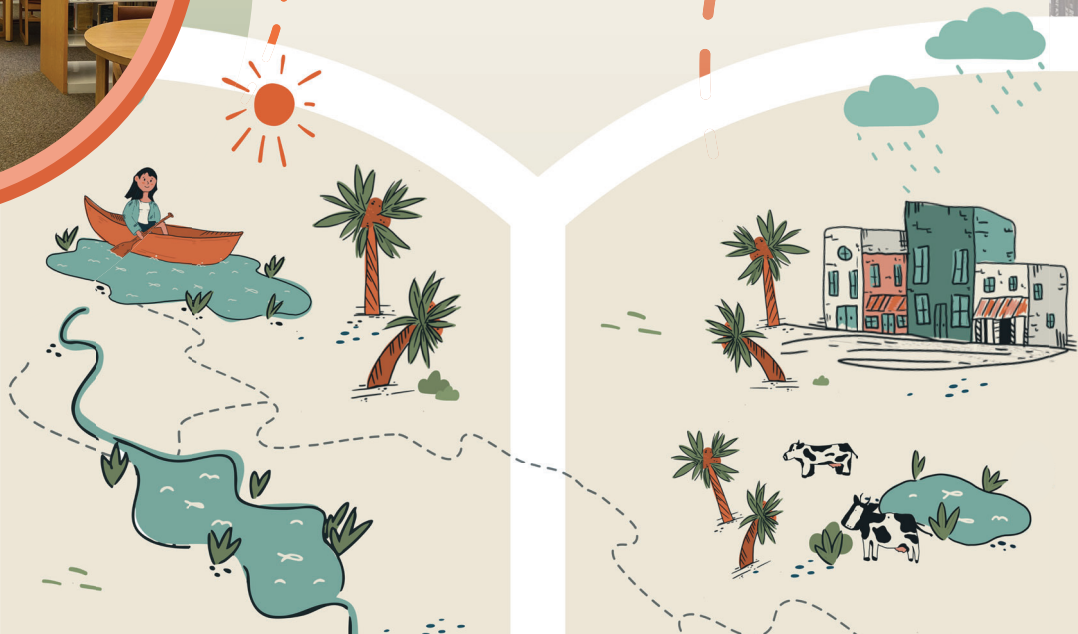




LIBRARY STRATEGIC MASTER PLAN JULY 2026





EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Hernando County Library System includes four locations that collectively serve over 210,000 residents. The goals and strategies outlined in this Master Plan are informed by an evaluation of existing facility conditions, services, and extensive community input from library staff, stakeholders, and residents. This approach aligns recommendations with current needs and serves as a guide for the System's continued growth.

Many of the identified strategies can be implemented in the short term (0–2 years), allowing the Library System to adapt and grow as services expand. These strategies are organized into four key themes derived from community input: expanding program offerings, optimizing existing facilities and spaces, establishing sustainable funding sources and community partnerships, and increasing awareness of available services. Longer-term (6–10 years) initiatives are primarily focused on facility expansions and renovations, which require additional planning, coordination, and financial investment.

At a facility level, recommendations focus on enhancing the functionality and accessibility of existing spaces while planning for future growth. Key strategies include expanding program offerings and establishing metrics to track participation and engagement, optimizing interior layouts to better support services and community use, and pursuing long-term facility expansions or reconfigurations where needed. Additional strategies emphasize diversifying funding sources through donations and membership models, strengthening community partnerships, and leveraging existing engagement practices to enhance the delivery and awareness of library services. The strategies and goals mentioned here are expanded on in Section 5 and Appendix A of this plan.

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Figure 1. Staff Meeting, 2024



Figure 2. West Branch Sidewalk Chalk Art Event, 2024





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SECTION: 1

INTRODUCTION: VISION AND PURPOSE





PURPOSE OF THE PLAN

The Hernando County Public Library Master Plan establishes a collective vision for Library System and identifies future opportunities and goals that reflect the needs of the community through the year 2036. The Master Plan is both aspirational and practical in its intent to align with the adjacent goals of the County and prioritizes actions to assist the Hernando County Public Library System deliver its vision to the community.

The Master Plan

- ★ Assess current library assets and operations
- ★ Identify gaps and opportunities within the Hernando County Public Library System
- ★ Compare the Hernando County Public Library System against other public library systems
- ★ Establish a roadmap for the future of the Hernando County Public Library System



Figure 3. Spring Hill Branch VPK Fair, 2023



Figure 4. West Branch National Library Week, 2023

HERNANDO COUNTY LIBRARY MISSION, VISION, AND GOALS

Current Mission Statement

To provide spaces where all are welcome to discover, create, and learn through innovative technology and library resources.

Current Vision Statement

Hernando County Public Library System is an essential part of a just and fair community, where all can thrive and grow.

Summary of Goals

According to the Hernando County Public Library System Fiscal Year 2022–2023 Annual Budget, *the County's Libraries are an innovative center for lifelong community enrichment, education, and entertainment providing quality resources and services in a welcoming, customer-friendly environment.*

The Hernando County Public Library System's goals are to maintain a knowledgeable, creative, and engaged staff that offers exceptional customer service, continues to support Grow Early learning initiatives, expands our artistic and cultural offerings, provide services to disadvantaged and underserved populations, increases strategic partnerships in the community, and creates collections and services to support community priorities and needs.

The Libraries are committed to being a dynamic, constantly evolving center for the community through embracing the wisdom of the past, the technologies of the future, and the needs and contributions of our customers.

Key Strategies and Goals Identified in the Strategic Plan

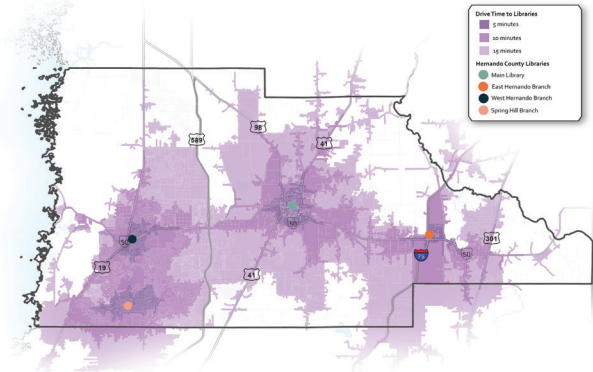
- ★ **Goal #1:** Grow and diversify library program offerings
- ★ **Goal #2:** Optimize existing facilities and seek opportunities for growth
- ★ **Goal #3:** Establish consistent funding and financial resources while optimizing existing revenue streams and strengthening strategic partnerships
- ★ **Goal #4:** Increase awareness for the services offered by the Libraries



LIBRARY LOCATIONS AND SERVICES

Figure 5 shows the four Hernando County Public Libraries and the time it takes to drive to each location. According to this data, the majority of residents are able to access each location within a 15-minute drive time. Table 1 provides detailed information on each library location.

Figure 5: Hernando County Public Library facility locations and their drive times.



Hernando County Library Locations¹

Main Library, Frederick Eugene Lykes Jr. Memorial Library

238 Howell Avenue, Brooksville, FL 34601

Located near a bus stop

East Hernando Branch

6457 Windmere Road, Brooksville, FL 34602

Located near a bus stop

West Hernando Branch, Staffordene T. Foggia Memorial Library

6335 Blackbird Avenue, Brooksville, FL 34613

Located near a bus stop

Spring Hill Branch, Harold G. Zopp Memorial Library

9220 Spring Hill Drive, Spring Hill, FL 34608

Located near a bus stop

¹ More details are provided in Table 1 of this plan.

TABLE 1. HERNANDO COUNTY PUBLIC LIBRARY SYSTEM SERVICE OUTLETS, 2024

SUBJECT	MAIN LIBRARY	EAST HERNANDO BRANCH	SPRING HILL BRANCH	WEST HERNANDO BRANCH
Address	238 Howell Avenue, Brooksville, FL 34601	6457 Windmere Road, Brooksville, FL 34602	9220 Spring Hill Drive, Spring Hill, FL 34608	6335 Blackbird Avenue, Brooksville, FL 34613
Year Constructed	1950	2005 <i>Original library location opened in 1994</i>	2005	1985
Size (Square Feet)	9,091	8,033	10,055	13,076
Meeting/Activity Room Space*	688 sqft	711 sqft	1,080 sqft	401 sqft
Key Facility Characteristics	- Community Room - Children's Area - Seating Lounge - Self-Check-Out Stations - Reference Desk - Atrium/Patio	- Computer Lab - Community Room - Children's Area - Teen's Area - Seating Lounge - Self-Check-Out Stations - Reference Desk - Atrium Exterior Seating - Storybook Walkway	- Study Room - Computer Lab - Children's Area - Teen's Area - Seating Lounge - Self-Check-Out Stations - Reference Desk - Atrium/Patio	- Children's Area - Seating Lounge - Self-Check-Out Stations - Reference Desk - Atrium/Patio
Public Service Hours Per Year	1,850	1,946	1,986	1,962
Programs Held Annually**	170	181	275	210

*These measurements need to be physically verified.
**Programs can be ongoing, in a series, or one-time events.



TABLE 2. HERNANDO COUNTY PUBLIC LIBRARY SYSTEM SERVICE OUTLETS, 2024

SUBJECT	MAIN LIBRARY	EAST HERNANDO BRANCH	SPRING HILL BRANCH	WEST HERNANDO BRANCH
Annual Program Participation**	2,363	2,349	5,797	3,245
Venue Event Count**	11	6	26	17

*These measurements need to be physically verified.
**Programs can be ongoing, in a series, or one-time events.

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SECTION: 2

ABOUT THE
HERNANDO
COUNTY LIBRARY
SYSTEM AND THE
PEOPLE IT SERVES





HERNANDO COUNTY LIBRARY HISTORY

From community-led beginnings, the Hernando County Public Library System grew through the support of residents, civic organizations, and public partnerships. Over the last century, the library has become a Countywide network, which is integral to Hernando County's educational, cultural, and social fabric.

TIMELINE

• Civic Beginnings (1910–1929)

Public library service in Hernando County began in 1910, when the Brooksville Women's Club, led by Mrs. R. N. Chelf, established a small public lending library in the First National Bank Building (today the King Risk Partners Insurance Agency).

• Depression Grit (1930–1948)

In 1930, the Works Progress Administration (WPA) built the first dedicated library at Bell Avenue and Mount Fair Avenue, establishing a permanent home for the collection. That same decade, Mrs. Bertha Hancock Ashbrook launched Florida's first Bookmobile, delivering books weekly to rural communities and schools.

By the 1940s, community leaders, such as Mr. Frederick Lykes, envisioned a modern public library and formed a Library Association to fund a larger, permanent facility.



Figure 6. Hernando County Bookmobile, Date Unknown.

• Post WWII Boom (1949–1979)

In 1949, construction began on a new library site near Fort Dade Avenue and Old Hammock Road. The Frederick Eugene Lykes Jr. Memorial (Main) Library opened in 1950, symbolizing a new era of County investment in public education and access. In 1951, the Florida Legislature authorized shared financial support among Florida counties, cities, and school boards, establishing a stable public funding model.

During this period, the Friends of the Library emerged as a key volunteer organization supporting fundraising, programming, and community engagement.

Over the following decades, the System added wings and volunteer-run facilities in Spring Hill, Ridge Manor, and Istachatta. By 1977, it served more than 11,000 cardholders and housed over 47,000 volumes, firmly establishing the library as a cornerstone of civic life.





TIMELINE (CONTINUED)

• Modernizing for the New Tech Age (1980–1999)

In 1982, Hernando County joined the Florida State Library System and hired its first certified librarian, Mrs. Hester O'Leary, to professionalize operations and secure state and federal grants. This transition formally established the Hernando County Public Library System as a coordinated Countywide network.

The West Hernando Branch opened in 1985. The East Hernando Branch followed in 1994, and the historic Rock Cannery Library was restored and reopened in 1997.



Figure 7. Groundbreaking of the Brooksville Branch (now known as the West Hernando Branch, or the Staffordene T. Foggia Memorial Library). Photo dated 1986.

• Present Day (2000–Present)

Since 2000, the Hernando County Public Library System has strengthened its role as a core community resource through facility improvements, expanded services, and continued support for literacy, learning, and public access.

A defining change in this period has been the transition from a primarily physical collection to a blended model that includes print materials, e-books, digital audiobooks, databases, and other electronic resources.

Today, the libraries operate as modern information centers that provide technology access, educational programming, meeting space, and essential services that support lifelong learning and community connection.





THE PEOPLE THEY SERVE: DEMOGRAPHICS
SUMMARY AND TRENDS

Over the last fifteen years, Hernando County has seen a **21% increase in population growth** and is **anticipated to grow an additional 17% by 2050**. The Main Library, East, and West Hernando Library locations are situated along primary roads and have access to prominent bicycle and pedestrian networks. These networks include the Good Neighbor Trail, Withlacoochee State Trail, and the Suncoast Parkway Trail. The Main Library, West, and Spring Hill Library locations are located in densely populated areas, placing them within a 15-minute drive to many of the County residents. The accessibility of Hernando County's Library System will become increasingly valuable as the area continues to grow.

As the population evolves, the libraries will have to adapt and expand their services to accommodate young and aging demographics as well as offering more multilingual resources.

Key Takeaways

- Three Library Branches (Spring Hill, West, and Main) are accessible within a 15-minute drive for most residents.
- The County maintains an educational network of 24 K-12 facilities, indicating a need for strong youth-oriented programming and study spaces within the Library System.
- Youth and senior populations are both concentrated in the southwest region of the County (west of SR-589), creating a high demand for intergenerational resources at the West, Main, and Spring Hill library locations.
- The geographic overlap of key age groups suggests these branches serve as vital hubs for both childcare support and senior engagement.



Figure 8. Staff Meeting, 2023



Figure 9. Library School Visit, 2023

Summary of Hernando County

Figure 10. Summary of Demographic Data in Hernando County, 2024

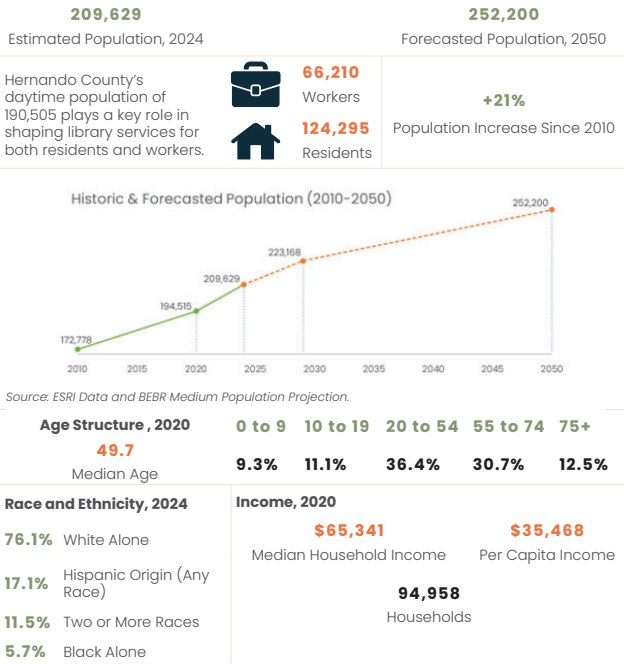
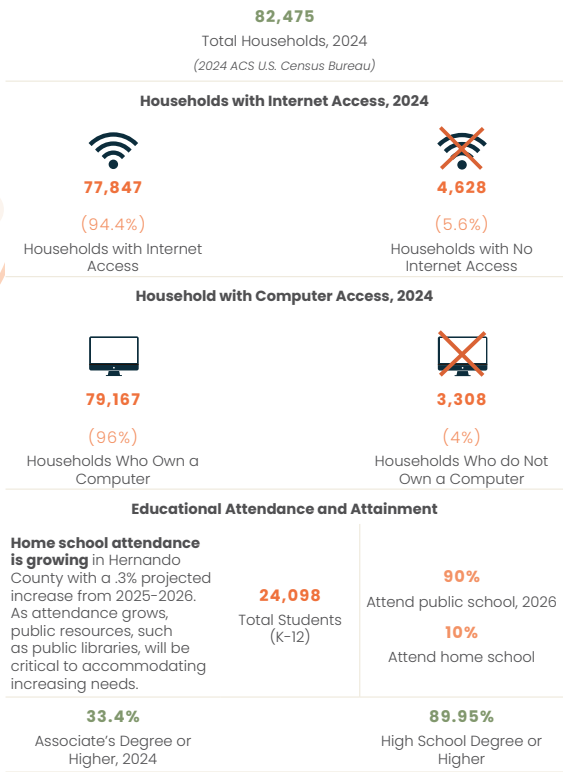




Figure 11. Summary of Household and Educational Data in Hernando County, 2024, 2026



Over the last decade, **access to physical books in the public education system has declined with a greater emphasis of technology and digital materials.** During this time there has also been a decrease in reading proficiency throughout Florida. Since 2019, Hernando County's **average reading score has decreased by more than one point**, exceeding the statewide decline of 0.77 points over the same period. To combat these challenges, Hernando County Library hired a staff member in 2026 to tackle growing struggles.

TABLE 3. AVERAGE READING SCORES AND TRENDS IN SCORES, 2019-2024

	2019 Average	2022 Average	2024 Average	2019-2022 Change	2022-2024 Change	2019-2024 Change
Hernando County, FL	.14	-.08	-.88	↓ -.22	↓ -.80	↓ -.102
Florida	.32	.20	-.45	↓ -.11	↓ -.65	↓ -.77
Similar Districts ¹ in Florida	.45	.25	-.37	↓ -.20	↓ -.62	↓ -.82

¹Comparison districts are the nearest matches within the same state based on socioeconomic status, demographics, and size.

Adult Literacy, 2017

20.3% At or Below Level 1 Literacy ¹	60.3% At or Below Level 2 Literacy ²
---	---

¹Level 1 Literacy: Not being able to work with print material, not able to read and understand short materials, and not able to do simple tasks, such as filling out forms.

²Level 2 Literacy: Better, but still struggling with reading and writing abilities, including being able to read and understand print and digital materials and compare and contrast between materials with better understanding.



Age Distribution and Library Locations

Figure 11 and 12 show the total youth and senior populations in Hernando County. The youth population in the County is most concentrated in the southwestern portion of the County, particularly west of SR-589. This demographic density is a key factor for the East, West, Spring Hill, and Main Hernando Library locations. The high concentration of young people nearby helps inform the types of activities, programs, and resources these branches offer to best serve this age group. The senior population is also located in the southwestern portion of the County. Notably, the senior population density occurs along SR-50, in the area between US-19 and SR-589. The high concentration of older residents nearby helps inform the types of activities, programs, and resources these branches offer to best serve this age group.

Figure 12. Total Youth Population in Hernando County

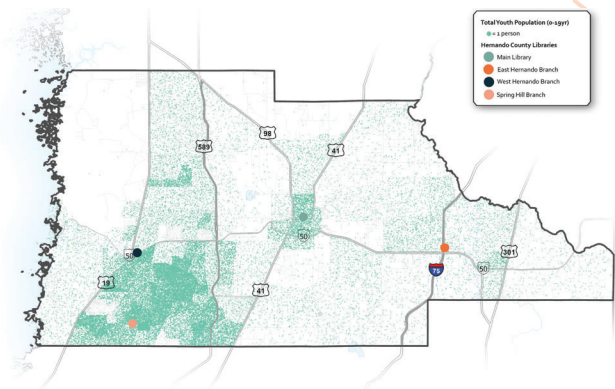
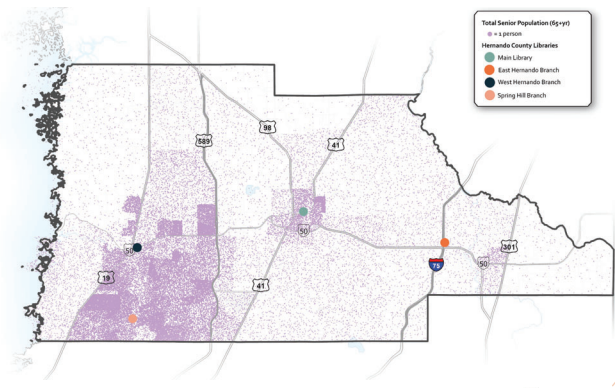


Figure 13. Total Senior Population in Hernando County





ABOUT HERNANDO COUNTY LIBRARIES: LEVEL OF SERVICE REPORT

The Master Plan evaluates the current library facilities and creates a comprehensive framework for the next ten (10) years of the library's future. This Level of Service Analysis is one of the steps in the creation of the Library Strategic Master Plan and includes a needs assessment to provide recommendations on facility improvements, resource allocation, and investments.



Figure 14. East Branch Location, 2025

Key Takeaways

- ★ Hernando County has four libraries that have over 70,000 registered users, serving nearly one-third of the population.
- ★ Virtual library use has become increasingly popular in the last ten years, while in-person visits have steadily decreased and plateaued since then.
- ★ Hernando County Libraries offered 982 programs in 2024, reaching 29,000 participants.
- ★ Opportunities exist to expand fee and donation revenue, which currently accounts for less than 2% of the Library System's \$4 million+ operating budget, the majority of which is locally funded.



Figure 15. Spring Hill Branch Location, 2025

Overview of the Analysis

A series of pertinent reviews were conducted for this analysis including site evaluations to inventory and observations of County-owned and managed library sites; an assessment of existing library programs and services, operations and maintenance practices; a review of the Library's current System, including its collection adequacy, organizational effectiveness, staffing, service accessibility, building/facilities, and cooperative activities; and a comparative analysis against three (3) peer institutions, one (1) aspirational, and five (5) were also reviewed for additional contextual understanding.

Peer Institutions:

- ★ Sumter County
- ★ Citrus County
- ★ Clay County

Aspirational Institution:

- ★ Pasco County

Additional Institutions reviewed for context and background:

- ★ Charlotte County
- ★ Leon County
- ★ Okaloosa County
- ★ Marion County
- ★ Lake County

The purpose of this analysis is to ensure that the Hernando County Public Library System evolves to meet the changing needs of the community. By thoroughly assessing current assets and operations, identifying gaps and opportunities, and benchmarking against other communities, the strategic recommendations developed from this analysis will provide a clear roadmap for maintaining high-quality library services and supporting the County's sustainable growth into the future.

¹Identified by Hernando County staff.

²These additional Counties were chosen for review based on their population comparison.





ABOUT THE AREA

Hernando County spans 473 square miles and includes a variety of natural landscapes, including the Gulf of America coastline, the hills of Brooksville Ridge, the Weeki Wachee River, as well as numerous parks and nature preserves. Despite its abundance of rural scenery and outdoor recreational opportunities, the County's population distribution is predominantly urban. In 2020, over 79% of Hernando County residents lived in urban areas. These urban centers have the highest population density, whereas the remaining 21% of residents are sparsely distributed across the County's rural regions.

The concentration of population in Hernando County is found primarily west of State Road 589 (Veterans Expressway/Suncoast Parkway), south of Cortez Boulevard, and bordered by U.S. Highway 19 (Commercial Way) to the west. This region, largely known as Spring Hill, is an unincorporated census-designated place (CDP) and serves as the County's main urban hub.

LIBRARY FACILITIES

The Hernando County Public Library System is an example of how libraries function as "third spaces" within communities. Third spaces are public gathering places for community members. These spaces are separate from home and work, but they foster community and socialization. These are neutral grounds where individuals can relax and participate in a wide range of activities. Libraries have served as accessible community hubs that offer spaces for collaboration and connection. These spaces provide patrons with resources beyond books by offering amenities such as access to Wi-Fi, technology, and meeting rooms.



210,136
Service Area
Population



4
Library
Locations



40,255
Square
Footage



7,839
Total Public
Service Hours



70,894
Total Registered
Users

Condition

All Hernando County Public Library System buildings are maintained by the County's Facilities team. As a result, library facilities are included in the standard schedule for both routine and deferred service and maintenance. Observations indicate that all library facilities are in good operational condition and receive appropriate attention from the service team.

Although the library team has historically requested certain improvements, these requests follow the same design and construction process as those from other county agencies. Similarly, libraries utilize the central procurement system for acquiring materials, furniture, fixtures, and equipment.

Utilization

Space allocation within the Library System is managed consistently across all facilities. Each location features dedicated areas for traditional collections, meeting rooms, computer laboratories, youth literature, teen literature, and operational functions. Collections are positioned at accessible heights, with staff readily available to assist patrons as needed.

All areas of each library are fully accessible and include clearly defined circulation routes. Accessible workstations are provided at every facility, and entry/exit points accommodate individuals using alternative mobility devices. Security protocols restrict direct interaction between patrons and circulation personnel; however, some doors remain unalarmed. A comprehensive security audit is recommended to ensure uniform safety standards, though no immediate hazards have been identified.

Computer laboratories exhibit steady usage and frequent patron engagement. Main collection areas and specialized youth and teen sections also experience significant use, particularly in alignment with academic schedules. Youth areas are currently seeing increased occupancy, largely due to their use by home school groups engaging in collaborative learning activities.

Furnishings throughout the facilities are suitable for their respective user groups. General seating is adult-sized, consistent in quality, and well maintained at each branch. Youth program areas feature child-scaled, inviting, and accessible furniture, while teen spaces are equipped with comfortable and attractive furnishings. Although some furniture items are dated, all remain serviceable. Outdoor furniture presents some inconsistencies; benches meet commercial and institutional standards, yet certain residential-grade installations show signs of wear. Overall, facility furnishings are well maintained.

Meeting rooms are in high demand, supporting public events, County training sessions, and private functions. These rooms are regularly designated as voting sites and facilitate various County operations and instructional programs. Activities conducted in these spaces include educational workshops, professional training, and informal instructional events.



The Hernando County Public Library System exemplifies coordinated management and thoughtful resource allocation across its branches. Facilities are consistently maintained, accessible, and equipped to support a diverse array of patrons and programming. Spaces are designed to accommodate traditional and evolving library functions—from collections and technology labs to youth, teen, and adult learning environments. Security, accessibility, and furniture standards are systematically addressed, ensuring comfort and usability. Meeting rooms serve as crucial community hubs for civic engagement, education, and County operations.

The library's collection strategy is data-informed and robust, reflecting participation in statewide benchmarking and reporting efforts. Holdings are comprehensive, spanning books, media formats, periodicals, and innovative non-traditional resources, such as games and gardening seeds. This breadth supports a wide range of community interests and learning opportunities, illustrating the library's commitment to adaptability, inclusivity, and continuous improvement.

COLLECTION

The Hernando County Public Library System participates annually in the Florida Annual Statistical Report, a statewide survey administered by the Division of Library and Information Services and the Institute of Museum and Library Services (IMLS). This reporting process tracks key performance indicators such as revenue sources, expenditures, and service outputs to benchmark the efficiency and sustainability of public library operations across Florida. This LOS report utilizes the data submitted in the Florida Annual Statistical Report survey from 2024.

Physical Size

In Fiscal Year 2024, the Hernando County Public Library System maintained a collection comprising 116,227 physical items. As detailed below, 90.6% consisted of books, 7.1% were physical video formats such as DVDs and Blu-rays, and 2.2% comprised physical audio formats such as CDs. Additionally, the Library System provided 46 print subscriptions to journals and magazines; 21 of these were available for circulation, allowing patrons to borrow them, while the remaining subscriptions were designed for in-library use only.

Hernando County Public Library patrons can also borrow from a collection of other physical items. This collection consists of more than 200 uncategorized items to promote thought and learning. The non-traditional collection has games, telescopes, and other devices. Additionally, the System has a robust seed library to promote gardening literacy.

HERNANDO COUNTY PUBLIC LIBRARY SYSTEM PHYSICAL ITEMS COLLECTION, 2024

					
105,307	2,499	8,200	21	25	200
Books	Audios	Videos	Current Print Serial Subscription (Circulating)	Current Print Serial Subscription (Non-Circulating)	Other Circulating Physical Items

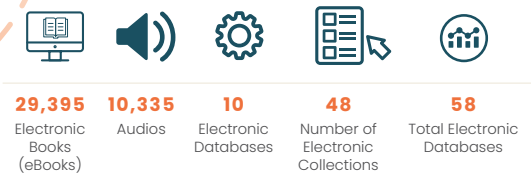


Digital Resources

To serve more patrons and satisfy the growing need for electronic resources, the Hernando County Public Library System has shifted to include an extensive digital collection. As seen below, the Library System has over 29,000 electronic books and 10,000 audio files. Patrons can use either their personal electronic devices or Hernando County Public Library computers to access these resources.

It is important to note that during the time of this analysis, state and federal funding to the Institute of Museum and Library Services and the Library Services and Technology Act were cut, resulting in the termination of the interlibrary loan services. This statewide catalog was available to patrons all over the state to request materials such as books and articles from other libraries. The data shown below is from 2024 and may not reflect the status of the Hernando County Public Library System's digital resources as of September 8, 2025.

HERNANDO COUNTY PUBLIC LIBRARY DIGITAL ITEMS COLLECTION, 2024



STAFFING

Qualifications

As of 2024, the Hernando County Public Library System reported a staff of ten (10) full-time equivalent¹ (FTE) librarians holding accredited master's degrees. All librarians met this qualification; assuming normal distribution, this would mean that every library patron has access to at least two (2) qualified librarians during normal service hours.

Additionally, given modern day technological advancements, Hernando County Public Library patrons have access to Ask A Librarian, the "Human Search Engine", that connects patrons to librarians across the Tampa Bay Library Consortium (TBLC). Certified librarians are accessible through a live chat platform from 10 am to 10 pm (Eastern Time) Monday through Thursday and 10 am to 5 pm (Eastern Time) Friday through Sunday.

Organization

In 2024, the Hernando County Public Library System reported a total of 34 FTE staff, which equates to approximately 0.48 FTE per 1,000 patrons. Of these, ten (10) professional librarians have accredited master's degrees. Each facility benefits from access to certified librarians during normal operating hours, ensuring high-quality service delivery and professional support for patrons.

TABLE 4. HERNANDO COUNTY PUBLIC LIBRARY SYSTEM FTE

Total Librarians	10
Other Paid Staff (FTE)	24
Total Number of Volunteer Hours	770

¹According to the 2024 Florida Annual Statistical Report, to ensure comparable data, 40 hours per week has been set as the measure of full time employees. To compute full-time equivalents of employees in any category, take the number of hours worked per week by all employees in that category and divide it by 40. For example, if you had three regularly scheduled part-time employees who worked a total of 60 hours per week, FTE = 60/40 = 1.5 FTE staff. Include all positions budgeted, whether filled or unfilled.



Central Services

The Hernando County Public Library System operates as a four-facility network serving a population of roughly 210,000 residents. Collectively, the System encompasses 40,255 square feet of library space, averaging about 10,064 square feet per facility. Each facility is open for an average of 1,960 hours annually and supports a combined total of more than 70,000 registered users. Table 4 summarizes key system-wide data for 2024.

TABLE 5. HERNANDO COUNTY PUBLIC LIBRARY SYSTEM CENTRAL SERVICES SUMMARY, 2024.

Service Area Population	210,136
Number Of Facilities	4
Total Square Footage	40,255
Average Square Footage Per Branch	10,063.8
Average Public Service Hours Per Branch	1,959.8
Total Registered Users	70,894
User Service Hours Per Facility	36.2

The Library System is supported by an active Friends of the Library organization, which in 2024 included 210 members and raised \$20,766 to enhance programming, events, and community engagement initiatives across the Library System.

SERVICES AND PROGRAMS

The Hernando County Public Library System provides a broad range of services, programs, and resources that meet the diverse educational and recreational needs of residents. In addition to traditional circulation, the System offers access to technology, digital literacy instruction, reference assistance, and community programming for all age groups.

Technology and Digital Access

The Hernando County Public Library System provides patrons and staff with extensive internet and electronic access. In 2024, the Library System hosted more than 80 in-person events focused on technology instruction for both children and adults. Online, the library's website connects users to educational and workforce development tools, including driver's education, test preparation, career resources, language-learning programs, and research databases.

TABLE 6. HERNANDO COUNTY PUBLIC LIBRARY SYSTEM INTERNET AND ELECTRONIC RESOURCES, 2024

Number of Staff Internet Computers	50
Number of Internet Computers for the General Public	104
Wireless Sessions Per Year	48,983
Number of Staff Receiving Technology Instruction	161
Number of Users Receiving Technology Instruction	6,448
Annual Number of Persons Who Complete the Internet Safety Education Program	5



Reference

The Hernando County Public Library System continues to serve as a trusted resource for information and assistance. In 2024, library staff responded to more than 461,000 reference transactions, including in-person and virtual inquiries through email and live chat. The System recorded 204,291 in-person visits, reflecting consistent community use of library facilities for study, research, and public programs.

TABLE 7. HERNANDO COUNTY PUBLIC LIBRARY SYSTEM REFERENCE TRANSACTIONS AND VISITS, 2024.

Traditional Reference Transactions	460,012
Virtual Reference Transactions	1,172
Total Reference Transactions	461,184
Library Visits	204,291

Circulation

In 2024, the Hernando County Public Library System saw strong demand across both traditional materials and digital content. Adult materials accounted for the largest share of circulation, as shown in Table 7.

TABLE 8. HERNANDO COUNTY PUBLIC LIBRARY SYSTEM CIRCULATION AND COLLECTION USE, 2024.

CATEGORY	COUNT
Circulation by Audience	
Circulation of Adult Materials	279,174
Circulation of Children's Materials	94,562
Total Annual Circulation of Materials	373,736
Use by Format	
Physical Item Circulation	238,108
Circulation of Other Physical Items	1,178
Total Electronic Content Use	246,481
Total Collection Use	485,767

Programming

In 2024, the Hernando County Public Library System hosted a total of 982 programs, including 960 in-person events and 22 virtual programs, reaching more than 29,000 participants. Programming remains one of the library's strongest service areas, offering a diverse mix of activities for all ages, from storytimes and book clubs to community events, technology instruction, and arts-based learning.

As shown in Table 8, the Spring Hill Branch accounted for the largest share of in-person programs (31.4%) and attendees (38%). The West Hernando Branch followed with 26.9% of events and 21.8% of participants, while the East Hernando and Main Libraries contributed 21.3% and 20.5% of total in-person programming, respectively.

TABLE 9. IN-PERSON PROGRAMS AND ATTENDANCE BY LIBRARY FACILITY, 2024.

	No. of Events	% of Total Events	No. of Attendees	% of Total Attendees
MAIN LIBRARY	197	20.5%	3,716	14.0%
EAST HERNANDO BRANCH	204	21.3%	6,930	26.2%
SPRING HILL BRANCH	301	31.4%	10,053	38.0%
WEST HERNANDO BRANCH	258	26.9%	5,770	21.8%
TOTAL (IN PERSON)	960	100%	26,469	100%

Community Outreach

Library staff regularly participate in community outreach, attending local events like Chamber of Commerce breakfasts and the annual Trunk-or-Treat. They communicate with residents at various community-wide events to provide information about available library services. The Hernando County Public Library System also serves as a venue for civic functions, including early voting and community meetings. In 2024, the library system held 124 events across four facilities, attracting over 12,000 residents.

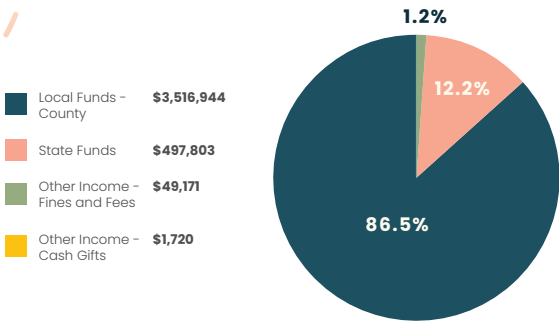


COST EFFECTIVENESS

In Fiscal Year 2024, the Library System reported a total operating income of \$4,065,638. As shown in Figure 15, the majority of funding (86.5%) was derived from local County sources, primarily through the General Fund. State and federal funding accounted for 12.2%, while fines, fees, and donations made up less than 2% combined.

When compared to the 70,894 registered users (including both resident and non-resident borrowers), the System operated at approximately \$57.35 per user in 2024. This figure reflects Hernando County's ability to maintain a broad range of programs, collections, and digital resources at a low per-capita cost.

Figure 16. Hernando County Public Library System Funding Sources, 2024



BENCHMARKING

To evaluate service efficiency, facility coverage, and collection strength, the Hernando County Public Library System was compared to nine other Florida counties with similar population sizes or regional contexts: Sumter, Citrus, Charlotte, Clay, Leon, Okaloosa, Marion, Lake, and Pasco. In addition to peer comparisons, statewide and national library data were reviewed to provide broader context for how Hernando County performs relative to Florida averages and overall national trends.

This benchmarking analysis highlights where Hernando County aligns with, exceeds, or trails peer systems, as well as how the system compares to typical library service levels observed across the state and the United States. Together, these comparisons help distinguish which conditions reflect local scale and staffing realities versus broader structural differences in library service delivery.

Comparative Library Systems

Hernando County maintains four outlets serving approximately 210,000 residents, resulting in an average of 10,064 square feet per outlet and 1,960 annual service hours. These figures fall slightly below the peer county average but remain consistent with similarly sized systems such as Charlotte and Clay Counties. When compared to statewide averages, Hernando's facilities are smaller than the typical Florida library outlet, which averages approximately 20,000 square feet, reflecting the County's more compact and decentralized service model rather than reduced access.

Hernando County's registered user base of 70,894 represents roughly one-third of its population, a participation rate comparable to peer counties and consistent with statewide trends. While Florida's overall registered user totals are significantly higher due to larger urban systems, Hernando's enrollment levels indicate steady community engagement within a primarily suburban and rural context. The County's compact library network allows for broad service coverage within a 15-minute drive time for most residents despite fewer facilities.

When compared to peer systems, Hernando County maintains a balanced collection size relative to its service population. As shown in Table 9, the Hernando County Public Library Systems houses 116,227 physical items, equating to 1.64 items per user. This ratio is below the peer county average of approximately 3.0 items per user and below the statewide Florida average of 1.13 items per capita. However, Hernando's collection size aligns closely with counties of similar scale and service models, such as Charlotte and Clay, indicating proportional investment rather than under performance.

At the national level, library collection volumes are significantly higher due to the inclusion of major metropolitan systems and large research libraries. The United States average of over 13 items per capita reflects a fundamentally different scale of service and should be viewed as contextual rather than directly comparable to Hernando County's local public Library System.



Digital collections continue to expand as patron demand for e-resources increases. Hernando County currently offers 29,395 e-books and 10,335 digital audio items, placing the System in the mid-range among peer library systems. While larger counties such as Pasco and Marion maintain extensive e-book libraries, Hernando's e-resource levels compare favorably to similarly sized counties and demonstrate a clear shift toward digital access. Nationally, digital holdings far exceed local and state figures, reflecting widespread investments by large urban and regional systems, but Hernando's growth trajectory indicates responsiveness to evolving user preferences within available staffing and funding levels.

TABLE 10. COMPARATIVE LIBRARY COLLECTIONS AND DIGITAL RESOURCES, 2024.

JURISDICTION	PHYSICAL ITEMS IN COLLECTION		BOOKS		E-BOOKS		AUDIO (ELECTRONIC)	
	TOTAL	PER USER	TOTAL	PER USER	TOTAL	PER USER	TOTAL	PER USER
Sumter County	80,616	1.39	64,494	1.12	15,266	0.26	8,946	0.15
Citrus County	196,940	3.60	181,299	3.31	28,523	0.52	4,743	0.09
Charlotte County	193,998	2.38	144,767	1.78	33,962	0.42	29,467	0.36
Hernando County	116,227	1.64	105,307	1.49	29,395	0.41	10,335	0.15
Clay County	190,619	2.16	168,566	1.91	18,948	0.21	27,448	0.31
Leon County	306,331	2.19	257,157	1.84	40,844	0.29	33,014	0.24
Okaloosa County	290,931	7.43	239,821	6.13	15,110	0.39	23,982	0.61
Marion County	583,354	2.45	532,133	2.24	349,608	1.47	10,082	0.04
Lake County	682,486	5.01	569,379	4.18	23,989	0.18	8,317	0.06
Pasco County	226,487	0.61	203,975	0.55	533,652	1.43	215,670	0.58
State of Florida	26,307,630	1.13	22,170,000	0.95	19,310,000	0.83	9,280,000	0.40
United States of America (2023)	748,712,157	13.54	651,090,700	1.94	1,498,165,066	4.46	794,426,104	2.36

Key Performance Indicators

Two key performance indicators were used to evaluate System capacity and efficiency among peer library systems: average square footage per facility and user service hours per facility.

As shown in Table 10, the Hernando County Public Library System has an average of 10,064 square feet per facility, placing it near the mid-range of peer counties. While this footprint is smaller than larger systems such as Leon, Lake, or Pasco Counties, it remains consistent with the County's population size and approach to service. Compared to the statewide Florida average facility size of approximately 20,000 square feet, Hernando's libraries operate at a smaller scale but compensate through geographic coverage and targeted programming.

The Hernando County Public Library System also reported an average of 36.2 user service hours per facility, reflecting balanced operations when compared to other counties of similar scale. While statewide and national totals are significantly higher due to the sheer number of outlets and extended operating hours in large urban systems, Hernando's performance reflects efficient staffing deployment within a lean facility network.

At the national level, total service hours and registered users are driven by extensive multi-branch systems and metropolitan libraries, making direct numerical comparison less indicative of local performance. Within this broader context, Hernando County demonstrates effective resource management and consistent service delivery proportional to its population and current staffing levels.

Together, these metrics show that Hernando County's Library System provides strong service coverage and facility efficiency proportional to its population and currently available staffing resources.





TABLE 11. COMPARATIVE LIBRARY FACILITIES AND SERVICE COVERAGE, 2024

JURISDICTION	SERVICE AREA POPULATION	NUMBER OF OUTLETS	AVERAGE SQUARE FOOTAGE PER OUTLET	AVERAGE PUBLIC SERVICE HOURS PER OUTLET (ANNUAL)	TOTAL REGISTERED USERS	USER SERVICE HOURS PER OUTLET
Sumter County	148,967	5	8,718.8	2,672.0	57,835	21.6
Citrus County	155,790	5	13,800.0	2,440.2	54,780	22.4
Charlotte County	206,334	4	21,800.5	1,922.5	81,544	42.4
Hernando County	210,136	4	10,063.8	1,959.8	70,894	36.2
Clay County	236,365	5	14,102.0	2,680.2	88,183	32.9
Leon County	300,806	7	22,395.3	2,162.3	139,759	64.6
Okaloosa County	311,554	12	14,813.8	1,132.0	39,130	34.6
Marion County	413,951	9	13,131.0	2,241.9	237,772	106.1
Lake County	432,796	16	16,309.4	2,398.6	136,282	56.8
Pasco County	634,768	9	16,090.4	2,446.2	372,421	152.2
State of Florida	23,372,215	560	20,000.0	2,756	1,543,360	560.0
United States of America (2023)	336,172,026	16,823	-	2,135	35,915,693	16,822.34

Evaluation Framework

Utilizing an evaluation framework divided into eight pillars, key outcome areas of the Hernando County Public Library System were assessed for its current performance. At the time of this analysis, the Hernando County Public Library System meets all of the following criteria:

- 1 Customer-Focused Organization
- 2 Community Partner
- 3 Service Access
- 4 Center of Knowledge, Education, and Lifelong Learning
- 5 Popular Culture and Civic Engagement Community Center
- 6 Government and Economic Development
- 7 Center for Child and Teen Literacy Development
- 8 Organizational Management

1. Customer-Focused Organization

The community experiences the Library System as a transparent, responsive, and customer-focused organization where services are aligned with local needs and community input. The Hernando County Public Library System currently implements the following:

- ★ Long-range and annual service plans are developed based on documented community needs and meet requirements for participation in the State Aid to Libraries Program (Section 257.17, Florida Statutes).
- ★ Formal needs assessments (surveys, focus groups, and partner feedback) conducted at least once every five years, with ongoing informal engagement by staff. High-priority audiences are identified as part of systemwide services and facilities planning and are incorporated into outreach and program design. Community representatives, including the Library Advisory Committee and the Friends of the Library, are engaged in service and facilities planning.
- ★ Planning documents and operating and capital budgets are publicly available in multiple formats, including accessible versions upon request and on the library website.



- ★ Customer service values and engagement practices are defined and applied consistently at each branch. The Library System implements a communications plan, in accessible formats where needed, to solicit feedback and share how services are adjusted in response. Regular customer satisfaction surveys are conducted and used to refine services.

2. Community Partner

Community members benefit from the library's collaboration with other organizations and from staff involvement in community life. The Hernando County Public Library System is recognized as a source of cultural capital and civic pride. Collaborative actions include but are not limited to:

- ★ The building and maintenance of relationships with community organizations, local government, and civic groups to maximize shared resources and services.
- ★ Library staff involvement and leadership in community organizations, with administrative support for this involvement.
- ★ The provision of public library functions, including lending, information and research support, public space, internet access, personal computing, and a broad curriculum of classes, workshops, seminars, and events. Library facilities also host community forums, meetings, and discussions that support civic dialogue and engagement.
- ★ A structured volunteer program, with written policies and procedures, supports recruitment, orientation, training, evaluation, and recognition of volunteers.

3. Service Access

Residents recognize library service as an essential, tax-supported public good and can access services in-person, online, and through outreach, regardless of language or ability. Currently, the Hernando County Public Library System excels in providing:

- ★ Tax-supported lending and reference services as required by Section 257.25, Florida Statutes, along with access to public space, programs, and technology.
- ★ Technology services and equipment are aligned with community priorities and help customers achieve personal goals. The library's website functions as a virtual branch that allows customers to access their accounts, digital collections, and other online services at all times. Wireless internet is available during operating hours and public computing capacity keeps pace with evolving standards. The library provides access to current and emerging technology tools and applications and updates or replaces hardware as needed.
- ★ Library outlets located within a reasonable distance based on the urban and rural context of Hernando County with operating hours reflective of the specific needs of the communities served by each branch.

- ★ Outreach services to individuals and groups who cannot easily get to library facilities.
- ★ Web pages, registration and use documents, promotional materials, and wayfinding signage in languages representative of the local community. Hernando County Public Library System management seeks to employ public service staff who speak languages representative of the local community.
- ★ Library facilities and services with adequate access for people with disabilities in accordance with current ADA regulations.

4. Center of Knowledge, Education, and Lifelong Learning

Community members have access to collections, staff expertise, and spaces that support information needs, education, and lifelong learning. The Hernando County Public Library System ensures that:

- ★ Collections are maintained at a size and depth appropriate to community interests, educational levels, and population, and reflect a wide range of topics. Materials are available in multiple formats, including print, non-print, and digital. Expenditures on materials in all formats typically fall between 10 and 15 percent of the operating budget and follow a collection management plan. New materials are ordered at regular intervals throughout the year, and the collection is evaluated periodically to identify strengths and weaknesses.
- ★ Clear, up-to-date signage and wayfinding help customers locate materials. Library System resources are promoted through classes, workshops, activities, and events at library branches and in the community.
- ★ Professional librarians and library staff have the technical skills and training needed to demonstrate resources and troubleshoot common technology issues. New staff receive orientation, and all staff receive ongoing training on policies and procedures.
- ★ Each outlet open 40 or more hours per week has access to at least one full-time librarian with a master's degree in library and information science.
- ★ Staffing levels consider population serviced, attendance, hours, facility layout, and type of services offered.
- ★ Public and private workspaces support research, study, work, and creative projects. The Library System provides equipment and materials for creative expression and production, including reliable and sufficient broadband connectivity to support public use, and adequate floor space available for both public computer workstations and patron-owned devices.





5. Popular Culture and Civic Engagement Community Center

The community views the Hernando County Library System as a welcoming place to gather, enjoy popular culture, and engage in civic and cultural activities where:

- ★ Library facilities offer gathering spaces in a range of sizes and configurations to host social, cultural, and civic activities, including meeting rooms for community groups and cultural presentations.
- ★ Staff provide readers' advisory services that help customers find popular reading, listening, and viewing materials that match their interests.
- ★ Classes, workshops, seminars, and events for all ages introduce library resources, increase awareness of services, support lifelong learning, and provide neutral forums for discussion of public issues. Programs are open to all and scheduled at times and on days that fit community needs and are located in accessible spaces with adaptive equipment and services provided as needed.
- ★ The Hernando County Public Library System collaborates with community organizations, educational institutions, and local government to co-develop and deliver programs and ensure that programs are planned and presented in ways that acknowledge and respect cultural diversity.

6. Government and Economic Development

Residents, job seekers, and businesses use the Library System to connect with government services, build digital skills, and support local economic development. The Hernando County Public Library System offers:

- ★ Public access computers and connectivity support residents in accessing city, county, state, and federal government resources, forms, and application systems.
- ★ Individual assistance and group classes that help increase digital literacy, including software and tools commonly required by local employers. Technology resources are also available to help job seekers improve their skills and complete applications through partnerships with organizations that offer specialized technology training. However, the Library System identifies and promotes additional training and educational resources beyond its own offerings.
- ★ Collections and online resources support job searching, resume writing, software applications, and broader career development.
- ★ In partnership with other local and virtual providers, a curriculum of classes and workshops on job search skills and career planning and offers specialized information services to the business community.
- ★ Surveys and meetings used to assess local business information and learning needs.

- ★ Staff participate in business organizations and service groups to build relationships and stay informed. They also partner with experts and organizations to provide business planning workshops and develop resource packets or kits for entrepreneurs.

7. Center for Child and Teen Literacy Development

Children, teens, and their caregivers are satisfied with youth-focused services and experience improvements in literacy, learning, and engagement. The Hernando County Public Library System works to ensure that:

- ★ Managers or coordinators of children's services hold a graduate library degree and librarians who primarily serve children and teens practice accepted, published professional competencies.
- ★ Children and teen spaces are separated from adult spaces and from each other. Collections for children and teens are organized, shelved separately, and include print and media in current formats. Dedicated computers with internet access are available for children.
- ★ Early literacy classes and events are planned according to the age and developmental needs of children in the community and programs are scheduled and located with time, transportation, language, and socioeconomic factors in mind.
- ★ Early literacy services are also offered at non-library locations where community needs indicate, including sessions for parents, caregivers, and childcare providers.
- ★ The Library System provides enrichment and educational classes, events, and summer reading programs that foster a love of reading and help maintain or improve reading skills.
- ★ Reading events are held at times convenient for children, teens, and their families. Programs encourage independent reading for education and enjoyment.
- ★ Partnerships with childcare agencies and youth-focused professionals help expand access and reduce barriers. Commercial sponsors are acknowledged in a limited, non-promotional way that maintains program neutrality.
- ★ Programs for children and teens use experiential, hands-on learning activities, including STEM and STEAM content. Staff responsible for these programs have opportunities to learn and practice the skills needed to deliver them.
- ★ Staff serving teens are selected for their ability to relate to this age group, and teens are encouraged to join advisory groups and help plan services.
- ★ Program content and presentation techniques are free of gender, cultural, and racial bias.





8. Organizational Management

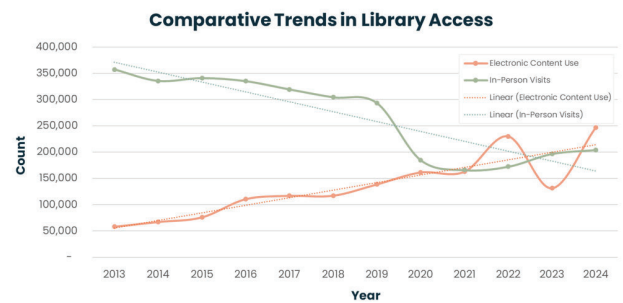
Hernando County community members have confidence in the Library System's governance, planning, financial stewardship, and professional management due to their continued efforts to ensure:

- ★ The governing or advisory board is informed about classes, services, programs, and key issues facing the library, including the regular review of financial and statistical reports, monitoring of statutory changes, court decisions, and legislation related to library operations.
- ★ Library policies, especially those affecting public use, are reviewed and endorsed regularly and updated to reflect statutory and regulatory changes.
- ★ The library clarifies and communicates its core values and develops a long-range plan and annual plan of service.
- ★ Management and staff proactively apply sustainable thinking in facilities.
- ★ Budgets are posted and easily accessible to the public with financial statements as standing items on the governing or advisory board agenda.
- ★ The library meets applicable requirements in Section 257, Florida Statutes, for state grant eligibility.
- ★ Library policies are inclusive of customer input and free from unnecessary barriers to service. Policies are reviewed at least once every three years to ensure continued alignment with community needs.
- ★ The library communicates its return on investment and community impact to residents, governing boards, and stakeholders.
- ★ Strategic partnerships are pursued to enhance sustainability and service reach.
- ★ The administrative head of the library is employed by the eligible administrative unit and fulfills state requirements regarding education and professional experience. The library maintains a sufficient number of professional librarians, information technology staff, and other trained personnel to ensure the delivery of high-quality public service. Furthermore, specialized programs and services for both youth and adults are managed and overseen by professional librarians.
- ★ A designated staff member coordinates public relations across the System.
- ★ Staff compensation is regionally competitive relative to similar public sector positions, considering authority and responsibility.
- ★ Customer ratings of staff service are consistently "good" or better.

Longitudinal Data

Over the past decade, the Hernando County Public Library System's access patterns have shifted significantly, reflecting broader statewide and national trends. As shown in Figure 16, in-person visits have declined steadily since 2013, dropping sharply in 2020 during the COVID-19 pandemic and stabilizing at a lower baseline afterward. In contrast, electronic content use has risen continuously, increasing nearly fourfold since 2013 and reaching its peak in 2024. These intersecting trends indicate that while physical facilities remain essential community anchors, library patrons are increasingly accessing materials and services digitally. Understanding how the community engages with the Library System spatially, whether they visit in person or access content online, will be key to future facility planning and investment in broadband and digital infrastructure across all four locations.

Figure 17. Comparative Trends in Library Access, 2013-2024





As shown in Figure 17, the composition of the library's collection has evolved over time as the Hernando County Public Library System continues to rebalance physical and digital materials. The total number of physical items in circulation has decreased since 2016 as part of a statewide trend toward leaner, more curated physical collections. Meanwhile, the number of e-books and digital audio items has expanded each year, demonstrating the growing importance of remote access and digital lending platforms. The convergence of these two trends in 2024 underscores the library's ongoing transition toward a hybrid service model that meets the needs of both traditional and digital patrons.

Figure 18. Library Collection Trends, 2016–2024

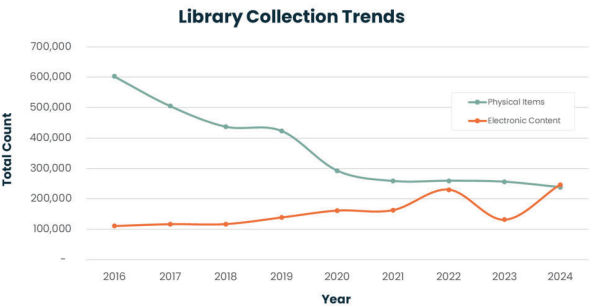


Table 11 highlights longitudinal operational and funding patterns within the Library System. Total registered users have fluctuated over the last decade, reflecting the shift toward digital participation. Although the number of service hours declined between 2011 and 2021, operating income and funding per user increased consistently, rising from \$20.32 in 2011 to \$57.35 in 2024. This demonstrates Hernando County's growing efficiency in delivering services, leveraging technology, and investing strategically in digital platforms to serve a broader user base within a stable budget framework.

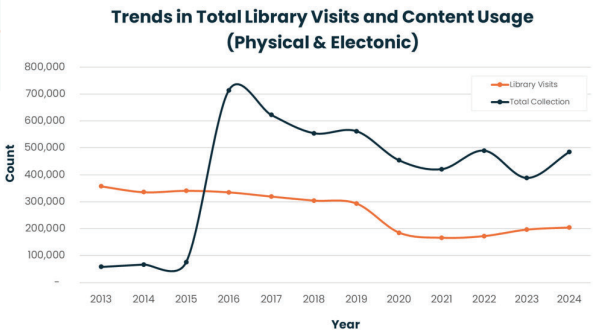
TABLE 12. LONGITUDINAL TRENDS IN SERVICE HOURS AND FUNDING PER USER, 2011–2024

YEAR	SERVICE HOURS	REGISTERED USERS	FUNDING PER USER	OPERATING INCOME
2011	9,979	85,284	\$20.32	\$1,732,840
2012	8,379	91,601	\$16.71	\$1,530,572
2013	8,041	97,642	\$4.22	\$412,316
2014	7,656	102,910	\$17.06	\$1,756,073
2015	8,529	109,366	\$23.73	\$2,594,826
2016	8,461	116,994	\$26.59	\$3,111,386
2017	8,226	122,503	\$25.02	\$3,064,624
2018	8,355	110,813	\$28.89	\$3,201,073
2019	7,715	101,723	\$30.30	\$3,082,232
2020	6,676	92,940	\$34.30	\$3,188,033
2021	7,489	95,172	\$33.27	\$3,166,766
2022	7,816	80,236	\$43.12	\$3,459,992
2023	7,839	70,427	\$53.16	\$3,743,786
2024	7,839	70,894	\$57.35	\$4,065,638



As shown in Figure 18, total collection use remains strong even when library visits stabilized below pre-pandemic levels. The widening gap between physical visits and total content use reflects an evolving user behavior in which patrons increasingly consume materials online. This data underscores the need for a balanced investment strategy that maintains high-quality physical spaces while continuing to strengthen the library's digital ecosystem, ensuring that all residents—regardless of age, location, or income—can fully access library resources.

Figure 19. Longitudinal Trends in Total Library Visits and Content Usage, 2013–2024

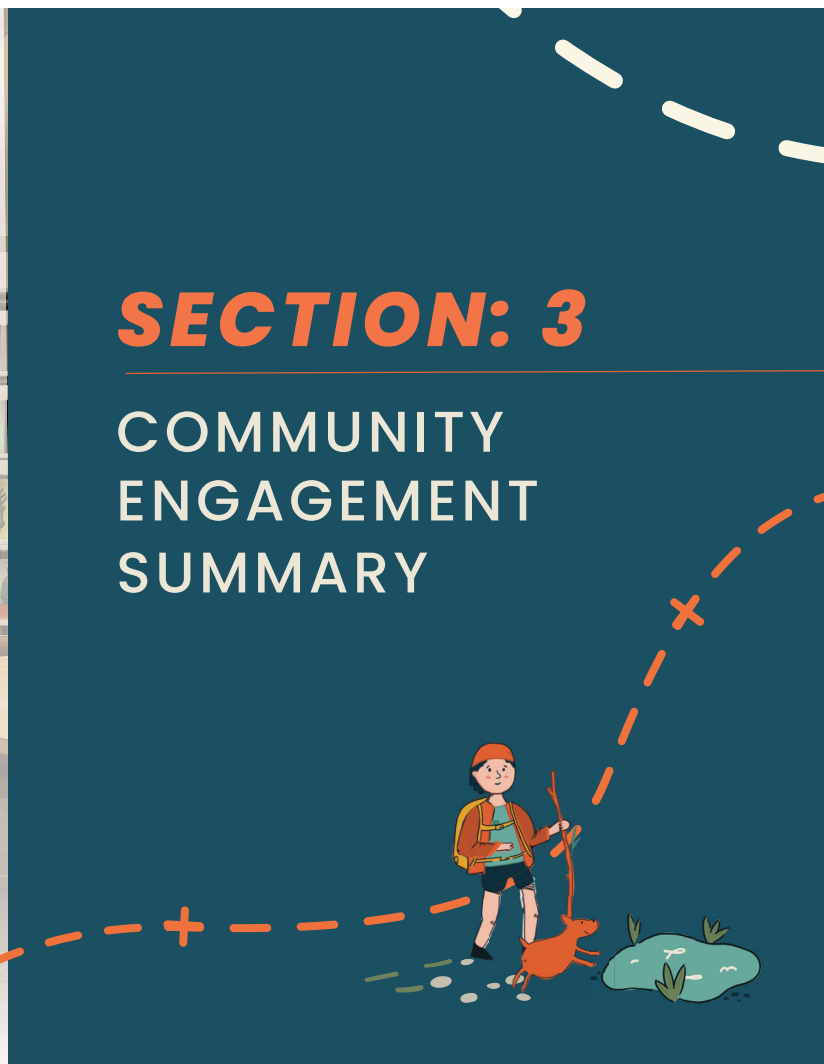


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SECTION: 3

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT SUMMARY





COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

Throughout the Master Plan process, the project team conducted community engagement to better understand the community's vision for Hernando County Libraries. Engagement activities included stakeholder interviews with staff from the library, elections, homeschool group, library facilities staff, and Friends of the Library. The team also organized community visioning workshops with staff and residents, pop-up events, and an online survey. These efforts provided insight into community members' current challenges as well as their priorities and aspirations for the future of the Library System. A full summary of the community engagement activities and findings is provided in Appendix C and D.

Stakeholder Meetings

- ★ Stakeholder and Staff Interviews | Dec 2025 - Feb 2026
- ★ Library Advisory Board Meeting | May 2026
- ★ County Commission Presentations | June, 2026

Community Workshops

- ★ Library Staff Workshop | Dec 2026
- ★ Visioning Workshop - Staff | March 2026
- ★ Visioning Workshop - Public | March 2026

Pop-Up Event

- ★ Brooksville Holiday Parade | Dec 2025

Online Engagement

- ★ Online Survey | Dec 2025 - Feb 2026

Key Takeaways

- ★ Patron interest in programs often conflicts with scheduling, staffing limitations, and limited program diversity.
- ★ Updated floor plans are needed to reconfigure spaces to better accommodate services and evolving community needs.
- ★ Clear and consistent branding, along with improved outreach strategies, is needed to reach broader target populations.
- ★ 84% of survey respondents indicate that investing in Hernando County Libraries should be a high priority and are willing to contribute additional taxes to support them.
- ★ 59% of library users report being unaware of available programs and services, highlighting a need for improved awareness and communication.



Figure 20. Library Staff Workshop, 2025

In-Person Engagement Summary: Major Themes within the Hernando County Library Systems



Grow and Diversify Program Offerings

Strengths

- ★ Books are well used and valued by community members.
- ★ Strong interests in youth, teen, and homeschool programs from the community.
- ★ Existing children's programs and adult classes are beneficial.

Challenges

- ★ Limited variety of programs across age groups, including adults, youth, and technology offerings.
- ★ Limited flexibility in library hours and program scheduling.
- ★ Staffing limitations and training gaps affect service consistency.



Expand Access to Library Resources

Strengths

- ★ High appreciation for library staff, including their helpfulness and friendliness.
- ★ Strong desire to use the library and its services.
- ★ Strong emphasis on family-focused and children services.

Challenges

- ★ Library layout does not support multiple uses, including study rooms, meeting spaces, and age-specific areas.
- ★ Limited library hours, especially in the evenings and on weekends.
- ★ Accessibility issues at facility entrances, exits, and bus stations.
- ★ Funding and staffing constraints limit expansion of facilities and services.



Increase Consistent Funding and Grow Library Partnerships

Strengths

- ★ Existing partnerships with local organizations.
- ★ Community support for expanded partnerships and business sponsorships.

Challenges

- ★ Limited existing community partnerships that could be used to support shared programming.
- ★ Lack of flexible spaces for hosting outside organizations and hands-on learning.



Improve Awareness of Services Offered

Strengths

- ★ Social media is currently an effective way to share library events and services.
- ★ Community members have a strong interest in physical books, browsing, and in-person programs.

Challenges

- ★ Inconsistent messaging/branding across library branches.
- ★ Limited use of outreach platforms reduces awareness of services.
- ★ Event descriptions often lack clarity and detail.

Online Survey Summary

Online surveys were available to residents and library patrons between December 2025 and February 2026 to gather feedback on their experiences with the Hernando County Library System. Respondents were asked to identify the services and features they value most, as well as to describe challenges or barriers encountered when accessing library resources and services.

531

Total Online Survey Responses

98% Of respondents live in Hernando County

26% Of respondents use multiple library locations

22% Of all respondents recorded that they use the Spring Hill Branch the most



Key Takeaways

Program Feedback

- ★ Need for more adult programs, such as adult book clubs, discussion groups, creative classes, and technical training.
- ★ Need for more flexible program scheduling across days and times.
- ★ Improve access to seed libraries, STEM resources, museum passes, and "library of things".
- ★ Maintain current facilities through proactive facility management, such as updating old systems and overall cleanliness.

Participants were asked to rank library collections, programs, and services by level of importance. Their top three responses are below.

82% Physical print items

53% E-books and Audiobooks

47% Passes to museums

Participants were asked to select what they like to do at the library.

84% Borrow/check out materials

55% Look through books and other materials

52% Pick up holds

38% Attend adult library programs

Participants were asked to select what would influence their decision to use the libraries more often.

51% Expanded library hours

48% Coffee shop/cafe

38% Expanded adult programming

36% Creative spaces



Library Facility Feedback

- ★ Lack of flexible library hours during the weekdays and weekends.
- ★ Need for more inviting and versatile spaces, such as meeting spaces, quiet study rooms, and areas to access community services (e.g., healthcare and community resources).
- ★ Improve accessibility for disabled and elderly residents.

Participants were asked to rate their level of agreement with statements related to library facilities.

84% Of respondents strongly agree that investing in libraries should be a high priority for Hernando County



Library Funding and Partnership Feedback

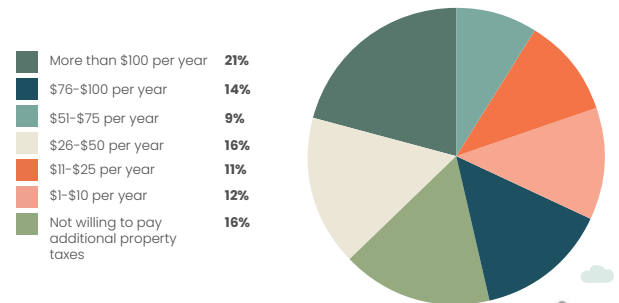
- ★ Diversify funding strategies to include donations, community fundraising, and membership tiers.
- ★ Offer resources to underserved community members by partnering with local organizations.

Participants were asked how much they would be willing to support in additional taxes for Hernando County Libraries.

83% Of respondents are willing to support additional taxes to Hernando County Libraries

16% Of respondents are not willing to support additional taxes to Hernando County Libraries

Figure 21. Participants responses for how much they would be willing to support in additional taxes to improve Hernando County Libraries





Awareness of Library Services Feedback

- ★ Improve clarity and awareness of library services and offerings
- ★ Expand notification systems, such as text, email, or social media alerts, are needed to spread awareness for upcoming events or programs.

Participants were asked to rate their level of awareness related to library services listed below.

- How to find the appropriate library staff to help with in-library and at-home research needs
- Aware of online educational resources available
- Aware of in-person technology courses available
- Aware of services and programs that Hernando County Libraries offer

Over
50%

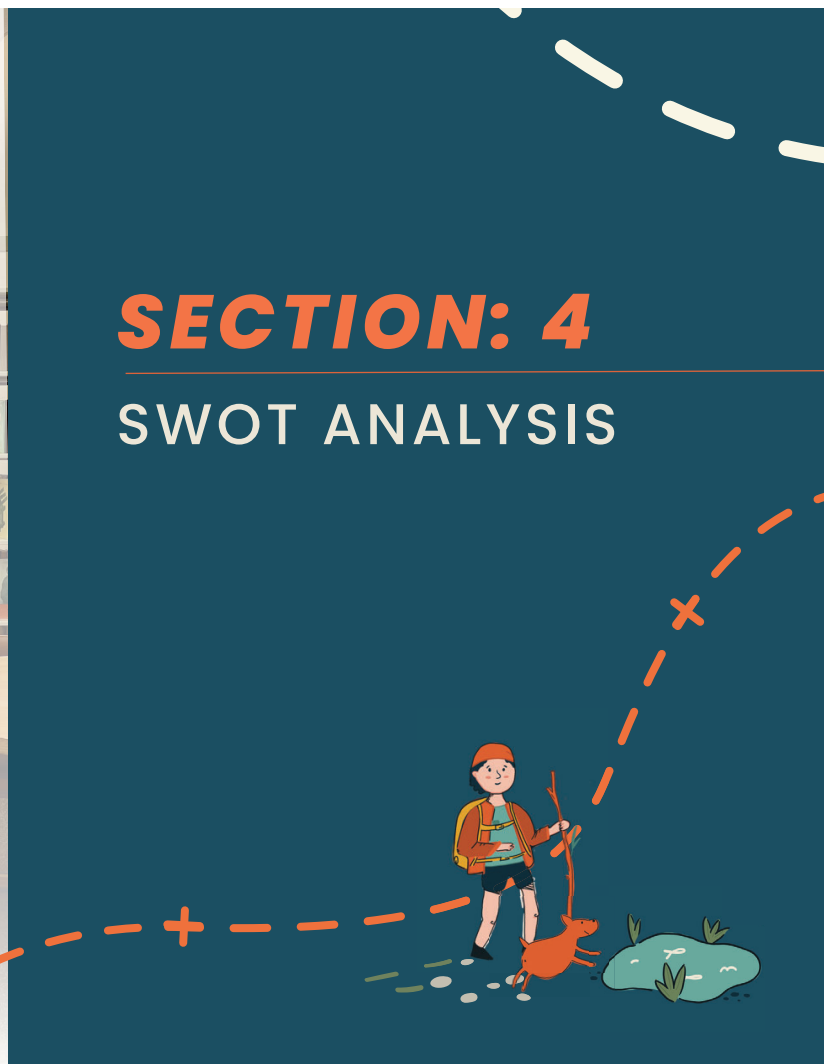
Of respondents are aware of these library-related services; however a substantial amount are unaware of these services

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SECTION: 4

SWOT ANALYSIS





SWOT ANALYSIS

The following Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats (SWOT) Analysis highlights key internal and external factors affecting the operations and growth of the Hernando County Public Library System. This initial SWOT Analysis highlights key internal and external factors. The topics identified here point to opportunities for further study, supporting more in-depth exploration through a subsequent analysis. The SWOT Analysis was developed through technical review and community engagement to set the framework for the recommendations in the Master Plan.

Key Takeaways

- ★ Hernando County Libraries have high patron support, high-quality programming, and well-utilized facilities.
- ★ Current data provides insight into usage trends but does not fully capture unmet needs or engagement gaps among non-users.
- ★ Opportunities exist to expand outreach, partnerships, and programming to better reach underserved populations and increase overall participation. Enhancements to facility design, flexibility, and visibility of activities could strengthen the overall patron experience and community presence.
- ★ External factors, including accessibility limitations and potential shifts in funding priorities, may impact long-term services and sustainability.

Strengths

- ★ The library uses participation data to track trends and understand user behavior across all locations
- ★ Patrons view the library as a trusted, welcoming space and highly value the quality of staff service and programming
- ★ Facilities serve as flexible venues for civic gatherings, homeschooling groups, and local events
- ★ The System is built on a solid foundation of local engagement and consistent public appreciation

Weaknesses

- ★ Current participation data fails to identify “non-users,” making it difficult to measure service equity or reach underrepresented groups
- ★ Some services and environments feel transactional, indicating a need to modernize space design and program delivery
- ★ Limited facility flexibility hinders the library’s ability to adapt to different community needs
- ★ There is a persistent need for more consistent and effective communication regarding library offerings across all locations
- ★ Limited and unstable funding restricts staffing levels, services, and long-term planning

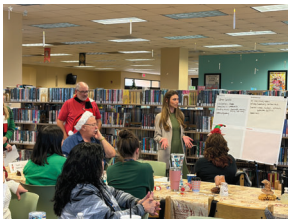


Figure 22. Library Staff Workshop, 2025

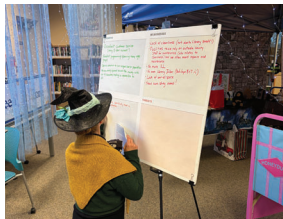


Figure 23. Library Staff Workshop, 2025



Opportunities

- ★ Developing a dedicated outreach and engagement plan to identify and connect with currently underserved populations
- ★ Reimagining interior layouts to better showcase events, boosting both awareness and participation
- ★ Integrating qualitative feedback and resident "lived experiences" into the planning process to ensure services evolve with community needs
- ★ Strengthening the library's reputation as a premier destination for creativity, connection, and lifelong learning through targeted partnerships and marketing
- ★ Strengthening partnerships and online platforms to expand collaborative efforts and presence in the community

Threats

- ★ Physical and logistical constraints, such as limited ADA access and a lack of nearby public transportation, hinder universal access to facilities
- ★ Fluctuating political priorities and changing funding perspectives pose risks to long-term public investment
- ★ To ensure continued support, the library must align its operations with Countywide goals and maintain transparent communication
- ★ Consistently proving the library's value through data and community stories is essential for securing institutional backing
- ★ Population growth and increasing diversity are outpacing the library's current capacity to meet demands

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SECTION: 5

STRATEGIC PLAN





OVERVIEW OF THE STRATEGIC PLAN

Actions for Implementation

This portion of the Plan can be used to identify project priorities for each library location based on time frame, budget, responsible parties, and partnerships needed to complete each strategy and goal.

There are 70 strategies and goals that can be used to improve library services at each location. Time frames are categorized by short-term (0-2 years), medium-term (3-5 years), and long-term (6-10 years). Many of the funds will be provided from the County, impact fees, capital funds, grants, and donations.

Key Takeaways

- ★ **Diversifying programs** can expand access to resources, broaden target audiences, and strengthen collections, supporting long-term program growth and retention.
- ★ **Optimizing existing library spaces, improving accessibility, and extending library services** to underserved populations can enhance library facilities.
- ★ **Improving funding, partnerships, and outreach strategies** can be used to expand library services, increase community presence, and support broader program and event offerings.
- ★ **Enhancing community presence and engagement** is supported by strong internal coordination and partnerships, targeted outreach, data-driven strategies, and consistent branding.

The actions for implementation are grouped into four main areas:



Programs

Goal #1
Grow and diversify library programs.



Facilities

Goal #2
Optimize existing facilities and seek opportunities for growth.



Funding & Partnerships

Goal #3
Establish consistent funding and financial resources while optimizing existing revenue streams and strengthening strategic partnerships.



Awareness

Goal #4
Increase awareness for the services offered by the Libraries.

Overview of Goals and Strategies

Many of the proposed goals and strategies can be implemented across all Hernando County Library locations. Below is a summary of the overarching strategies and goals for each theme, followed by goals that apply to specific library locations. A robust list of strategies and goals is included in Appendix A of this Plan.

Goal #1: Grow and diversify library program offerings.



Implementation of Goal #1 relies on a combination of internal and external funding sources, including grants and donations, to support program resources. Developing strong relationships with community groups, businesses, and non-profits will help expand programs. Internal collaboration and coordination will be critical to successfully implementing these strategies and achieving the goals summarized below and further explained in Appendix A.

Overall Strategies

- ★ Utilize partnerships to expand programs, resources, and experiences
- ★ Broaden program types and formats to reach different target audiences
- ★ Expand access to additional resources and book collections
- ★ Strengthen staff scheduling and internal systems to support program growth
- ★ Add a Research Librarian position to support future growth and needs (East Branch location only)
- ★ Partner with local organizations to provide interactive areas for STEM resources, garden activities, and educational purposes (East Branch location only)



Figure 24. Book locker pick ups expand library offerings outside of regular hours to meet the needs of the community. Chesterfield County, Virginia, 2026.



Figure 25. Existing Summer Reading Program at the West Branch Library are highly attended and very popular among patrons, 2024



Goal #2: Optimize existing facilities and seek opportunities for growth.



Implementation of Goal #2 focuses mostly on long-term improvements anticipated to occur over a 2-5+ year timeframe. These strategies rely primarily on a combination of internal and external funding sources, including impact fees, capital funds, grants, and donations. Coordination with the library facilities department, municipal partners, the County Commission, and other local organizations will be critical during the approval process and funding allocation.

Overall Strategies

- ★ Optimize and expand library spaces
- ★ Enhance accessibility and library parking circulation
- ★ Activate indoor and outdoor community spaces
- ★ Strengthen facility operations and maintenance
- ★ Expand library services to underserved community members
- ★ Install electrical vehicle charging stations
- ★ Activate and improve exterior courtyard and areas surrounding the library (Main Library location only)
- ★ Create a connection between the library and the City of Brooksville's Hernando Park (Main Library location only)
- ★ Relocate administration rooms (collections) to new office space to optimize available building square footage for programming and public use (Main Library location only)
- ★ Reconfigure internal library spaces to accommodate designated children areas away from the entrance (Main Library location only)



Figure 26. Private study rooms are highly used and popular at the Hernando Libraries. Updating and expanding these spaces can further meet the needs of the community. The newly renovated Barack Obama Library in St. Petersburg has larger, flexible study rooms with TVs available for reservation.

- ★ Improve parking management and circulation (Main Library location only)
- ★ Expand the library layout to improve functionality of the circulation desk (Spring Hill and East Branch locations only)
- ★ Improve external ADA compliant facilities and access routes to the library (West Branch location only)
- ★ Plan for long-term reconstruction to improve vehicular access opportunities and utilize available property acreage to support updated community features and resources (West Branch location only)

Figure 27. The newly renovated Barack Obama Library in St. Petersburg includes a spacious, separated children and teen areas with a range of activities, seating options, and reference desk staff.



Figure 28. In-library cafe programs offer opportunities to connect people with and support local businesses. These in-library cafe programs can offer shorter term leases which offers a rotation for new businesses to reach the community. If dedicated space is limited within the library, designating parking spots for a food truck provides the same opportunity.

Source: City of Tigard Public Libraries



Goal #3: Establish consistent funding and financial resources while optimizing existing revenue streams and strengthening strategic partnerships.



Implementation of Goal #3 relies heavily on partnerships with external organizations. Coordination with local businesses, County civic organizations, the Chamber of Commerce, the School Board, and non-profits will be key to successfully implementing these strategies and goals.

Overall Strategies

- ★ Improve funding strategies through donations and memberships
- ★ Expand partnerships with local businesses, schools, nonprofits, and community organizations
- ★ Enhance outreach, marketing, and community presence
- ★ Utilize partnerships to expand library services and events

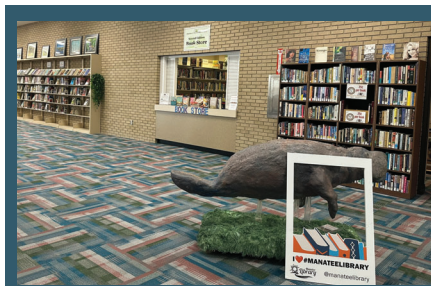


Figure 29. Manatee County Public Library Systems incorporated a book store for used and secondhand books at their Central Library location.

Goal #4: Increase awareness for the services offered by the Libraries.



Implementation of Goal #4 focuses on low-cost, internal efforts to strengthen and grow awareness of services and resources the library provides.

Overall Strategies

- ★ Add Public Engagement staffing position for awareness and public engagement support
- ★ Increase data-driven program tracking to improve engagement and future strategies
- ★ Establish consistent branding and diversify technology used for outreach across all library locations
- ★ Strengthen internal collaboration and cross-training
- ★ Increase community presence through partnering for community events
- ★ Expand library services by providing a bookmobile (mobile library) and homebound delivery services to underserved populations



Figure 30. The library system is already partnering with schools and should continue to expand partnerships. Main Branch Library school visit, 2024.



Figure 31. A mobile library, or book mobile, can reach target audiences and expand the Libraries' services around the County. Largo, Florida 2022.



Funding Strategies

Implementation of the goals and strategies discussed in this Plan will require continued efforts along with a balanced and proactive approach to funding. Current funding challenges exist, including limited general funds and potential impacts from future property tax policies, which may pose threats to libraries and other public facilities. While these resources are not unlimited, there are opportunities to pursue grants, increase donations, and leverage partnerships. While libraries may charge fees for certain services, the Florida State Statute limits what services can be charged for and generate revenue for the libraries. **The statute mandates that qualifying public libraries offer unrestricted, no-cost access to fundamental services, explicitly including the borrowing of circulating materials and access to reference and information services, which impacts future cost recovery efforts.**

Potential Funding Strategies

- ★ Review County policies that limit revenue generating strategies (i.e., rentable library rooms).
- ★ Increase printer fees.
- ★ Increase non-resident membership fees.
- ★ Develop a fee schedule to expand library funding strategies to include direct donations, annual giving, and community fundraising.
- ★ Increase Friends of the Library membership value.
- ★ Establish dedicated areas in the Library where the Friends of the Library can collect donations.
- ★ Improve the Friends of the Library donation website to be more visible, accessible, and user-friendly for patrons.

Next Steps Towards Implementation

Rooted in the Library System's past success as a trusted community resource, this plan recognizes the integral role libraries play in supporting Hernando County's future growth and quality of life. By building on established community connections, responsive services, and a strong foundation of public value, the plan positions the Library System to remain a vital civic asset that contributes to education, economic opportunity, social connection, and long-term community resilience. In this way, the Library System's history of service and community trust provides the foundation for achieving its future goals and aspirations.

To support this vision and guide implementation, Appendix A provides a matrix of actionable items, organizational assignments, partnering opportunities, and recommended implementation time frames organized by short-term (0–2 years), mid-term (3–5 years), and long-term (6–10 years) priorities. The matrix also considers responsibilities and collaboration opportunities involving both internal Hernando County departments and external stakeholders with a connection to the Library System to help ensure the Hernando County Library System remains relevant and adaptable for the future.

Continuing to strengthen internal coordination will also be critical to effectively prioritize projects and follow-through. Strategically prioritizing strategies and goals based on funding available, time-frame, and community impact will continue to progress the Library Systems' mission to create a more accessible and community-driven space for current and future residents. Ongoing evaluation of the strategies and goals will be essential as the Library System adapts to changing needs and prepares for long-term success.





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