



Chattanooga  
Public Library

# 2030

## STRATEGIC PLAN



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# INTRODUCTION



## **In 2021, the Chattanooga Public Library completed its Fiscal Years 2017-2019 Strategic Plan.**

Accomplishments from this plan included a new HVAC system, a new roof, energy-efficient lighting, new wheelchair-accessible bathrooms, and automatic doors for the Downtown Library, as well as ceiling repairs for the Northgate and Eastgate Libraries. It also included strengthening the Library's partnership with HCDE through outreach and reading lists, introducing food literacy programs, developing a tool library and seed exchange, a new library branch in the Avondale Community Center, and building new partnerships with local businesses and nonprofits.

Since 2021 CPL navigated changes in services and offerings, organizational restructuring and the introduction of Executive Director, Will O'Hearn. With new leadership and new services, CPL is now looking to the future.



### **Our Point-of-View:**

How do we serve the public in a rapidly changing and uncertain world? We build a plan that's flexible. Let us tell you what that means...





**To best serve Chattanooga, we have aligned our initiatives with the One Chattanooga Plan.**

By doing so, we ensure that we're working together to make Chattanooga a great place for everyone. This Strategic Plan is designed to help achieve the following goals:

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**Build a universal path to early learning**

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**Catalyze economic vitality in the Black community**

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**Build a competitive regional economy**

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**Improve local infrastructure & public transit**

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**Provide responsive and effective local government**

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# VISION + MISSION





Our Vision:

**AN INSPIRED, CONNECTED, AND ENGAGED CHATTANOOGA.**



Our Mission:

**TO BE THE COMMUNITY'S CATALYST FOR LIFELONG LEARNING.**



# OUR FIVE AREAS OF FOCUS



## Our Five Areas of Focus

### 01: LOWER BARRIERS TO LIBRARY ACCESS

This is more important than ever. The easier the library is to use, the more people will love to use it. It shouldn't feel like you're going out of the way to get to the library—the library should permeate your life. Simple, easy, and intuitive.

The people most affected by life's challenges are often the most vulnerable, and that's exactly who the library is here for. We aim to be a natural, intuitive part of your life—a place that never feels intimidating or closed off. The library isn't about gatekeeping; it's about sharing, supporting, and showing you that you're valued and loved. As a welcoming “third space,” we offer more than just books—we offer a sense of belonging. When everyone feels comfortable being here and using what we offer, that's what makes us not just unique, but essential—a vital, often missing part of community life.

#### Fiscal Year 2027 One-Year Strategic Operational Goals:

- ☐ **Launch Kanopy to provide streaming video services for library patrons.**  
Status: In Progress
- ☐ **Improve parking lot facilities at the Northgate (NG) branch to increase accessibility.**  
Status: In Progress

#### Fiscal Year 2026 One-Year Strategic Operational Goals:

- ☒ **Eliminate fines on all adult materials.**  
Status: **Achieved**
- ☒ **Expand digital access by adding at least one new database or eMaterial resource.**  
Status: **Achieved**





Our Five Areas of Focus

## 02: NEW & IMPROVED FACILITIES

Fifty years ago, Chattanooga made a significant investment in its libraries through the creation of the Chattanooga-Hamilton County Bicentennial Library. Since then, our community has grown, and the role of the library has expanded dramatically.

Today, we're facing new challenges: many of our locations no longer have the space to serve all residents equitably, and two of our busiest branches—Eastgate and Northgate—are approaching the end of their service life. As the needs of our community continue to evolve, so must our spaces. To meet these changing demands and maintain the high quality of service Chattanooga deserves, we need modern, accessible libraries designed for today and the future.

Our newest facility is the Avondale Library, which opened alongside the Community Center in 2019. Major accessibility and cost-saving upgrades were made to our Downtown Library from 2017 - 2020, and we have made a number of repairs at Northgate and Eastgate.

### Fiscal Year 2027 One-Year Strategic Operational Goals:

- ☐ **Successfully plan and execute the relocation of the Eastgate branch.**  
Status: In Progress
- ☐ **Initiate the renovation project for the Local History and Genealogy department.**  
Status: In Progress

### Fiscal Year 2026 One-Year Strategic Operational Goals:

- ☐ **Select a site location for a large East Brainerd Library.**  
Status: In Progress
- ☒ **Add a meeting room space to the Downtown Library**  
Status: **Achieved**



## Our Five Areas of Focus

### 03: OUTREACH

The “Field of Dreams” days of “if you build it, they will come” are no longer. There are so many other mediums competing for your attention these days that it’s more important than ever to get out in our community and meet people where they are.

This effort is also about breaking the library poverty cycle—the idea that the best predictor of future library use is past use. While we know libraries can positively impact lives in countless ways, those who need us most often don’t walk through our doors. That’s why we’re committed to meeting people where they are, reaching out to show them all that the library has to offer. Our goal is to interrupt the cycle of non-use and ensure everyone knows that the library is for them—a place where they belong, are welcomed, and are loved.

In Fiscal Year 2024, we hired a Library Outreach Coordinator and met our goal to ensure at least one outreach event in every district. Since then, we have doubled that goal and launched the Pop-Up Library, aka “Poppy”, a new outreach van that acts as a mobile library with books, technology, and fun, educational activities.

#### Fiscal Year 2027 One-Year Strategic Operational Goals:

- ☐ **Conduct at least four outreach events in every city district.**  
Status: In Progress
- ☐ **Ensure the library social worker participates in at least 10 distinct community outreach events.**  
Status: In Progress

#### Fiscal Year 2026 One-Year Strategic Operational Goals:

- ☒ **Offer at least 3 outreaches in each district.**  
Status: **Achieved**
- ☒ **Increase outreach to seniors by 15%.**  
Status: **Achieved**



## Our Five Areas of Focus

### 04: COLLABORATIONS & PARTNERSHIPS

We think Chattanooga works best when we all work together toward shared goals. We all have different strengths and expertise, so when we collaborate, we get better outcomes than if we were to work in silos. The outcome is worth more than its parts.

Our main goal here at CPL is to have the most positive impact on the community, whether that means directly providing services, working in tandem with other organizations, or supporting the good work of others.

One of the most impactful developments in recent years has been the growth of our Family Pass program. We've tripled the number of available passes, giving up to two adults and four to five children free access to local attractions like the Chattanooga Zoo and Tennessee Aquarium, as well as tickets to Chattanooga Football Club and Lookouts games. It's one of our favorite parts of the job—seeing the joy on families' faces when they pick up a pass that enriches their lives without adding financial strain.

In 2024, we also launched a new partnership with 423 Chain Breakers and Chattanooga United to Reduce Violence, offering concurrent programming during Nightfall events. The goal is to give youth a safe, engaging space to gather, helping them stay active and out of harm's way.

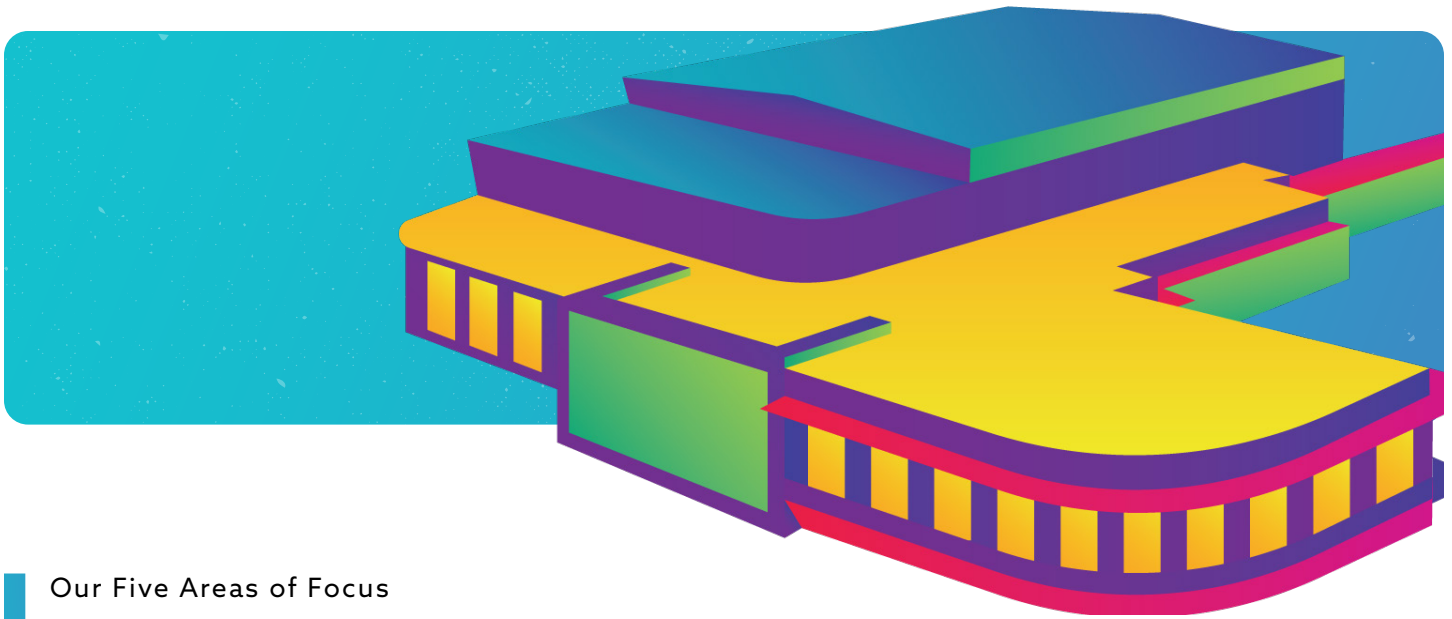
#### Fiscal Year 2027 One-Year Strategic Operational Goals:

- ☐ **Establish a collaborative community partnership to install a minigolf pilot.**  
Status: In Progress
- ☐ **Develop new or significantly expand at least two community partnerships (e.g., exploring opportunities with UTC).**  
Status: In Progress

#### Fiscal Year 2026 One-Year Strategic Operational Goals:

- ☒ **Offer at least 3 outreaches in Establish two new partnerships.**  
Status: **Achieved**
- ☒ **Expand programming to support nontraditional learners**  
Status: **Achieved**





## Our Five Areas of Focus

### 05: NEW & UNIQUE OFFERINGS

Sharing has always been at the heart of what we do.

The library has always been about sharing—traditionally, that meant sharing information to meet a critical community need. But the way we consume information has changed dramatically in the last 20, 10, even 5 years. With information more accessible than ever, we’re evolving too—honoring our time-tested role by reimagining the kinds of resources and services we share to make the biggest positive impact in people’s lives. That means finding new ways to surprise and delight, offering opportunities for people to explore, discover, and grow. We aim to provide low-risk, high-reward experiences where anyone can learn more about themselves and pursue their passions—without having to break the bank.

CPL has historically been on the forefront of the changing landscape in the library world. We made national and international headlines in 2014 for dedicating an entire floor to maker technology. We were an early adopter of the “library of things” concept, debuting a Seed Exchange in 2018 and a Tool Library in 2019. In recent years, we’ve redefined what libraries checked out by offering more unique library collections, which we’ve branded “Beyond Books.” New Beyond Books offerings include the Adventure Library, a camping and hiking collection; the Discovery Collection, educational tools and special books for adult literacy; MindSpark Memory Kits for people caring for others with dementia; Library Telescopes, a collection of high-powered, user-friendly telescopes; and the Toy Library, a collection of high quality, educational toys.

#### Fiscal Year 2027 One-Year Strategic Operational Goals:

- ☐ **Acquire and install a large format flatbed scanner for Local History.**  
Status: In Progress
- ☐ **Introduce or expand at least two “Beyond Books” collections.**  
Status: In Progress

#### Fiscal Year 2026 One-Year Strategic Operational Goals:

- ☒ **Expand two Beyond Books collections.**  
Status: **Achieved**
- ☒ **Improve access by making two Beyond Books collections available at all locations.**  
Status: **Achieved**

# A SHORT LIST OF WHAT WE'VE ACCOMPLISHED SO FAR:

## ✓ **ELIMINATED FINES ON ALL ADULT MATERIAL**

Following official Library Board approval on July 16, 2025, we permanently eliminated late fines on adult materials and launched a comprehensive amnesty campaign to clear outstanding fees, successfully removing financial friction for thousands of patrons.

## ✓ **EXPANDED DIGITAL ACCESS BY ADDING AT LEAST ONE NEW DATABASE OR EMATERIAL RESOURCE**

We launched Comics Plus last July, strategically transitioning comics out of Hoopla to save the library \$4,000 annually while driving an anticipated 179% increase in comic downloads due to unlimited user access.

## ✓ **ADDED A MEETING ROOM SPACE TO THE DOWNTOWN LIBRARY**

We launched a highly requested public meeting room in February. It has proven so popular that we are actively expanding the concept this year by acquiring two additional rooms of varying sizes to accommodate different community group needs.

## ✓ **OFFERED AT LEAST 3 OUTREACHES IN EACH DISTRICT**

We comfortably cleared this benchmark ahead of schedule, visiting every city district many times. Through a strategic focus on District 4, we more than doubled our neighborhood presence there (surging from 9 to 22 visits), ultimately connecting with over 550 new and returning patrons who walked away with updated or brand-new library cards.

## ✓ **INCREASED OUTREACH TO SENIORS BY 15%**

We crossed our 15% growth target by early spring, expanding vital programming at key facilities like Standifer Senior Home, Riverview Towers, and the Glenwood Community Center. We also teamed up with the YMCA Mobile Market vehicle to deliver mobile library services directly to the residents of Mary Walk Tower and Silvertree Senior Home.

## ✓ **ESTABLISHED TWO NEW PARTNERSHIPS**

We partnered with Signal Centers to assess library accessibility and conduct specialized inclusive training for our entire team on Staff Day. We also collaborated with Chattanooga JAM (Junior Appalachian Musicians) to launch traditional music lessons at the library, a program so high-demand we had to open an extra session to accommodate interest.

# A SHORT LIST OF WHAT WE'VE ACCOMPLISHED SO FAR:

## ✓ **EXPANDED PROGRAMMING TO SUPPORT NONTRADITIONAL LEARNERS**

In early 2026, we officially launched a brand-new, dedicated daytime programming series specifically designed for homeschooling families. By hosting these specialized sessions during traditional school hours, we have successfully created an intentional, highly accessible community hub and educational pathway for nontraditional learners across Chattanooga.

## ✓ **EXPANDED TWO BEYOND BOOKS COLLECTIONS**

We heavily expanded inventory for two of our highest-demand non-traditional offerings: the community Tool Library and the Mobile 4 Library, which supplies patrons with top-tier makerspace equipment to take the 4th floor home with them.

## ✓ **IMPROVED ACCESS BY MAKING TWO BEYOND BOOKS COLLECTIONS AVAILABLE AT ALL LOCATIONS**

We decentralized our specialized gear, making our brand-new Toy Library collection and our customizable Book Club in a Box sets easily available for checkout at every single library branch across the city.



~~CONCLUSION~~

**OUR SUPER SECRET  
SIXTH AREA OF FOCUS**



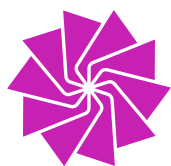
Six  
Our ~~Five~~ Areas of Focus

## 06: COMMUNITY

### **Did you notice all the love for our community throughout this report? Here's why:**

At the heart of all we do is our love for our community. We are called the Chattanooga Public Library intentionally as we put Chattanoogaans before anything else. At all times we strive to be responsive and caring towards all the needs of our community. In every action we take, we are constantly thinking of you, our patron. Our collections, our services, our customer service, is all designed with YOU in mind and ensuring that when you're with us, you feel valued and seen, in a place that you belong.

We want you to always enter our libraries as your authentic self. For over a century, libraries have been a sanctuary for so many people, and we continue to take that role to heart. We create safe, inclusive spaces with intention; we create programs that celebrate different people, cultures, and perspectives. CPL has something for everyone, and we encourage everyone to come explore our spaces and offerings in a caring, supportive and loving environment.



# Chattanooga Public Library

We appreciate you taking the time to learn more about the Chattanooga Public Library and the work we're doing in the community.

