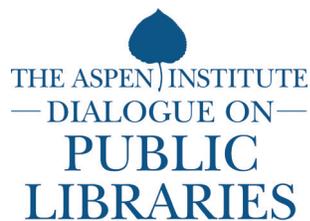


The Aspen Institute Dialogue on Public Libraries  
in partnership with the  
Winter Park Public Library

# WINTER PARK RISING TO THE CHALLENGE

*A Report of the Winter Park Library Dialogue*



This report is written from the perspective of an informed observer at the Winter Park Library Dialogue. Unless attributed to a particular person, none of the comments, ideas or recommendations contained in this report should be taken as embodying the views or carrying the endorsement of any specific participant or their affiliated organizations at the Dialogue.

To learn what other communities are doing to transform their libraries, download the Rising to the Challenge: Re-Envisioning Public Libraries report or its companion, Action Guide for Re-Envisioning Your Public Library, or to share the work that you are doing around library and community transformation in your own community, please visit the Aspen Institute Dialogue on Public Libraries online at [LibraryVision.org](http://LibraryVision.org).

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# FOREWORD TO THE REPORT

The City of Winter Park is facing what has become an all-too-common municipal challenge. New technologies, shifting demographics, varied educational models, and many other factors demand that communities reconsider long-held and commonly accepted doctrine on what physical and non-physical assets constitute a community. For many, the community library is one of those elements that has seemingly lost its relevance, especially given the proliferation of technology and the ease of access to information. However, it is for these very reasons that the library should be even more important than it has been in decades.

Winter Park has a unique opportunity to not only create and deliver a generational imperative to our community, but also to send a signal to the region and beyond, that comprehensive library projects are not expenses, but rather investments. The new library should not only be a place to go and check-out a book or even to connect to the internet, but rather a place where dreams are created, careers are launched, relationships are strengthened, and bodies, minds, and souls are nourished.

As well, both businesses and families have become “decentralized” in the name of efficiency. This has contributed to the deterioration of community and, one could argue, family values. Libraries have the unique opportunity to “recentralize” communities and even families. To be that place to reconnect. Not home or the office, but that “third-place.” I am incredibly encouraged about the possibilities that a newly imagined library can deliver to our community. Some are quantifiable, but I believe the larger ones are not.

The Winter Park Library Dialogue, as guided by the Aspen Institute, is a critical piece of the puzzle as it helps our community contextualize the opportunities and the challenges. This report provides the beginning of a roadmap for Winter Park, and perhaps a blueprint for other communities who must reinvest in their assets to remain relevant in a hyper-dynamic marketplace wherein all municipalities are competing with one another to attract and retain the best and brightest residents, businesses, and guests. The long-term health of both urban and suburban communities in particular, depends on investments to assist in this goal.

I want to thank the Aspen Institute for its investment of time and energy in leading the Winter Park Library Dialogue. Through its stewardship, we have more clearly defined strategies to attain our lofty objective of creating more than just a transactional library. We should be bringing out of the ground an experiential library whose very design, as well as the opportunities within, inspires our community members to seek growth.

Steve Leary  
Mayor, City of Winter Park

# INTRODUCTION

In spring 2016, the Aspen Institute Dialogue on Public Libraries launched a new series of community and regional dialogues to address the strategic opportunities presented by public libraries and their changing roles in communities and the nation and their long-term sustainability. Taking place in five communities of different sizes and with public libraries of various types, the purpose of these dialogues is to reimagine for the 21<sup>st</sup> century the institution that Andrew Carnegie once described as outranking “any other one thing a community can do to benefit its people.”

In partnership with the Winter Park Public Library, the Institute convened the first dialogue in this series in Winter Park, Florida, on June 8-9, 2016. A model for future conversations, the Winter Park Library Dialogue was designed to explore and advance the alignment of the public library’s programs, services, and resources with the goals, priorities, and aspirations of the community. The dialogue agenda drove toward actionable recommendations that addressed opportunities to leverage new and existing partnerships with the purpose of creating and delivering services and experiences for library users and the community as a whole.

As with Winter Park, each dialogue will be based on the framework presented in the Aspen Institute’s October 2014 report *Rising to the Challenge: Re-Envisioning Public Libraries*, which states: “The role of the 21<sup>st</sup>-century library in the digital era is built on its three key assets: people, place, and platform” and concludes that “the long-term health of libraries is essential to the long-term health of the communities they serve.” It identifies four strategies for success: “aligning library services in support of community goals; providing access to content in all formats; ensuring long-term sustainability of public libraries; cultivating leadership.”

## WINTER PARK DIALOGUE MODEL

The format in Winter Park included a public program to engage residents of Winter Park and surrounding communities in the process and a one-day moderated roundtable dialogue among a select group of leaders representing diverse sectors, experiences, and expertise locally and nationally.

The public forum took place at the University Club and featured keynote presentations by **Richard Adler**, president of People & Technology and a distinguished fellow at the Institute for the Future, and **John Bracken**, vice president for media innovation at the John S. and James L. Knight Foundation. Their complementary presentations placed libraries within the context of a constantly and exponentially changing environment in which technology is becoming smaller, cheaper, and more mobile and continues to shape the work of libraries.

Adler and Bracken challenged public libraries to take on vital new functions—none more important than bridging the distribution gap in digital skills—and charged residents and civic leaders in the public and private sectors with making decisions and investments now that will ensure the long-term sustainability of the Winter Park Public Library for the future. A short panel discussion with Adler, Bracken, and Winter Park Public Library Executive Director Shawn Shaffer (and moderated by the Aspen Institute’s Amy Garmer) picked up on these themes before opening into a broader conversation in which the approximately 75 community members in attendance were invited to share their comments and observations.

The following day, 26 participants—civic leaders, policy makers, educators and business and library leaders—convened at the Rachel D. Murrah Civic Center for a moderated roundtable dialogue. The roundtable discussion addressed four key questions:

1. What kind of community do we want?
2. What changes are necessary to make this vision a reality?
3. How can the Winter Park Public Library help bring about this transition?
4. How can other stakeholders in the community engage and collaborate with the library to transform the library and strengthen the community, now and in the years ahead?

This report of the Winter Park Library Dialogue summarizes the major points, insights, and themes raised by participants, with an emphasis on action steps to move the library forward.

## SETTING THE CONTEXT FOR DIALOGUE

Winter Park, located eight miles north of Orlando, in central Florida, was founded in the 1880s by northerners seeking a seasonal retreat. Today the city of about 28,500 residents, with its village-like feel, is home to two nationally recognized colleges, a university, and several highly regarded museums. Adding to this intellectual capital, the Winter Park Public Library is a tax-exempt nonprofit (501(c)3) organization partially funded by a grant from the city and currently located within walking distance of city hall and the community's shopping and restaurant core.

While the library offers a robust array of services, the physical space, a three-story brick building constructed in the late 1970s and expanded in the early 1990s, has become overcrowded and outdated. In 2014 the city commission appointed a task force to explore whether to remodel, rebuild on the existing site or find a new location. More than two years and eight public forums later, the task force's work culminated in the narrow passage of a March 2016 \$30 million bond referendum to build a combined new library, event space, and parking garage on the site of the city civic center, inside 23-acre Martin Luther King, Jr. Park, a three-minute drive from the city core.

After the task force's considerable attention to "place," the time seemed right to consider in greater depth the two other key assets highlighted in the Rising to the Challenge report: people and platform. In convening the roundtable, the Aspen Institute's objective was to explore how the community can deploy those assets in new ways to align with the goals of Winter Park and move ahead to action.

# THE REPORT: WINTER PARK RISING TO THE CHALLENGE

*A Report of the Winter Park Library Dialogue*

## OVERVIEW AND KEY THEMES

**“Raise your hands if you’ve heard of Smosh, the Fine Brothers or PewDiePie,” Richard Adler asked the audience assembled at the University Club on an early Wednesday evening in June.**

Adler, the first of two keynote speakers at the opening public program of the Winter Park Library Dialogue, is president of People & Technology and a distinguished fellow at the Institute for the Future. Unsurprisingly, given the relative maturity of attendees at the library-themed event, few audience members indicated their recognition of these YouTube performers who were recently named the country’s most popular celebrities among American teenagers. Adler’s playful use of the pop quiz served as both a clever introduction to and proof of his arguments about the disruption and exponential change that characterize the information and knowledge environments that individuals and communities must navigate today. In the 21st century, new media are emerging so rapidly that it is a considerable challenge to keep up and be aware of new people, ideas, and knowledge as they become relevant.

Adler’s keynote presented one key theme for the public conversation and the leadership roundtable that followed: that society is at an inflection point, brought about in part by exponential technological change that is transforming the way people relate to one another, to their communities, and to information. Society is moving away from what he referred to as “stocks of knowledge,” in which new information is synthesized and then remains relevant for long periods, to continually evolving “flows of knowledge,” a transition that has tremendous implications for libraries and how they function within the community.

Rather than acting as storehouses for existing knowledge, libraries should help patrons to understand, access, and participate in the dynamic knowledge flows that surround them.

In the second keynote, **John Bracken**, vice president of Media Innovation at the John S. and James L. Knight Foundation, introduced another key theme of the Dialogue: stewardship and its role in driving sustainability for public libraries. Bracken cited **Andrew Carnegie’s** 19<sup>th</sup>- and 20<sup>th</sup>-century work promoting and building libraries across the country to underscore the importance of community stewardship and challenge communities like Winter Park to pick up the mantle of collective responsibility for libraries in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Carnegie understood that communities needed to be invested in the library’s success and demanded that communities match a percentage of his gift. He also understood that a healthy, sustainable library would be one that anticipates and addresses the needs of people in light of emerging technologies that would create new needs in the future. Thus, Carnegie thought carefully about where libraries should be located, even insisting on moving the location of a library in Pittsburgh in order to meet changing needs brought on by the advent of the horseless carriage. “So,” Bracken said, “technology has always impacted libraries.”

Turning to today's massive technology-fueled disruptions, Bracken talked about the urgent need for libraries to rethink their core mission if they are to thrive and not just survive. "For libraries to continue to be vibrant, growth is not optional, but mandatory," he said. The most successful are thinking creatively and building off of their assets, resulting in institutions that put people first and stress human-centered design. But as critical as it is for libraries to "build up new muscles," as Bracken said, he also reminded Winter Park residents that libraries need to retain a fundamental sense of discovery, exploration, and fun.

Speaking during the public program, Shawn Shaffer, executive director of the Winter Park Public Library, responded to the themes raised by Adler and Bracken by explaining how the library functions as an early-adaptor that helps patrons experiment with new technology and design their own products in maker spaces. "I'm a big believer of the library as sandbox," she said. "It's an incubator for life." She also pointed to another cornerstone of the library's mission: bringing diverse people together. "When we catalogue books by the Dewey Decimal system, the books around it are on the same topic. Similarly when you come to the library, you can find other people who are doing the same thing."

Community members joined the conversation. One Winter Park resident added to Shaffer's concept of the public library as a much-needed civic space, comparing it to a retail business understanding what drives the engagement with its patrons. "Starbucks [isn't] selling coffee," he observed, "they're selling a community place." Another audience member urged the Winter Park Public Library to act as "a portal to the world." Pointing out that "information on your phone is based on your usage" and that "serendipity is less and less possible," libraries, he said, offer privacy and accessibility that "Google and Amazon don't."

These themes—technology and continuous change, stewardship and sustainability, and the library as a place for people to connect and discover new ideas and pursuits—carried forward to the roundtable dialogue the next day and clearly informed and shaped the recommendations that follow.

## ISSUES AND OPPORTUNITIES

**“Public libraries that align their people, place and platform assets and create services that prioritize and support local community goals will find the greatest opportunities for success in the years ahead.”**

~ Rising to the Challenge: Re-Envisioning Public Libraries

With the population of Central Florida expected to double over the next 20 years, how Winter Park manages its future development is critical. Some hope to protect the community's timeless quality while others seek to advance Winter Park as a dynamic, world-class city that attracts new residents and visitors. One participant melded these two ideals when he said, "We want to be where we were 100 years ago, which is the place to be, the destination, and a place that attracts 20- and 30-year-olds" which is a demographic that public libraries tend to lose.

For more than a year, the Vision-Winter Park Steering Committee engaged residents of Winter Park in a visioning process to develop a grassroots plan to guide its future. The city-appointed steering committee led by Chairman **John Gill** and Vice Chairman **Jeffrey Blydenburgh** approved its final draft report on June 9, 2016, the same

day as the Dialogue roundtable. The final report was submitted to the City Commission on July 11, 2016, with commissioners voting to accept the report. Among its themes, the vision report embraces Winter Park's local institutions for lifelong learning, a cornerstone of which is the Winter Park Public Library. With the Committee at the end of its visioning process and the Winter Park Public Library embarking on a similar journey, it is expected that the library will build on and mirror the Steering Committee's foundational ideas. Indeed, a summary of the Committee's work, presented by John Gill, led off a discussion of the community's goals and priorities.

*Vision Winter Park*, the Steering Committee's final report, distills its vision for the city into a single sentence: "Winter Park is the city of arts and culture, cherishing its traditional scale and charm while building a healthy and sustainable future for all generations." The report's four vision themes highlight priorities and goals that participants identified in the Dialogue: 1. Quality of life will be sustained by investments that support "lifelong learning, healthy living, and...connectivity to the natural world." 2. Planning and collaboration are critical to any process of community development. 3. Support for cultural institutions and the development of innovative partnerships, as well as an understanding that new programs and events need strong marketing to succeed. 4. Perhaps most importantly for the library discussion; "Build and embrace our local institutions for lifelong learning and future generations," with an emphasis on collaborations, partnerships, and a healthy, creatively-built community.

Dialogue participants took up the question of how the Winter Park Public Library aligns with these goals. They considered what roles the library already fills in the community and identified new opportunities for it to make a difference as the community confronts the trends and disruptions of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Above all, participants recognized the public library's strength as a place of connection for people and resources of all types. They saw

considerable opportunity to build on the library's strengths in the future. Below are some of the roles identified for the library going forward.

**A safe, neutral space for active listening and passionate dialogue.** The library can be a place to elevate the national political discussion, forging tolerance by bringing people with diverse backgrounds and points of view face-to-face. Importantly, it is a multi-generational, cross-socioeconomic hub that connects residents to institutions, ideas, and other people. It is a place to slow down and engage in conversation. As participants noted, besides the ballfield, the library is one of the last democratic institutions where kids and families from all walks of life can congregate and feel at home.

**A clearinghouse.** The library can be a clearinghouse for coordinating and even managing community programming and, by doing so, be a hub for community information. It offers access to the city's varied resources and could serve as a place to leverage big ideas and to promote problem-solving.

**A center for lifelong learning.** A new 21<sup>st</sup>-century public library has perceptual value, telegraphing the importance Winter Park places on education for all ages. "We used to say that the library was all things to all people, done cheaply and at a location near you, from birth to infinity," one panel member mentioned at the public forum. The staff can inspire kids by communicating the excitement that surrounds reading and learning and, as a Winter Park resident said during the public program, "hold older people's hands heading into the 'infinity' portion of their lives." In between, the library is evolving as a creative and fun partner in adult learning. One such example is "Books and Brews," a book discussion group sponsored by the Winter Park Public Library that invites 20- and 30-somethings to sample books and adult beverages at restaurants and bars throughout the city.

**A maker space and resource for workforce development.** The library should provide access to high-quality digital tools that give residents an opportunity for hands-on experimentation and practice with emerging technologies. The library can provide a platform for residents to engage in creative activities and help prepare them for the highly competitive job markets of the future, which will require competency and skills using many new technologies. The library can be a partner in retraining workers for the changing marketplace and help them update their workplace skills.

**An asset to help the community “recentralize.”** With the very busy lives that individuals and families lead today, people are increasingly stuck in their own in silos and experience limited interactions with people of different social, economic, educational, and other backgrounds. The public library can bring together people of diverse backgrounds, professions, ages, and experiences to share stories and resources, and to restore a sense of community in the face of centrifugal forces that pull on the bonds of community. Described as the community’s only politically neutral institution, the library is best-suited to bring together existing and new networks of people.

As the Dialogue’s participants contemplated these important roles for the library, they identified three important features that must be embedded as values at the core of the library’s role in the community. These include the following characteristics:

**Human-centered.** The physical presence of the library should be an expression of social responsibility and accommodate people with physical, intellectual, and cognitive challenges. In its physical and virtual presence, in its programs and services, the library must be an exemplar of human-centered design.

**Accessible.** As a complement to human-centered design, the library must be guided by a commitment to accessibility. The library does, and should, meet people

where they are, especially those who cannot make it to the library during regular business hours or at all. This includes a commitment to extended hours and community outreach.

**Wired.** Robust connectivity within the library building can be an asset that would push Winter Park to overcome its current technological limitations (a city feasibility study is currently being done to bring high-speed broadband fiber into homes). The library should be wired (in both a literal and figurative sense) to allow for many people to be using library networks and resources—on wired and wireless devices—for any application, including video and other high bandwidth uses. Being wired is important to help personalize learning and connect teens and learners of all ages to resources locally and beyond. With such connectivity, the library can connect people to the broader world, providing sensory experiences and virtually transporting them to other countries.

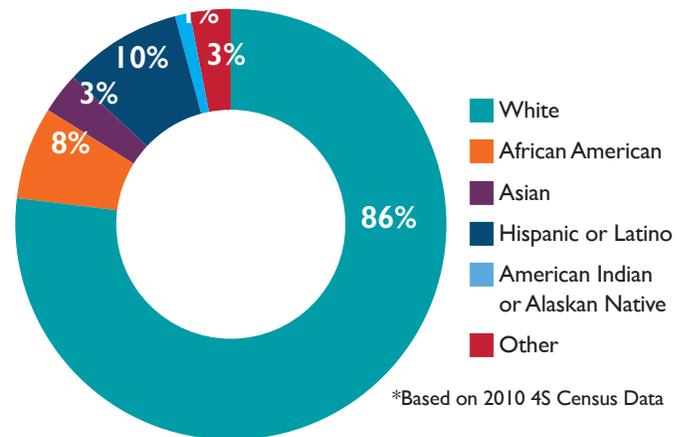
One of the richest veins of conversation was a consideration of the library as a welcoming “third space.” Metaphors abounded as participants discussed what sensibility they would like for the Winter Park Public Library to embody. They saw it variously as the living room of Winter Park, with deliberative dialogue and “engineered collision;” a family room where people can come and share in common experiences; one part living room and one part kitchen, where people are busy talking and making different “recipes” (i.e., maker spaces); a public square where the community comes together to have tough discussions and afterward goes together to the pub; a place of reconciliation for the community when needed; a destination where anyone could come in the morning, spread out, and stay all day, temporarily making the space his or her own; a front porch to allow for continuous dialogue, convergence, and coincidence; and, finally, since the library will be in a park, a backyard. It should offer a sense of freedom, discovery, and play inside and outside.

## WINTER PARK, FLORIDA PROFILE

Winter Park boasts an extraordinary quality of life that residents feel strongly about maintaining. The city prides itself on careful urban planning, a rich intellectual history, multi-generational families, and an appreciation for culture and the arts. Winter Park is an economically and racially diverse community<sup>1</sup> where residents tend to divide around questions of growth and change: Is there enough growth, is there too much growth? What does it look like - are buildings too short, too tall, or too wide? Will gentrification displace residents with deep roots in the city, or will development provide new opportunities for all residents to thrive? As one participant said, "If are you familiar with Winter Park, you know the greatest thing about our community is that there is intense passion around everything that happens. And probably the biggest challenge in our community is that there is intense passion about everything."

Winter Park's distinguishing assets include Rollins College, ranked by *U.S. News & World Report* in 2016 as the No. 1 regional university in the South, Valencia College, which, in 2011, became the first winner of the Aspen Institute College Excellence Program's prize as the nation's best community college, a competition announced by **President Barack Obama** to recognize exceptional community colleges, and Full Sail University, an innovative private university that specializes in educating for the media, entertainment and technology sectors. In addition to its vaunted educational centers and museums, the city is also

Winter Park Racial and Ethnic Makeup\*



home to a new, four-star hotel, a 106-year-old, nine-hole public golf course currently undergoing a \$1.2 million renovation, and a state-of-the-art wellness center that is under construction. Winter Park also boasts private foundations that support a range of community-enhancing projects and programs.

Bounded by two major state roads (Interstate 4 and State Road 436), Winter Park is, as one participant put it, "a landlocked little community" of just over ten square miles (nearly 15% of which are covered by a series of lakes) on the northeastern edge of Orlando, with implications for how and where future growth can occur. "We cannot just take five acres and build new sports complexes for the young families in the community," he said. "We cannot just take two acres and build a museum. How do we complement those assets?"

<sup>1</sup> According to US Census data, Winter Park's residents have a higher median household income and educational attainment than the national averages for these categories. The racial and ethnic composition of the city is: White 86%, Black or African American 8%, Asian 3%, Hispanic or Latino 10%, American Indian or Alaskan Native 1% and Other 3%. In the City of Winter Park's 2016 Visioning Steering Committee report, residents and businesses recognized "diversity," "equality" and "inclusiveness" as attributes that are important to defining the character and future of the city (see report of the Winter Park Vision Steering Committee dated June 9, 2016, <http://visionwinterpark.org>.) An important contributor to Winter Park's history and heritage, two other key values in Winter Park's vision report, is an historic African-American community concentrated in the city's west side neighborhoods that has an important stake in the development of the city and its future.

## THE LIBRARY AS A PLATFORM FOR LEARNING

### Early Learning and K-12 Education

Participants paid considerable attention to the library as a platform for education. This included beginning as early as pre-school, as one participant cited the library's capacity to help families with preschoolers and extend the reach of educational institutions by "meeting them where they are and providing for them whatever it is that they need." The library is a place for learning that bridges formal and informal learning. The Winter Park Public Library recently hired a community librarian whose job includes reaching out to daycare facilities, schools and youth. Among her highlighted activities, this librarian is working with an Eagle Scout to get a book bike and is hiring a volunteer staff to give readings and help foster literacy in schools.

In response to news that in fall 2016 each Orange County high school student would be receiving a laptop from the school system, with middle-school students slated to follow shortly thereafter, roundtable participants considered potential opportunities for the library to help students use the new technology productively and responsibly. The greater access to information means that teachers in schools can experiment with new models of instruction. As an institution deeply experienced in informal types of learning, the public library can help to support the "flipped classroom" model of teaching and learning, for example. Staffed from nearby colleges, the library could offer a librarian or tutor on-call beyond the normal operating hours of the library to assist students with the online and project-oriented assignments of the flipped model. The library also could be a conduit for students to reach teachers and mentors via videoconferencing.

**Providing connectivity.** While the school system will give students hardware, it will not provide connectivity. In a state where nearly 60 percent of Florida's public school students receive free or reduced-price lunches, there is enormous inequality in terms of access. While the community works to bring connectivity to every home in Winter Park, the library can be part of the solution for addressing connectivity needs.

**Transcending tomorrow's digital divide.** Today's digital divide is largely thought of as a divide in access to hardware and broadband services (high-speed internet). Tomorrow's gap will be in synthesizing information and creating and using content. Moreover, since not all information on the Internet is accurate, the library can help students learn how to filter what they read.

**Supporting digital citizenship.** Kids will be handed a piece of equipment that they may not know how to use. Just as the National Football League (NFL) teaches young athletes how to be professionals, the library can act as an educational hub for digital citizenship, instructing kids on proper handling of their laptops and educating on the rights and responsibilities of digital citizenship. This includes when to use technology, as cell phones and computers easily separate people from one another.

**Offering student maker spaces.** Most people have experience as information seekers but not as content creators or "makers." The library can provide a low-stress environment—i.e., without the pressure of grades—for students to design a website, learn to code, experiment with digital media creation, and play with other creative tools to become networked millennial learners.

**Acting as the community's "orchestrator of learning."** The library can bring educators together, becoming the nexus for asset and resource mapping. It can provide resources as simple as the teacher's manual for each class so that parents and tutors can help children learn. The library can lead a community discussion on education and provide academically vetted material to students and their families.

**Consulting with users.** The Winter Park Public Library currently convenes a large teen council. These young people can be helpful in offering information about which resources will best serve their needs. Likewise, the library can engage in outreach with seniors and other special populations both at the library and out in the community where they live.

### Adult Learning

Cognizant that the library's educational mission extends beyond pre-school through grade 12 learners, participants proposed platforms for adult learning, creativity, and innovation. One participant evoked an image of the library as the LEGO® green board—a base upon which different people will want to build different things—and another described it as a “community think tank.” To ensure the Winter Park Public Library's long-term sustainability, participants agreed on the importance of differentiating it from other local organizations, perhaps by establishing programs for artists and writers in residence. It was also noted that librarians and library staff do not need to deliver every service available through the library. As one participant said, “There are a lot of people in the community who can bring to bear all kinds of skills.”

To help address economic disruption, the library could offer a network of best practices to bring workers up to speed quickly, perhaps assembling a task force to forecast disruptions and solutions using connections between Crummer Graduate School of Business at Rollins College and Valencia College in Winter Park as partners. Besides offering high-speed digital access, the proposed new library facility, which would be built in tandem with an event space, offers the opportunity for video walls and other cutting-edge communication tools.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

With a vision for the Winter Park Public Library beginning to emerge, participants focused on pinpointing goals and action steps for the library, oriented toward partnerships across different sectors of the community. They considered the elements and indicators of successful collaborations, what is possible to accomplish in the short-term versus the long-term, and how to begin implementing these changes. Through a process of discussion and debate, in small groups and in plenary, Dialogue participants recommended the following action steps for library, city, and community stakeholders to undertake together.

**Recommendation #1:** Create and communicate the vision. Amid the give-and-take required to reach consensus, two critical questions arose: is it enough to talk about a library vision in broad strokes—a flexible platform for innovation, learning, and creativity in the community—or should the vision be specific? If so, has that been articulated? Participants agreed that it is essential to spell-out a specific vision. “Create the vision” became its own “super action item.” Participants concluded that the Winter Park Public Library and its board should take the lead in drafting a vision statement, going through a deliberative design process, facilitated by Valencia Community College and an outside library consultant recommended by participant **Maureen Sullivan**, past president of the American Library Association. “We can't imagine that this would not be the first action step,” said one participant, explaining that it is essential for the private sector, community partners, and the public to take ownership of the library re-envisioning process. Once created, the library must create and implement a media plan for communicating the vision. With an eye toward community partnerships, this could be done as a competitive challenge involving marketing students at Rollins, Valencia, or Full Sail.

**Recommendation #2:** Define the public library as a community priority. Amplifying an earlier conversation about how to measure the library's success, participants considered what it would look like in the present-term and in the future for the library to be treated as a priority. From a policy perspective, the word "priority" is important, as one participant explained, because often in government, that distinction establishes where funds go. The discussion ranged from micro to macro considerations of what it might look like for the library to be defined as a community priority.

- *Increase traffic.* Make sure that the Winter Park Public Library is on the Lynx (Orange County's public transportation system) route. Whereas Winter Park now has a boat tour of its lakes, the new library should be "on the scenic tour"—i.e., one of the city's must-see destinations.
- *Deepen user involvement.* "If people just check-out books, we will have failed," one participant said. The same is true if people merely admire the library from the outside and don't partake of its services.
- *Design creative programming.* The new library should be of the park and not just in the park, taking advantage of its location to create new outdoor programming. The library should also take advantage of the synergy that will be created by its proximity to the new events center and to neighborhoods in the west side of the city.
- *Market robustly.* Signage around the city should let people know where the new library is. The library should be co-branded and marketed like other "jewels" of Winter Park. Public relations events should be used to attract attention and raise curiosity (e.g., library book delivery by aerial drone).

**Recommendation #3:** Bring diverse expertise and financial and sustainable resources to partner with the library. A vision alone, without self-sustainability, is not enough. Otherwise, the library will be reduced to being a

budget item and will not be able to accomplish the many goals the community leaders have for it. While the library is not primarily a "moneymaker," it is important to be aware of, and leverage revenue-generating opportunities to offset, the institution's capital and operational expenses. Since financial contributions are both an indicator and enabler of success, the library could have a donor's wall in the entrance that displays the names of its contributors as a way to demonstrate public and philanthropic support. Fostering relationships with local and state business leaders will help with the library's fundraising efforts and long-term sustainability.

**Recommendation #4:** Brand the library as a platform for community learning and development, collaborate with users, and define the scope of library program and strategies. Since most people say they love their library but few know what a library actually does, communicating the library's transformative role in the community is critical. Use case studies from other new libraries to demonstrate the impact they have in their communities. Participants identified the role the library can play in expanding broadband access throughout the community, helping Winter Park to overcome its current technological limitations and connecting residents and guests to global resources. This was among participants' highest priorities and should be an immediate priority. In the future more, people will interface with the library virtually than physically, and the website will become, as one participant said, the library's "front door" requiring a redesign of the Winter Park Public Library's website to become more user-friendly. A specific recommendation was made to organize a half-day forum at Rollins College on the future of community learning. This forum would address touch points relevant for residents and businesses in Winter Park, and bring people up-to-speed on the skills and knowledge that they will need to have in order to access information services such as medical data, manufacturing, entrepreneurialism, and financing, to name a few. This will help people start to grasp what is possible in the new library.

## A PATH FORWARD

Participants defined the path forward as one that is focused on developing partnerships and ensuring sustainability over the long term. Some of these partnerships would be created to amplify the services the library currently offers, while other partnerships would provide information-gathering opportunities to help the library better meet the needs of its varied constituencies. And while some users are not partners in a traditional sense, the plenary put forward ideas about how the library can strengthen its connections to the city's "priority" populations, including kids and seniors.

**Develop and strengthen education partnerships by convening an educators' roundtable.** Throughout the roundtable dialogue, participants emphasized the library's role as Winter Park's "orchestrator of learning." The community, with the library as a key partner, should bring together representatives from all of Winter Park's educational institutions -- including daycare facilities and preschools, the Orange County Public School System, local private and parochial schools and Winter Park's institutions of higher education. This educator's roundtable would focus on common issues and how the library and the other education providers can align their work to achieve a community of lifelong learners. "It's all about getting to know each other," one participant later said. "We all get in our fiefdoms and don't know what the other does." The roundtable will open the way for future collaboration on teacher projects, school standards, and the resources the library offers and vice versa. When grant opportunities arise, community educators and the library will think of one another as partners rather than as competitors for the same money.

**Develop and strengthen business and philanthropic partnerships.** The Winter Park Library Dialogue underscored the community's goal of remaining "the destination" in Central Florida, continuing to attract new

families and businesses as well as Winter Park's ongoing need to compete in the global business environment. A business roundtable coordinated by the Chamber of Commerce would give the library an opportunity to learn what resources Winter Park's business leaders need to help foster prosperity, job growth and a vibrant community. By tapping external expertise and aligning with business' workforce priorities, the library could offer a network of best practices to bring displaced workers up-to-speed quickly. For example, the Florida Chamber of Commerce Foundation is currently mapping out a strategic plan for Florida called "Florida 2030," with a final plan expected in early 2018. The plan will look at the state's talent, innovation, infrastructure, business climate, civic and governance systems, and quality of life. The library should look at the plan when it comes out to see how it might align with the Winter Park Chamber's push to drive and diversify the economy.

**Develop partnerships with the technology sector.** Technology will play a critical role in helping the library and the Winter Park community "not just survive but thrive," as John Bracken said during the public forum. Having positioned itself as an early-adapter that helps patrons experiment with new technology and design their own products in maker spaces, the library should work with partners in the community to develop new expertise and capabilities with digital and advanced technologies. Partners could include: architects, to articulate what the optimal virtual library looks like and how it interacts with the physical library; faculty and students from Full Sail, Rollins and Valencia who could help with the library's maker spaces and the library staff's ongoing efforts to assess cutting-edge technology; and staff at Full Sail University, including in the UX Lab (user experience) who could work with the library to measure the impact of, and outcomes from, the virtual side of the library experience. After the library's vision document is finalized, library leaders can survey EA, Disney, and other nearby content creation companies to tap their ideas for re-envisioning the library experience and service delivery. Outreach to ask for their

input could grow into a leadership forum on the technical side of libraries. Additionally, nonprofit groups including Orlando Tech, FamiLab, and I Million Cups could host a techie meet-up on the library.

#### **Attention to priority populations in the community.**

This is not so much about traditional partnerships as an attempt to fulfill one of the roundtable participants' goal for the library to engage the community as broadly and as deeply as possible, and to address specific needs of distinct populations within the community, including youth and seniors. Participants view the library as a multi-generational, cross-socioeconomic hub that connects residents to institutions, ideas, and other people—a safe, neutral space where kids and families from all walks of life can congregate and feel at home. This speaks to the customer-service orientation of the library. The Winter Park Public Library already engages in a number of outreach efforts, including signing residents up for library cards at the local farmers' market and giving cards to new city hall employees and Chamber of Commerce members. In addition, the library brings new people into the building by, for example, administering SAT and ACT prep and testing.

The library can do more to determine who is underserved by the library. Some of these people may be financially advantaged but do not think they need a library. Others may experience barriers to using the library that the library itself can address in its service design and delivery. The library can work with partners to hold dialogues with Winter Park's elderly and senior populations at Tranquil Terrace, the Plymouth, the Mayflower, and the Towers with help from the Winter Park Health Foundation, which has a task force on the elderly. And it can offer English to non-English-speaking families, with the Orange County school district assisting with staffing needs.

To hear the youth perspective, library staff can collaborate with the Chamber of Commerce's summer youth leaders program. Additionally, Full Sail's international students can talk about what they admire about their library experiences at home. To bring in kids, the library should work with the Winter Park Health Foundation and the Parks and Recreation Department. The New Student Experience at Valencia has co-curricular activities that can involve its students in the library. The library can also reach out to kids through social media, including popular platforms such as Snapchat. Finally, the library should continually ask questions to keep up with changing user preferences. This can occur whenever anyone checks-out a book, signs-up for a library card, or through annual outreach and surveys.

**Develop health and wellness partnerships.** During the dialogue, participants discussed the juxtaposition of the proposed new library building and Martin Luther King, Jr. Park, which includes playing fields, walking paths, and a lake. They highlighted the opportunity to find synergies for new health and wellness programs. The Winter Park Public Library is already engaged in a number of wellness activities and initiatives. The library lends fitness trackers and bicycles through a partnership with the Winter Park Health Foundation's Healthy Central Florida Program and plans on installing a treadmill desk. The library staff is given time to exercise during their workday, and, through a partnership with the YMCA, receives deeply discounted memberships and personal training. The library is also working on overcoming a stumbling block for its staff—the high price of running shoes—by teaming up with a local sporting goods store to give out shoe scholarships. The library should look for opportunities to deepen its relationships, help to foster health literacy and serve as a community connector in this area. For the new library building, the library staff is looking into a partnership with the Winter Park Health Foundation to identify health services that the library could provide.

## CONCLUSION

The Winter Park Library Dialogue engaged a broad range of community stakeholders in an exploration of how to leverage the library's key assets of people, place, and platform in new ways to advance community goals and priorities. The Winter Park Public Library is well-positioned to work with government, education, businesses, and community partners to design and deliver opportunities for learning and promote the development and use of advanced high-speed Internet connectivity. The recommendations in this report are aimed at strengthening existing initiatives and considering what new proposals or partnerships might position the library to be a flexible hub and partner for learning, innovation, creativity, and civic engagement in the community, now and in the years ahead.

**Measuring success.** The dialogue addressed various ways to gauge the library's success as it works with the community to re-envision its future. Some participants favored a quantitative system, recommending that the library track not just who walks through the door, but also who "visits" virtually and then work to increase the participation rate of each. Such categories as customer service, revenue generation, and user experience are also measurable. It is important to consider different key performance indicators over time, one participant said, "to make sure that we're staying in front and staying on top of things."

Beyond these traditional metrics, the buzz the new library creates is also an important indicator of its success. As one participant said, "I want people to come by this building and go, 'Wow! Look what the City of Winter Park did!'"

Others suggested going deeper, proposing to measure how the community is progressing and growing with the library. One participant mentioned Peter Senge's "The Dawn of

System Leadership" as a model for a thoughtful evaluation. That report emphasizes the ability to see the larger system through reflection and conversation, shifting away from reactive problem-solving to co creation of the future.

Another suggestion emphasized the experience provided by the library as an alternative to simply thinking in terms of data and outcomes—designing the architecture, brand, and experience of the library based on the community's responses to three phrases: "I feel this... , I like that... , and I'm moved by..." Participants undertook an exercise to complete these phrases; their responses appear in the Appendix.

**A National Model.** There is a strong connection between the goals of the Aspen Institute-Winter Park Public Library partnership and the Task Force's guidance to the City Commission for the Winter Park library to be an exemplary model for the nation. Could Winter Park's single library "system" serve as a model for smaller American communities and their public libraries, when so many examples for internal change seem to involve large public library systems? If a smaller scale, single-branch library city like Winter Park can make a difference, it could serve as a model for other systems, spurring other communities to follow Winter Park's lead and resulting in larger scale change for all public library systems. That would be a clear indicator of success.

The wide-ranging conversation demonstrated that there are many ways to measure the library's ongoing success, from traditional business and marketing models, to the personal stories that Winter Park residents and visitors (or "hosts and guests" as they came to be referred to during the leadership roundtable) will tell about the library. Used in different combinations and adjusted over time, these yardsticks will enable the library to remain sensitive to the changing needs of the Winter Park community.

# ACTIVITIES

## CONTINUING THE WINTER PARK LIBRARY DIALOGUE AND HOW TO GET INVOLVED

Since the adjournment of the Winter Park Library Dialogue roundtable in June 2016, the Winter Park Public Library has been developing a series of activities to adopt and advance the recommendations in this report. An important focus has been to engage community members and leaders in thinking in new ways about the role of the city's public library in helping to achieve community priorities.

In response to recommendation number one in this report, the Winter Park Public Library Board met in October 2016, in a three-hour workshop led by a facilitator from Valencia College to draft a vision for the future of the library. Once final, the library's vision will be used to advance other recommendations and activities outlined in this report.

The educator's roundtable is the first activity expected to take place under the leadership of **Stacey Johnson**, East Campus President, Valencia College.

To learn more about these and other activities in Winter Park, to access resources or to get involved, please consult the library website at [wppl.org](http://wppl.org) or contact:

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# APPENDIX

## QUALITATIVE MEASURES FOR LIBRARY DESIGN AND SUCCESS

Dialogue participants discussed various ways to measure the impact that the library has on its community, the “success” of its vision and the success of its design and deployment of assets. **Ken Goldstone**, chief operating officer of Full Sail University, suggested that the library engage in a parallel effort to numeric output and outcome measures that would measure success of the brand side of the library, of how it makes us feel. Goldstone’s suggestion was to pick three major takeaways and design the messaging, the experience, and even the architecture to address what a representative sample of residents would say in response to these prompts when they think about the public library:

I feel this \_\_\_\_\_ about the library.  
I think that \_\_\_\_\_ about the library.  
I’m moved by \_\_\_\_\_ at the library.

“We may not ask every resident, and they may not give us those answers exactly the way we are framing them, but it is a good start for us to think about the storytelling of what this library will be. We work off of the qualitative feel people have...it’s a brand that transcends this concept of, ‘Oh, I like the library.’ It will be the feeling on top of the numbers,” Goldstone explained.

Participants engaged in this exercise themselves during the dialogue. Below are their responses to the three prompts.

### I feel moved by...

- I’m moved by the people and interactions.
- I’m moved by the competence and commitment of the staff.
- New Ideas.
- I am moved by the positive energy in the room.
- The beauty of the place and the quality of the experience.
- I am moved by the level of engagement, focus, and passion associated with our library.
- I am moved by the library support for economically disadvantaged, underserved and special needs population.
- Peace.
- I’m moved by the environment and hope that it is a part of the new library, both inside and outside.
- I’m moved by beauty, other people.
- I’m moved by how many different people use the library for so many different reasons.
- I’m moved by the energy of the participants.
- How much effort and care was put into this awesome facility.
- I’m moved by the level of passion that individuals have towards the library.
- Civic action and intellectual discourse.
- I am moved by the limitless knowledge.
- I’m moved by energy of the facility.

## I like that...

- I like that I connect with my kids while there.
- I like that... everyone is welcome at the library.
- I like that: proud of diversity of users. Proud of community voting to build.
- I like the beauty of the setting.
- I like that: I was able to accomplish the goals I had for coming to the library.
- I experienced one-of-a-kind opportunities to discover.
- I like learning, reading.
- We are considering the whole community and thinking about access.
- I like that it is open to all.
- I like that we are looking to revive the library as the hub of the community.
- I like having knowledgeable, curious people available to help guide me.
- The artwork from the sidewalk fest
- I like that our library has brought us all together in this process... and has the capacity to bring folks together again and again...
- I like the many opportunities to learn and discover.
- I am inspired by what I see and who I encounter there.
- I like that the library helps provides learning opportunities for adults.
- We want and expect everyone to use our new library.

## I feel this...

- Is an amazing opportunity to co-create.
- I feel a sense of nostalgia and hope at the library.
- I feel inspired.
- I feel this: is an important resource for me and my community.
- I feel this: empowerment.
- I feel comfortable, safe.
- I feel energized.
- Is not a library, but something I can't describe or put into words.
- I feel that the library is a place of opportunities.
- Connected to my community.
- I feel this library is a reflection of the soul of the community.
- I feel excited about the possibilities of new knowledge and creativity.
- I feel this library empowers the community.
- Connected to the world and my community.
- I feel welcome.
- I feel inspired when I am there to be free to think and create.

# NOTES

- i Amy K. Garmer, *Rising to the Challenge: Re-Envisioning Public Libraries*, Washington, DC: The Aspen Institute, October 2014.
- ii Save Our Library, a local political action committee whose members are contesting the results of the March 2016 bond vote to build a new library and events center in Martin Luther King Jr. Park.
- iii Susanne Ault, "Digital Star Popularity Grows Versus Mainstream Celebrities," *Variety*, July 23, 2015, <http://variety.com/2015/digital/news/youtubers-teen-survey-ksi-pewdiepie-1201544882/>
- iv In the past, students came from information-poor environments, and it was the school's job to fill them with knowledge. Now, with increasing access to technology, many students come from information-rich environments and schools are guiding them to active mastery of the knowledge they have already acquired. Lessons are being "flipped," which means that students are expected to learn basic concepts on their own outside of school (e.g., by watching video-recorded lectures and reading texts) and then clarify, apply, and analyze that knowledge when they are in the classroom setting at school. The library can identify what resources and services students will need to help them succeed in this changing learning environment.
- v While the admirable work of the library task force created opportunities for exploring and resources for shaping this vision, there was general agreement that something more is needed. "I don't know if we're there yet. There is a segment of our community that doesn't believe we need a new library," said one participant, referencing the March 2016 ballot initiative to fund the construction of a new library, events center, and infrastructure improvements that passed by a vote of 51 percent to 49 percent. On the close margin of victory for the ballot measure, another participant pointed out that the vote of 49 percent represents a large group of residents who are in favor of the library and even of a new library building, but are not in favor of the proposed location in Martin Luther King, Jr. Park. Additionally, some of the 49 percent did not want a tax increase. "I believe this is an important distinction that needs to be articulated because a great majority of people in Winter Park are pro-library, much higher than 51 percent," observed one roundtable participant.
- vi <http://www.fsg.org/publications/dawn-system-leadership>
- vii Please see appendix for participants' responses to these questions.



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