



Park Ridge Public Library

## PUBLIC NOTICE

A meeting of the Board of Trustees of the Park Ridge Public Library will be held on **Monday, August 24, 2020 at 7:00 p.m.** using all electronic attendance for a strategic planning discussion.

Meetings of the Library Board are open to the public under provisions of the Illinois Open Meetings Act. The Library Board President has determined that it is not practical or prudent to schedule an in-person meeting due to the COVID-19 pandemic, therefore, this meeting will be held virtually and in accordance with state statute.

Please click the link below to join the webinar:

<https://zoom.us/j/93401525623?pwd=Y2tYMEZVMzRzcG5HTUcrSXdhVDFydz09>

Or dial (312) 626-6799

Webinar ID: 934 0152 5623

Password: 994987

Other local and international numbers available: <https://zoom.us/j/93401525623?pwd=Y2tYMEZVMzRzcG5HTUcrSXdhVDFydz09>

*Those calling in will be identified by the phone number from which they are calling. To be assigned a different identifier, dial \*67 before dialing the phone number.*

### Agenda

1. Call to order
2. Strategic Planning Discussion
3. Adjourn

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## Park Ridge Public Library Key Initiatives: Narrative

By James LaRue and Elizabeth Martin  
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July 14, 2020

### Background

Much of the focus of our work has been on the generation of a new, more community-centered vision (and accompanying initiatives) for the library. The library also has traditional, highly valued services it should and will maintain. The promotion of early literacy is one of them. Providing access to print is another. Public space is a valuable asset, especially when it's downtown. All of these things have ongoing needs for time, attention, and money.

But the organizing theme of the Park Ridge Public Library (PRPL) strategic plan is **engagement**, developing enduring relationships and connections within the context of the community. The library seeks to connect individuals with the larger social and intellectual context, not just as a consumer, but as creator, partner and leader. While this focus may not always manifest itself as new services, real engagement requires both intention and practice. The shift is one of orientation and underlying philosophy.

The draft initiatives were identified by community leaders, and vetted by them in a debrief session. While some of the responses were unquestionably influenced by COVID-19 (locked down people are almost frantically relieved to talk with anyone not locked in with them), there was genuine and grateful interest in the library's interview process. Interviewees were glad to have been contacted, eager to share their thoughts, and eager to see coordinated action. There was a deep and persistent concern for the community as a whole. One message was clear: the library is a valued and respected resource. It is also a trusted and intriguing community partner.

Following the community debrief, staff involved in the planning effort met with all departments, and asked for staff's best thinking about library responses to the expressed community concerns. There was strong convergence in the suggested initiatives, which is itself a sign that the community interviews gave some clear direction to services.

They fall into five broad categories.

## I. Encourage lifelong learning and individual growth.

This is the traditional base of library service. We serve people who want to explore the world of stories and ideas. Often, our service transactions are one to one, librarian to patron. But these ongoing services -- staff, a place, a collection, library-sponsored programs, community-sponsored programs, access to technology -- have two clear needs for the future.

The first concerns the **library building** itself. Libraries are often seen in the community as a reflection of shared values. Community leaders consistently voiced a strong interest in sustainable, "green" technologies. There is particular interest in having public buildings reflect this concern. How efficient can the library be? As a practical matter, the real cost of libraries is not building the facility, but operating it. Energy consumption (usually generated by interior lighting and the related need to heat and cool the building) is typically the largest cost.

The second need is for PRPL to *grow the library's digital offerings*. We have learned that in a time of quarantine, people still want to read, still want to listen to books, still want to listen to music, still want to watch videos, and still want to meet to listen and talk about things. While many of the library's most popular materials seem recreational, research tells us that even reading for fun is part of lifelong learning (we learn about human situations and possibilities, for instance). Many people have long taken advantage of the library to support both formal education, and less formal alternatives such as self-paced language instruction, or the social learning that happens in programs and meetings.

In a pandemic, people can't go into a closed public space. They need virtual options. During the first few months of the pandemic, many patrons finally got around to trying ebooks, streaming videos, or Zoom. That expertise opens up some options for ongoing services. This has budget implications. The conveniences of digital offerings are often offset by their costs. But the demand is there.

Finally, notice that the most personal of issues -- mental health -- is also a shared concern. The library should provide opportunities to connect, combat isolation, learn more about local resources, and be aware of healthy and helpful practices. There are many potential partners in the community.

## II. Build a healthy and sustainable private sector.

The essential issue here is economic recovery. In the Great Recession of 2008-2010, libraries found themselves delivering two levels of community support: helping people find jobs, and helping people found (or grow) their own businesses. In (at least) 2020 through 2022, all libraries will be walking that road again. The good news: we know how to do it. This time, we need to be a little clearer about telling our community just how important our contribution really is.

## III. Align Policies and Procedures to set the stage for Development.

We were asked to address Development opportunities and approaches. The general idea was even raised by community leaders, although not just about the library.

Changes begin from within, and much thought needs to be put into both how this plan will be executed and by whom. Policies, procedures, programs, partnerships, staffing, reports, facility use and budgets need to be aligned towards the updated vision, mission and strategy. A focus should be on shifting the library's public narrative to the stories of impact that result from the plan. Use this narrative to communicate to the community, apply for grants and awards.

Additionally, an outcomes focus for planning, assessment and reporting will be key to show that what the library is doing is making a difference.

Development is to Fundraising what Engagement is to Outreach. Funders like to give to winners and this plan will lay the groundwork for developing relationships with future donors. Planned gifts come from relationships and winning strategies. This plan lays the groundwork for "development" by those who have been positively affected by your mission and have firsthand experience with the value of your service.

## IV. Build a healthy and sustainable public and social sector.

Most folks have no idea of the significance or contributions of the publicly funded world. Interviewees frequently voiced questions that fall into the category of "civic education." There are two key initiatives here: the establishment of a Citizens Academy, and a refresh of the Park Ridge Community Network.

The purpose of the **Citizens Academy** is not only to recruit and orient a new generation of civic leaders (always needed in a community with governing and advisory bodies), but also to contribute quality information to the community, at a

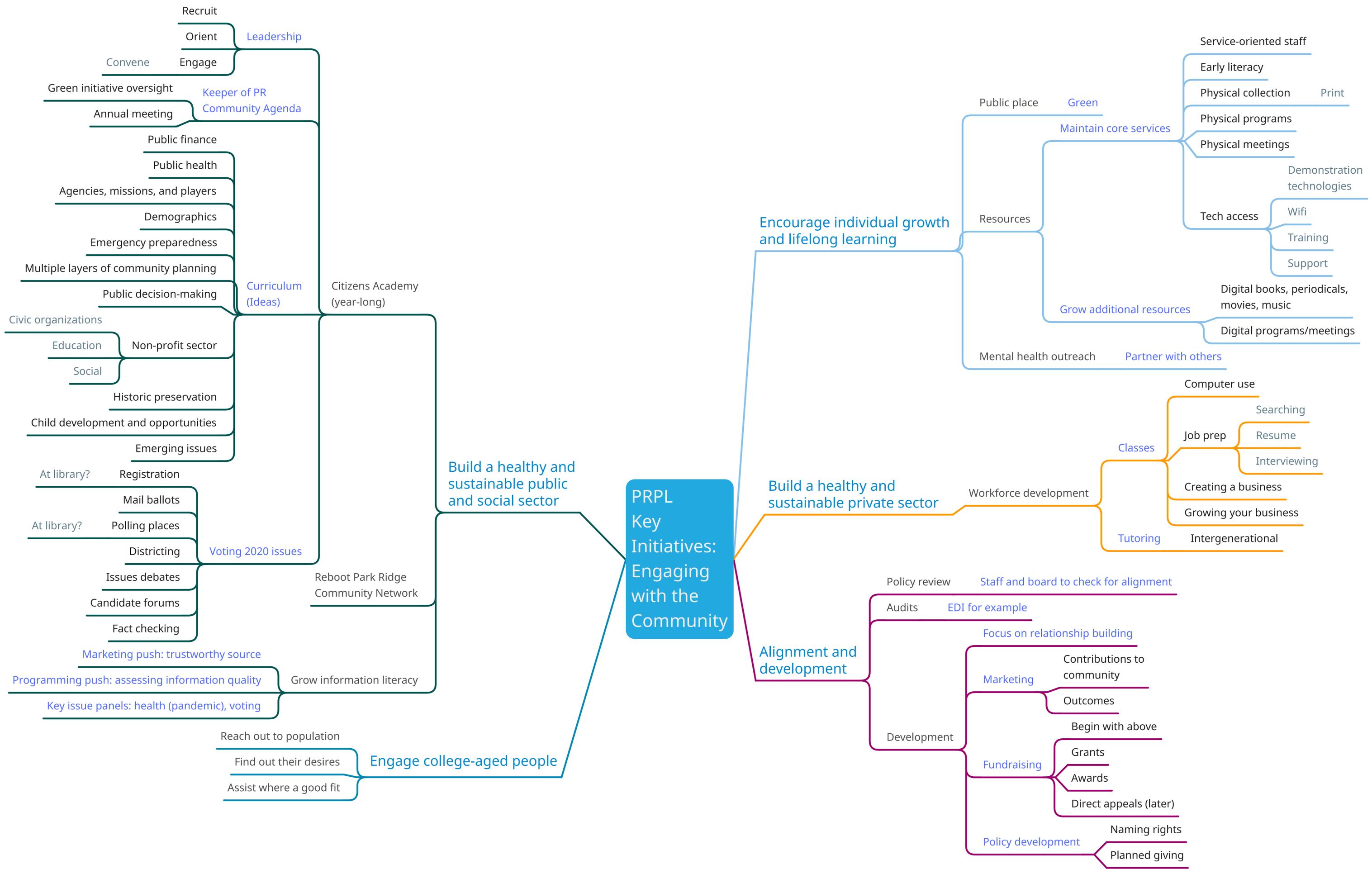
time when “fake news” is spreading. The key information concerns of the community, today, concern public health and the 2020 elections. There is also an oft-expressed interest in deeper *community conversations*, encompassing everything from public finance to historic preservation to population density.

The proposed **curriculum** is just a starting point. Ideally, the Citizens Academy would be a jointly created effort with other interested parties. Other more pressing issues will certainly arise. But this is a good starting point for an annual list of the issues people seem to wonder about.

The **Park Ridge Community Network** is imagined as a place where Park Ridge residents can find a comprehensive introduction to community agencies: their missions, their plans and initiatives, their contacts. Maintaining these kinds of community databases can be a lot of work, and for some libraries, the use is often disappointing. The challenge will be to make the resource participative and sustainable in the sense of “we can keep this current.” We recommend a pilot project -- a list of mental health resources is one example, or perhaps other formal education products -- and careful assessment of use before any expansion of the effort.

## V. Engage college-aged people.

A key finding of the interviews was the deep insight that a lot of young people won't be leaving Park Ridge to go to college. What will they do instead (beyond having the time to lead national protests)? Where does the community most need them? The best approach to this issue is to assemble a group of this population, share this information with them, and ask them if they would like to combine their efforts, and how? Perhaps the library can assist. (Note that this initiative could easily fit under either Individual Growth *or* Sustainable Public Sector.) While the issue is, at present, a reflection of the pandemic, an outreach to this demographic group is worthwhile on its own merits, if only as a recruitment tool, and certainly as an investment in the future.



**PRPL Key Initiatives: Engaging with the Community**

**Build a healthy and sustainable public and social sector**

- Leadership**
  - Recruit
  - Orient
  - Engage
  - Convvene
- Keeper of PR**
- Community Agenda**
  - Green initiative oversight
  - Annual meeting
- Curriculum (Ideas)**
  - Civics Academy (year-long)
  - Public finance
  - Public health
  - Agencies, missions, and players
  - Demographics
  - Emergency preparedness
  - Multiple layers of community planning
  - Public decision-making
  - Civic organizations
  - Non-profit sector
    - Education
    - Social
  - Historic preservation
  - Child development and opportunities
  - Emerging issues
- Voting 2020 issues**
  - At library? Registration
  - Mail ballots
  - At library? Polling places
  - Districting
  - Issues debates
  - Candidate forums
  - Fact checking
- Grow information literacy**
  - Marketing push: trustworthy source
  - Programming push: assessing information quality
  - Key issue panels: health (pandemic), voting
- Engage college-aged people**
  - Reach out to population
  - Find out their desires
  - Assist where a good fit

**Build a healthy and sustainable private sector**

- Workforce development**
  - Classes**
    - Computer use
    - Job prep
      - Searching
      - Resume
      - Interviewing
    - Creating a business
    - Growing your business
  - Tutoring**
    - Intergenerational

**Encourage individual growth and lifelong learning**

- Partner with others**
- Resources**
  - Public place**
    - Green**
      - Maintain core services
        - Service-oriented staff
        - Early literacy
        - Physical collection
          - Print
        - Physical programs
        - Physical meetings
      - Grow additional resources
        - Demonstration technologies
        - Digital books, periodicals, movies, music
        - Digital programs/meetings
  - Tech access**
    - Wifi
    - Training
    - Support
- Mental health outreach**

**Alignment and development**

- Policy review**
  - Staff and board to check for alignment
- Audits**
  - EDI for example
- Development**
  - Focus on relationship building
  - Marketing**
    - Contributions to community
    - Outcomes
  - Begin with above
  - Fundraising**
    - Grants
    - Awards
    - Direct appeals (later)
- Policy development**
  - Naming rights
  - Planned giving

# Park Ridge Public Library Key Initiatives Summary: August 21, 2020

## Engagement 2021-2025

Encourage individual growth and lifelong learning.

- Expand diverse and inclusive collections with materials that provide mirrors in which to see ourselves as well as windows through which to see others as well as changes and challenges.
- Grow digital offerings including virtual programs and resources.
- Commit to 21<sup>st</sup> century infrastructure.
  - Lead Green as convener, researcher, and public example
    - Support the community with discussions and information
    - Research grants for green facility updates
      - Retrofit older lighting with LEDs
  - ADA and access improvements to support physical access
    - Improved/expanded Prospect entrance
    - Ramp to meeting room
    - Children's bathrooms
- Anticipate and respond to remote and postponed learning needs.
  - Support college-aged people: What do they need? What will they do? Where does the community most need them?
  - Support parents with remote learning and homeschooling.
  - Support students with resources and research assistance.
- ~~Support the mental health of the community with opportunities to connect and build community.~~

Build up a strong workforce and local businesses.

- Enhance and expand impact services for job seekers.
- Increase assistance to local small business establishment and development.

Align policies and procedures and set the stage for development.

- Evaluate policies, procedures, programs, partnerships, staffing, reports, facility use and budgets to align with the updated vision, mission and strategy.

*Underlined: proposed 2021 initiatives*

*Red text: proposed cuts if the Board supports maintenance over growth*

*Green text: proposed PRPL additions*

- **Develop and launch engagement strategy and action plan to increase partnerships and more.**
- Cultivate outcomes focus for planning, assessment and reporting to show that what the library is doing is making a difference.
- Shift the library's public narrative to the stories of impact that result from the plan.

**Develop civic education for an informed and engaged citizenry.**

- **Seek out partners and experts to create a Citizens Academy for civic awareness and engagement.**
- **Reboot the Park Ridge Community Network to be a tool for connection and convening.**
  - **Integrate with updated PRPL website**
- Work with teens to increase social awareness.

### **What will it take to fulfill the plan?**

Public libraries play a key role in community recovery and quality of life during economic downturns. Investing in this plan is investing in the outcomes defined above. To do that to the extent we think is needed based on the community conversations we had, I recommend the following investments:

- Expand Administration and Marketing teams to support engagement, partnerships and development and enhanced operations
  - Add 2FTE: increase spending \$150,000 over FY21 and FY22)
    - Adding an Assistant Director as one of the two will have the added benefit of increasing leadership support of operations
- Complete capital needs assessment and plan and increase capital reserves
  - Restrict additional \$750K in capital reserves for the future plan

*Underlined: proposed 2021 initiatives*

*Red text: proposed cuts if the Board supports maintenance over growth*

*Green text: proposed PRPL additions*

# Values, Vision, and Mission

## Values

The Park Ridge Public Library (PRPL), like most of the public libraries in the United States, embodies a set of institutional values. Among them are: all are welcome; collections and programs encourage and demonstrate intellectual freedom; early and ongoing literacy of all types is essential to the nation; and public libraries are good stewards of public money. The 2020 planning effort, based on community interviews, and intended to contribute to a developing community agenda, marks a shift. PRPL is not moving away from its traditional values and services; it is, however, putting the whole community, rather than just the library and its users, at the center of its concerns. This will likely result in a shift not only in what the library does, but how we do it.

*The library is a social asset, contributing to the creation, education, and promotion of a thriving community.* The library believes in the value of exploration, of conversation, of partnerships with other social assets to increase understanding and engagement in all aspects of our lives.

## Vision and mission

In general, a vision statement stakes out an ideal outcome. A mission statement defines what key steps an organization is taking to get there, and who will benefit. We present several options for the board, each with its own key phrases. The board, rather than wordsmithing each of them, should try to indicate the phrases that most resonate with them and their idea of the future. What will become the brand of the PRPL? Our recommended choices are in **bold**.

### Vision

The Park Ridge Public Library is a trusted and valued community partner. It stimulates and informs discussion of shared issues, and enhances the quality of life of its populations.

Or

The Park Ridge Library plays a valued role in fostering the community's strengths and facilitating a growth mindset for all citizens through innovative and traditional services, programs and resources.

OR

The Park Ridge Library is a community leader in facilitating the goals and aspirations of all sectors and individuals by utilizing engagement and creating a hub of information and resources.

**PRPL is a trusted and valued partner and leader in facilitating the goals and aspirations of the community. With engagement at its center, the Library stimulates and informs discussion of and work on community issues using the strengths of the community. The Library is a true crossroads of engagement, information, tradition and innovation.**

### **Mission**

1. Through community conversations and connection, the promotion of lifelong learning, through support for job-seeking and business development, through civic engagement and education, and through comprehensive partnerships, PRPL transforms the lives of its community.
2. The Park Ridge Public Library builds a more vital community. From individual learning to social engagement, the library informs and connects people to significant issues and concerns.
3. The Park Ridge Public Library engages the community through services, resources, and programs to achieve their goals.
- 4. We are the Park Ridge Public Library. We ask. We listen. We connect. We foster growth in learning, imagination, careers, businesses and community and civic engagement for all of Park Ridge. We partner. We lead. We transform.**

### **Key Concepts for Measuring Success**

- Transformational - how did an individual or community change?
- Engagement - how many people actively participated?
- Community Leadership - the library convened, informed, summarized....
- Impactful and Outcome Based - did it make a difference?
- Partnership - what new relationships were fostered?

