



**Across America, the role of libraries is changing.** In today's digital age libraries are rethinking their roles and redefining their space in communities. This document is a summary of what was heard through community research and serves as a discussion guide to help library staff and community stakeholders think about emerging opportunities for increased engagement.



## WHO WE ARE...



**11.7**  
Square Miles



**32,322**

Residents  
with growing Asian, African American,  
and Hispanic populations



**\$70,264**

Median Household Income  
increase from \$53,791 in 2000



**4.4%**

Population Below Poverty  
increase from 3.7% in 2000



**4%**

Unemployment  
increase from 2.2% in 2000

## OUR STRENGTHS...

as heard through community  
engagement efforts



- + Community connected through volunteerism, events, and regular engagement
- + Plentiful green space and recreation opportunities
- + Conveniently located to regional assets
- + Many strong nonprofit organizations supporting the community and its residents
- + Affordable quality of life
- + Increasing diversity of population

## OUR CHALLENGES...

what's holding us back?



- Additional youth engagement in community activities and volunteerism is needed
- Need affordable housing options for families, particularly seniors
- Lacking conversations about diversity
- Communication of available resources is inadequate
- School system falling behind neighbors and needs better support for families with special needs



# COMMUNITY PROFILE BETHEL PARK

## SERVICES WE USE...

social services accessed by residents [2014]

	Any Service	Mental Health	Aging	Medical Assistance Transportation	Intellectual Disability	Homelessness / Housing	Drug & Alcohol	Child Welfare	Family Support Centers
<b>Bethel Park</b>	4.45%	2.00%	2.20%	0.20%	0.20%	0.10%	0.20%	0.10%	0.00%
Region Avg.	14.72%	4.59%	2.54%	1.75%	0.33%	1.21%	0.85%	0.71%	1.09%

## OUR ASPIRATIONS...

a vision for our community



- > Increase the number of places and activities for youth throughout the community
- > Improve public transportation and accessibility
- > Create thriving small business climate that provides amenities and jobs for residents
- > Support community activities that drive collaboration and engagement with one another
- > Connect families and residents with needs to services that provide support
- > Establish an identity and market the community to younger families and residents
- > Improve the quality of education and the Bethel Park school system

## HOW LIBRARIES CAN HELP...

community engagement is critical



As civic institutions, libraries are neutral, safe spaces where all are welcome and respected.



Libraries are no longer just transactional institutions for borrowing materials. They are transformational spaces for the discovery of new ideas and passions. Libraries are human connectors providing opportunities to engage with others, including those who represent diverse perspectives and cultures.



Gone are the intimidating spaces where librarians “shush” anyone talking above a whisper. Today’s thriving libraries are welcoming and vibrant.



Libraries level the playing field, providing computers and wifi for those without access and working patiently with those who struggle to navigate the digital environment.



In an age when the internet seemingly puts the world at everyone’s fingertips, library professionals help people find the right information.



Libraries are community conveners, offering meeting space for civic engagement, and welcoming community partners for collaboration on programs and services for all ages.

### WHAT’S NEXT?

If you haven’t already done so, get to know your local library! The more libraries understand their communities, the better they can serve them. The next time people gather to discuss community challenges and aspirations, remember that the library should have a seat at the table. Please reach out to the library at any time. We are here to support you.



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