

I. INTRODUCTION

In late 2019, the Altadena Library District (ALD) undertook a comprehensive strategic planning process facilitated by Margaret Sullivan Studio (MSS). Over the course of four months, MSS conducted a highly participatory process that included the contributions of the Board of Trustees, the community-based Strategic Planning Committee, all members of the Altadena Library District Staff, representatives from the Friends of the Altadena Library, and the Altadena Library Foundation. The plan incorporates specific community input from a diverse cross-section of Community members, Town Council members, and Altadena Library District patrons. This input was gathered through a series of community engagement sessions, focus groups, one-on-one conversations, and a community survey.

The goal of this process was to develop a flexible strategic framework for the future of the Altadena Library District. ALD will continue to be a central organizing hub that serves a diverse set of patrons, provides a wide range of services, and overlaps with many other community assets, institutions, and groups in Altadena.

This document encapsulates the results of the strategic process. It sets out a strategic framework for the Altadena Library District's future that prioritizes the community's needs and aspirations while honoring the unique characteristics that make Altadena a special community. The next-generation Altadena Library District will be a powerful contributor to the civic, cultural, economic, and educational health and well-being of all Altadena's residents. Our library district can and should be a national example of how a public library creates a stronger community.

II. PHILOSOPHY & PROCESS

A. The Changing Role of Libraries

New technologies, modes of communication, competitors, and models of service combined with ever-expanding patron expectations, interests, and needs, are requiring all institutions to adapt and innovate — and libraries are no exception.

In the past, libraries relied on passive models: patrons would come into the library, request materials or collection items, and take them away. It was a transaction model grounded in a physical collection that grew over time. Today, the library of the 21st century exists in an entirely different context, and while the historical legacy of libraries will always be a core component of our work, it is no longer sufficient as our *only* work.

Libraries in the 21st century must be active: not just in our efforts to engage patrons, but in our programs, our services, and our thinking. Libraries are one of the few remaining public spaces for learning, connection to ideas, and to serve an essential role in a democratic, free society where access is available to all. The primary mode of library service has shifted away from transactions to the creation of intentionally designed human-centered experiences.

The Altadena Library District has recognized this moment as an ideal opportunity to strengthen community relationships and to adapt and adopt new techniques of service. This is an opportunity to more effectively, and more intentionally, provide relevant, transformational services for all.

The Altadena Library District's role and fundamental mission has not changed, but the ways in which the library executes that mission can either lag behind and react to a changing world, or the library can take a proactive role in transforming our community. We choose the latter.

B. Community-Centered Planning

The active community participation in this plan development has affirmed that the Altadena Library District is an essential community institution, playing a key role in the areas of learning and literacy, family-centric services, and community gathering. This process has also enabled the library to engage in conversations with the community to build deeper, richer, and more meaningful relationships.

This planning process was undertaken with a community-centered approach, and it is an approach that ALD will continue to prioritize in the implementation of our strategic framework. It is clear from this, and other recent experiences, that while our efforts to reach out to and engage the community have been a good start, there is a great deal of work left to do. Being responsive to a community's needs means hearing from - and representing - the entire community, not only the self-selected portions who already engage with the library.

Our work will require a continuous, evolving awareness of what our patrons expect us to provide. We will work with all of Altadena to understand how to strengthen core services and how best to provide resources to empower and transform all the lives in Altadena.

C. Time of Transition for ALD

ALD is in a position of strength to lead the town's community development agenda with new leadership, an energetic and talented staff, an active board, a Foundation eager to engage in robust fundraising, and a supportive and stalwart Friends group. In the past year, a committed staff, volunteers, and community leaders have been building the infrastructure and support to position our public libraries as a dynamic force. All of us will unite with a shared vision, mission, and set of values - set out in this strategic plan - that clearly define what we plan to do, why, and in service of what ends.

As a special District, ALD is uniquely positioned to operate with agility, speed, and independence. This gives us the opportunity to proactively set a course for the future and execute it more rapidly than many other peer institutions.

We are also anticipating a redistricting effort that will take place after the 2020 census, shifting the representation of the Board from at-large elections to by-district elections. In an effort to make our democratic process more inclusive, more representative, and more accessible, this shift falls in line with our many transitions writ large.

III. Strategic Planning Process

Over the course of four months, ALD, in conjunction with MSS, conducted a highly participatory process that included the contributions of the Board of Trustees, the community-based Strategic Planning Committee, all members of the Altadena Library District Staff, representatives from the Friends of the Altadena Library, and the Altadena Library District Foundation. The following outlines the process.

Phase I

The purpose of ALD's Strategic Planning Phase I process was to gather information, analyze this information for context, and to introduce participants to the community-centered planning process.

Pre-Work

In July 2019, the following preparation work occurred:

- A. The Strategic Planning Committee (SPC) and the Board of Trustees articulated goals and objectives of the Strategic Planning process and how ALD will continue its relevance into the future.
- B. A Leadership Working Group was identified to assist in developing strategic priorities and to learn service design thinking methodologies to better understand and respond to patron and community needs.
- C. The Board of Library Trustees provided their input to the process. The Consultant Team had conversations with individual board members to gain insight into ALD's history and the Board's vision for the library's future.
- D. The SPC, Board of Trustees, and Leadership Working Group were provided materials to read in preparation of the Strategic Planning work which included:
 1. *Rising to the Challenge: Re-Envisioning Public Libraries*, a report of the Aspen Institute
 2. *Museums, Libraries, and 21st Century Skills*, produced by the Institute of Museum and Library Services
 3. *Transforming Communities*, a Strategic Plan produced by the Institute of Museum and Library Services
 4. *Library as Movement*, article by David Lankes

AUGUST 2019 - PHASE ONE

In August 2019, the consultant team met with all of the staff to kick-off the Strategic Planning Process. Workshop #1 engaged the staff in two days of workshops and presentations; the purpose was to introduce the staff to service design methodologies, and to illuminate barriers, difficulties, and challenges library patrons face.

The consultant team also facilitated a Town Hall Meeting for all community members, leaders, and staff members. The goal of the meeting was to involve and update the community in the Strategic Planning process and to facilitate dialogue to that was framed around how the library can create a role in contributing to a stronger Altadena. Participants were introduced to how libraries and public institutions across the country are addressing complex community conditions. Community members worked collectively to identify challenges, needs, and opportunities. Using the Healthy Community framework, participants engaged in discussion around Civic Health, Cultural Health, Educational Health, Economic Health, and Personal Health.

Phase One concluded with a Strategic Planning Committee Meeting. Building on the work to date, SPC members contributed to an understanding of community conditions to evolve the strategic themes. The complete Phase I Point In Time Deliverable can be found [here](#).

SEPTEMBER 2019 - PHASE TWO

The consultant team met with all members of the staff, with members of the Town Council, with leadership and members of the Friends and Foundation support groups, with the Facilities Committee, and with the Strategic Planning Committee. The purpose was to work with all stakeholders to identify emerging strategic themes and opportunities for the library district as a whole.

A two-day workshop with staff to engage the group in a series of activities to synthesize their learnings from patron interviews and observations, to identify gaps in their synthesis (to inform the next phase of work), to envision future scenarios of activities, programs, and resources to improve the community and their patron's lives, and to align the work with emerging strategic themes.

Staff also developed a set of Core Values which was combined with those previously identified by the Strategic Planning Committee. They created the outlines and first phase of a Community Asset Map, and came to the workshop with information they had gathered through directed storytelling (in-depth patron interviews) and ethnographic observations with current patrons. The Staff participated in a series of activities to better understand and analyze "patron journeys" in order to improve future patron experiences. These activities helped Staff identify patron needs, motivations, and challenges experiences and identify opportunities for the library's role in the future in meeting patron needs.

A meeting with the Facilities Committee was focused on how the library's facilities update (currently in its planning phases) can best align with the strategic planning work. It brought up the ways in which physical spaces will need to play a role in activating the

strategic work; how future leadership can think about the “town” as the library’s domain, and the “brand experience” of the library. It reiterated the need for funding strategies for facilities in the future to be innovative, to serve Altadena’s needs and to support equity.

The Strategic Planning Committee engaged discussions around the future of the Altadena Library and its role as an essential contributor to community. The work to date provided a broader context to Committee member’s understanding of the library’s role in improving quality of life for Altadena’s residents.

OCTOBER AND NOVEMBER 2019 - PHASE THREE

[Phase III will be described here in the final iteration of the plan.]

IV. DISCOVERIES

As part of this process, community feedback was garnered from four primary platforms:

1. Patron Interviews
2. Community Town Halls
3. Community Survey
4. Town and Library Leadership Conversations

(1) Patron Interviews

Staff engaged in intensive one-on-one interviews with core patrons to learn how the library can be a valuable partner for their personal goals. These conversations provided anecdotal evidence that allowed library staff to understand their current service strengths, and how future services can be refined better serve our community.

(A) Community Cohesion and Enjoyment

- Patrons come to ALD for enjoyment, to participate in programs, to meet friends, to utilize communal space, to simply be in a comfortable environment, to have fun with friends and staff, to watch movies, to enjoy events, and to use and experience our many resources (including toys, drawing, coloring, reading, chess, games, exploring, and playing).
- Patrons are in need of community and support.
- Needs identified include: playtime, childcare, making friends, building connections, after school support, social support and growth, support through life transitions, connecting with peers, making meaningful contributions to community, creating equitable community for ALL people, walkability/transportation.

(B) Education and Information

- Patrons come to us to work on school projects, study, use the internet, access tutoring, homeschool, find answers, read, assist in early literacy. They are looking for help with homework, for help with job searches, and for help preparing for their individual futures.
- Needs identified include: testing boundaries, developing a passion for lifelong learning, providing after school support, helping with homework, developing life skills, preparing for college and job training, assisting with financial literacy, providing resources for health and wellness, family planning and support, building on a career, retirement planning, accessing technology, and enhancing food security.

(C) Creation and Innovation

- Patrons come to us for printing, 3D printing, VR, homeschool materials, computer access, learning new and interesting things, preparing for their futures, growing, playing, and exploring.
- Needs identified include: providing safe places to explore, discovering and exploring interests, developing independence, developing personal identity, developing passions, accessing technology.

(2) Community Survey

Over 100 residents have taken the community survey to date. The following is a synthesis of the results.

Respondents describe themselves as people who:

- Mostly using the Altadena Library, followed by the Pasadena Central Library. *(Figure 1)*
- Love doing outdoor activities (especially biking and hiking), playing and attending sporting events, making art and visiting art museums, reading, traveling, and many other fun activities.
- Love ALD's great programs, its welcoming and cozy space, its convenience, and its librarians.
- Come to the library for materials, programs, and for renewing passports. *(Figure 2)*
- Find their greatest challenges in the rising cost of living, coming together as a community, and aging/health.
- Enjoy that the library offers voter registration, community festivals, music programs, early literacy programs, oral history programs, and pathways to citizenship. *(Figure 3)*

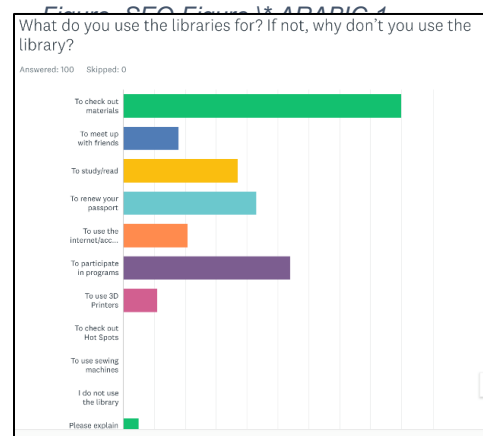
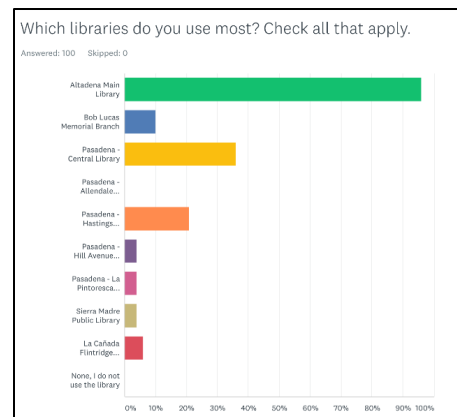


Figure 2

- Find information about their community through Nextdoor, the Library website, Facebook, and the *Pasadena Star-News*.
- Get to the library by car, usually solo.
- Would like to learn new skills, strengthen basic and complex digital skills, learn how to sew, learn new art techniques, improve writing skills and meet with other local writers, and learn to speak new languages.

(3) *Community Town Halls*

The consultant team and ALD also facilitated community conversations framed around the Healthy Communities¹ model of community development. This provided an opportunity for community members to articulate

- shared characteristics of what it means to be a healthy Altadena,
- the key challenges the community is experiencing that prevent these outcome goals, and
- the potential role the library can play to provide services that will foster the health and well-being of everyone in the community.

The following identify the characteristics of community health identified in our conversations. It is worth briefly outlining the definitions for our major areas of concentration - respondents then discussed the particular local contours of these areas, identifying key challenges and needs.

Community Cohesion is achieved when a community is invested and participating; when it accepts, understands, and empathizes with diversity; when it celebrates diverse skills and talents; when it is self-reliant; when it discusses its issues and works together to create solutions; when it is created and built by its people (the members are the core); when it is connected; when it supports and welcomes its newcomers; and when it is affordable.

With regards to education and information, a healthy community understands how government systems work; is informed; has access to materials for knowledge growth and to support lifelong learning; supports its youth and future generations; and values the health and well being of its members (through nature, exercise, nutrition, healthcare, classes, workshops)

When it comes to creation and innovation, a healthy community is improving; supports its local small businesses; creates and shares its stories; and offers access to exciting and diverse innovations that its community needs and desires.

Common themes that arose from these conversations are similar to those that many communities are experiencing nationally: lack of access to quality education for all, scarcity of transportation options as a barrier to opportunities (including access to library

¹ "Defining Healthy Communities," July 25, 2013, Health Resources in Action, <https://hria.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/10/defining-healthycommunities.original.pdf>.

services), the need to overcome poverty and inequality, and the stresses that demographic shifts are having on the community's diversity, equity and inclusion values.

We were able to hear how those challenges are expressed uniquely in Altadena, as well as what residents identified as desirable in addressing them.

Community Cohesion: Local Challenges

- Scarcity of transportation options as a barrier to opportunities (including access to library services);
- Overcoming poverty and inequality;
- Stresses that demographic shifts are having on the community's diversity, equity and inclusion values;
- Being unincorporated;
- Lack of coordinated communication about Altadena's resources;
- Concerns about gentrification and the lack of affordable housing;
- The implications that development will have on the community's shared values;
- The need for intentional efforts to foster positive social interactions to reflect Altadena's diversity; and
- Lack of walkability.

Community Cohesion: Altadena Wants & Needs

- Opportunities for civic engagement;
 - A place to gather to discuss local events and concerns ;
 - For its members to understand government;
 - Awareness of local events;
 - To combat difficult problems (e.g. homelessness); and
 - Safer and more walkable/active streets and parks.
-

Education and Information: Local Challenges

- Lack of access to quality education for all;
- Need for effective information dissemination;
- Connecting to schools;
- Language diversity;
- Lack of healthcare awareness and information; and
- Lack of healthy food options.

Education and Information: Altadena Wants & Needs

- To engage, empower, and inform its youth;
- A resource for information, services, and voting;
- To help people find jobs;
- Guidance on educational materials;

- To catalyze relationships between public schools and other community institutions;
- Improved and more equitable education; and
- Access to, and information on healthier eating practices.

Creation and Innovation: Local Challenges

- No local newspaper;
- Disengaged community members;
- Lack of empathy; and
- Difficult for small businesses to survive.

Creation and Innovation: Altadena Wants & Needs

- Pop-ups to engage the community;
- A local newspaper to share its stories; and
- To leverage its local resources.

Key Takeaways From the Evidence

It is essential to identify the ways in which the Altadena Library District can play a role in answering some of these challenges. While of course ALD cannot - nor should it! - do all things, it can play a meaningful role in addressing some of our community's identified problems.

It is also essential to remember that the evidence gathered in this strategic planning document is drawn from a very small, and in no way demographically representative, sample of citizens (relative to Altadena as a whole). While this feedback is very valuable in identifying contours of the larger conversation, it is a starting point for further investigation and conversation to be undertaken as part of our work going forward, not a definitive answer to a question.

This process garnered feedback about how the community currently uses ALD, what it most values about ALD, and how core patrons envision using library services in the future. It is confirmed that Altadena residents use and value the library for the services they have enjoyed throughout their lives, including checking out books and movies, studying, research, and family-centered activities.

The community also expressed appreciation that the library facilities provide spaces for community meeting, quiet spaces for reflection, reading, and escape, and spaces for teens to hang out. We learned about programs that are currently popular: youth service programs, community-centered programs, art exhibits and STEM programs. In fact, during this process, the library conducted innovative new programs that were extremely well attended. These included an event that ALD hosted at the Bob Lucas Branch long-time residents with a diverse background of lived experiences shared their "Altadena"

stories; ALD hosted a panel discussion celebrating the achievements of talented scientific innovators, all women who are making an impact in the fields of astrophysics, engineering, biology, and chemistry; and the Main Library hosted a family festival to celebrate the Summer Reading program.

We also learned that the community is largely eager to embrace an expanded role of the library in order for the Altadena to reach its potential. At the same time, it is true that some residents expressed frustration that the role of the library was changing - in the words of one respondent, “why can’t you just check out books?”

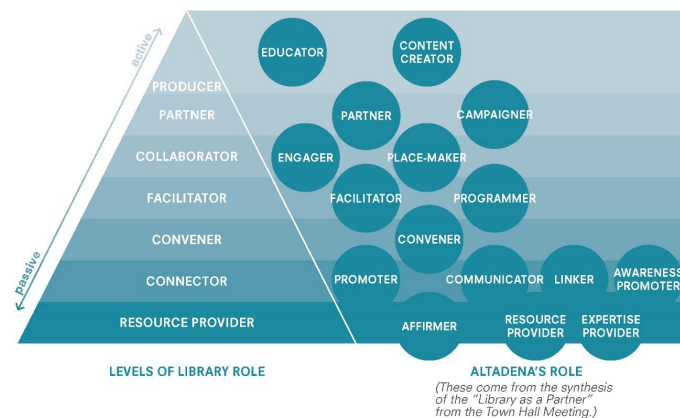
The answer to this is simple: ALD *does* check out books. As a Library District, we have, until recently, largely embodied the traditional model of library usage throughout the twentieth century, and it is safe to say that we have neither the resources nor the square footage to be a major research library on the scale of, say, the main branch of the LA County Library.

It is also true that continuing to solely pursue our traditional, twentieth-century model of library service would not serve all our constituents. Adding more books to a collection will continue but will not address the many other needs of Altadena residents who do not currently use the library, or who don’t think that the library is a place that is welcoming, relevant, or useful to their lives.

And finally, it is undeniable that the world is changing rapidly. We can either take proactive steps to decide how to deal with that change, or we can deny its reality. It is our belief that our task as a public library system is to serve all of Altadena to the best of our ability: to connect our neighbors to ideas, experiences, and learning opportunities that will directly and indirectly make their lives better.

Our role as a library district is not to do all things for all people, but rather to be intentional and deliberate about how to best align the services, resources, and experiences we can provide with the needs of our town. In some areas, the library absolutely can and should be a leader - in other areas, we envision ourselves bringing value more as a partner or supporter.

To that end, the Strategic Planning Committee, the Staff, and the Board of Trustees are recasting our mission, our vision, our core values, and our strategic priorities to represent the Altadena Library District as it currently exists in the community, and as we envision it moving into the future in a bold, innovative, and courageous way.



IV. MISSION, VISION, VALUES

The mission, vision, and core values of the Altadena Library District are the cornerstone of all our work. We have updated these to reflect our changing world and our renewed commitment to our community.

MISSION:

The Altadena Library District provides free, public, and equal access to information, ideas, technology, and experience, designed to educate, empower, and celebrate the diversity of our community.

VISION:

The Altadena Library District will be an innovative leader, and a leading voice, in building a community that moves into the future in an intentional way. We will construct a tomorrow that includes all of us.

CORE VALUES:

Our core values are ALD's enduring, passionate, and distinctive core beliefs that will guide everything we do, define our organizational culture, and serve as the foundation for our strategic objectives.

These values articulated by the community and by the staff, are in alignment and serve as the bedrock of our library system.

We value:

- **Community**
- **Integrity**
- **Innovation**
- **Creativity**
- **Diversity**
- **Equity**
- **Sustainability**
- **Empathy**
- **Intentionality**

V. Strategic Objectives

The following strategic objectives will activate the Vision, Mission and Values of ALD, and will be articulated more fully in the implementation plan that follows this strategic planning work.

[More fully developed objectives will be identified in the final iteration of staff workshops and will be spelled out in the final plan; a rough outline is included here to give a sense of direction.]

When it comes to COMMUNITY, our strategic objectives include:

- Promoting civic health and taking a leadership role as a convener for conversations in the community.
- Enhancing local communication and access to information, in ways that ensure better access for all residents;
- Promoting voter registration and voting for all Altadena residents;
- Meaningfully engaging a wider swath of Altadena in events, programming, collection growth, and services;
- Redistricting ALD's elected representatives to a by-district as opposed to an at-large electoral system; and
- Finding ways to contribute meaningfully on serious problems facing our community, including homelessness, mental health, affordable housing, income gaps, and a shrinking middle class.

To show our commitment to INTEGRITY, strategic objectives include:

- Improved transparency and accountability at all levels;
- Good governance and sound local leadership;
- Acting as a reliable and good-faith partner with local institutions, organizations, and community groups;

As an institution driven by INNOVATION, our strategic objectives include:

- Continuing to advance our available technology;
- Providing access to STEM programming and resources to kids and teens;
- Partnering more effectively with innovative institutions, including JPL and Caltech;
- Providing resources for local small businesses; and
- Promoting local industries and enterprises.

Because we value CREATIVITY, our strategic objectives include:

- Finding new and interesting ways to provide resources to patrons;
- Promoting the library and library services in new and different methods;
- Providing access to the fine and performing arts experiences and programs;
- Designing and providing new spaces for learning and engagement;
- Moving the work of the Library District beyond the four walls of our Main and Branch locations, creating library experiences in unexpected, surprising, and delightful ways.

DIVERSITY is an essential characteristic of Altadena, and so our strategic objectives include:

- Lifting up and centering the stories, experiences, and lived realities of all Altadena residents, especially those who have been traditionally under-represented;
- Affirming and welcoming the LGBTQ+ community
- Showcasing the history and traditions of diversity in Altadena; and
- Striving to appreciate and value difference, and to model respect and openness, even when it is uncomfortable.

In thinking about EQUITY, our strategic objectives include:

- Ensuring equity of access to all, most especially in our facilities becoming not just ADA compliant, but welcoming, open, and accessible to people no matter their health, mobility, or needs.
- Better linguistic representation, including the consistent translation and provision of all ALD communications in Spanish, and the development of language-specific collections relevant to our community;
- Seeking equity in provision of services across neighborhoods, populations, and areas of Altadena; and
- Making sure that all library facilities, no matter where they are located, are equally updated, interesting, engaging, and well-maintained.

In terms of SUSTAINABILITY, our strategic objectives include:

- Providing services in a “green” way;
- Identifying and renewing reliable sources of funding for ALD’s future;
- Updating our facilities to a more environmentally-friendly and energy-efficient standard;
- Continuing to build the relevance of our work into the future and communicating it effectively to all of Altadena.

Because EMPATHY underlies all our work, our strategic objectives include:

- Approaching all patrons, experiences, opportunities, and situations with compassion;
- Building ties within the community;
- Helping under-served populations access resources they need.

We want to approach everything we do with INTENTIONALITY, and so our strategic objectives include:

- Deliberate self-assessment and stock-taking that includes a frank look at whether our goals are being met, and our vision realized;
- The construction and nurturing of viable community feedback loops, to consistently improve the provision of library services;
- A commitment to a long-term and ongoing process of community engagement;
- Open and clear deliberation at all levels on whether future decisions align with our values, with our mission, and with our vision.

VI. Next Steps & Implementation

The board will adopt this plan by the end of 2019. The Strategic Plan directs the work of the Altadena Library District, including staff and Board, and will also inform and orient the work of our support groups, including the Friends and Foundation. In the next year, the incoming District Director will work with the Board of Trustees to develop a one-year activation plan, a three-year implementation plan, and a five-year business plan. The following outlines a three-phased approach to be accomplished in the first three years. Progress will be assessed regularly, based on collectively defined success indicators.

Year One, Phase One: Listening, Learning, and Following Through

By the end of Phase One, ALD will have accomplished:

- Community asset mapping;
- Strengthened relationships with community members and institutions;
- Strengthened trust
- Improved cultural empathy & awareness;
- A better alignment between community needs and library services
- The development of staff skills and talents necessitated by strategic objectives; and
- The institutional adoption and embodiment of our core values in every patron experience and interaction.

Year Two, Phase Two: Prototyping Services

By the end of Phase Two, ALD will have accomplished:

- The implementation of new services and programs aligned with community-identified wants and needs;
- Implementation and practice of enhanced staff skills and talents;
- Improved community relationships, which will generate increased opportunities; and
- Increased competency in evaluating and assessing our impact, our successes, and our areas which require improvement.

Year Three, Phase Three: Fuller Implementation

By the end of Phase Three, ALD will have accomplished:

- A demonstrable creation of public value;
- Confidence and improved core competencies from staff;
- Improved reach and interaction with the community across all demographic and geographic ranges;
- The ability to align our facilities, our services, our assets, our resources, and our staff skills and talents with our strategic objectives.

The Library's Board of Trustees will serve the role of championing the strategic work, will communicate stories of impact, initiative, and relevance to community peers and civic leaders; and will continue to build, nurture, and develop relationships. The Board will support the Altadena Library District's leadership to ensure strategic success. The District Director will create the culture, lead the brand development and grow the business.

Undertaking this work will require ALD to build its capacity as influencers and storytellers. It will require ALD to strengthen its public trust by demonstrating increased value. Ultimately, this work represents the commitment of a Board, staff and community to demonstrating how impactful and important a public library can be in a town like ours.