Board of County Commissioners
Agenda Request

Date of Meeting: November 21, 2023

Date Submitted: November 1, 2023

To: Honorable Chairman and Members of the Board

From: Edward J. Dixon, County Administrator
Tabitha D. Washington, Director of Library Services

Subject: Approval of the Gadsden County Public Library System's Strategic Plan 2023-2028

Statement of Issue:

This agenda item seeks Board approval of the Gadsden County Public Library System's Strategic Plan 2023-2028.

Background:

The five-year strategic plan outlining the library's operations and development is one of the eligibility requirements to be awarded the State Aid to Public Libraries Grant.

During FY 2022-2023, the library system implemented a systematic planning process that included a public survey, staff retreat, collaboration between members of the Gadsden County Public Library Commission and Library Long-Range Planning Committee, library staff input, and a dinner and dialogue session that Novare Library Services facilitated. The end product is a community-driven plan that outlines services, goals, and potential activities for the next five years.

Analysis:

Approval of the Gadsden County Public Library System's Strategic Plan 2023-2028 is the first step toward retaining eligibility for State Aid funding that is critical to the provision of quality library services for County residents.

Fiscal Impact:

Approval of this plan does not commit the current nor future Gadsden County Board of County Commissioners to the expenditure of funds.

Options:

1.   Approve the Gadsden County Public Library System's Strategic Plan 2023-2028.
2.   Do not approve.
3.   Board direction.

County Administrator's Recommendation:

Option 1.

Attachment(s):

1. Gadsden County Public Library System's Strategic Plan 2023-2028

GADSDEN COUNTY PUBLIC LIBRARY
STRATEGIC PLAN 2023 -2028

Prepared by

Novare Library Services
novarelibrary.com

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Introduction

The Gadsden County Public Library (GCPL) has been a staple in this community since its inception in 1980. For over 40 years, they have been steadfast in their mission.

> *"To serve the diverse informational and recreational needs of the people of Gadsden County, to provide quality service and programs in a comfortable setting, and to keep the public aware of these resources."*

Purpose

The strategic plan for the Gadsden County Public Library aims to provide a clear roadmap for its future development and growth. It outlines the library's vision, goals, and actions required to enhance its services and resources. By aligning efforts and resources, the plan aims to ensure the library's continued success, adaptability, and relevance to the community GCPL serves.

About Gadsden County
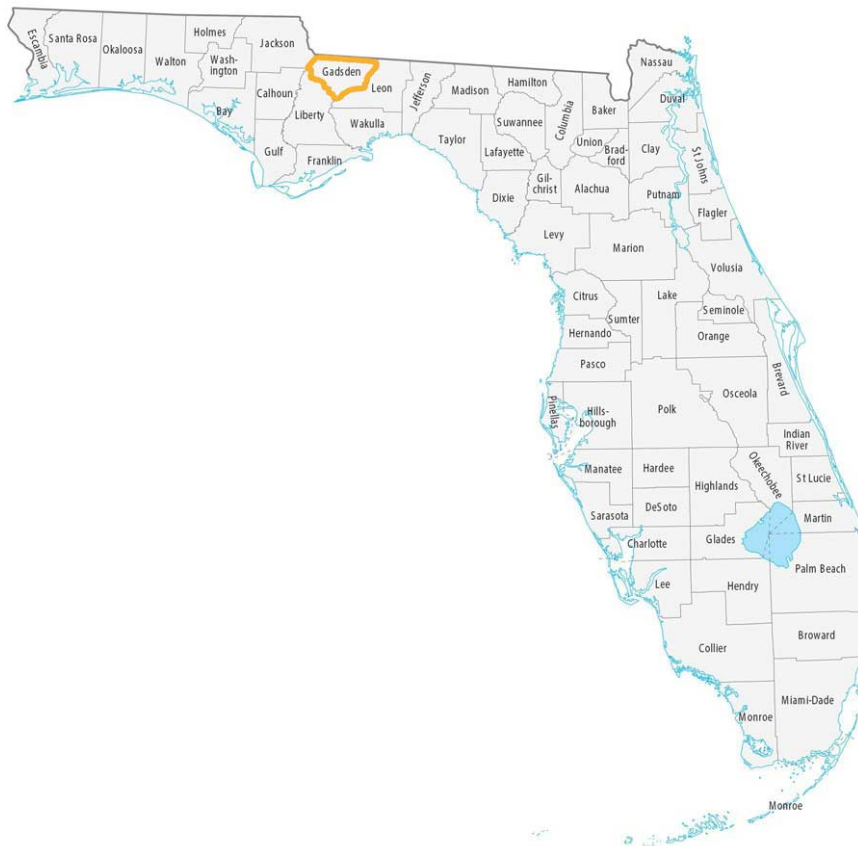
Gadsden County, Florida, is in the panhandle bordering Georgia on the north and the counties Leon, Liberty, Calhoun, and Jackson within Florida.

The county has four cities and two towns:

- Chattahoochee – population 3,327
- Greensboro – population 449
- Gretna – population 1,369
- Havana – population 1,713
- Midway – population 3,434
- Quincy (County Seat) - population 8,004

Gadsden County's rich heritage is intertwined with shade tobacco, elegant Victorian homes, and its historical association with Coca-Cola. In the early 1900s, the visionary local banker M.W. "Pat" Munroe foresaw the potential of Coca-Cola and encouraged clients to invest in its stock, leading to significant wealth for many residents as the

company's prominence grew. During that era, Gadsden County boasted the highest number of millionaires and the largest holdings of Coca-Cola stock in the nation. This legacy continues to shape the county's identity, showcasing its historical significance and entrepreneurial spirit.

Today, the county is the only Florida county with an African American majority. According to 2022 Census data, the county has 43,714 residents, a 6.4% decrease from 2010. 54.9% are African American, 42% are white, and 11.7% are Hispanic.

The county's median income is $25,400. The county has a high poverty rate of 24.2%, with 42.5% of children under 18 living below the poverty line. Compared to the state average of 13.1% of individuals living below the poverty level and 18.2% of children (0 – 17) living below the poverty, Gadsden County's poverty levels are extremely high.[i]

Healthwise, the county was hit hard during COVID, with over 13,000 cumulative cases reported.[ii] The county generally sees higher-than-average chronic diseases such as heart attacks, strokes, diabetes, colorectal cancer, asthma, and other respiratory diseases. Risks, such as inactivity or muscle strengthening recommendations, are well above state averages.[iii]

Today, agriculture, forestry, fishing, and hunting jobs still employ most residents though changes are coming. Gadsden County's location to the Tallahassee MSA and four major interstates has set Gadsden County on a path of growth with a 700-acre master-planned Intermodal Logistics Center, a nearby Amazon Distribution Center, and a focus on Inclusive Economic Development.[iv]

About Gadsden County Library

In 1980, the County designed a public library system to include a main library in Quincy and two branch libraries in Chattahoochee and Havana. Locations were decided in response to state standards suggesting that county residents' driving time to a library should be no more than 15 minutes in urban areas and 30 minutes or less in rural areas.

Gadsden County maintains a main library and two branch libraries. Library personnel includes a paid staff of 18. The library falls under the governance of the Gadsden County Board of Commissioners.

The Gadsden County Public Library actively promotes various programs for youth and adults in the community. In addition to providing highly rated services and programs, the GCPL is a support system to the local schools and institutions of higher learning.

The library system circulates over 200,000 adult items annually and over 200,000 for teens and children through its three locations. Using the Library Value Calculator, checking these items out of the library saved the citizens of Gadsden County over 6.8 million dollars last year.[v]

Library Locations

William A. "Bill" McGill Public Library

732 South Pat Thomas Parkway
Quincy, FL 32351
850-627-7106

Built-in 2006 through a Public Library Construction Grant from the State of Florida, the main library in Quincy is 14,560 square feet. The library has a large meeting room, makerspace, and computers on the main floor.

The new maker area has a 3D printer, virtual reality, and a Cricut machine for library programming.

The library houses LVA-Gadsden Inc., which provides basic tutoring, English as a second language, computer literacy, and GED training.

Hours:

Monday – Tuesday 10:00 AM - 8:00 PM
Wednesday-Thursday 10:00 AM - 6:00 PM
Friday 10:00 AM - 6:00 PM
Saturday 10:00 AM - 2:00 PM
Sunday Closed

Cowen Public Library

300 Maple Street
Chattahoochee, FL 32324
850-663-2707

The Chattahoochee Library was the first library in the Gadsden County system. The City of Chattahoochee signed an inter-local agreement transferring the operation of the Chattahoochee Public Library to the County in 1980.

In 2007, the new Chattahoochee Library opened through a Public Library Construction Grant from the State of Florida. The library is 6,112 square feet facility has a small meeting room and public computers.

Hours:

Monday – Tuesday 10:00 AM - 8:00 PM
Wednesday-Thursday 10:00 AM - 6:00 PM
Friday 10:00 AM - 6:00 PM
Saturday 10:00 AM - 2:00 PM
Sunday Closed

Havana Public Library

203 E. Fifth Avenue
Havana, FL 32333
850-539-2844

In 2004 the Town of Havana built an 8,008-square-foot facility to house the Havana Public Library. The library has a flatbed scanner and public computers.

Hours:

Monday & Tuesday 11:00 AM - 8:00 PM
Wednesday – Friday 11:00 AM - 6:00 PM
Saturday 10:00 AM - 3:0 0 PM
Sunday Closed

Library Website

The library website http://www2.youseemore.com/gadsden/ provides access to:

- the online catalog and account management
- a calendar of events for all locations
- Friends of the Library Information
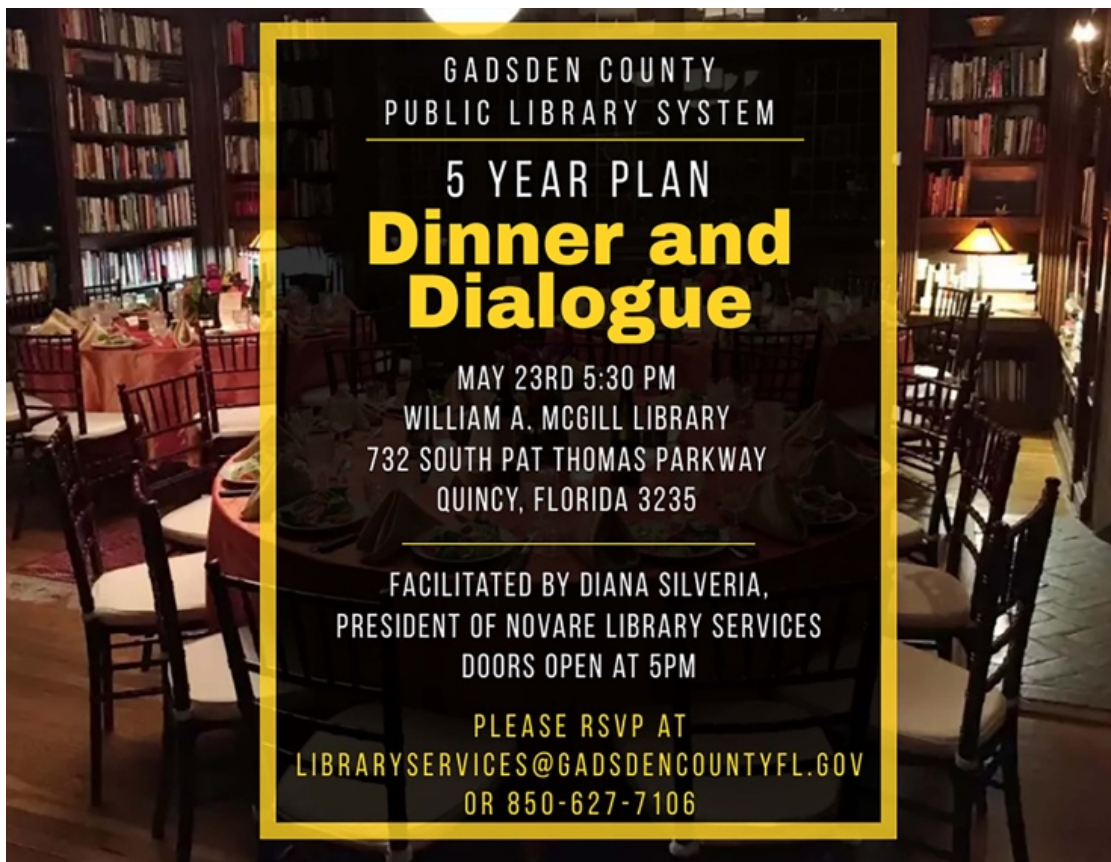- Library News
- Online Resources

- Ancestry Library (in-house access only)
- Axis360 eBooks and audiobooks
- Florida Electronic Library (remote access) provides access to over 65 online premium resources for students, adults, and Spanish-language resources.
- African American Heritage
- Universal Class with over 500 online continuing education courses

Planning Process

Gadsden County Public Library contracted with Novare Library Services to develop a new strategic plan for the library for 2023 – 2028 through its membership with the Panhandle Library Access Network (PLAN) (https://planfl.org/). Before the Strategic Plan, Novare Library Services developed a 2022 – 2025 Technology Plan for Gadsden County Public Library.

The Strategic Plan will cover December 2023 to November 2028.

Community and Staff Input

The new strategic plan's development relied heavily on community input. A public survey was available to all users from April – May 2023 and promoted at each location, social media, and website. The survey analyzed current library services, possible services, and programming for the future and left room for open community input. In addition, staff completed a survey to identify staff and user needs from a staff perspective.

In addition, there was a public meeting on May 23, 2023. Staff members and the public attended. Moderated by Diana Silveira, the attendees discussed the current library and where the library should go in the future.

Community Needs

The determination of community needs involved various methods, including:

- Interviews with library staff
- A public meeting
- County statistics
- Review of the long-range plan for Gadsden County
- Review of the Gadsden County Development Council Initiative

Strategic Plan 2023 – 2028

***Goal 1*: Expand programs to offer access to Gadsden County residents to technology, Internet, and computers.**

1. Facilitate user access to the Internet beyond the library premises.
    a. Relaunch the hotspot and device loaning programs.
    b. Deploy Wi-Fi extenders to broaden coverage outside the library premises.
    c. Provide Wi-Fi through Bookmobile.
2. Deliver technology classes tailored for community members focusing on workforce development, college preparedness, and hobbyist pursuits.
    a. Provide ongoing classes for users on new emerging technology and basic skills.
    b. Continue and expand STEM programming for K-12 visitors.
    c. Introduce tech help appointments/programming hours to provide one-on-one assistance to residents with their devices and technology-related issues.
3. Replace aging hardware.
    a. New laptops for staff members
    b. Complete upgrade to the in-house library technology infrastructure.
    c. Replace public and staff hardware at all locations.

***Goal 2:* Expand Outreach Services and Library Marketing**

1. Provide mobile library services.
    a. Purchase a new smaller bookmobile, drivable by any staff member (without a commercial driver's license).
    b. Develop a new bookmobile schedule.
    c. Promote access to the Internet to residents visiting the bookmobile.
2. Provide Offsite programming at community events.
    a. Provide workshops at local senior centers.
    b. Expand school outreach services.
    c. Participate in community events.
3. Expand services to homebound users.
    a. Expand eBook and audiobook collections.
4. Enhance marketing and promotional efforts.
    a. Refresh the current website.
    b. Continue marketing programming and services to the community.

Goal 3: **Promote enhanced health and wellness within Gadsden County by delivering education and resources.**

1. Establish dedicated, soundproof meeting spaces at each location, allowing community members to schedule and conduct telehealth appointments.
2. Develop educational programming focused on health issues and exercise.
   a. Utilize the walking path at Havana Library for library programming including a walking group.
   b. Introduce new exercise-related classes through streaming to the library.
   c. Introduce new workshops for cooking and wellness.
3. Develop a pilot health, wellness, and exercise Library of Things.
4. Expand the seed program to promote healthy eating and sustainable living.
   a. Develop a library food garden at the Chattahoochee Branch.
   b. Develop new library programming on gardening and sustainable living.

Goal 4: **Develop innovative programming and services to attract and engage a diverse audience at the library.**

1. Create in-person, hybrid, and online programming for residents.
   a. Continue genealogy classes.
   b. Continue fun community-building events like Bingo.
   c. Introduce new exercise-related classes through streaming to the library.
   d. Create life-skill workshop series for new adults.
2. Expand Adult Literacy Services
   a. Continue introducing life skill literacy classes on health, finance, and legal.
   b. Introduce adult literacy classes.
   c. Launch a campaign for new volunteers.
   d. Provide training for volunteers.
   e. Market service to residents

Goal 5: **Enhance community employability through targeted workforce development programs and resources.**

1. Increase employability skills through library resources and training.
2. Offer services through software, partnerships, or volunteers for resume writing assistance.
3. Create programming and personalized mentoring to facilitate increased confidence and success in job interviews.

Goal 6: **Foster the growth and enrichment of youth in Gadsden County by promoting and expanding activities.**

1. Expand Children's programming and outreach.
   a. Introduce supplemental reading programs to encourage reading and bring literacy resources to early readers.
   b. Collaborate with local schools and daycares for programming and library card sign-ups.
2. Restart the yearly summer reading program with events and prizes for reading.
3. Expand in-person programming for local youth.
   a. Explore partnerships, collaborations, and other free/low-cost programming options.
   b. Provide regularly scheduled movie nights.
4. Create a story walk at the Havana Branch.
5. Develop focused programming for teens at all locations.
   a. Utilize teens as volunteers with Bright Future hours.
   b. Develop new programming with makerspace and life skills.

Goal 7: **Ensure a culture of continuous staff development and cultivate an environment that prioritizes and sustains high job satisfaction.**

1. Promote staff training opportunities through the county, PLAN, the state, and professional organizations.
   a. Find grant opportunities for staff to attend regional, state, and national library conferences.
   b. Establish a versatile system enabling staff to actively participate in live training sessions, webinars, and on-demand learning opportunities, enhancing their professional growth and expertise.
2. Maintain open and effective communication channels while consistently offering robust support mechanisms for staff members.
3. Empower staff to design personalized training plans for self-development, fostering continuous growth and skill enhancement.

End Notes and Resource Links

[i] Data Commons Demographic Data - datacommons.org/place/geoId/12039/?utm_medium=explore&mprop=count&popt=Person&hl=en

[ii] Data Commons – COVID19 - datacommons.org/tools/timeline -&place=geoId/12039&statsVar=CumulativeCount_MedicalConditionIncident_COVID_19_ConfirmedOrProbableCase

[iii] Florida Health Charts flhealthcharts.gov/ChartsDashboards/rdPage.aspx?rdReport=ChronicDisease.Report&rdRequestForwarding=Form

[iv] Gadsden County Economic Development Council gadsdenfldev.com

[v] What's Your Library Worth? ilovelibraries.org/what-libraries-do/calculator

Resources Consulted

- Gadsden County Economic Development Council - Workforce Development
- Gadsden County Comprehensive Plan
- GIS Geography - Florida County Map (Image Source)
- Data Commons

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Submitted August 15, 2023