

2023-2026

STRATEGIC PLAN



**Public Library of Johnston
County & Smithfield**

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A Note from the Director

Johnnie Pippin



In late Spring 2022, the Public Library of Johnston County and Smithfield (PLJCS) began to facilitate the process of creating a strategic blueprint. The Library Director, library staff, and stakeholders worked to craft a community needs survey and overall three year library strategic plan for implementation. Amanda Johnson and Lauren Clossey helped the library facilitate this planning process.

The mission behind this project was to develop a flexible framework to allow PLJCS to integrate itself into its communities. The vision is to move the library forward into a new transformation.

The community needs survey was distributed in September and October 2022 to community sites, online and within the library, and to various stakeholders and library supporters. The responses and feedback were used to evaluate, determine, and craft the next chapter in PLJCS's future on how the library can improve its service to the community.

The following document opens the library's doors to better serve our communities and visitors through new and existing services. PLJCS will utilize this strategic roadmap to foster and grow meaningful relationships with our county and various town entities, and allow staff to shine in their work by focusing on excellent customer service and transforming the library's future.



Vision

As your library, we aspire to meet the needs of our rapidly growing and diverse community by providing connections to promote well-being.

Mission

We empower our community by supporting literacy, fostering connections, and providing services that enrich lives.



Focal Areas & Goals

1

CONNECTING COMMUNITY

- The library promotes community cohesion to enhance community wellbeing, foster relationships, and collaboration
- The library provides engaging spaces and events that foster connections and creativity
- The library facilitates equitable access to library and community resources

2

GROWING TOGETHER

- The library uses its events and resources to increase inclusion and appreciation for diversity
- The library contributes to economic wellbeing by connecting individuals and businesses to resources to meet their career and financial goals

3

PROMOTING WELLBEING

- The library supports family caregivers in becoming confident and competent providers
- The library develops literacy and leadership skills to encourage civic engagement and involvement in the community

Acknowledgements

Thank you for the support of the community we serve and the willingness of stakeholders, residents, and staff to contribute their time and attention by providing the Public Library of Johnston County and Smithfield a new roadmap to guide our vision.

Planning Committee:

Johnnie Pippin, Library Director
Katie Guthrie, Collection Development Librarian
Dustin Mobley, Technology Coordinator
Hannah Brennan, Patron Services Supervisor
Megan Shaner, Library Board of Trustees Chair
Jane Shipman, Library Board of Trustees
Sara Edwards, Smithfield Downtown Development
Jeff Jennings, County Resident

PLJCS Staff:

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Arcadia Shoulders
Xavier Snow
Ashley Wood

PLJCS is especially grateful to the organizations, local government agencies, school administration, affiliated libraries and business owners of Johnston County that participated in the focus groups for data collection.

Lastly, thank you to the residents of Johnston County that completed our survey, participated in individual interviews, and use and support the Public Library of Johnston County and Smithfield.

Contact

Public Library of Johnston County &
Smithfield

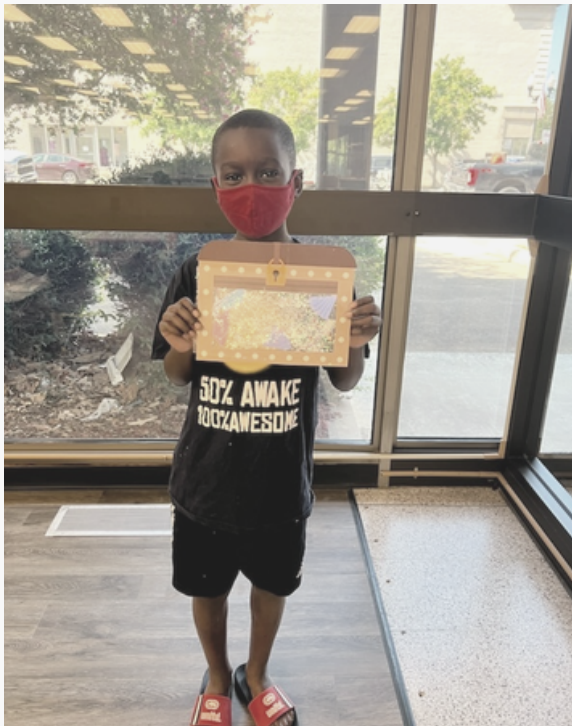
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STRATEGIC PLAN



About the community

Johnston County, located in central North Carolina is composed of 796 square miles, making it one of the larger counties by land mass in the state and is comprised of eleven towns: Archer Lodge, Benson, Clayton, Four Oaks, Kenly, Micro, Pine Level, Princeton, Selma, Smithfield, and Wilson's Mills. Smithfield is the county seat.

The estimated population of Johnston County in 2023 is 230,195; by 2033, the population is estimated to be around 270,000 people. The population of Johnston County is increasing by approximately 11,000 people per year. Johnston County is not only one of the fastest growing regions in North Carolina but one of the fastest growing counties in the nation. Growth is spread throughout the county but is especially concentrated in the northwestern side bordering Wake County. The southeastern side of the county is more rural with more agricultural land.

Nearly 75% of the population are between 18 and 64 years old and nearly 26% are between the ages of 5 and 17. Finally, approximately 13% of the population is aged 65 and older.



Located only about 40 miles east of Raleigh, Johnston County's rapid growth has been an opportunity for new businesses to flourish and for communities to become more diverse. Johnston County residents have access to quality schools, health care, and a thriving agricultural industry. Residents are proud of the communities they live in and have deep respect for the county's history and culture.

Methodology



PLJCS utilized a community-focused, inclusive planning process. To guide the process, a planning team consisting of the library director, 2 staff members, 2 Trustees, and 2 community members was formed. Each member of the team contributed to the planning process using their expertise and skill set as well as acting as a liaison to library stakeholders ensuring transparency and inclusivity all along the planning process.



The planning team first gathered and synthesized existing community and library data to provide a foundation for additional data collection. The team examined resident demographics and growth trends as well as identified what organizations and businesses are present in the county to understand gaps and needs. Using this foundational knowledge and awareness of community assets, the planning team decided to conduct focus groups with staff members, Board of Trustee members and interviews with community leaders from local and state government, small business, and education. The wider community was invited to respond to a community survey that was distributed widely through both library and community channels in both English and Spanish. The survey was available for 6 weeks and received a total of 146 responses. An additional survey was distributed to staff to gauge their perceptions of community needs and better understand their experience working in the library.



Findings

Both the community and staff feedback pointed to similar common themes affecting the community. Rapid growth was the most significant theme mentioned and was noted to impact many of the other themes discussed. Population growth was most frequently seen as a positive strength of the community and viewed as an opportunity bringing in more business, jobs, and opportunities for residents. While the county is experiencing tremendous growth, respondents also mentioned the strong community and small town feel as something that makes the county unique and a great place to live. At the same time, a significant number of responses also mentioned that it can be difficult for new residents to discover services and activities around the county. There is no streamlined way to find local news about events, businesses or information from local government and public services. This hinders community inclusivity and cohesion and results in some residents choosing to do activities outside of the county.

Population growth was the number 1 challenge and opportunity identified.

Both the community and staff feedback pointed to similar common themes affecting the community. Rapid growth was the most significant theme mentioned and was noted to impact many of the other themes discussed. Population growth was most frequently seen as a positive strength of the community and viewed as an opportunity bringing in more business, jobs, and opportunities for residents. While the county is experiencing tremendous growth, respondents also mentioned the strong community and small town feel as something that makes the county unique and a great place to live. At the same time, a significant number of responses also mentioned that it can be difficult for new residents to discover services and activities around the county. There is no streamlined way to find local news about events, businesses or information from local government and public services. This hinders community inclusivity and cohesion and results in some residents choosing to do activities outside of the county.

Residents want to do activities close to home and build connections within the community.

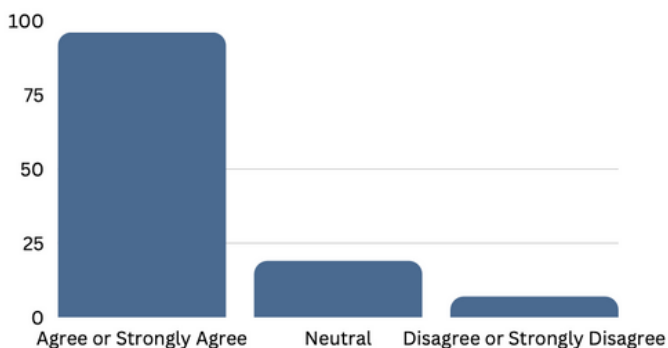
Respondents in both the staff and community survey noted that as the community grows, it is becoming more diverse which was seen as a strength. However, there were many responses that referenced a lack of inclusion for residents who may have different abilities, have a native language other than English, or may be in a lower socioeconomic group. General affordability was mentioned by 50% of respondents when discussing the major challenges of the community and increasing the assistance or awareness of assistance available for those who are food insecure and people experiencing homelessness were top concerns. The proximity to the Triangle and Wake county in particular was noted as contributing to wage disparity and difficulty hiring and retaining employees.

Transportation issues were also identified as a major obstacle for many residents in the county. The community survey identified issues with the maintenance and planning of roads that led to significant congestion and difficulty moving around within the county. Additionally, the staff survey and focus groups noted that there is a lack of public transportation options for the general public. Residents who do not have their own personal transportation have very limited options as bus service is extremely limited and car-sharing services are nearly non-existent. There was also considerable confusion around how to access public transportation service and who was eligible to service. These transportation issues directly affect the library as service is limited to the main location in Smithfield and four affiliate libraries along the I-95 corridor. Community and staff feedback mentioned the need for expanding service countywide. A number of community members expressed appreciation for the Grab-N-Go location in Flowers, NC and expressed the desire for more similar locations and additional services. Staff also expressed a desire to expand outreach services and bring more services and programming out into community locations where more residents are able to attend and benefit from library services.

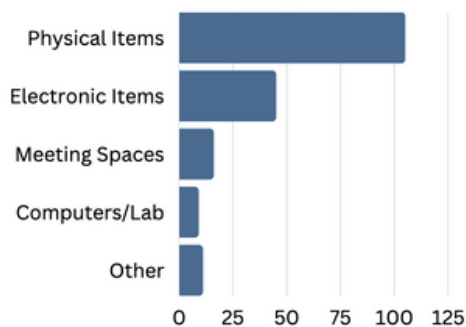
Library-related findings

Community members were also asked if they were library users. Those that had used the library recently were asked further information about their experience. Selected responses can be found below:

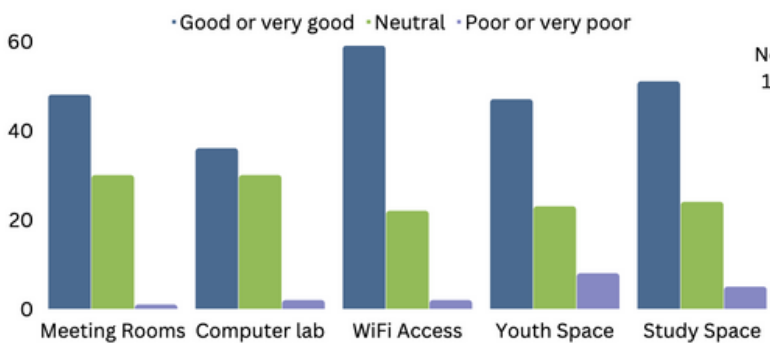
I typically find what I need when I visit the library.



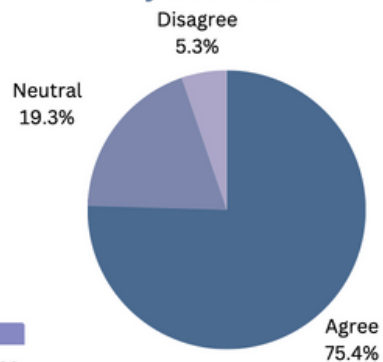
Please select the library services you have used recently:



Please rate the facilities of the Smithfield location



The library website has the information I need to use library resources.



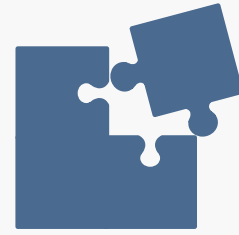
Quotes

I love the welcoming feel and the easy way to find books and check them out. Been going for many many years.

No fees! It has been a blessing to not have to worry about getting the book back by a certain date with all of the hussling from day to day, seriously! It matters! Staff members are always friendly so thank you for that too.

The librarians, the pick up options, the sense of community, children's program and the books!

Connecting Community



Goal 1:

The library promotes community cohesion to enhance community wellbeing, foster relationships, and collaboration.

Goal 2:

The library provides engaging spaces and events that foster connections and creativity.

Goal 3:

The library facilitates equitable access to library and community resources.



Connecting Community

Goal 1.1:

The library promotes community cohesion to enhance community wellbeing to foster relationships and collaboration.

Activities:

- Conduct classes and provide resources to promote literacy in all forms and hobbies.
- Collaborate and promote events that connect community members with others that have common interests
- Provide and evaluate community feedback and suggestions through surveys and a suggestions box

Goal 1.2:

The library provides engaging spaces and events that foster connections and creativity.

Activities:

- Provide welcoming library spaces that everyone can access
- Evaluate and prioritize ease of access of library services and resources
- Engage and collaborate with community stakeholders to develop and host recreational events and programs of all ages
- Create and foster library programming that speaks to all ages of the community

Goal 1.3

The library facilitates equitable access to library and community resources.

Activities:

- Evaluate outreach procedures to better assist and support groups and individuals that need library services outside of the facility
- Explore and implement resources to eliminate language barriers
- Evaluate library services to greater support our diverse communities

Growing Together



Goal 1:

The library uses its events and resources to increase inclusion and appreciation for diversity.

Goal 2:

The library contributes to economic wellbeing by connecting individuals and businesses to resources to meet their career and financial goals.



Growing Together

Goal 2.1:

The library uses its events and resources to increase inclusion and diversity.

Activities:

- Promote local and state talent by hosting events and programs for all ages
- Support efforts to engage underrepresented and underserved patrons through enhanced services and partnerships and increased customer satisfaction
- Engage with community stakeholders to develop and enhance more inclusive and diverse programs and collections.
- Increase staff knowledge and expertise by providing the necessary tools, resources, and professional development to become a more inclusive and diverse team to better assist our communities

Goal 2.2:

The library contributes to economic wellbeing by connecting individuals and businesses to resources to meet their career and financial goals.

Activities:

- Provide technology programming, learning opportunities, and assistance to library patrons
- Present classes and events that promote career development and opportunities by partnerships with local agencies
- Provide resources and tools to support job seekers and career minded individuals in their quest for employment
- Offer increased opportunities to share community information

Promoting Wellbeing



Goal 1:

The library supports family caregivers in becoming confident and competent providers.

Goal 2:

The library promotes and provides mental health resources and programs for the betterment of wellness of our communities.

Goal 3:

The library develops literacy and leadership skills to encourage civic engagement and involvement in the community.



Promoting Wellbeing

Goal 3.1:

The library supports family caregivers in becoming confident and competent providers.

Activities

- Promote and provide elderly care resources and classes
- Promote and provide library orientation resources
- Provide family friendly event times
- Provide Lexile level guidelines for caregivers/parents and parent literacy resources

Goal 3.2:

The library promotes and provides mental health resources and programs for the betterment of wellness of our communities.

Activities:

- Provide programming and resources to increase mental health awareness

Goal 3.3:

The library develops literacy and leadership skills to encourage civic engagement and involvement in the community.

Activities:

- Provide classes and events that inform and connect patrons to foster life skills for all ages
- Engage with local and state agencies to create partnerships that promote literacy and leadership skills for our communities
- Support local businesses by providing financial literacy workshops, tools, and resources



Our Story So Far

The Public Library of Johnston County and Smithfield (PLJCS) began its official existence in June 1966, but its roots go back over half a century before then.

In 1912, a group of young women from the Smithfield graded school started a library which was housed on the second floor of Mr. George Thornton's music store.

In 1915, when the Woman's Betterment Association became the Smithfield Woman's Club, these young women joined the new organization and brought their library project with them. This library remained primarily a Woman's Club project until 1940 when the club recommended that a Board of Trustees be appointed to oversee and expand library services. That year the Board purchased the Presbyterian School Annex building and moved it to a lot on Johnston Street, where the Smithfield Public Library remained until 1966.

In 1941, the General Assembly passed a bill for State Aid for Public Libraries and appropriated \$100,000 for each year of the biennium 1941-43. With this financial incentive (\$900 was Johnston County's share), and urgings from interested citizens, the Johnston County Commissioners approved the creation of a Johnston County Library and appropriated \$3000 for its operation. A Board of Trustees was appointed and Miss Virginia Williamson was hired as the first County Librarian.

The County Library was first located in a back room of the Smithfield Library; it was moved several times, including a one year stay in a vacant store in Four Oaks, until it made its final move to a 4-room building on Johnston Street right next door to the Smithfield Public Library.

The Public Library of Johnston County and Smithfield celebrated its 55th anniversary in 2022.

Bookmobile service first came to Johnston County in 1938 through a WPA library project sponsored by the North Carolina Library Commission and the Department of Public Instruction. A state-owned bookmobile was sent to Johnston County for six weeks in 1938 and two months in 1940. This proved to be a very popular service, and when the Johnston County Library was formed, the intent was to provide a permanent Bookmobile for the County.

The property on Third and Market Streets was donated in July 1964, and work on the new library building was begun in October 1965. In June 1966, the County Commissioners and Smithfield Town Council approved the formation of the Public Library of Johnston County and Smithfield; a twelve member Board of Trustees was established, 6 appointed by the Town and 6 appointed by the County.

The new Library was completed in January and opened to the Public on April 17, 1967.

Since 1967, our three primary funding sources have been Johnston County, Smithfield and State Aid. From 1966 until 1985, Johnston County and the Town of Smithfield provided matching funding for the Library. In 1985, The County began funding the services provided by the Bookmobile and to the town libraries, and matched funding with the Town of Smithfield for the operation of the Library.

In March 1991, the Hocutt-Ellington Memorial Library in Clayton, signed a Contract of Affiliation with the Library. Over the next 3 years, the libraries in Kenly, Selma, Benson and Four Oaks, also contracted with the Library.

In 1999, the Library responded to the critical need for additional space by purchasing the adjoining former Belk building at a cost of \$500,000. Following that, the County of Johnston and the Town of Smithfield committed money to attractively renovate the Belk building and to creatively up-fit the existing library, thus adding better located departments, new wiring for technology, and a new heating and air conditioning system. Private funding helped to pay for new furniture and additional improvements. A ribbon cutting was held on May 18, 2003 to celebrate the grand opening of the expanded library, which almost doubled in size to 34,000 square feet.

In April 2022, the Library celebrated its 55th anniversary as the Public Library of Johnston County and Smithfield.

Connecting Community

Goal 1.1:

The library promotes community cohesion to enhance community wellbeing to foster relationships and collaboration.

Activities:

- Conduct classes and provide resources to promote literacy in all forms and hobbies
- Collaborate and promote events that connect community members with others that have common interests
 - Promote local events and collaborate with local businesses, charities, churches, schools, daycares, and medical facilities
 - Host a community food and/or clothes drive for those in need
- Provide and evaluate community feedback and suggestions through surveys and a suggestions box
 - Disseminate surveys throughout the year to gather community feedback and make a community suggestions box available in the the library and at library events
 - Provide books to Little Free Libraries in the community
 - Host a paperback book exchange

Goal 1.2:

The library provides engaging spaces and events that foster connections and creativity.

Activities:

- Provide welcoming library spaces that everyone can access
 - Enhance our library spaces to make them more comfortable, engaging and accessible
- Evaluate and prioritize ease of access of library services and resources
- Engage and collaborate with community stakeholders to develop and host recreational events and programs of all ages
 - Host more recreational events and collaborative projects and programs with community groups
 - Create a community garden
 - Host events with local authors
 - Provide a more robust news outlet or source for the community (Ex. Patron Point -- Arts Council, local businesses, etc.)
- Create and foster library programming that speaks to all ages of the community

Connecting Community

continued

Goal 1.3

The library facilitates equitable access to library and community resources.

Activities:

- Enhance outreach procedures to better assist and support groups and individuals that need library services outside of the facility
 - Offer increased outreach opportunities across the county
 - Add more technology lending resources
 - Prioritize ease of access to the library's catalog (Ex. update iPads and computer terminals)
- Explore and implement resources to eliminate language barriers
 - Prioritize hiring bilingual library staff and provide technologies and resources to help with communicating with patrons
- Evaluate library services to greater support our diverse communities
- Aid patrons in accessing the library and programs
 - Create a guide for transportation options in the county

Growing Together

Goal 2.1:

The library uses its events and resources to increase inclusion and diversity.

Activities:

- Promote local and state talent by hosting events and programs for all ages
 - Host Heritage Holidays events with local guest speakers
- Support efforts to engage underrepresented and underserved patrons through enhanced services and partnerships and increased customer satisfaction
 - Provide inclusive and diverse storytimes and resources
 - Create displays for holidays and cultural events
- Engage with community stakeholders to develop and enhance more inclusive and diverse programs and collections
 - Actively work to recruit staff that reflect the diversity of the community in talents, experiences, and languages
- Increase staff knowledge and expertise by providing the necessary tools, resources, and professional development to become a more inclusive and diverse team to better assist our communities
 - Prioritize and increase opportunities for professional development for library staff around topics of interest

Goal 2.2:

The library contributes to economic wellbeing by connecting individuals and businesses to resources to meet their career and financial goals.

Activities:

- Provide technology programming, learning opportunities, and assistance to library patrons
 - Provide Tech Tuesdays/Book a Librarian Programming
- Present classes and events that promote career development and opportunities by partnerships with local agencies
 - Provide programming for job interview skills and best practices for getting a job
- Provide resources and tools to support job seekers and career minded individuals in their quest for employment
 - Form a team to develop resource kits and plan library programming for jobseekers
 - Provide interview attire and resources for jobseekers
- Offer increased opportunities to share community information
 - Create a community board to share information (increased information displays throughout the library)

Promoting Wellbeing

Goal 3.1:

The library supports family caregivers in becoming confident and competent providers.

Activities:

- Provide focused resources and programming for parents and caregivers
 - Promote and provide library orientation resources
 - Create parent literacy guides and literacy resource kits
 - Provide family-friendly event times
 - Provide Lexile level guidelines for caregivers/parents

Goal 3.2:

The library promotes and provides mental health resources and programs for the betterment of wellness of our communities.

Activities:

- Work with community partners on mental health initiatives
 - Partner with UNC Healthcare to provide programming and resources
 - Gather community resources and contact information for unhoused patrons; distribute to businesses and other community groups
- Provide programming and resources to increase mental health awareness

Goal 3.3:

The library develops literacy and leadership skills to encourage civic engagement and involvement in the community.

Activities:

- Provide classes and events that inform and connect patrons to foster life skills for all ages
 - Host life skills programming (find members of the community as potential speakers)
- Engage with local and state agencies to create partnerships that promote literacy and leadership skills for our communities
 - Revive the Triangle South Literacy Works partnership

Promoting Wellbeing

continued

- Support local businesses by providing financial literacy workshops, tools, and resources
- Increase civic engagement of community members
 - Provide legal literacy resources and programming
 - Create and promote voter registration resources