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MESSAGE FROM THE HONORABLE JOHN LOWNDES, MAYOR OF MAITLAND

A library is the soul of the community. It’s the space where all are invited to come and explore their interests as far as their imaginations, the stacks and the internet will take them. There’s no table rent and it’s not an exclusive club or a team. At its best, a library is a refuge for an unregulated collection of seekers who are as likely to join together as to shear off and chart their own path.

In Maitland, we’re lucky to have a library whose history stretches back to very near the founding of the town itself. The city’s founders were still laying out the dirt streets when the building went up to house the donated collection from Clara Dommerich. Since then, generation after generation has passed through its doors to explore worlds far beyond their own small town.

These “explorers” include my own kids. They loved the Maitland Public Library when they were growing up, beginning with story time on their mother’s lap. Still today, when my daughter is home from college, there is always a trip to the library. Her love of books was nurtured there and she’ll be a lifelong seeker.

We in Maitland are lucky, indeed.

John Lowndes, Mayor
INTRODUCTION

Offering curbside pickup and making in-person events virtual by using Zoom and YouTube were not part of the strategic plan. But that’s exactly what the Maitland Public Library did during the Covid-19 pandemic in order to keep serving the community. Like any other vital resource, the library’s original plans were set aside to adapt to the unprecedented.

The mission of the Maitland Public Library is to connect the community to a world of opportunity. This is why we exist now and has been since the library was established in 1896. Exactly how we connect and which opportunities we create vary over time and, occasionally, get altered by globetrotting viruses.

The library leadership team set out to revisit and update our five-year strategic plan during the height of the pandemic. Instead of brainstorming in person, we utilized video chats from our home offices with the distant sounds of kids playing and dogs barking in other sections of the house. We are unanimously optimistic about the future even if the post-pandemic “new normal” is not certain. In a way, the exact manner in which we emerge does not need to be fully defined; the library’s mission is a constant.

When people think of libraries they almost always think of books. Indeed, a recent survey of Maitland Public Library patrons indicate 84% believe offering books to borrow is its most important service and nearly as many believe more focus should be put on expanding the collection. As lovers of hardbacks and paperbacks, we are pleased to hear this. But it’s also important to know that a library is so much more than access to words on paper. With this in mind, we set out to identify where we want to go and how we want to get there in the pages that follow.

The Maitland Public Library’s strategic plan is organized around the three key words in our mission statement: connections, community, opportunities. You will see how we plan to create new reasons for people to engage with the library in the years ahead. We will also begin actively pursuing a new setting in which to connect the community to these opportunities – a new place that is as vibrant as our town and its future.

Thank you for giving us the opportunity to serve you. We all hope the next few pages excite you about the possibilities ahead as we seek to reimagine a new era of the library, rooted in our heritage and laser-focused on a future that allows us to fulfill our mission in the best possible way.

The Maitland Public Library Board of Trustees
GOAL: ENHANCE OPPORTUNITIES

The mission of the Maitland Public Library is to connect the community to a world of opportunity. In this context, the word opportunity refers to the services we offer. In other words, it’s the reason people love having a local library. As such, we constantly review these opportunities to ensure we are giving our patrons what they want.

OBJECTIVE: EXPAND BOOK COLLECTION

In an increasingly digital world, there is still something rewarding about curling up with a good book and turning pages made of paper. One objective we have in enhancing opportunities to lend books is to broaden both the number of copies and variety of subjects. The Maitland Public Library will partner with other state libraries to offer an even larger collection of books, including ones previously found only in big city institutions.

OBJECTIVE: INCREASE DIGITAL OFFERINGS

While 84% of patrons of the Maitland Public Library told us that offering physical books to borrow is the most important service we offer, we know that the number of people who use e-readers continues to grow. MPL will explore increasing the number of digital book copies, as well as audiobook recordings, to meet the changing ways our community consumes content. Digital media in the form of periodicals, databases, and research material will also have a permanent place in the library of the future.

OBJECTIVE: BOOST LIBRARY PROGRAMMING

Books, whether in paper or digital form, are just the tip of a library’s iceberg. More and more people come to our building, and our social media sites, to participate in our programming. Library staff create events to inspire, educate, and entertain. As the appetite for this type of gathering grows, we will be offering new and better enrichment opportunities regarding topics such as personal development, wellness, and economic empowerment.
GOAL: ENGAGE THE COMMUNITY

The mission of the Maitland Public Library is to connect the community to a world of opportunity. The word community, of course, refers to the people we serve as a vital part of town. The objectives below outline how and why we will engage them.

OBJECTIVE: EXTEND COMMUNITY OUTREACH

The Maitland Public Library is a community benefit to all citizens of the city. As new housing is built and people move into the northern and western sections of town, MPL must reach out in a way that is more inclusive. Staff and volunteers of MPL will explore new engagement opportunities in the rapidly growing parts of the city so that the entire community truly recognizes the value of our services and feels they are accessible.

OBJECTIVE: REIMAGINE COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIPS

The citizens of Maitland are lucky to have an impressive amount of cultural assets within the city limits. It is important for its library to explore new partnerships with neighboring organizations to promote synergy in a way that is beneficial to all people. MPL will work with museums, schools, and businesses to promote services and create opportunities for new audiences beyond the walls of our building.

OBJECTIVE: EMBRACE THE YOUNG AND YOUNG-AT-HEART

To the eyes of a child, going to the library is like opening the door to a world of amazement and wonder. To help nurture the natural curiosity of our young citizens, MPL will increase the availability of STEM kits and ways to learn about the arts, history, and culture. The staff will also increasingly focus programming content designed for the growing number of senior citizens who are enjoying longer, more spirited lives.
GOAL: STRENGTHEN CONNECTIONS
The mission of the Maitland Public Library is to connect the community to a world of opportunity. Here, the word connect refers to how and where we bring our services to the people.

OBJECTIVE: EMPOWER THE LIBRARY STAFF
Author Neil Gaiman is credited with saying a Google search can get you 100,000 answers but a librarian can get you the right answer. In a recent survey, more than 80% of our patrons said our staff is the library's best asset. We agree! In order to attract and keep the best talent on staff, we will explore training and professional development opportunities for the team so that they may best serve the needs of all Maitland residents, as well as answer all their questions.

OBJECTIVE: BOOST MARKETING AND COMMUNICATION
The Maitland Public Library must creatively and optimally leverage social media and other platforms in order to raise awareness of, and boost participation in, everything we have to offer. A robust communication plan will also keep the community informed of new initiatives while highlighting the value we bring to taxpayers. Ongoing and intentional interaction with our patrons will allow the team to be proactive regarding the changing needs of the community.

OBJECTIVE: CREATE A NEW SPACE
Nearly half of patrons surveyed say our quaint, historic and iconic building is part of what they like about coming to the Maitland Public Library. However, many in the community, including our own team, believe it is time to ‘turn the page.’ MPL has outgrown the building that has served us well. MPL will work with the city to solidify this growing community sentiment and create a new building that is reflective of our vibrant city and the value we bring to it.
CLOSING THOUGHTS AND LOOKING AHEAD

On behalf of the Maitland Public Library’s leadership team, I hope what you just read will inspire you to re-engage with the organization and re-invigorate your appreciation of what the library brings. The three key words of our mission statement—connection, community, opportunity—serve as our guide as we prioritize our strategic goals. We believe all the endeavors we listed will ensure our future builds on the rich heritage our library first started building more than 100 years ago.

In 1896, the Maitland Public Library was established by the donation of 360 books by Maitland resident Clara Dommerich. Today, we have nearly 100,000 books in a space which also offers programs and events. There is technology that gives people access to our services that our city’s founders would never have imagined. They probably would not have imagined how our town, and our library, have grown over the last 100+ years.

From ancient cultures, to the beginnings of Maitland, to the most modern cities of today, libraries were, and will always be, a fundamental component of a free society, wherein all have access and opportunity. Our city’s library is a living testament to the legacy of Maitland and its founders. It is a declaration of confidence about Maitland’s future. Clara Dommerich would be proud.

Like all living things, a library requires nourishment. That means a thoughtful plan for growth in order to meet the needs of our residents. The outlook for the future of the Maitland Public Library has all of us bursting with pride. At the same time our institution has outgrown its structure, bursting at the seams. The need for a new facility has never been more evident.

Maitland is fortunate to have cultural opportunities unmatched by cities three times its size. The time has come for our beautiful library to grow with Maitland in a way that honors this legacy and casts an eye towards the future. Maitland Public Library’s next chapter begins now. With your support and engagement, we will write it together.

Bryan Stewart, President, Maitland Public Library