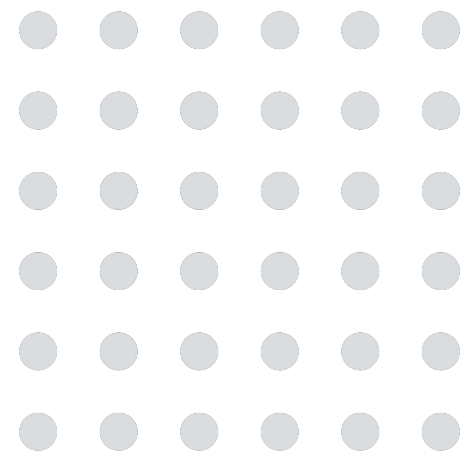




**Wichita
Public
Library**



Advocacy Toolkit

→ wichitalibrary.org



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Thank you for your interest in advocating for your Wichita Public Library. This toolkit outlines resources to help you promote the importance and value of the Wichita Public Library. These tools have been compiled to make it easier for you to raise awareness of the Library and ask for support from lawmakers, elected officials, friends, family, neighbors, and your greater community.

What is Advocacy?

Advocacy:

- Informs people about library services and their value to the community.
- Demonstrates how public library services improve the lives of residents.
- Speaks to the vision, mission, and values of Wichita Public Library.
- Ensures public libraries have sufficient resources in order to offer materials in demand, engaging programs, and excellent services.
- Secures a place at the table for our leaders when important funding and policy decisions are made for the community.

Advocacy IS...

- Active engagement
- Supporting a cause
- Defining specific issues
- Leading with a positive message

Advocacy IS NOT...

- Selling
- Marketing
- Begging
- Whining

Advocacy is vital for the Wichita Public Library to continue to have proper funding and governance to serve as a vital community resource for residents of Wichita. Regular and consistent advocacy with elected officials will result in the Library being top of mind when important decisions are made.

What You Can Do

When issues related to public libraries arise in policy debates, library advocates should be ready to reach out to their elected officials and share an expectation that they will protect our library system and our residents' rights to access information.

1. **Get to know your state and local elected officials ahead of time.** Do not wait until you need something to connect. Officials are accessible and want to meet with constituents to better understand their needs and concerns.
2. **Do your homework.** Reach out to the Wichita Public Library or the Kansas Library Association for background information on specific issues and how best to frame your message.
3. **Know your audience.** Research positions of elected officials in advance. Understand what they care about and consider how your request aligns.
4. **Contact elected officials personally if possible.** A meeting is better than a phone call, a phone call is better than an email, and an email is better than not connecting at all. Make it personable and build a relationship.
5. **Always start with a thank you.** Find something the elected official has recently supported which has had a positive community impact and thank them for their efforts.
6. **Keep it brief.** Share the most important facts and the best arguments.
7. **Make it personal.** Explain how the issue impacts you and your family/friends.
8. **Make a clear request.** Ask them to specifically support or oppose legislation, for help to change the legislation, or invite them to attend an event to learn more about a particular issue.
9. **Be polite, but direct.** Try to get a commitment to support the Library and your position. Always end on a call to action.
10. **Follow up.** Once the issue is resolved, make sure to thank those who supported the Library and for their commitment to the matter. Try to reconnect with those who did not and continue to build a relationship.



Mission

Connect. Discover. Learn. Thrive.

Vision

Inclusive. Responsive. Collaborative. Your library makes your community limitless.

Values

Trust and service are City of Wichita values that influence our interactions and decisions. We recognize that Wichita Public Library, as a social institution, has a duty to advance equality through library services to ensure all residents experience a sense of belonging. To support this work, we are guided by the following values:

Community: We embrace our role as a community builder. Our services evolve to meet the needs of our residents.

Diversity: We respect, reflect, and value differences. Our services are inclusive and actively affirm the varied needs and interests of everyone.

Opportunity: We support curiosity, exploration, and learning for all individuals. We actively seek opportunities for our staff and community to learn, grow, and thrive.



\$15,999,289

in community
savings from
borrowed materials

17,674

open hours

299,762

library card holders

658,974

library visitors

511,339

items in collection

753,945

digital materials borrowed

1,996,381

total items borrowed

1,408

free programs offered

75,999

public computer sessions

7,644

items lent to
other libraries

54,035

program attendees

118,308

Wi-Fi sessions

9,044

items brought in
upon patron request



The following talking points were created for you to use in conversation about the Wichita Public Library, providing a high-level overview and information about public libraries in general so you can best discuss how our library system operates and express the value we provide to the community.

Is the Library a department of the City of Wichita?

Yes, the Wichita Public Library is a department of the City of Wichita. The Library received about \$10 million from the City's general fund for operating expenses, including employee salaries, in 2025.

Does the Library have support organizations?

Yes, the Library has three support organizations:

1. The ***Wichita Public Library Foundation*** is a 501(c)(3) organization that seeks private charitable support for the sole purpose of creating a margin of excellence at the Wichita Public Library.
2. The ***Friends of the Wichita Public Library*** is a volunteer 501(c)(3) organization that fulfills its mission of service, advocacy, and support by using the money raised through memberships, donations, and the bookstore and book sales to support the Library's programming.
3. The ***Wichita Genealogical Society*** facilitates the gathering of genealogical and family history information to researchers, and supports the local history and genealogy department of the Wichita Public Library. They offer regular programming and have strong partnerships with researchers in the area.

How is the Library funded?

The Library receives an annual budget from the City of Wichita's General Fund. It also receives regional and state grants based on annual performance. Additionally, the Wichita Public Library Foundation seeks grants, oversees memorial gifts, and provides annual endowment distributions, while proceeds from the Friends of the Library are provided to support public programming, activities, and events.

How do libraries help prevent crime or contribute to a sense of safety?

Research¹ shows that crime rates are reduced, and property values are increased when a public library is in close proximity. Libraries provide a third place where residents of all ages and backgrounds can visit to access free resources, find a greater sense of belonging, and participate in activities that build confidence. As a welcoming public space, libraries provide opportunities for residents to connect with one another, reducing social isolation and increasing social cohesion.

1. *Do public libraries help mitigate crime? Evidence from Kansas City, MO* (Written and researched by Ferreira Neto, Nowicki, & Shakya)

a. <https://link.springer.com/article/10.1007/s10824-023-09497-4>

How do libraries support workforce development?

The Library benefits the local economy and empowers residents with workforce development opportunities by providing access to resources like LinkedIn Learning that build marketable job skills, hosting free technology training, providing support to small business and nonprofits with resources like online databases and public space for meeting use, and much more.

How does the Library support education in our community ?

The Wichita Public Library supports students and curriculum at all educational levels, from early literacy through college and continued discovery for lifelong learners. Recently, the Library adopted a Strategic Agenda that emphasized a focus on improving early childhood literacy so that children are positioned for success when they begin school. By offering regular storytimes, supporting initiatives like 1,000 Books Before Kindergarten, programs like Parent Child Workshop, and investing in children's books and parent collections, the Library helps fill the early education gap in our community and empowers caregivers to be the first educator.

How does the library extend beyond its buildings?

The Wichita Public Library is an active collaborator in the community, partnering with education and social services providers throughout Wichita:

- The Library installed twenty-six Little Free Libraries in District 3, where access to libraries and bookstores are limited.
- Each City Council District is home to a StoryWalk® that provides an interactive reading experience in area parks.
- Solar powered WiFi benches are installed to provide digital connection in low-access areas of the community.
- The Book Bus provides a mobile library experience and WiFi access to areas of Wichita with limited library services, at community events, routine stops at educational environments, and wherever community is gathering.
- Library staff provide presentations and programs across the city to reach potential customers and spark the love for reading.

The Wichita Public Library improves the health of residents through literacies support. More than 75% of Wichita's third-grade students do not read at grade level, and the Library is positioned to help improve the biggest health challenge facing our community, but needs proper funding in order to so.

Strategic Alignment with City Priorities

The Wichita Public Library directly supports City goals to:

- **Reduce crime** — Access to safe third spaces, youth programs, mentorship, and free informal education provides opportunities for those susceptible to crime.
- **Improve economic mobility** — Job readiness, digital skills building, and workforce support empowers residents and enhances economic development.
- **Expand access** — Multilingual programming, strategic outreach, and free technology and WiFi access connects more residents to vital services.
- **Strengthen families** — Early literacy engagement and the Family Place Library model fills in an education gap for the youngest in the community.
- **Support under-resourced residents** — Free library services near someone's home connects them to the City, their community, and opportunity to thrive.

The Wichita Public Library is positioned to deliver results, but only with the staffing capacity need to do so.

Library Staffing Does Not Match Demand

- Modern library work now includes:
 - Early literacy leadership
 - Workforce & digital skills training
 - Mental health crisis response
 - Multilingual assistance
 - social service referrals
- Professional staff are performing routine work due to paraprofessional shortages.
- Burnout and turnover risk are increasing. Staff have recently left employment because they do not feel safe.

Key Decision Points

This is not a question of adding services. It's a question of:

- **Sustaining what already exists**
- **Activating adopted strategic plans, like the Library Strategic Agenda and the council-adopted Branch Master Plan**
- **Protecting taxpayer investments**
- **Improving literacy and long-term economic outcomes**

1. Geographic Gaps

- **District 2** has no library presence.
- Under-resourced neighborhoods experience the greatest access gaps.
- Maya Angelou Branch in NE Wichita is open 31 hours/week; Walters Branch in SE Wichita is open 45/week, while all other communities have 60 hours of library access each week.

2. Literacy Crisis

- **76.5% of USD 259 third graders read below grade level.**
- Library materials for youth represent 44% of circulation but only represent 17% of the total collection.
- Families consistently ask for expanded early learning access and parental support.
- USD 259 needs help engaging parents and caregivers.

3. Funding Context

- **Library received 3.73% of the City General Fund in 2025**
- Per capita spending:
 - Wichita Public Library: **\$27.33**
 - Peer cities average: **\$44.78**
 - Kansas Average: **\$49.57**
- Materials spending power has declined 28% since 1980.
- Nearly 52% of the collection budget now goes to digital materials, which are more expensive than physical materials.

What Investment Achieves

Transformation Scenario: 48 FTE | \$3.44M

Full activates Strategic Agenda & Branch Master Plan

Projected Impact by 2028:

- +40% visitors
- +25% circulation
- +60% programming
- +60% partnerships
- +60% tech assistance

Strategic Gains:

- 9,000 additional hours of after-school literacy programming
- Stronger school partnerships with USD 259
- Workforce & digital skills training expansion
- Increased youth engagement tied to crime prevention research
- On-site leadership at neighborhood branches
- Expanded outreach to non-users and under-resourced neighborhoods
- **Outcome:** Measurable improvement in literacy, economic mobility, and public safety.

Constrained Scenario (No Investment): 0 FTE | \$0

- Reduced hours of operation system-wide
- 32% projected drop in visitors, circulation, tech help, and programming
- Longer wait times for digital content
- Loss of donor-funded Early Learning Vehicle
- Reduced access to safe spaces for youth
- Lower return on investment for remodeled facilities

Outcome: Service contraction that leads to inequitable access and diminished community impact.

Return on Investment

- National Research shows libraries return **nearly \$5 for every \$1 invested.**
- Protects multi-million-dollar facility remodel investments
- Prevents long-term costs tied to:
 - Lower literacy
 - Workforce under-preparedness
 - Increased social service demand
 - Crime prevention gaps

Workforce Reality

- Libraries are frontline service providers.
- Staff routinely manage mental health crises, substance abuse situations, homelessness interventions, and youth supervision.
- Current staffing model forces professions to cover basic operations.
- Sustainable staffing improves service, employee retention, and public safety.

Transformation drives measurable community impact. No investment results in reduced access, literacy, and return on investment.

The Wichita Public Library offers a wide breadth of services, resources, and programs that many people may not even know benefit them, their community, or their constituents. These quick facts showcases the range of offerings provided to residents by the Wichita Public Library

General/Services

- You can get a library card for free at any Wichita Public Library location. A card will give you access to books, DVDs, experience passes, online newspapers, databases, electronic books, electronic and regular magazines, digital audiobooks, and much more.
- Wichita Public Library supports nearly 100 unique programs and services that aim to help residents connect, discover, learn and thrive.
- The Book Bus is an outreach initiative to bring library services to areas of Wichita that don't have access to a library location. At the Book Bus you can get a library card, browse a small collection of library materials (primarily children's materials), return materials, or connect to Wi-Fi.
- You can get a Kansas Library eCard with your Wichita Public Library card, which is a free service provided by the State Library of Kansas in Topeka. It provides access to a wide range of digital resources.
- Come play at Family Place Libraries located at the Advanced Learning Library and coming soon to other locations. Children 6 and under will enjoy new programs and services specifically for babies, toddlers, preschoolers, parents and caregivers.

Collections

- Even if the Wichita Public Library doesn't have an item, we can borrow it from a library across the nation to meet your reading interests.
- The Library of Things offers unique items for you to borrow: Experience Passes, blood pressure kits, telescopes, microscopes, radon detectors, anatomical models, and more.
- The Advanced Learning Library has a local history and genealogy center for in-depth research needs.
- Kanopy is a service that provides ad-free films and series such as critically acclaimed movies, inspiring documentaries, and award-winning foreign films that can be enjoyed on your TV, mobile phone, tablet and online. Kanopy is free for Wichita Public Library card holders.
- Readers can access a variety of resources to easily find their next read, including the NoveList database, the Booklist Reader online, and staff recommendations.
- Families can support their child's auditory learning with our collection of children's audiobooks in a wide variety of formats including Vox, Wonderbooks, and Tonies figurines.
- Those new to reading or learning English can enjoy stories in our Just Right Reads collection, designed to support growing reading skills in teens and adults.
- You can borrow electronic books, audiobooks, and magazines for free through the Libby app with your library card.

Programs

- You can reserve time with library staff using the Book-a-Librarian service for up to an hour to assist you with technology, research, and more.
- Caregivers can receive support from developmental experts after they assess their child's skills with the Ages and Stages Questionnaire (ASQ). The ASQ is required for kindergarten registration in Kansas.
- Teens have opportunities for service hours and social engagement through our Teen Advisory Board and other unique programming.
- Families can participate in biannual Parent-Child Workshops with local child development specialists on hand to answer questions.
- The Wichita Public Library has offered showings of Academy Awards nominated short films for 40 years, the longest running free screening of Academy Awards nominated films. The Library also hosts screenings from Sundance, Manhattan Shorts, and Tallgrass film festivals.

Spaces

- Following the completion of branch library remodels, all locations will have a variety of study rooms and collaboration rooms available to reserve. These are spaces designed for small groups to meet and individuals to study or work.
- A dedicated sensory room is available at the Westlink Branch. The space is available for any age and is designed to provide a calming environment for individuals with sensory processing difficulties, including those with autism, anxiety or other conditions.

Technology

- The Wichita Public Library provides a wide variety of free technology classes at various locations, with about 15-20 offerings per month.
- You can print from your mobile phone from anywhere and pick up your prints at the branch that's most convenient to you.
- Your library card grants you access to LinkedIn Learning, which offers thousands of quality video training and certifications on topics ranging from basic computer skills and hobbies like digital photography to running a small business and mastering high-tech skills.
- Laptops are available to borrow at the Advanced Learning Library, and the Westlink, Angelou, and Rockwell Branch Libraries.
- At the Advanced Learning Library, you can record videos, podcasts, and music for free in our AV studio.
- Solar-powered benches are located throughout the City that grant free access to Wi-Fi.
- There are Maker Spaces available at the Advanced Learning Library and the Westlink Branch Library. Each space provides different activities and levels of staff involvement, with equipment such as a Cricut cutting machine, Mac computers, sewing machines, and 3D printers at the Advance Learning Library, and solo activities such as Kinex or paper crafts available at Westlink.
- The Macs available for use in the Maker Space at the Advanced Learning Library have software like Adobe Creative Cloud, Final Cut Pro, Logic Pro, Garage Band, iMovie, and Microsoft Office installed. Additionally, a Wacom Cintiq drawing tablet is available for use with the Macs.



In 2023, the Wichita Public Library embarked on a journey to craft a strategic agenda that not only aligns with the diverse needs of the community, but also harnesses the organization's distinct resources to generate meaningfully empowered residents. Through extensive focus groups, interviews, and an immersive design-thinking workshop, insights were gathered that serve as the bedrock for the strategic drivers within the agenda.

Strategic Drivers

1. Advance literacies for life to empower residents.

- a. Improve early childhood literacy
- b. Address low literacy for adults
- c. Increase digital literacy
- d. Increase literacies in other areas of empowerment
- e. Support literary creators

2. Elevate awareness of library resources to empower residents.

- a. Invest in diverse marketing and engagement strategies
- b. Expand technology applications to reach diverse populations
- c. Leverage expertise of library staff
- d. Reduce barriers for library service access
- e. Develop multiple options for customers to access information

3. Build partnerships to expand impact

- a. Develop strategic partnerships
- b. Amplify impact of advocates
- c. Dedicate staff to building community partnerships
- d. Define partnership expectations

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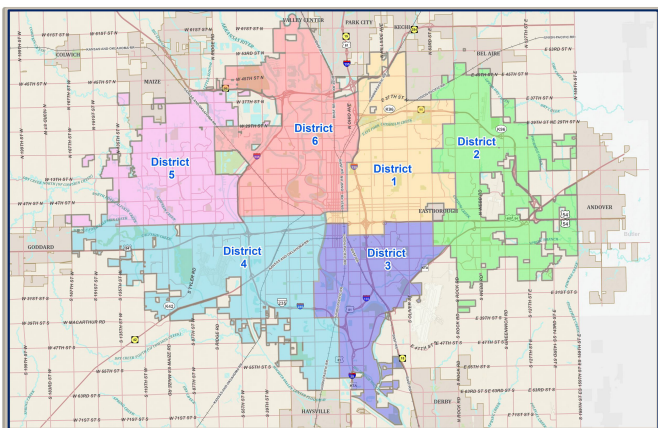


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City Council Districts Map



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