion Committee, and comprehensive planning for the technology infrastructure and building systems required for a modern, flexible facility.

Overall Strategic Direction

The plan frames the next three years as an essential period of **organizational strengthening, capacity-building, and public engagement**, rather than major programmatic expansion. The work outlined here ensures that when the community is ready to move forward with a renovated and expanded library, the organization will be prepared operationally, technologically, and financially.

Plan Foundations

Vision

To be a cornerstone for an engaged and informed community.

Mission

We connect people to information, ideas, and one another in a vibrant and welcoming community-responsive environment.

Values and Priorities

Responsive and Purposeful Service Development

We engage our community to understand its needs and aspirations. We plan thoughtfully to deliver high-quality, community-specific services. We provide flexible, welcoming spaces that support our users' educational, creative, entertainment, collaborative, and connection needs.

Outstanding User Experience

We are dedicated to accuracy, helpfulness, and inclusivity. We welcome feedback and respond with meaningful improvements. We seek out new ways to delight those we serve.

Improvement and Innovation

We explore trends, develop new methods, and continually evaluate and adapt our services. We celebrate imagination and invention through services, collections, and programs that encourage discovery and creativity. We prioritize and invest in cultivating a knowledgeable, innovative, and highly engaged staff.

Open Access and Opportunities for All

We manage a collection that reflects a broad range of interests and formats. We provide seamless access to others' collections to ensure information for all. We work to reduce barriers to access.

Responsible Stewardship of the Community's Investment

We recognize that the library belongs to the people of the community, and our actions honor the public trust.

Intellectual Freedom

We uphold the library's role as a cornerstone of democracy by providing information and programs spanning a wide range of perspectives; by protecting users' rights to read and seek information freely; and by adhering to the principles of the American Library Association's Library Bill of Rights and Freedom to Read statement.

Patron Privacy

We protect everyone's right to explore information and ideas confidentially and follow all Wisconsin statutes on library records and patron privacy (Chapter 43, Section 30). We collect and retain only the personally identifiable information necessary to provide services, and we strive to inform users of their privacy options.

Community Engagement

We embrace our role as a community connector by cultivating relationships with stakeholders, pursuing strategic partnerships, and being active and visible in the community.

Introductory Note on Staffing Capacity and Organizational Readiness

Across strategic planning committee meetings and in review of stakeholder feedback, a clear theme emerged: **the library's current organizational structure does not provide sufficient management and administrative capacity to meet ongoing operational needs while simultaneously preparing for a major facility expansion.** As noted in the plan summary, we have outgrown our organizational structure just as we have outgrown our physical building.

Three broad capacity challenges shape this plan:

1. Insufficient Management and Administrative Capacity

Department managers are responsible for their own professional work (such as reference desk coverage, collection development, and programming) while also supervising and coordinating the staff who perform that work. In addition, they carry significant administrative tasks such as scheduling, statistics, reporting, and internal communication.

Because their time is consumed by frontline responsibilities, staff supervision, and administrative work, managers lack the capacity to participate in administration-level functions such as strategic planning, policy development, service model design, and preparing the organization for expansion. This limits both their leadership development and the organization's ability to distribute administrative responsibilities more evenly.

2. Concentration of Administration, Governance Support, and Management in Director Role with Limited Flexibility to Redistribute

The Director currently carries:

- **Management responsibilities** (day-to-day operational oversight including building and collections, personnel management, workflow coordination);
- **Administration responsibilities** (strategic planning, policy development, budget design, organizational structure, expansion readiness);
- **Administrative work** (documentation, reporting, communication tasks); and
- **Governance support and liaison responsibilities** (Library Board, Foundation, Friends, Village, county/system partners)

Governance support, administration work, and liaison responsibilities need to expand for a building project, but the Director's current capacity is met and there are very limited options to redistribute that work: already, managers' limited availability for administration-level work means the Director carries that work with less collaborative input than intended, and administrative support is constrained because that role is partially absorbed by IT. In addition, expansion planning will introduce new categories of work, including fundraising and development coordination, capital campaign preparation, and direct work with architectural firms and other planning consultants.

3. Specialized Functions Such as IT and Marketing Lack Dedicated Staffing

The library's evolving technology infrastructure and growing communication demands now require specialized expertise and sustained attention. In the absence of dedicated roles, IT coordination is absorbed by the management team (especially the Administrative Services Manager), while marketing and communications tasks are divided among the management team and other staff whose primary responsibilities lie elsewhere.

It may appear that this plan emphasizes administrative and leadership capacity rather than additional frontline hours. In practice, the library has already expanded frontline staffing substantially, adding approximately 2 FTE over the past six years to maintain service desk coverage as usage surged. Managerial and administrative staffing, however, has not expanded during this same period, even as the complexity of operations, supervision, and planning has increased. This imbalance now limits the organization's ability to support staff, sustain quality, and prepare for expansion.

To address these challenges, the library will **evaluate multiple organizational models**, including redistribution of duties, additional roles, clarified responsibilities, and formalized IT and marketing positions. No structural assumptions are made within this plan; instead, trustees and staff will follow a structured evaluation process to explore possible options.

Strategic Plan Pillars:

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT & VISIBILITY

ACCESS TO COLLECTIONS, INCLUSION, & USER EXPERIENCE

ORGANIZATIONAL CAPACITY & STAFF SUPPORT

FACILITIES & PREPARING FOR FUTURE GROWTH

These define the areas of focus for the library from 2026–2028 and serve as the framework for the strategies that follow.

1. Community Engagement & Visibility

A. Community Relationship Building

Goal: Strengthen partnerships that embed the library more deeply in civic, business, and cultural life.

Strategies

- Establish a visible presence at Chamber of Commerce events. (2026)
- Build intentional partnerships with realtors and community groups to reach non-users.
- Invite residents to participate in public engagement features such as Friday Reads.
- Ensure outreach efforts are sustainable by aligning responsibilities with available staffing.

B. Visibility & Awareness

Goal: Build broad public understanding of the library’s mission, value, and upcoming expansion needs through clear, consistent, and engaging communication.

Strategies

- Develop a unified, multi-year communication campaign explaining the need for more space and how expansion benefits the community.
- Use multiple channels—website (2026), director communications, printed materials, social media—to reach both active users and non-users. (2026 – website and decide on format/frequency for director communications)
- Integrate storytelling featuring patron experiences, staff perspectives, waitlists, and visible space constraints.
- Establish sustained communication rhythms: foundational messaging in Year 1, engagement and detail in Year 2, and mobilization in Year 3.
- Consider community opposition scenarios and develop response plans.

Capacity Requirement: Expansion-related communications require *dedicated* marketing capacity. Funding additional hours or positions is necessary to support this work.

C. Continued Focus on Programming Excellence

Goal: Sustain the library’s reputation for exceptional programming while expanding inclusivity and addressing barriers caused by space limitations.

Strategies

- Maintain strong professional development for program staff.
- Continue strong program offerings and pilot 1-2 targeted programs/year for underserved or specialized audiences, including neurodiverse individuals, caregivers, and working parents.
- Use patterns in program demand and waitlists to inform expansion messaging and advocate for additional space. (2026 – include in foundational messaging)
- Develop a programming policy to ensure program planning and decisions align with library mission and community need.

2. Access to Collections, Inclusion, & User Experience

A. Increased Access to Collections

Goal: Expand and diversify access to physical and digital materials.

Strategies

- Build a robust digital collection that balances demand and responsible licensing.
- Standardize digital selection procedures and train two leads to ensure consistent, informed decisions and responsible direction of resources. (2026)
- Continue expanding the Library of Things, using patron data and community partnerships to identify new additions, while raising the collection’s profile with both users and non-users.
- Explore ways to increase convenience for patrons, including the feasibility of hold lockers or other off-hours access tools. If significant investment or construction required, incorporate into planning for the 2030 renovation and expansion.

B. Accessibility & User Experience

Goal: Ensure intuitive, equitable, and accessible experiences across physical and digital environments.

Strategies

- Redesign the library website to meet 2027 accessibility standards. (2026)
- Improve interior wayfinding to reduce confusion and improve navigation.
- Integrate accessibility principles into renovation/expansion planning (shelf height, aisle width, signage).

- Improve hold pickups through clearer labeling and organization. (2026)

C. Addressing Frustrations Caused by Current Space Limitations

Goal: Mitigate the user and staff challenges created by limited space while preparing for long-term solutions.

Strategies

- Implement interim improvements such as optimized signage, collection organization, and workflow adjustments. (2026 – circulation carts and reshelving workflows)
- Use space-related frustrations as data points in expansion messaging.
- Prepare service models that will scale effectively into a larger future facility (collection organization and browsing layouts that can expand cleanly, program models that are flexible, service workflows that do not depend on the constraints of the current space.)

3. Organizational Capacity & Staff Support

A. Communication Systems & Accountability

Goal: Strengthen internal communication and clarify expectations to support efficiency and staff satisfaction.

Strategies

- Create a “Who to Ask” guide to help staff identify the appropriate contacts for specific questions or needs.
- Implement Microsoft Teams chat function for quick, direct communication between staff workstations. (2026)
- Establish clear expectations for email response and internal communication. (2026)

B. Staff Support & Retention

Goal: Enhance staff well-being, performance, and retention through improved evaluation practices, fair workload distribution, and supportive scheduling.

Strategies

- Redesign the staff evaluation process to ensure it is meaningful, developmental, and equitable, including mechanisms that allow feedback to flow both upward and downward. (2026 redesign for 2027 implementation)
- Conduct workload and time audits to identify pressure points and reduce low-impact tasks. (2026)

- Evaluate the weekend rotation schedule to improve work-life balance and create more sustainable coverage.
- Develop a multi-year staffing plan that reflects current gaps and expansion needs.

C. Organizational Structure & Leadership Capacity

Goal: Ensure the library’s organizational structure provides sufficient capacity for daily operations, strategic planning, and expansion readiness.

Strategies

- Evaluate and revise the organizational structure to distribute operational responsibilities more effectively. (2026)
- Assess the need for additional or reconfigured positions, including options such as management-level roles, part-time administrative support, or reclassifications that better align responsibilities with organizational needs. (2026)
- Ensure adequate staffing for specialized work including IT and marketing/communications to sustainably support daily operations and enable the long-term planning needed for a major facilities project.
- Develop a phased, multi-year staffing roadmap that anticipates expansion demands, technology growth, and evolving service expectations.

Capacity Requirement: Progress in this pillar depends on resourcing additional management and administrative capacity. Without structural adjustments and added support, the organization cannot meet operational demands or prepare for expansion.

4. Facilities & Preparing for Future Growth

A. Safety & Security

Goal: Maintain a safe and secure environment for staff and patrons while embedding safety priorities into planning for the expanded building.

Strategies

- Upgrade safety measures such as cameras, privacy screens, and keycard access. (2026 – privacy screens)
- Improve rapid communication tools and safety alert options for staff.
- Include safety considerations in renovation design, focusing on visibility, workflow, and emergency preparedness.

- Strengthen relationships with public safety and emergency services.

B. Laying Groundwork for 2030 Expansion

Goal: Prepare the library and its partners for a successful building expansion and renovation.

Strategies

- In partnership with the Foundation, engage a fundraising consultant to build the organization's capacity and readiness for a capital campaign.
- Develop a shared vision and consistent messaging about the future library with all stakeholders. (2026)
- Establish or strengthen Friends and Foundation roles to support expansion.
- Conduct governance and organizational readiness assessments to ensure unified leadership.
- Maintain alignment between communication efforts, public engagement, and facility planning.

C. Board Alignment & Governance Readiness for Expansion

Goal: Ensure the Library Board is prepared to play an active, coordinated role in pre-expansion planning prior to the formation of the Village-appointed building committee anticipated in 2028.

Strategies

- Establish an Expansion Committee within the Library Board to build a shared understanding of expansion needs and coordinate with staff, the Foundation, and the Friends. This committee should begin by meeting quarterly and increase as needed before sunseting when Village-appointed committee is formed in 2028. (2026)
- Translate community engagement work from Pillar 1B into documented expansion priorities that can guide future Village-led planning.
- Provide the Board with context, background knowledge, and strategic insight to participate effectively when formal planning begins.

D. Technology & Future Systems Planning

Goal: Prepare the library's technology infrastructure, digital services, and building systems for the needs of a modern, flexible, future-ready library facility.

Strategies

- Integrate technology considerations early in facility design discussions, planning for the cabling, electrical layouts, server room, AV systems, and more to serve a modern library.
- Strengthen cybersecurity through regular training and updated policies and systems to support larger, more complex environments.

- Monitor technological trends, including AI and automation, and evaluate responsible adoption for building operations, patron education, and library services.

Capacity Requirement: Effective technology planning requires dedicated IT leadership and early-stage coordination with design professionals. Without this capacity, the library cannot develop accurate program requirements to meet long-term operational needs.

Using & Evaluating this Plan

This Strategic Plan will guide the library's work from 2026–2028. To ensure that the plan remains effective and aligned with community needs, the library will use the following process:

Annual Action Plan

Each year, staff will develop a detailed action plan that identifies specific objectives. It will include project owners, timelines and contingencies, and measurable milestones. While informed by the strategies in this document, action plans will also reflect operational realities, new opportunities, and resource availability. The Library Board will review and approve the action plan annually.

Progress Reviews

Staff leadership will review progress quarterly, identify obstacles, and adjust timelines as needed. Brief progress updates will be shared with the Board to ensure alignment and transparency. Midyear and before year-end, the Director will provide a comprehensive progress report on all activities.

Annual Evaluation & Course Correction

At the end of each year, staff leadership and the Board will evaluate progress against the plan, identifying lessons learned, adjusting for shifting priorities, and confirming the plan still meets the community's needs.

This process ensures the plan remains a flexible guide rather than a static document.