

2023-2028

Community Needs Assessment Plan

Broken Bow

Broken Bow Public Library
626 South D
Broken Bow, Nebraska

Broken Bow Public Library Community Needs Response Plan

The Broken Bow Library has been a pillar of our community since 1885. Since then, we have experienced continual growth in programming for children, youth, and adults, technology; inventory, and community service. Through our growth, we have always stayed true to the values of our founders while always looking to the future.

The Broken Bow Public Library staff, board members, Library Foundation board members, community members, and patrons assisted in developing this strategic plan. The plan will be reviewed annually or as needed by the Library Board, Library Director, and staff.

Library Mission Statement

The Broken Bow Public Library strives to provide Broken Bow and the surrounding area with unique educational and cultural opportunities.

Community Profile

Broken Bow is nestled in the heart of Custer County and is the county seat. The railroad was built through Broken Bow in 1884, and the town was incorporated as a village that same year. Broken Bow was incorporated as a city of the second class in 1888. Broken Bow is the largest city in Custer County and serves as the regional hub for commerce and shopping. Broken Bow citizens maintain a sense of pride and honor by holding on to its history, character, and charm. The city has strong ties to its past as it continues to grow and progress into the future. Situated just 50 miles north of Interstate 80, the town has easy access to North Platte, Kearney, and Grand Island.

Population

As of the census of 2022, there were 3,522 people, 1,538 households, and 935 families residing in the city. Of those 1,538 households 27 % had children under 18 living with them, 51% were married couples living together, 13% had a female householder with no husband present, and 7% had a male householder with no wife present. The average household size was 2.3, and the average family size was 2.86. The median age in the city was 41.4 years. 27% of residents were under the age of 18; 10% were between the ages of 20 and 29; 9% were from 30-39; 14% were from 40-49 years; 10% were from 50-59 years; 15 % were from 60-69 years; 4% were from 70-79 years, and 9% were 80 plus years of age or older. The gender makeup of Broken Bow was 47% male and 53% female.

Education

The Broken Bow Public Schools are a PK-12 educational system with about 830 students and 80 certified faculty members. The Broken Bow Public School System consists of four schools: New Discoveries—a preschool located in North Park; North Park Elementary—grades K-5; Broken Bow Middle School—grades 6-8; and Broken Bow High School—grades 9-12. The Broken Bow Schools are a member and school district of record for the Sandhills Educational Services Cooperative. Approximately seventeen school districts in Custer and Blaine Counties have joined together in a joint effort to provide services for disabled children. Adult education programs are available at the high school in cooperation with Mid-Plains Community College, the University of Nebraska at Kearney, and the University of Nebraska at Lincoln, for credits or non-credits.

Mid-Plains Community College of North Platte has had a physical presence in Broken Bow with one of its extended campuses for over a decade. During these years, they have seen significant growth, not only in student enrollment but with their facility also, with more than 40 classes per semester and over 200 individuals taking classes every semester. In August 2011, a seven-acre campus became home to the Mid-Plains Community College and a Bellevue University extended campus. These educational institutions allow area citizens to earn associate degrees, bachelor's degrees, master's degrees, diplomas, and certificates. ESL classes are also taught at the Mid-Plains Extended Campus location.

Language and Ethnicity

According to the 2022 census report, the racial makeup of Broken Bow was 91% White, 1% African American, 1% from other races, and 3% from two or more races. Hispanic or Latino of any race was 4% of the population. Nearly 92% of the library's service population speaks English in their homes. Of other languages spoken, Spanish is the predominant language among those not speaking primarily English.

Economics (Major employers)

Between 2020 and 2023, Broken Bow struggled with much economic growth. Only a few businesses expanded or opened during this time, and just a few jobs were created.

Jennie M. Melham Medical Center is a significant employer for our community. The medical center is a 23-bed critical access hospital with more than 200 professionals and support staff dedicated to providing a continuum of high-quality, professional healthcare services to our rural area. In the past ten years, nearly \$9 million has been spent on expansions and renovations for the hospital, and reserves, gifts, and donations funded all the costs of the projects and equipment. A kind of identity is inherent in the agricultural tradition, and it's a way of life that endures in Broken Bow and Custer County. Today, Custer County is the third largest beef cattle

county in the nation and one of Nebraska's top producers of corn. Companies like Adams Land and Cattle, Sargent Irrigation, The Andersons, and Thomas Livestock are known worldwide. Becton Dickinson, who chose Broken Bow over 55 years ago, continues to grow and thrive as a leader in global medical technology and is the largest employer in our community and area.

Economics (Family and Household)

According to the U.S. Census Bureau, the 2022 Area Median Income in Broken Bow was \$46,167, and the estimated per capita income in 2022 was \$28,109. Records also show that 94.8% of all parents with children are in the labor force. The unemployment rate for Broken Bow is currently 2.9%, but 23% of all people in our community have experienced an income in the past 12 months below the poverty level. Depending on which school in the Broken Bow Schools District is being analyzed, the percentage of those receiving free or reduced meals ranges from 35-47%. Most employees note their jobs as being in management, business, education, health care, and social assistance. 90.2% of the residents in Broken Bow have health insurance. The average travel time to work for employees is 9.8 minutes.

There are 1,538 total households in Broken Bow, with 874 households defined as "family" and 664 homes defined as "nonfamily." 462 households have individuals under 18, and 296 have individuals aged 65 or over. The total number of renter households in the city is 38%. The town's largest federally assisted affordable rental community is Regency Place Apartments at 30 units, and the smallest is Broken Bow Apartments at 16 apartments. The median gross rent in 2022 in Broken Bow was right around \$755, and the estimated median house value in 2022 was \$109,000; adequate housing for owners and renters is a significant concern, and many groups and individuals are working with the city officials, economic development personnel and the Chamber of Commerce to address the issue.

Cultural Overview

There's always something fun to do in Broken Bow. Whether you're in the mood for swimming, golfing, bowling, hunting, fishing, tennis, baseball, basketball, frisbee golf, walking, biking, or any other exciting activity, you'll find it here! The Melham Sports Complex was developed in 2009 and consists of a \$3.25 million sports complex housing soccer fields, baseball/softball fields, a sand volleyball court, and a new playground area with a picnic shelter. Then in 2012, a \$3.2 million aquatic center was added to the Melham Sports Complex. The aquatic center has 8,000 square feet of water surface and a zero-depth entry for small children. Play features include a water slide, diving boards, lily pad water walk, dump bucket, in-ground spray features, a child's slide, and a basketball hoop. There are four city parks, including our city square and its trademark gazebo, the Tom Butler Memorial Bandstand, which recently received a facelift. The Custer County Fairgrounds is located on the east edge of Broken Bow and is busy year-round

with activities. There is also The Fox Theater, a locally owned movie theater that has three screens, surround sound, and the ability to show 3D movies.

The Jennie M Melham Memorial Medical Wellness Center is open 24 hours a day, and golfers are delighted to find the Broken Bow Country Club just west of town. The course showcases a challenging yet fun 9-hole course.

Hunting opportunities are also vast, with upland game hunting around Broken Bow and Custer County. Broken Bow is home to the Nebraska One Box Pheasant Hunt, an annual event of worldwide interest. A shooting range is also located west of Broken Bow and is open to the public. Fishing and camping enthusiasts are surprised by the possibilities less than an hour from our community. There is the Calamus Reservoir State Recreation Area 56 miles northeast of Broken Bow near Burwell, the Victoria Springs State Area about 20 miles from Broken Bow, the Sherman County Dam located 40 miles east of Broken Bow near Loup City, and Pressey Special Use Area located 17 miles south of Broken Bow. The Tomahawk Park in Broken Bow also offers full hookup campsites.

The Wild Rose Art Gallery, Custer County Museum, and Sandhills Journey Scenic Byways Interpretive Center are in Broken Bow and are must-stops for visitors and travelers. The Interpretive Center recently constructed a sod house with historic beams.

Broken Bow has various civic groups and organizations that help keep our community vibrant with opportunities for residents of all ages and economic statuses. Those groups and organizations include the Custer County Economic Development Corporation, American Red Cross, BPOE#1688 Broken Bow Elks Lodge, Broken Bow Food Pantry, Broken Bow Lions Club, Broken Bow Ministerial Association, Broken Bow Optimist Club, Broken Bow PTA, Broken Bow Rotary, Community Connection, Custer County Foundation, Goodwill Industries, Healing Heart and Families, Mid-Nebraska Individual Services, NAMI, Salvation Army, Teammates, United Way of the Kearney Area, and the University of Nebraska Extension in Custer County. In addition, there are 18 churches in our community.

Broken Bow residents also have many options for media information. There are three telecommunication/Internet providers; the Custer County Chief, our local weekly newspaper with 3,200 subscribers; newspapers from Omaha, Lincoln, Grand Island, Kearney, and North Platte, as well as some other communities in Custer County; three local radio stations—KCNI 1280, KBBN 95.3 FM, and KBEAR 92.3 FM, and several television stations in Hastings, Kearney, Grand Island, and North Platte carry news pertinent to our residents.

Community Needs

Community Needs Response Planning Team members comprised Library Director Megan Svoboda, Assistant Library Director Kim Blackburn, Library Board Members Betsy Smith, Mike Garner, Kristine Moninger, Breanna Kaup, and Rachel Schmidt, Broken Bow City Administrator David Schmidt, City Council Member Paul Holland, and Custer County Economic Development Executive Director Keith Ellis. The team developed an online questionnaire that focused on community needs and life in Broken Bow. The Survey Monkey questionnaire was promoted in the library, on the local radio stations, on the library's website and Facebook page, on the city's website and Facebook page, on the Broken Bow Chamber of Commerce website and Facebook page, and a direct email link to the survey was emailed out to our patrons. Based on some of the team members' previous experiences with surveys, it was determined that the questionnaire would be short and the time to respond kept to one week. We received 193 questionnaire responses.

The community survey had several reoccurring responses from the online survey. Some of the top community needs mentioned were Housing, Daycare, YMCA, Indoor Pool, more family activities, walking/bike trails, splash pad, dog park, community garden, dances, food truck festivals, and more shopping options.

The Planning Team also held a focus group with stakeholders from the community. Jeremy Shipe, from KCNI/KBBN radio, mediated this meeting. Among the participants were representatives from Jennie Melham Memorial Medical Center, The Broken Bow Public Schools, The City of Broken Bow, Adams Land and Cattle, Central Plains Center for Services, Mid-Plain Community College, Custer County Foundation, Broken Bow Chamber of Commerce, Nebraska State Bank, Super Kids Club, Runza Restaurant, KCNI/KBBN Radio.

The Planning Team analyzed the survey responses and the focus group's input to determine our community's strengths, threats, opportunities, and needs. The following goals and objectives are an outcome of that information and data.

Library S.W.O.T Analysis

Internal Strengths

- A significant renovation and additions to the library were completed in December 2017. The community embraced the library project, and the completed building is considered an attraction for our community. The ADA-compliant library is located one block east of the downtown business district and is an integral part of the downtown hub.

- Among the additions to the building was a 2,000-square-foot multi-purpose room available for public use outside of regular library hours. Smart TVs and a professional sound system are available in the rooms and can be divided by a soundproof portable wall. There is no charge to use the rooms for non-profit organizations and a \$35 charge for businesses/ and or individuals.
- As evidenced by the success of our capital campaign for the library building project, Broken Bow residents strongly value the role of our public library, and the library is considered an increasingly valued partner in the community.
- The renovated library features a makerspace area for children. There is a Lego wall, a light table for transparent objects, a small castle for a puppet show, a wind tunnel, a Nintendo switch, robots, and over 40 makerspace resources for children of all ages that generate creative exploration, engineering, and inventing.
- The teens and adults also have items they can get creative with including a Glowforge laser cutter, button maker, cricut, art tablet, and two Oculus VR headsets.
- Since our renovated building reopened for use in February of 2018, we experienced a 26 percent increase in users and a 74 percent increase from the same six months in 2017. As more evidence that the public appreciates their new library, we have had a 554 percent increase in library cards issued. Unfortunately, these trends were steady once COVID-19 hit. We had to close the library temporarily. We noticed a considerable decline in services, programs, and attendance. Beginning in 2022, the Broken Bow Public Library has begun to see trends and statistics closer to pre-pandemic numbers.
- We upgraded technology in the renovated library, including wiring, routers, wireless access points, and Cat 5 fiber cable to our building. We provide four public library computer stations, five laptops for public use, an online card catalog and circulation, programs, and free Wi-Fi. Our Internet download and upload speeds are adequate for our needs.
- The Broken Bow Public Library provides the Libby service for digital audiobooks and eBooks, and all NebraskaAccess databases for patrons. We also provide the Chilton Online Library. Our library patrons can access any of these online resources for free.
- The library is the only downtown facility that serves an increasingly diverse population. The staff and board make certain that no economic, education, ethnic, ADA, or age barriers exist for families or individuals who use the library's services or attend programming.

- The Library Director, Assistant Director, and Children's Services Librarian are full-time employees. They are certified or working on their certification and keep abreast of current library trends and research trends for future use and needs.
- One part-time employee has taken part in extensive in-house training after being hired to work at the library and can assist patrons with research and reference.
- Staff longevity has helped create a sense of personal relationship with library users and given the community recognizable faces.

Internal Weakness

- Our City Council was incredibly supportive of our library building project. Our overall budgets have not significantly increased in over three years. Our materials budget has remained the same for the past five years, which will become challenging to keep up with our peer libraries and meet the needs of our patrons.
- While there are three full-time library employees and one part-time library employee, staffing is a concern when planning additional programming that would include library employees. As previously mentioned, there is no budget for additional staff, and it is highly encouraged that staff not accrue comp time.

External Opportunities

- Our community recognizes the importance of partnerships for leveraging resources, building power, strengthening institutions/businesses, and achieving meaningful community change.
- Over the past ten years, the Broken Bow community has invested millions of dollars into initiatives that improve current residents' quality of life and prepare the city for future growth.
- Broken Bow has been recognized by many leaders and businesses in the state for the community's ability to attract new residents and stimulate development that enhances the economic vitality of our community.
- Broken Bow is the seat of Custer County and the largest community within a 70-mile radius. Therefore, most residents work near the town, and several people from the outlying areas travel to Broken Bow for their employment and shopping.

External Threats

- The Super Kids Club is an after-school and summer program that offers academic and recreational programs for all school-age children and is partially funded by a 21st Century Learning Center Grant. It has after-school homework help, snacks, and student activities. Since Super Kids Club has blossomed, we have noticed a significant decrease in after-school programming attendance for elementary-aged children.
- Broken Bow and Custer County remain highly reliant on the success of those employed in agriculture. If the agriculture market swings downward, the effect is felt throughout our community.
- Our community lacks adequate rentals (apartments and houses), and there is also a shortage of housing to purchase within a certain price range in the city limits of Broken Bow.
- Even with its laudable recognition for improving economic vitality, Broken Bow is still a rural community with a tight municipal budget, aging population, public infrastructure needs, and fair number of lower-income residents.

Community Need #1

The population of our community is aging, and many of our non-profit, local organizations are noticing it is getting more difficult to find volunteers.

Goal

The Broken Bow Public Library will host a free annual Volunteer Fair to recruit volunteers for area non-profits. This event will begin in the Summer of 2023 and occur yearly.

Objectives

- a. The Library Director and Assistant Library Director will contact local non-profit organizations in our community to see if they need new volunteers. The librarians will invite all the local non-profits to our fair.

- b. The library will provide a space for the Annual Community Volunteer Fair in our multipurpose room. Each organization will have a table/space to decorate its booth. General information and volunteer opportunities will be provided by each non-profit organization. The Friends of the Broken Bow Library will donate to the organization with the best-decorated booth.
- c. The library will promote this event using the local media outlets and the library's newsletter, website, and Facebook page.
- d. The library will give away door prizes to the attendees.

Community Need #2

Our community needs more educational, informational, and/or entertaining programs for audiences of all ages, emphasizing the Fine Arts.

Goal

The library will better utilize the multi-purpose rooms and expand programming. The library will target young children, families, and the fine arts with their upcoming programming.

Objectives

- a. The Library Director, Assistant Library Director, and children's Librarian will meet over a month to collect ideas on various programs the library could sponsor in the multi-purpose room. Staff will brainstorm options. Examples could include painting events, lunch and learns, fort-nights, board games, and local business open houses, and continue to work with the Creative Arts District to bring activities, awareness, and grant opportunities for fine art activities. The library staff will meet in September 2023 and begin plans to sponsor at least one program a month.
- b. Since there is no programming line item in the library's operating budget, the Broken Bow Library Foundation and the Friends of the Broken Bow Library cover costs involved in programs hosted by the library. The library staff will prepare grant applications to help offset any costs for expanding programs and work with the Foundation Board on other fundraising options. Searching for grants and working on the necessary applications will begin in October 2023.
- c. The library staff will increase the promotion of programs we offer to people of all ages through more radio news stories/PSAs, newspaper articles, website features, social media channels, and in-house promotion. We will increase all promotions by 10 percent yearly for the next five years.

- d. According to the public survey and community forum, the Library realized we needed to respond to a need. After consideration, the library staff will move Lapsit storytimes to Fridays beginning in Fall 2023. Broken Bow currently does not have any preschools that assemble on Fridays. This will allow caregivers to do something educational with their children on Friday mornings.

Community Needs #3

Our community has a shortage of Mental Health Programs and professionals. We have noticed a high percentage of mental health crises in our area.

Goal

The library will offer a free six-week Lunch and Learn Program focusing on mental health.

Objectives

- a. Library staff will work with local licensed mental health professionals to bring the public a six-week Lunch and Learn Program. This program will begin in the Fall of 2023. The Library Director will contact at least four mental health professionals to provide this program to the public. The lunch and learns will be free of charge and held in the library's multi-purpose room. The topics could include stress relief, self-help, positivity, self-esteem, social media, etc. The mental health professionals and the group will determine the topics.
- b. The library will promote the Lunch and Learn segment using the local media outlets and the library's newsletter, website, and Facebook page.
- c. At the conclusion, this program will then be evaluated to see if it could be expanded or repeated in the spring and continue annually.

Evaluation Plan

The library staff will develop and implement the objectives listed above, involving the Library Board and others. Library staff will also be responsible for recording the statistics. The Community Needs Assessment Plan will be reviewed by staff every three months, and in those reviews, staff will determine if the timeline for objectives is on track. That information will be shared with library board members and the President of the Library Foundation Board annually. Those annual reviews will be held in August. The Library Board and Foundation Board President will determine if satisfactory progress in being made and whether the goals remain relevant and attainable or if they need to be adjusted.