

# **Des Plaines Valley Public Library District**



## **A Bridge to the Future**

### **Strategic Plan 2004**

## **Introduction**

### **A Generous Beginning**

Public library services in the Des Plaines River Valley area first were offered in 1921, when the Lockport Woman's Club started a volunteer library in Lockport, Illinois. The first location was Pilgrim Hall which was rented for \$25.00 a month. Several unsuccessful attempts were made to establish a tax-supported town library until voters approved the establishment of the Lockport Free Public Library in 1929. After being housed in several locations, the library trustees purchased the Boyer residence in 1932 for \$19,000.00 and remodeled it for \$15,000.00—quite an accomplishment and commitment in 1932! A small addition was built in 1938 at a cost of \$1,931.00.

### **Responding to a Growing Community**

In 1965, responding to changing needs and a growing community, the library trustees voted to sell three-quarters of the library's property to the First National Bank of Lockport, and to build a new two story building on the remaining lot. At that time, the library owned 33,135 books and circulated 122,135 items. In 1966, the new 15,660 square foot building was built for \$257,459.00 and opened to the public. Federal LSCA funds were used for a portion of the cost. In 1969, the library trustees agreed to expand services to Crest Hill. Land was donated for a 10,500 square foot building, which cost \$221,710.00. Federal funds were also used for this project.

Recognizing the need for better service coordination and greater cost efficiencies, the libraries separated from the Township and became the Des Plaines Valley Public Library District in 1981. In general, the District boundaries continued to be those of Lockport Township.

### **Growth Beyond Expectations**

As it turned out, the combination was a wise move. The population of the area—especially in Romeoville—grew dramatically in the last 23 years. Now the population of the communities of Crest Hill, Lockport and the portion of Romeoville south of 135<sup>th</sup> Street are expected to double in size in another 15 years.

With a view to population growth and increasing need for library services, the trustees of the Des Plaines Valley Public Library District authorized the development of a comprehensive strategic plan to determine near-term and long-term options in the provision of library services to meet changing needs in growing communities.

### **Planning With Professional Assistance**

In preparation for a comprehensive strategic plan, the trustees authorized a consulting firm to conduct a community survey of every household in the District to gather input about the quality, relevance and value of the services provided in the district. The Summit Planning Group and its lead consultant, Dr. John Throop, studied the community and conducted data gathering. This survey was underwritten by a grant from the Illinois State Library. The results of the survey have provided data regarding community sentiment and interest in the libraries within the District.

The Summit Planning Group was retained by the trustees to conduct a comprehensive strategic planning process and gather further data, meet with public officials, and community leaders.

We are excited about this plan, and are committed to assist all residents in the District in building bridges of lifelong learning and knowledge development in their personal, community and business lives.

September 2004

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**DES PLAINES VALLEY PUBLIC  
LIBRARY DISTRICT**

**MISSION**

The Des Plaines Valley Public Library District takes pride in its role as a citizen of the community; partners with its members in the duties incumbent upon every community member. We offer our information services to the community with the enduring belief that in so doing, we serve ourselves. As professionals, we view our responsibilities as a covenant of public trust. In accomplishing this all-important mission, we are guided by the following principles:

- To provide timely, accurate, and useful information for community residents.
- To feature current high-demand, high-interest materials in a variety of formats for persons of all ages.
- To provide materials and services to assist those seeking to meet educational objectives established during formal and informal courses of study.
- We encourage all age groups to develop an interest in reading and learning through services provided.

**VISION**

The Des Plaines Valley Public Library District is a community knowledge hub providing lifelong learning resources and opportunities to every resident. The Library District will continue to develop its resources to expand services to our patrons, both on an individual basis, and also encompassing local businesses, learning institutions, civic and community organizations.

## **STRATEGIC DIRECTIONS**

**By 2010, the Des Plaines Valley Public Library District will:**

- Demonstrate greater relevance to every resident of the District through improvements in materials, services, programs and electronic resources so that increasingly diverse resident needs are met.
- Meet resident expectations for service excellence and convenience by reviewing every facility option and, when possible and advantageous, develop new facilities and/or redevelop existing facilities.
- Ensure excellence in staffing by providing well-trained and professional personnel who are proactive in meeting resident needs for library services.
- Make a compelling case for public support of high-quality library services which will result in residential support to the District in a variety of ways.
- Present a comprehensive range of informational and recreational services to residents by collaborating with a wide range of public, private organizations and groups in the area.
- Develop the local workforce, support area companies and businesses by assisting local employers in meeting their informational needs.

**The Des Plaines Valley Public Library District will demonstrate greater relevance to every resident of the District through improvements in materials, services, programs and electronic resources so that increasingly diverse resident needs are met.**

## **GOALS**

- Continue to assess and analyze resident needs to anticipate service and collection improvements.
- Increase the range and quantity of public programs reflecting resident interests.
- Increase services and training opportunities to meet specific community interest group requirements.
- Increase the use of electronic resources through comprehensive training at remote sites and home.
- Develop and expand reference/research capabilities and special collections to reflect diverse resident interests.
- Provide resources to enhance the ability of businesses, community organizations and governmental units to acquire information to achieve key objectives.
- Maintain and strengthen children's collections, materials and outreach programs.
- Support and supplement educational pursuits of children and adults by partnering with schools, home schooling families and businesses to provide up-to-date print and electronic resources.

**The Des Plaines Valley Public Library District will meet resident expectations for service excellence and convenience by reviewing existing facilities, when practical and advantageous, develop new facilities or redevelop existing facilities.**

## **GOALS**

- Enhance and increase full accessibility at each library facility.
- Develop a plan to increase parking at each library facility.
- Develop a plan to provide a new library facility in high-growth areas of the District.
- Partner with local, state, and federal governments to review all possible funding and location options for facility enhancements and/or new construction.
- Review and refine all fee levels, including user and developer impact fees.
- Improve each library facility's infrastructure to permit increased high-quality electronic access capabilities.
- Continue to review space utilization to ensure sufficient space for patron use and greater staff efficiency.

**The Des Plaines Valley Public Library District will ensure excellence in staffing by providing well-trained and professional personnel who are proactive in meeting resident needs for library services.**

## **GOALS**

- Provide regular opportunities for patron and staff input for improvement based on standardized quality benchmarks.
- Promote educational and training opportunities for staff to increase knowledge and skill in library service delivery.
- Review the staffing configuration to align library organization with strategic plan directions and goals.
- Align staffing patterns to meet District needs and specific library needs.
- Develop a training program to cross train staff to understand more fully different staff responsibilities.
- Hire the best staff available in the library science field, information technology, and train existing staff to higher standards, as budget allows.

**The Des Plaines Valley Public Library District will make a compelling case for public support of high-quality library services which will result in resident support to the District in a variety of ways.**

## **GOALS**

- Establish an endowment fund for legacy gifts, special donations, and for community support for long-term projects.
- Strengthen the organization and efforts of the Friends of the Library organization to enhance public support.
- Develop a range of new fund-raising activities to support specific improvements and investments in library services and collections.
- Create a “wish-list” of specific material needs that can be met through donations of cash or materials from individuals and businesses.
- Develop and promote a legacy/planned giving program for bequests, annuities and trusts from residents.

**The Des Plaines Valley Public Library District will present a more comprehensive range of informational and recreational services to residents by collaborating with a wider range of public and private organizations and groups in the area.**

## **GOALS**

- Improve collaborative efforts with area school districts to coordinate library services to meet educational objectives.
- Promote library's services, programs, and assets to various community groups, churches, schools, businesses, and other organizations.
- Coordinate with historical and genealogical groups to improve access to relevant materials and programs.
- Improve communications between staff, board members, and local community leaders.
- Identify groups and governmental units with which the library can partner with.
- Provide information and resources to other governmental units or community organizations in their comprehensive planning efforts or needs assessments.

**The Des Plaines Valley Public Library District will develop the local workforce and support area companies and businesses by assisting local employers in meeting their informational needs.**

## **GOALS**

- Improve communications with local businesses and companies. Enhancing the value of library services to meet business objectives through improved access to information and training.
- Coordinate informational services with local post-secondary educational institutions with workforce development/business degree programs.
- Provide business services resources to governmental units with economic development programs.
- Coordinate with educational institutions to deliver services and materials to home-based businesses or small business enterprises.

# Library and Community Input

## Community Vision Focus Groups

The American Library Association's preferred strategic planning process (also preferred by the Illinois State Library) is defined by Sandra Nelson in *Planning for Results*, revised edition (ALA Press). In this process, leaders in the community are invited to participate in an envisioning process. The objective is to itemize the community's assets and deficits, to describe their vision for their community during the coming years, to identify unserved populations and emerging needs, and to articulate the library's role in the community of the future.

The library staff and trustees assembled a list of community leaders, invited them to participate in the visioning session, and engaged a consultant in the planning process to facilitate the session to obtain the fullest possible input from participants. This session provided information and perspectives used in our planning process.

The Des Plaines Valley Public Library District, civic and business leaders in each of the three communities were invited to participate in the planning process. The turn-out from the civic sector while diverse, was rather small. However, the perspectives offered by the participants were accurate when compared with information garnered from other sources.

***One clear conclusion became apparent: there is a difference in vision among the three communities as to what the future holds, and no unifying direction could be identified.*** As a result, the library leaders, while taking into account the perspective that the community leaders have to offer, will have to take a proactive stance in defining the future of these growing and changing communities.

### ***Romeoville***

The Romeoville vision group identified **five main assets** that make the community a great place to live:

***Solid community political leadership.*** Participants had positive comments about the mayor's leadership through the years, and his commitment to make Romeoville a good place to live. The village trustees also make good decisions about planning and policy to be able to address rapid growth.

***Excellent recreational opportunities.*** Perhaps it was partly because we met in the community recreation center, but participants were proud of the recreational facilities offered by the village. They also pointed to the requirement for adequate park facilities in new subdivisions that are built in the community, and to the recreational opportunities along the Des Plaines River and the Sanitary and Ship Canal.

***Diverse and affordable housing.*** Unlike surrounding communities—especially Naperville to the north—Romeoville offers enough types of housing to fill various economic niches and age needs. Young families find that Romeoville is an affordable place to buy a good house and a safe place where their children can play and learn.

***Good education for children.*** Participants had positive comments about the local elementary schools, the middle school and the new high school. They also valued the new Joliet Junior College campus on 135<sup>th</sup> Street and the proximity of Lewis University. There are good educational opportunities for children, young people and adults alike.

***Rapidly improving infrastructure.*** Participants had considerable praise for the work of the Romeoville Fire Department, especially in cultivating good community relations to promote public safety. Participants also had positive things to say about the Romeoville Police Department's commitment to public safety. There is improvement in electric service and in cable television service that manages to keep up with the public demand of residential growth. The leaders are proud of the development of the Lewis Airport as a general aviation hub—which will support business development in the area.

The group then identified **five main deficits** in community life.

***Transportation nightmares.*** Without question, Romeoville civic leaders look at traffic gridlock, especially (but not only) on Weber Road, and wonder when and how there will be an improvement in traffic direction. Many other arterial roads and streets have not been improved to keep up with residential growth. Residents commute long distances to work so that they can have affordable and high-quality housing. There is concern about the ability of all roads to keep up with what they see as inevitable commercial growth along Weber Road south of 135<sup>th</sup> Street.

***Social service availability.*** There is only one agency that deals generally with various social service or life problems that people may experience, whether job loss and unemployment, life crises or family problems. There also are very few churches in the community compared to the population residing in the area. There is some concern about the ability of community residents to find the personal help they need when they need it.

***Lack of a community center district.*** There is awareness that Romeoville's leaders are directing planning and funding for the establishment of an historic community center on the east side of the community, across the Des Plaines River. In time, there may be more of a sense of a community center in Romeoville, a section of town that could be identified as "downtown." Right now, there is no such center.

**Lack of an urgent health care facility.** There is no hospital nearby—so if someone becomes very ill, it may be that the paramedics will have to get the person to Bolingbrook or Joliet—which can take a very long time in heavy traffic periods, but which are a minimum of 8 to 12 miles away. There is a sense that, with increasing population, there will be an even more need for a hospital or immediate care facility.

**Adequate library service.** There is confusion about the availability of library service, and from which legal entity. There is awareness of the public library on Normantown Road in Romeoville, but only minimal knowledge that the library is part of the Fountaindale Library District. There is some confusion that library services for those living south of 135<sup>th</sup> Street are available, at least as a starting point, by heading to Lockport or Crest Hill. Romeoville spans two or more townships, but it is not clearly understood that those who live in Lockport Township cannot establish their library usage at the library in Romeoville. Further, that library does not have all of the types of services that are wanted and needed.

Regarding **community vision**, participants see a Romeoville community ten years out that will be bustling in size, but with some essential services (such as transportation) still struggling to catch up. The community's residents will have matured in place, so instead of young children, there will be teenagers with middle-aged parents who are re-thinking their careers. Longer-lived family members will be coming into the community to be near their relatives, so there will be an increase in assisted living facilities, retirement communities, and skilled nursing facilities. The community will benefit from the presence of recreational facilities.

Many types of businesses will locate in the area because the remaining open spaces will be reserved for light industrial and logistics businesses and for commercial “big-box” stores. These businesses and stores will generate good revenue for the village, which will keep taxation in check.

The old downtown area will be developed to create a sort of destination for people to go for dining, small shops and small offices—all of which will go a long way towards creating a sense of a community center even when the population increasingly is divided into clear and discrete communities in individual subdivisions.

The community will be “wired” or even wireless moving into the future because, with improvement in area infrastructure, technological advances in communications and computing can be built into the area.

The community leaders stressed **needed changes in library services** in view of the community vision. Unlike some communities, since Romeoville really does not have a “center” per se, any facility must be easily accessible to people in their cars, and must function as a place to gather for all types of residents. There are four things that they want in a library for Romeoville.

**A gathering place.** Given the fact that Romeoville really has few, if any, places for anyone and everyone in the community to gather, formally or informally, in small to mid-sized groups, the community leaders look for a library facility with meeting rooms, larger community rooms, and a place for some recreational relaxation with printed materials—sort of like Borders or Barnes & Noble where people go to relax and read or research on topics that interest them.

**A place for families.** Leaders stressed the importance of a place where an entire family can gather, yet separate to pursue particular types of interests.

**A place for information to be gathered.** Leaders emphasized the importance of up-to-date computing and printing equipment, wireless technology, satellite programming, and other ways to connect immediately with the larger world. They also saw the library's role in working with the business community to provide ways to sort through the increasing volume of information to find and use what is relevant to their business efforts.

**A place that collaborates and connects.** The participants want to see a different type of library than the Fountaindale Library District facility on Normantown Road. At the same time, if services and materials can be fully integrated between the two districts, then the libraries would address the needs and interest of all of Romeoville's residents. They also want good community coordination with Joliet Junior College and Lewis University in terms of what materials are offered and how they can be accessed.

### ***Lockport***

In Lockport, some difficulty was encountered to obtain community leader involvement, which demonstrates the lack of community focus and library engagement with the community's needs. Most of the focus group involvement came from one sector, the historical and genealogical interests, though the pastoral community also was involved.

The community leadership identified **four main assets** in Lockport:

**Community settledness.** Most people, especially in the older part of Lockport, have lived in their homes for decades. Also, there are families who have lived there for two or three generations, or more. People know each other very well and look out for one another. Houses do not change hands quickly. There is a kind of pattern of living in Lockport, and people demonstrate it through taking walks in town, taking care of property, and visiting in established places.

**Community history and preservation.** Lockport is an old community, one of the original communities in the area, and there is a strong sense of history and the value of historic preservation of properties, both public and private. It is very hard to tear down old facilities to put up new ones, and new residents in the older part of town have the same sense of commitment to maintain the historic fabric of the community.

**Overall, good schools.** Historically, Lockport schools have provided an excellent education for its residents.

**Recreational opportunities.** Participants spoke enthusiastically about the parks and the nature center in the community, and about the walking and biking trails along the I & M Canal. There is a lot to do outdoors in Lockport, and people do come into the area to avail themselves of recreational opportunities.

There were many more challenges facing Lockport, and the focus group members identified **five main deficits**.

**Lack of community focus.** There does not seem to be a clear identity for Lockport, in spite of its historic nature. Businesspeople and political leaders cannot seem to come to a consensus about how Lockport can be an historic center while still offering modern amenities. There is no clear public place for people to meet, especially in a larger setting.

**Lack of integration between old-timers and newcomers.** Most of the growth is happening on the east side of town, in Homer Township. People there may have Lockport addresses, but they do not look to Lockport for shopping or as a place to become involved politically or socially. People who have lived in Lockport for a long time have not sought out the newcomers to help them find roots in the community—but the newcomers do not seek out the old-timers, either, for history or for guidance on the way things have worked here historically.

**Lack of balanced shopping opportunities.** Participants bemoaned the lack of shopping for a variety of items, from clothing to sewing needs to a wide array of groceries to medications. In former days, the retail sector in Lockport was complete. Today, there are very few establishments left that deal with basic needs that individuals and families may have.

**Transportation problems.** The existing bridge has two lanes, which means traffic tie ups from time to time during the day. Also, train service is provided only in the early morning, and then later in the day, and only for commuters. There is no train service at other times of the day. Finally, there is no meaningful bus transit service in the community, though Lockport Township provides senior citizen bus service.

**Very little senior housing.** As people age in place, there comes a time when they have to move out of their homes since they no longer can care for their property. Yet there is no place to move that is affordable for the majority of residents in Lockport.

The participants **could not articulate a coherent community vision**. They clearly and honestly admitted that they did not have much of a sense of vision looking 10 to 15 years into the future, except to say that it was not likely that much would change quickly in this long-established community.

When addressing **needed library services**, participants were clear about two things:

***The current facility is limited.*** Granted, some were speaking from the perspective of history and genealogy, and there is a center for such services and interests within the Lockport library facility. It is very small, however, and there is not adequate and constant staff to provide people who want to utilize the historical and genealogical information. Also, participants noted that computer equipment seemed to be fully utilized. Finally, not all of the building is accessible, which can be a problem for older residents who want to participate with their grandchildren and great-grandchildren in children's activities.

***The meeting space needs updating.*** While the room has historical interest, and while there is a sense of permanence in the room with original wood paneling, there is awareness that the seating is uncomfortable, the lighting is not adequate, and the room can be noisy with the bare floors. The meeting room could benefit from some updates and improvements for aesthetics and from a practical standpoint as well.

## **Crest Hill**

There were a small number of Crest Hill community leaders from which to draw for this focus group. That fact demonstrates the quiet and self-contained sense of this community—which, from the participants' standpoint, soon will change.

The participants identified **five main assets** to living in Crest Hill.

**Resident longevity.** Participants cited many instances of residents who moved to Crest Hill in the late 1940s and early 1950s who have lived in the same house for those 50 to 55 years. There has been a great stability in the community. The composition of the community through the years has been relatively uniform in terms of age, ethnicity and economic status. In addition, children who have moved to other places, and who have married and started families, are moving back to the community where they grew up. There is great loyalty to Crest Hill.

**Nearby senior housing.** As residents age, they need to be able to move into a residence that requires less direct care, or where they can receive assisted living services. These services are provided in or near the city so that people can stay connected to family, friends and services they have known for years. Participants cited examples of older people who have retired elsewhere, and then return to Crest Hill to live out the remainder of their lives, especially as they become more frail.

**Excellent public services.** Participants spoke highly of the police, fire and emergency medical technician services available from the city. Also, people who work for the city work very hard even though they may be somewhat short-staffed for the growth that has occurred in the area.

**Good elementary schools.** There are excellent public school districts and private schools within the Crest Hill area, including Chaney-Monge School District 88, Richland Grade School District 88a, and Joliet Montessori School (alternative to public school). Students do well in these schools and they continue to be supported by community residents (though not necessarily with the passage of school referenda).

**Convenient nearby shopping.** While there is little shopping *within* the city, the accessibility of all types of stores in the northwest side of Joliet and the south end of Romeoville make shopping convenient to meet every type of need.

Interestingly, there were only **two principal deficits** that participants identified.

**Lack of community coherence and identity.** Because there is no center to Crest Hill, there seems to be no community coherence and identity. Joliet is a strong presence, and Romeoville seems to capture a lot of area attention. There are a relatively small number of civic leadership groups, business leadership groups or religious leadership in the community. While residents have a strong sense of their property and their status as residents, they do not have a clear view of Crest Hill's direction or some way to give Crest Hill a geographic focus. While not a sprawling suburb, according to participants, it does seem to be at times an extension of Joliet.

The participants **did not have a sense of vision** 10 to 15 years ahead for the City of Crest Hill. The city does not have to be as clear as it once was that it is *not* Joliet. That is good. But there are two important factors that will occur in the next several years that will affect the lives of Crest Hill residents.

First, **there will be a population shift** as older long-time residents die or move to retirement and care facilities, and new families and single persons move into the community. Who they will be and what they will be like has yet to be determined.

Secondly, **there will be a shift in land use at Stateville Penitentiary.** The prison does not need all of the land it currently holds, and there is a sense that land use has been considered. Not much of it will be used for additional housing—most of it will be used for business development. However the land is used, however, will have an effect on the quality of life in Crest Hill.

Participants also had very little to say about **development of library services**, since they had little to say specifically about Crest Hill's future. There is an awareness that the library will have to be prepared for the coming population shift, and that the current facility might have to be updated or be provided with an addition. Other than that, there was very little comment about how library services currently are provided, or how they should be provided in the future.

## Community Leaders

### *Romeoville*

The consultant met with the former village development director, Paul Gorte, about the development trends in Romeoville. He indicated that Romeoville recently conducted a special census and met the threshold for home rule government. That means that the village trustees and mayor can govern more directly, guiding the development of the village and establishing fees and taxation for development.

Mr. Gorte reviewed the current village comprehensive plan and stressed that, in large measure, residential development has matured and that future development will focus on three areas:

- **Commercial development along Weber Road.** There is considerable land remaining for commercial development along Weber Road, including the Helen Ward property south of 135<sup>th</sup> Street. Mr. Gorte indicated that the village is in communication with a variety of commercial developers about construction of shopping plazas with large commercial anchors. The population growth and traffic patterns in the area can support such commercial development, and the good news is that retail development and ongoing sales will strengthen the tax base of all taxing bodies in the village, including the Des Plaines Valley Public Library District. Mr. Gorte said that this development is imminent, and that the library district is at a critical point for obtaining some property in the general vicinity of commercial development. He and the village are willing to help in whatever way possible to facilitate library service in the area south of 135<sup>th</sup> Street.
- **Industrial and business development in areas along main east-west arteries.** Mr. Gorte outlined village zoning plans for industrial and business parks along Division, Caton Farm and Renwick Roads (this last area in conjunction with the city of Crest Hill). Also, there is significant development around the Lewis Airport that will attract relevant industrial and business development. This business development will provide greater tax revenue for all taxing bodies. Mr. Gorte also believes that a discussion may be in order to receive some development impact fees to support the library, especially if the library district emphasizes business services that it can provide.
- **Creation of an “old downtown” village center.** The older section of Romeoville is on the east side of the Des Plaines River and the canal. In an effort to promote a sense of community identity and history, there is considerable interest in restoring some existing building as well as authorizing some new construction on that side of the village. The objective is to create a village square environment with small shops and small businesses and professional services. In that way, people may look to this section of town as a “destination” for the community.

In a separate meeting, the consultant, along with William Diaz, president of the library trustee board, Christina Bianco, library district director, and Beverly Krakovec, assistant district director, met with Marian Gibson, the newly appointed village manager, who requested the meeting. Ms. Gibson outlined the village's development directions, and sought input from Mr. Diaz, Ms. Bianco and Ms. Krakovec about library needs for space in Romeoville.

Ms. Gibson emphasized that the village would work carefully with developers to encourage them to set aside some land for the library to develop a new facility, if desired. The site would be visible, within general traffic patterns, and set off on an east-west road near Weber Road. The consultant also emphasized that the village and the library could stress tax benefits to the developer for remanding land for public use through a library facility. The District participants took all information under advisement.

### *Lockport*

The consultant met with Larry McCasland, Lockport's city administrator, and Steve Lazzaro, the city's development director. Mr. McCasland reviewed development initiatives in the city, especially the potential development of the I-355 corridor to the east of the city, and a new senior housing development, Lago Vista, in the southeast side of the city, within Lockport Township. That development alone will have 875 units on 280 acres. More residential development within the Lockport Township part of the city is anticipated.

Considerable discussion ensued regarding the library's role in Lockport's future development. Both Mr. McCasland and Mr. Lazzaro understand that long-time residents of the community are averse to change. Nevertheless, the city is growing rapidly and must respond to the increasing population and to business growth spilling south of Lemont and west of Orland Park and New Lenox. City services must keep pace, and the District library needs to consider carefully how it will keep pace, too, with the community's expansion, even if some of that expansion is outside of Lockport Township and the District's boundaries.

Mr. McCasland noted that the library's current facilities are surrounded by existing development, and wondered about the extent of renovation and expansion that is possible in the current facility and site.

Both Mr. McCasland and Mr. Lazzara understand that, whatever decisions finally are made, the residents will have to endorse the changes. But if they are able to obtain better services in a newer facility, and if newer residents also find the library to be convenient and useful, then it may be that they will be willing to support these shifts in a referendum. That decision, of course, ultimately belongs to the District trustees.

### *Crest Hill*

The consultant met with Donald Randich, long-time mayor. Mr. Randich stressed the development potential of Crest Hill, especially with regard to the section of the Stateville property along Renwick Road that the Department of Corrections will be selling. The ultimate goal of all business development, according to the mayor, will be to reduce to the greatest extent possible the tax burden on Crest Hill residents.

The mayor emphasized his commitment to help the library with whatever site and facility issues it may have so that it can strengthen its service to the residents of the city. He indicated his willingness to support library development through appropriations channels with state representatives in Springfield and congressional representatives in Washington.

### *Will County*

The consultant met with Tyson Warner, the planning director for Will County. Mr. Warner reviewed the overall outlook for land use in Will County over the coming decade, and especially within the library district boundaries. He emphasized the distribution of industrial and business development, and what areas are poised for development in the near term. He reviewed with the consultant the land use mapping currently in use in the county planning offices, including overlays of zoning designations over currently vacated land.

In particular, according to Mr. Warner, there is considerable development potential in sections of Crest Hill, and in the south side of Romeoville near the Lewis Airport. He emphasized that every community has their own land use plans and their own protocols and ordinances regarding collection of development fees and impact fees.

The consultant also met with John Greuling, president and CEO and Aimee Ingalls, economic development manager, of the Will County Center for Economic Development. They stressed as well the much greater emphasis in the coming decade on aggressive business and industrial development of available land, and the general fill-in of available residential space. While the population is likely to increase greatly in the communities in the next 10 to 20 years, that will be the result of higher density housing and not simply the construction of more and more single-family homes. Two long-term issues will have a profound economic impact on the area: the I-355 development, and the potential Peotone airport.

Both Mr. Greuling and Ms. Ingalls pointed out that there is increasing attention being given to impact fees on business and industrial development due to its effects on infrastructure (especially roads and traffic).

## Educational Leaders

There are several key challenges facing library staff in coordinating with teachers, curriculum specialists and school librarians.

**Several school districts with different populations and different needs.** There are several school districts even within specific communities, and each district has its style of leadership, its staffing methods, and a socio-economic profile of students.

There are significant differences between students in the Fairmont, Valley View, Richland, Chaney-Monge, and Lockport school districts. There are two public high school districts serving a highly diverse group of young people. In addition, there are private elementary, middle and high schools, some of which are secular and some of which are church-based. The Joliet Montessori School program in Crest Hill also attracts area children.

Further, there are distinct differences in the needs of gifted students, those in vocational/technical education programs, special needs students, and those students whose first language is not English. In addition, to enhance test scores and academic performance levels, there is an increasing need for after-school and tutorial programs to support student educational progress.

Each district has its own curriculum staff and librarian/media specialists, and teachers generally plan their lessons and assignments without references to availability of materials or resources (print or electronic) in school resource centers, not to mention the public libraries that are part of the Des Plaines Valley Public Library District.

**Rapidly expanding school populations.** Every area of the library district is growing—particularly in Romeoville. By some estimates, at least another five elementary schools will have to be built within the library district boundaries just within Romeoville alone. Chaney-Monge and Richland schools face significant overcrowding. There will be increasing numbers of children needing educational support and the services of a dynamic public library, especially in Romeoville.

**Library coordination with the schools.** There is frequent communication between District library staff and school library/media specialist staff. Library staff members make an effort to communicate regularly with the schools, and District library staff members are in the schools regularly to educate students about services and resources in the libraries. The schools do not always avail themselves of those offerings and opportunities.

**The increase in home schooling and self-teaching.** Increasing numbers of parents are opting to provide home-based schooling and different methods of self-teaching. One of the challenges in communicating with home schoolers is that there is no one umbrella organization that coordinates home schooling curriculum.

Therefore, it can be very difficult to communicate with home schooling parents to help them identify what library services are needed.

## **Board of Trustees**

The Des Plaines Valley Public Library District trustees met with the consultant for a planning session on Saturday, November 22, 2003. They reviewed the library district's overall operation by considering four questions:

1. What are the principal operational strengths and weaknesses of the District's library services?
2. What are the principal external strengths and weaknesses of the external environment in which the library operates?
3. What will the library and the District's future be like? What are some emerging issues?

### ***Operational Strengths and Weaknesses***

The operation of the library demonstrates strength in these four areas:

**Library accessibility.** There is easy accessibility to existing library facilities if people are willing to do the driving. The community rooms are well booked, especially in Lockport. The two buildings attempt to address the needs of three different communities.

**General use of collections.** The collections are helpful to general users, and there is good individual assistance for library patrons, especially in Crest Hill. There has been improvement in the high-tech services.

**Greater interest in the library.** There is more interest in adult programs, and children's programs and services are very well-received. The newsletter is very informative and greatly improved.

**Fiscal care.** The library district does not run a deficit and the trustees, who represent a diverse group of citizens in the District, are cautious and careful about their fiscal responsibilities.

The library district demonstrates weakness in:

**Facilities and services with long-range problems and limitations.** Both existing facilities have serious infrastructure issues which are problematic to address including parking. There is no current facility to serve Romeoville residents who are taxed by the District and presently there is minimal outreach.

## ***External Strengths and Weaknesses***

The trustees identified the following three strengths in the operating environment surrounding the library:

**Community spirit.** There is a strong sense of history in Lockport, a deep sense of settledness in Crest Hill, and a strong business and commerce sensibility in Romeoville. Each community has real distinctiveness.

**Educational attainment.** In Lockport and Crest Hill, people's educational attainment and achievement are strong, though less so in Romeoville. The schools overall are strong and provide a good education to young people.

**Recreational advantages.** Because of the I & M Canal, bike trails and wooded areas, there are many recreational opportunities and advantages that are strongly appealing to residents and non-residents alike. In addition, the Lockport Township Park District offers multiple parks, swimming pools and also the Romeoville Recreational Center.

There also are four considerable weaknesses in the region:

**Three distinctive communities are difficult to serve.** Each community is different in type of resident and community character. The Romeoville residents do not have a strong sense of Lockport Township residency, or educational focus (the Lockport Township High School in Lockport formerly served that role). New housing is bringing new people with no community connection, or whose primary connection is to the subdivision. Municipal annexation has left small islands of unincorporated areas which are isolated.

**A significant number of unemployed/under-employed people.** Because of economic shifts nationwide, there are large numbers of men and women who are well-educated, well-trained and formerly economically prosperous who have been laid off or terminated with corporate cutbacks and facility closings. Though, the economic picture has brightened via the proposed extension of I 355, the development of the former Texaco property into an industrial park, a future development of the Route 7 corridor east of Lockport and the dynamic growth of the Weber Road Corridor.

**Geographic divisions.** The presence of the river and the canal have established clear geographic consciousness between east and west in the township.

**Institutions with minimal economic benefit to the area.** The presence of Stateville Penitentiary, Lewis University and the Metropolitan Sanitary District results in considerable land not on the tax rolls, with the exception of Taft School District in Lockport who will receive taxes from Metropolitan Sanitary District.

### ***Emerging Issues to Consider***

As the library moves into the future, there is a primary vision for how the library can function adequately and effectively to serve resident needs.

**The Des Plaines Valley Public Library District must understand that any new designs for library services offer a hub for connecting people with information, and to one another.** The library is not to be a building for books or the physical warehousing of information, but a place where networking can take place, at a technical (high-tech) and a personal (high-touch) level. In its provision of information, the library and its staff must embrace key roles as delivery people for instantaneous information, and as mentors and guides to information so that people can continue their lifelong learning at whatever age.

On the other hand, the library, from a high-touch standpoint, has to offer warm and welcoming amenities, since its competitor, from a book and electronic standpoint, is a large retail bookstore like Barnes & Noble or Borders. There have to be refreshment options, relaxation areas, family areas, and even sales areas that generate revenues from those who wish to purchase materials to take home permanently with them.

In short, the library will look and feel very different from what facilities and staff currently offer. Also, there will have to be some resolution about how and in what manner to serve residents of Romeoville.

## Library Staff

The consultant met with the full-time staff of the Crest Hill and Lockport facilities in the community meeting room of the Lockport Public Library on October 27, 2003. They reviewed the library district's operation by considering four questions:

1. What are the principal operational strengths and weaknesses of the District library's services?
2. What are the principal strengths and weaknesses of the external environment in which the library operates?
3. What are the opportunities and threats that will have an effect or impact on library services?
4. What are some of the critical issues the library must consider in the next several years?

### Operational Strengths and Weaknesses

The full-time staff identified five areas of operational strength:

**Strong and dedicated staff.** The entire staff takes their jobs seriously, knows how to do their jobs, and cares about the delivery of excellent library services. They care about one another as people, too, not just as co-workers. Patrons also really like staff members. In fact, patrons sometimes will bring treats in for staff to enjoy as a way of saying thank you for good service. Everyone also is trying in their own way to make the library look better and more attractive to all types of patrons.

**Collection appropriate to the community.** While there are no specialized collections (except for Lockport history), residents utilize current and popular materials, especially audio books, music CDs and DVDs. The goal of the library is to be timely and up-to-date, and we seem to succeed in meeting that goal. Young adults seem to enjoy graphic novels, so they are stocked in larger numbers. There also are more requests for examination resources from police and correctional officer candidates.

**Commitment to community services.** Senior services are offered in three facilities outside of the libraries. Children's programs are well-attended, and there is considerable loyalty in attendance for these programs in both locations. Adult programs are increasing in number, and are receiving greater positive response to them, especially because we publicize them more consistently with a good newsletter and good public relations. We co-sponsor community events, too. A writers' group that has met for the past three years and is quite popular—with the result that the libraries have increased resources available to writers in both communities.

**Excellent technical support and innovative efforts in technology.** A competent and knowledgeable technical support staff. The exceptional technical support has been provided to full time staff in the form of templates, forms and the adaptability of the Web site to new information and improvements in patron utilization. Both trustees and staff are supportive of technical improvements and the acquisition of relevant technical equipment in the two facilities.

**Community Rooms well-used.** The rooms are heavily booked for community groups and events as well as for library programs. They are free of charge to residents and to local groups.

There are four primary weaknesses that the full time staff identified:

**Facility infrastructure has significant problems.** These problems are rather obvious. Neither facility is completely ADA-compliant or accessible. There are serious problems with parking (both for staff and for patrons), work space, and programming (little flexibility). Electrical and HVAC systems need considerable attention; the electrical system in particular cannot support much more computer expansion, especially in Lockport (where lighting can be a problem). A lighting grant has been applied for to assist in cost of replacement.

Developer fees are limited, not always dependable, and do not support the type of expansion needed. There are no convenient facilities currently available to Romeoville taxpayers who live in Lockport Township. Neighboring communities have newer (and more attractive) library facilities.

**Lack of clear visibility and identity.** The name *Des Plaines Valley Public Library District* sometimes is confused with the city of Des Plaines. Township boundaries confuse people in Romeoville who live south of 135<sup>th</sup> Street or in sections of Lockport that are part of Homer Township. People who live out-of-district are dismayed at the fee structure for use of library materials. Also, for various reasons, the newsletter cannot be distributed to every household in the township.

**Compensation levels are not in line with area averages.** There has not been a board-level compensation study to determine whether salaries are in line with responsibilities when compared to other libraries in the area. The trustees have a vision of the type of staff they want and the types of services they want, but they have not addressed the compensation question when offering this vision. We are meeting the average, but people carry much greater responsibility and thus are compensated at a lower level than their peers—which means that there are competitive pressures for some staff to take other positions.

**Lack of good working relationship with trustees.** Trustees generally do not come into the two libraries to introduce themselves to staff members. So there are gaps in this relationship.

## **External Strengths and Weaknesses**

The full time staff identified three strengths in the library's operating environment:

**Strong community support for education.** Especially in Lockport, residents are willing to support referenda to improve schools and to sustain levels of excellence. In all areas of the district, but especially Romeoville, young families are moving in with young children, and these families care a lot about education and also about quality programming in the community for their children.

**Development brings in financial support.** With the development of single-family homes, townhomes, and senior developments, developer fees help to support the delivery of excellent library services. Also, there is strong business development in Lockport and Romeoville, and vital Chambers of Commerce.

**Clear community identities for which residents are proud.** There is a strong sense of community in Lockport because of its historic charm, and there are "lifers" as residents of Crest Hill. In Lockport, there is a strong commitment between churches and municipal government to deliver a range of social services to help community residents deal with various hardships.

There are four external weaknesses, as viewed by the full-time staff:

**Lack of connected communities with a regional perspective.** Each community has its own character, which is good. But each community has a different perspective regarding growth and development, and there are geographical separations due to the river, the clogged bridge coming into Lockport, and lack of bus transit later in the day and in the evening. There does not seem to be a regional planning approach, at least one that is easily accessible to the library.

**Lack of engagement with local schools.** The library staff has attempted to reach out to colleagues (librarians and educators) in local school districts and individual schools. Some educators think it is the parents' responsibility to take the children to the library; others think that the school library is the primary (and perhaps only) resource; and there is no coordination between educators presenting homework and research assignments and alerts to public library staff to be ready for student (and parent) requests.

**Competitive factors challenge library services.** Call it the "Barnes & Noble effect," but people do not think of libraries as "fun" places to go where they can relax and browse. The library is more of a utility or service. Children are growing up with less and less awareness of what the library has to offer, and how it is relevant to their studies.

**Uncertain futures regionally and statewide.** With the fiscal crisis facing the State of Illinois, there are fewer and fewer grant initiatives through the Illinois State Library, whereas previously many resources were available (and utilized). The merger of the Heritage Trail Library System with the River Bend Library System and the Northern Illinois Library System presents all kinds of uncertainty and potential impacts, especially with regard to Inter-Library Loan and informational technology resources.

### **Major Opportunities and Threats on the Horizon**

The full-time staff identified three specific opportunities that, if addressed, could have positive impact on the delivery of library services in the future.

**Financial resources from the private sector.** Three opportunities in particular were identified by staff as promising. First, with so many older residents in Lockport and Crest Hill who have been faithful library users, and who have higher net worth than they might expect, the district needs to offer a coherent and compelling planned giving/legacy giving program so that we may capture significant funds that can be used for facility development or collection enhancement.

A second opportunity is to redevelop the Friends of the Library. We need to stress that Friends of the Library is for the entire district, and we need to develop and train leaders who can go into the community and do fundraising—as well as to host vital fundraisers at the libraries.

Increasing population and residential development can have a positive impact on library funding, but more growth in business can provide greater tax revenue with very little, if any, demand on materials and services.

**Assistance with information delivery and utilization, and enhancements in customer service.** The library staff can and should shift its orientation to customer service (more active) instead of patron assistance (more passive). The staff needs to help train customers in the use of on-line databases as efficient methods to obtain the information they want and need so that they can manage those services on their own. Staff members also can shift their focus to doing research or review for customers and take a more proactive stance to offer to help. Finally, staff members can make a more concerted effort to reach out to young adults, especially through the Web site and in Internet services.

**Better connections and partnerships in the community to reach and touch more residents.** In order to increase visibility and relevance, library staff have an opportunity to develop stronger ties with collaborating organizations in the library field, such as better coordination and joint services with Fountaindale Public Library District's Romeoville branch. There can be stronger community ties, such as with the Lions' Club and other service clubs.

There can be good coordination with social service and health-related organizations to provide resources to accompany training in first aid and in cancer prevention. Finally, there can be closer and more deliberate collaboration with schools and other governmental units and agencies. One bright opportunity will be to coordinate with Joliet Junior College's Workforce Development Program to

provide job training materials, resume writing materials, and similar products and services.

There are four major threats, however, that the libraries must address so that services and materials acquisition are not threatened:

**Financial challenges.** There are two key threats to financial stability that the library will have to address in the near and mid-term. First, the condition of state finances means that there are not only significant cuts in grants that have been traditional sources for library capital development and materials acquisition, but there also is a threat to cut, at least in part, the annual per-capita grants. We must be prepared to address these threats, which are very likely.

Secondly, current tax support is not going to be sufficient for the long term to finance the district's operations. Yet residents typically do not understand how libraries are funded and why, at some point, there may need to be a tax increase. The district may need to be prepared to go to the voters to seek a tax rate increase, especially because the rate is as low as it currently is.

**Older facilities hamper service delivery.** People compare our library facilities with those in surrounding communities, and they see tremendous gaps in quality and attractiveness. Older is not necessarily better when it comes to a library facility. People also compare the services we can offer in these facilities with those they receive in Lemont or Joliet and wonder why we cannot equal these libraries in what they do. The two library facilities also have significant public access issues because they are not ADA-compliant. Also, the space we have to provide public computer services is not sufficient for the demand we have now, and will have at increasing levels in the years to come.

**Changing demographics.** There is an increasing Hispanic population in our area, and we have very little in the way of materials, services or activities for them to be drawn to use the library. Culturally, they may not have had too much exposure to a public library in their countries of origin. If we do not connect with these populations as they increase in presence in our region, we will miss a major opportunity to connect with a growing population base.

# Consultant's View

## Critical Issues for Library Services

There are five critical issues that must be addressed in the short to mid term by the district as it seeks to provide relevant and valued library services: facility needs, public identity, and community support.

**Facility.** The library's leadership must determine whether two or three facilities are economically feasible. At the minimum, there must be adequate facility planning to deal with population growth and economic diversification in the area.

**Identity.** The district's leadership must make a thorough review of the library's brand identity and community connection. Perhaps a legal name change will solidify in resident minds that this library district is theirs to use to the fullest extent possible for their informational and recreational needs.

**Community support.** The district needs to do everything possible to build loyalty, especially among voters who may be called upon to vote in a referendum at some point. There needs to be adequate financial provision to ensure efficient and excellent facilities, and salary levels and budget amounts to attract talented staff.

**Changing perceptions.** Libraries are changing, and expectations of younger people are changing about needs and wants for information and recreation. The district libraries had better change with the times. What we think of as a library may not be what patrons/residents want, and the district and its leadership will have to be prepared to adapt to new realities.

**Better communications.** The district needs to create more two-way communication methods to raise public awareness, obtain feedback, and find and develop leadership to take the district libraries and their services well into the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

Approved 9/21/04

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## Community Survey 2002

A community survey was conducted by The Summit Planning Group in 2002 to gather community response to the quality of service and collections offered by the two libraries in the district. The final report is available for review at either library in the district. In summary, three sets of results are relevant for input into this planning process.

The libraries in the district need to do a better job in customer service. The customer service issue includes two components: materials on hand and how customers/patrons are treated. There was a clear response from those who responded to the survey that materials were not current, especially in technology, mechanical and repair topics, and general nonfiction. People want more choices, and they want to wait less time for those choices and options.

and in public places. So the library must do more than publicize activities; it must

The district needs to evaluate collections priorities-and what can be made available electronically for people who want information in those formats.

Respondents also had a relatively unfavorable rating on how staff members handled their requests and their use of the library. In fact, the results surrounding library customer service were uniformly the lowest of any community -surveyed by The Summit Planning Group. There needs to be a way to document improvement in customer service and some benchmarking of customer service standards, and improvements that are made

. The district needs to position itself as a regional library and move away from specific libraries for specific communities. Respondents want improvements in facilities, but just in the communities in which they live. When asked to rank which facilities could use improvements and in what priority, the results could be correlated by zip code and respondent (Lockport respondents want improvements in Lockport only, for example). They view their libraries as community libraries, even though they shop regionally, work elsewhere and commute, or go to church in other places. There needs to be a concerted effort to build a sense of a regional library district before a tax referendum will have a chance of passing, either for a operating tax rate, bonding initiative, or both.

A case needs to be made regarding the relevance of library services. Respondents did not have much awareness of what the library offered, or what kinds of activities were offered there to children, adults, or to the general public. As a result of the survey, a public relations specialist was hired to help compile and distribute a newsletter, press releases, speaking opportunities, and programs that could be brought to the library and publicized.

Yet it cannot be assumed that, just because people know about or even use the library, they will think the library is relevant for the long term-especially with increased availability of Internet and wireless capabilities at home, at work, make a case to various populations that library services are an important if not an essential part of life in the 21st century, especially to meet lifelong learning needs.

## **Consultant Recommendations**

The Des Plaines Valley Public Library District trustees face complex and challenging choices in the next five years as they seek, not only as they work to maintain and improve existing library services, but as they provide innovative approaches to expanding service to a rapidly growing population which is becoming increasingly diverse ethnically and economically.

Yet any consultant recommendations and any actions the trustees may take in the next five years must be considered within the larger and more long-term trends in the state of Illinois, the Chicago area and Will County. These trends in these areas will have an impact on the communities served by the District and will require careful thinking by the trustees to prepare for and anticipate these developments-many of which will have significant economic impact both positively and negatively on the District's ability to provide services.

The consultant's thorough review of data, community comment, library staff input and trustee viewpoints during the strategic planning process, together with the consultant's trend analysis of the region, provides the basis for the consultant's key recommendations for trustee policy and action during the next five years.

## Key Long-Term Planning Factors

First, however, it is important to provide the framework for the consultant recommendations by stating conditions that may well exist by the year 2020.

- **Population Growth.** According to the Northeastern Illinois Planning Commission, the population of each of the communities served in Des Plaines Valley Public Library District may come close to doubling in size.

Community	2000 Census	2020 NIPC Estimate
Crest Hill	13,329	22,311
Lockport	15,191	35,205
Romeoville	21,153	43,321
Total	49,673	100,837

To be sure, the total population growth will not take place within District boundaries. Part of Lockport's growth and a smaller proportion of Romeoville's growth will be outside the District. The unincorporated Will County segments also are not included in specific NIPC information. Ultimately, many of these areas also will be annexed into the three communities. The significant assumption is that the District's population will grow by 35 percent by the year 2020. The second significant assumption is that this growth will occur earlier than later in that time frame.

- **Demographic Shifts.** Many of the current residents of Crest Hill have been in the community for 30 years or longer. In the next 15 years, most of these residents will have sold their homes and, if they have not died, will be living in senior-oriented housing. A very different population ultimately will settle in Crest Hill, coming from a much more diverse ethnic and economic background. The NIPC has not broken down the population projections based on ethnicity or language, so it is not clear how many of which group will be represented in Crest Hill, but it is safe to say that a "sea-change" in demographics will occur in the city~ In the portions of Lockport within Lockport Township, more economically stable families with children will move into the community and become residents, buying older housing stock and seeking the traditional feel of the community while valuing housing affordability compared to Lemont, Orland Park, New Lenox and other nearby communities. Romeoville will be the most diverse community of all, filled with families with older children who have aged in place in their homes by 2020, but also with a significant senior population and a vast array of ethnic backgrounds speaking many languages.

- . **Business Development.** Four key business sectors will dominate the local economy by 2020: transportation logistics/warehousing; high-tech support companies; food service industries; and, small/home-based businesses. These business sectors will seek just-in-time training and continuous learning opportunities for their employees. In addition, Lewis Airport will become fully established as a general aviation transportation hub for the southwest suburban area, and will attract companies that desire ease of air access for business development.
  
- . **Land Use.** By 2020, nearly the entire area served by the District will be fully developed and vacant land will be at a minimum. Business facilities will be developed along major arteries in Romeoville and on the north side of Crest Hill. The Stateville prison facility will sell additional land in the next 15 years on all sides of the prison grounds. Most housing development will take place north to south along and west of Weber Road.
  
- . **Transportation Infrastructure.** Three major infrastructure assumptions guide the consultant recommendations. By 2020, the extension to I-355 will be under construction if not completed, and a further extension south of I-80 will be in some stage of development. The I-355 extension will have a general impact on the District due to additional economic development and job growth. I-55 and I-80 will be expanded to six lanes each. Finally, commuter rail traffic also will grow in volume because of the need for alternatives to automobile commuting, and because the commuter rail traffic that passes through Lockport and terminates in Joliet will connect to a new commuter rail line to Ottawa, Illinois with a possible extension to La Salle.
  
- . **Life-Long Learning.** Longevity will increase towards 2020, and people will continue to work and volunteer actively later in life. As Baby Boomers move into their 70s, they will seek more dynamic learning opportunities.
  
- . **Technological Developments.** Predicting technological trends is akin to a seer peering into a crystal ball, but three trends are likely to make an impact on populations within the District. First, technology will be fully accessible. Economic status will not matter. Nearly all homes and public spaces will have Internet access, even if for communication purposes only. Secondly, wireless communication will be the norm. Land-based lines, whether for telephones or computers, will be completely obsolete. Wireless communications will be preferred because access is much less expensive compared to land lines and fiber optic transmission. Finally, since homes at all economic levels will have integrated wireless functions (television, radio, telephone, appliances, webcam monitoring, heating and air conditioning, security), people will want information and databases to be fully available electronically.

## **Recommendations**

With information derived from the community survey that took place in 2002, the strategic planning process in 2003-2004, and the trend analysis for the year 2020, *the consultant makes the following specific recommendations to the trustees of the Des Plaines Valley Public Library District.*

*These recommendations are placed in a five year time frame (short term, mid-term, long-term ending in 2009) and link elements of the six strategic directions identified earlier in the strategic planning document.*

In the narrative, the recommendations are ordered from long-term to mid-term to short-term so that the trustees, in the words of Steven Covey in *Seven Habits of Highly Effective People*, can "begin with the end in mind."

## **Short-Term 2005-2006**

### **Provide a financial projection of District needs through 2009, including facility development and operational cost.**

Before embarking on any capital development campaign, especially with regard to facility development in Romeoville, it is essential that the trustees develop a financial impact projection of all improvements in facilities, collections and services. As these expand, it will be essential that trustees determine realistic costs for operating expenses in this expansion. Finally, trustees need to think about what percentage of operating costs can be recovered through taxes, developer contributions, community financial gifts, the per capita grant, and other grants.

### **Develop a leadership roundtable in the District to promote library needs and assist with the referendum.**

Trustees will find that passage of the needed referendum will be more likely if they establish a leadership roundtable before the referendum is put forward to a vote. The leadership council should be comprised of governmental and business leaders and persons in the community who are well-connected or persuasive. Their task will be to understand the need for additional resources for the library and to advocate for the District in the three communities it serves-with the objective that the referendum should pass with their assistance.

### **Promote giving opportunities, especially planned giving opportunities, in the District.**

As the population ages in place (for most part) in Crest Hill, and as older residents live in the city of Lockport within Lockport Township, it is important to communicate actively with them about opportunities to leave bequests in their wills, or to establish charitable trusts for library support.

The trustees need to strengthen the library's endowment activity and communicate to citizens regularly that the library is capable of receiving bequests that have benefit to the donors or the estates of donors. This process takes time to generate sufficient resources, but these resources can make a tremendous difference in the resources the library has to expand services and collections or even to expand facilities.

Finally, the trustees need to encourage the Friends of the Library to be more proactive in general fundraising for the library more than to focus on one or two events in a year. The Friends of the Library group can provide great leadership to the trustees and the District by focusing on generation of annual support.

### **Begin a business information services division in the District.**

As businesses continue to locate in the District, especially in the enterprise development areas of Crest Hill and Romeoville, it is important for the library to develop business information services to support business development.

In particular, the District should ask the library director to designate a business services specialist who can connect library resources with employee training and development needs, business planning, and regional demographic information (as some examples). That way, business interests will become supportive of library needs.

Additionally, the business information center can be available to small businesses, or to business start-ups, or to home-based businesses. Often, these businesspeople are seeking further business information but have neither the time nor the knowledge to put it together themselves. Again, more area residents will find the library of value and will support future development of facilities and services.

### **Develop a plan for improvements in customer service.**

One of the comment areas in the 2002 community survey focused on quality issues in customer service. Residents indicated that they wanted service that was more personal, more proactive, and faster (especially in obtaining books that were not in stock at the libraries).

The personal and proactive elements of customer service seem to revolve around a desire for greater warmth and enthusiasm in the staff providing the service, and the ability to offer suggestions for additional sources or authors on a topic or area of interest.

Customer service is not only in person. It is "virtual" as well. It will be important to review the District Web site to determine the degree to which it is user-friendly and the extent to which users quickly find information that they are seeking.

### **Develop a revised policy on priorities in collection development.**

One of the criticisms in the 2002 survey was the lack of depth in professional literature, either in reference or in the stacks. The trustees need to be careful not to give specific directions regarding what should be in the collection, but they should get a clear plan from the professional staff on where there are deficiencies in the collection.

In addition, the trustees can insist on a plan of action to provide a better range of best-seller materials, and more copies of those items at any given time. The trustees need to engage in a forthright dialogue with professional staff regarding measurements that determine whether the District provides a good community library collection.

Finally, any collection development plan must take into account future needs, especially in business, finance and marketing literature for small to mid-sized businesses. Also, "collection" is not restricted to printed matter. Overall, how does the staff intend to provide a comprehensive collection improvement-and by what point in time?

**Develop a comprehensive plan to reach out in a fully coordinated fashion with educational institutions within the District.**

While members of the library staff do communicate and provide programs in conjunction with media specialists/school librarians, staff needs to develop a coordinated approach to school outreach including educators. The goal should be to provide a strong educational support service for homework needs, tutoring activity, and for gifted students doing research (to name just three segments of the educational community). A more coordinated effort also should take place with parents providing home schooling. The trustees do not need to be directly involved in this work other than to ask for a clear plan to be presented, and for accountability through benchmarks that determine effectiveness and efficiency in implementing this approach.

## **Mid-Term 2006-2007**

### **Complete a total infrastructure improvement and space renovation in Lockport.**

Trustees will need to commit to a thorough overhaul of the Lockport facility. The electrical and computer infrastructure is insufficient to meet service demands, especially moving into the future.

In addition, it will be important to determine how space should be reconfigured to provide convenient access to materials and staff, especially in light of the resolution of the short-term issue of collection development. If the collection does expand significantly in the areas of professional literature and reference, then that will have an impact on space re-design.

Finally, trustees will need to determine whether to add an extension of the second floor above the “back office” and community room areas of the library. Any decision on space expansion will have an impact on financial planning to take place in the short term, since space expansion will require a referendum to finance the project.

### **Evaluate property possibilities in the vicinity of the Crest Hill Facility.**

The mayor of Crest Hill, Donald Randich, says that he will be willing to work with trustees as they evaluate property needs in the vicinity of the Crest Hill facility. He has indicated that, as a life-long resident of Crest Hill, he knows people and property owners. He may be a great ally to help obtain property, though not by way of donation. Property issues should be evaluated from the standpoint of an expanded facility and better parking, as stated in other recommendations. These are mid-term priorities because the trustees will need to take time to evaluate any and all possible property options.

### **Complete a successful referendum campaign to increase both the operating levy and to authorize bond issuance for capital development in Romeoville.**

Toward the end of this mid-term period, probably by 2006, the trustees will need to put a referendum before the residents of the District to increase the operating tax rate and to authorize the issuance of capital bonds to finance all facility improvements and developments. Based on the financial projections for operating needs and capital needs which should have been completed in the short-term, the referendum levels can be established clearly and rationally.

### **Finalize land acquisition in Romeoville.**

Given the fact that vacant land in Romeoville will be developed within the two to three years, especially in the Weber Road corridor, it is essential that a decision be made in very short order about the site of the future Romeoville branch. In addition, this consultant believes that the best site for Romeoville facility will be in the Weber Road corridor. The District will want to be included in any and all planning initiatives occurring in Romeoville.

This consultant strongly urges that the trustees be in regular communication with the Romeoville village manager so that the manager can work as an “emissary” between the trustees and retail developers to ensure provision of land as a donation and tax write-off so that the District does not incur land acquisition and expense. It also is essential that any development agreements, wherever and however they are finalized, identify a time period for facility development as well as infrastructure provision to the development site (water, sewer, entrance points).

**Provide full accessibility to all sections of existing facilities in Crest Hill and Lockport.**

Discussion has taken place for several years regarding full accessibility to all sections of the two facilities. It is important in the mid-term to finalize and publicize the addition of an elevator in the Lockport facility. Further, the trustees need to decide how to make the community room at Crest Hill fully accessible, either by an elevator or by a ramp leading to a new, expanded and automated external entrance to the community room. Trustees also should seek grant funding for at least a portion of the expense to make the facilities fully accessible to the differently abled.

Any accessibility resolution at Lockport should be considered with-in the mid-term plans to undertake a complete renovation of the facility infrastructure.

## **Long-Term 2007-2009**

### **Complete a new Romeoville facility.**

Having made a land acquisition decision, the trustees should have completed the development of a state-of-the-art community library facility in Romeoville. The facility square footage should meet state library standards for population, and it should be physically accessible to all residents. It should be fully operational, properly staffed, and well-known in Romeoville.

### **Complete Crest Hill facility expansion.**

Having completed additional land acquisition of property to the west of the library and the commercial facility to the north of the library, the Crest Hill facility should be expanded and developed in square footage, collection, and computer services to meet the needs of an increasingly diverse population in Crest Hill and adhere to state library requirements. In addition, the expanded facility should house all, or at least a part of, the District offices, since (if property can be obtained) it is the least land-locked site in the District, and nearby land could have been donated or obtained at a cost cheaper than in any other area of the District.

### **Participate in regional wireless access planning.**

The District likely will be in a region that will move rapidly to wireless communications and computer activity. It will be important for the libraries in the District to participate in regional wireless access planning so that services and databases can be as fully available to residents as possible, and that library needs can be taken into account in all infrastructure planning regionally.

### **Provide a bookmobile to extend services throughout the District.**

In conjunction with the long-term effort to provide a fixed site facility in Romeoville, the trustees should authorize the purchase of a bookmobile to provide more comprehensive and visible services, primarily but not exclusively to Romeoville. The stops can include the elementary and middle schools, senior centers, after-school programs such as the one at the community center at High Point, and other public locations. The bookmobile can provide wireless access to the Internet and to the databases at the library for a full utilization of library services (and, of course, a range of reading material for review and check-out). Again, grants and community financial gifts, especially from area businesses, should be sought to underwrite as much of this expense as possible.