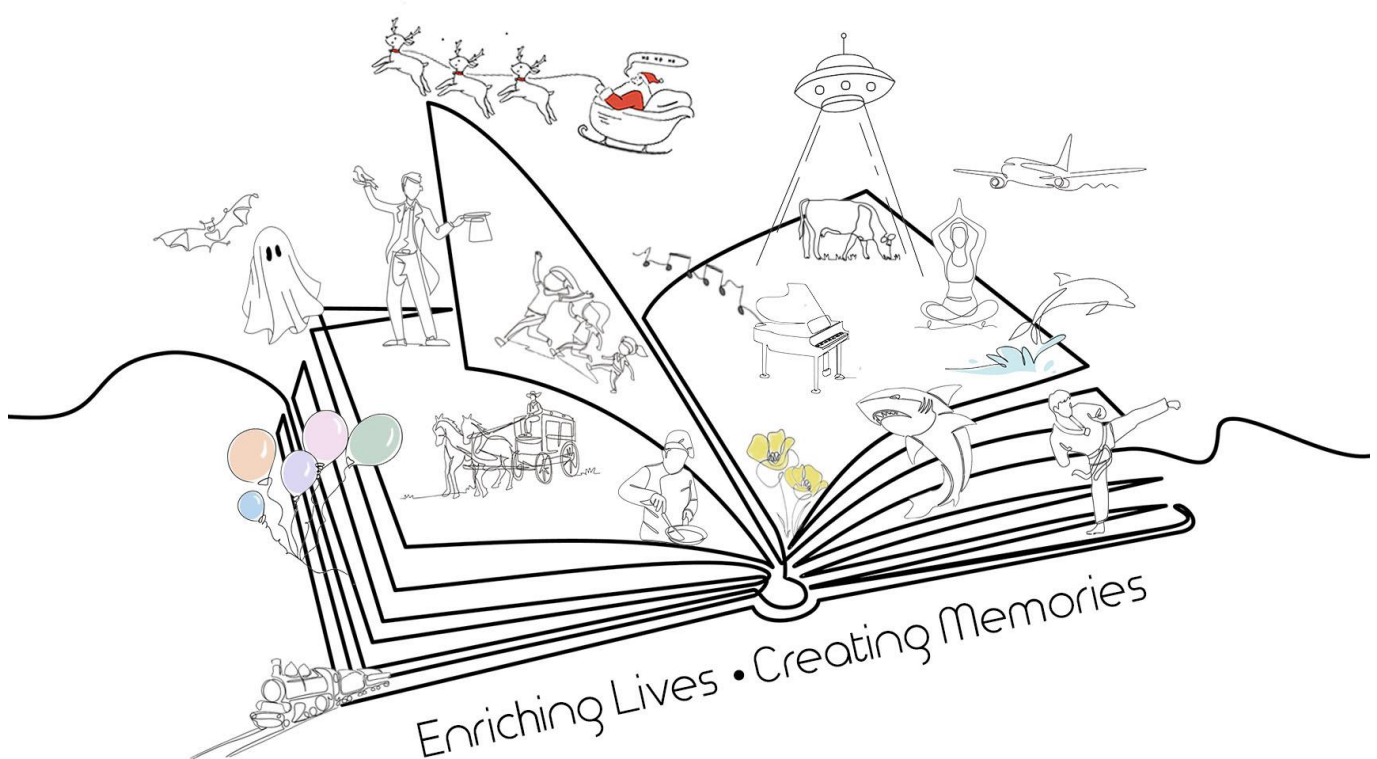


Raymond A. Whitwer  
**Tilden Public Library**

**2024 – 2029 Strategic Plan & Community Needs Response**



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**Mission Statement**

It is the central purpose and role of Raymond A. Whitwer Tilden Public Library to provide each individual with equal and adequate access to informational resources, providing valuable information and opportunities, constructive and enjoyable programming & events, and a place for learning and discovery.

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The Tilden Public Library Director and Library Board worked together to comprise and revise a five-year strategic plan for the Raymond A. Whitwer Tilden Public Library. This plan reviews the library's strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats; presents a series of statements relating to the library's, mission, values and objectives; and sets out proposed strategies, goals and action plans in response to the needs of the library, encounters with patrons, and engaging with associations and organizations. In addition, data gathered through community surveys and a focus group revealing the needs and concerns of community members is also summarized in this plan, which will be reviewed annually and revised as needed.

### **Community Demographic Profile**

Tilden is a city located in both Madison and Antelope Counties. Tilden is served by U.S. Highway 275 and Highway 45. The city is 22 west of Norfolk, is 134 miles northwest of Omaha, and 148 miles northwest of Lincoln. Tilden is the home of famous Phillies baseball player and Hall of Famer, Richie Ashburn, and the birthplace of Scientology creator L. Ron Hubbard.

As per the 2020 official census, the population of the City of Tilden is 992. Of the population 956 are not Hispanic or Latino, 36 are Hispanic or Latino. 918 are white alone. There are 445 households in the City of Tilden. 99.3% of the households are English speaking only. 49.2% of households are married couples. The median household income is 63,523. 24% of the population are under 18 years of age, while 24.2 % are 65 and older. 44.3 is the median age in the city. Elkhorn Valley Schools resides in the City of Tilden, supporting Pre-K through 12<sup>th</sup> grade. 79.2% of the city population is enrolled in the public school. The total enrollment for the 2024-25 school year, including the rural community, is 454.

Since October 1, 2018, The City of Tilden has retained the services of the Five Rule Rural Planning organization to assist with planning, strategy, resources and grants regarding economic development in the City. In order to fulfil requirements for specific grants, business members in the community formed the Tilden Community Alliance group with 501(c)(3) status. In addition to addressing community needs, an account was established with funds derived from a grant and a small percentage of sale tax proceeds through which existing and new small businesses can access loans. As part of the procedure, a loan review committee is in place, along with a Citizens Advisory Board for oversight, of which the Library Director is a member. In 2023, Tilden received their Leadership Certificate and continue with plans for downtown revitalization and other areas of the community.

### **Assessing Community Needs**

The following analyses are a result of Community Needs Response questionnaire conducted by the focus group assigned to this project, along with an online survey available on both the City of Tilden and Library Facebook pages. All were completely anonymous. Questions pertained to both the City of Tilden and the Tilden Public Library.

Of the responses received, 74% of the people are VERY SATISFIED with their life in Tilden, 23% are SATISFIED, 1% answered DISSATISFIED and 2% had NO OPINION.

When asked: *Over the last three years do you believe Tilden's quality of life has improved?* 55% answered YES, 25% answered NO, 10% were undecided and 10% had no opinion.

While the majority of those respondents were mostly satisfied with their overall quality of life in Tilden, the following were the most critical issues facing Tilden:

1. Addressing an ongoing illegal drug problem and drug traffickers. (Also, what some respondents like LEAST about Tilden).
2. The removal or clean-up of unmaintained houses, buildings, and properties. (Also, what some respondents like LEAST about Tilden).
3. More available housing for purchase or rental.
4. A variety of more businesses, stores and restaurants in town.
5. The need for more EMTs and rescue personnel.
6. More employment opportunities.
7. A community center.

### **Survey responses regarding the Tilden Public Library:**

A series of ten questions were included in the library surveys. The majority were multiple choice or selections, and included general questions such as usage, frequency of visits, recommendation to others, use of services, sources to learn about library programs & events. The information acquired helped us to gain a better perspective regarding our marketing strategies, and overall customer services.

Other questions included narrative answers or comments:

When asked if *library operating hours were convenient for them*, over 90% answered YES, however, few respondents did request evening hours.

When asked about *their overall experience at the library*, 100% were SATISFIED or VERY SATISFIED.

When asked *Do you feel library services could be improved or what would you like to see offered*, comments included more children's programs, a variety of different classes and programs, longer time for material to be checked out. Some of the answers included services and programs that are already in place at the library, leading to the conclusion that better promotion and marketing is necessary.

## **S.W.O.T Analysis**

This strategic plan addresses the following key strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats which apply to Raymond A. Whitwer Tilden Public Library now and in the foreseeable future:

### **Internal Strengths:**

- Experienced & friendly staff
- A variety of services
- Accessible online newspaper archives
- Beautiful and spacious facility
- Unique collections / displays / artifacts
- Attached large auditorium for programming / events and rental.
- 8 public access internet computers and WiFi.
- Full-time operating hours for customer convenience.
- 2 convenient 24/7 drop boxes
- Private additional funding available.
- A supportive and functional Library Board and Library Foundation.

### **Internal Weaknesses:**

- Insufficient number of volunteers for programs and functions.
- Health of some staff members
- Insufficient publicity and marketing of library services available.
- Ongoing building maintenance, upkeep and repairs.
- Facility size increases operating costs such as utilities.
- Fixed layout prevents makerspaces or moving shelves.

### **External Opportunities:**

- The increasing population of children.
- The availability of grants and resources.
- Increasing number of homeschool families
- Partnering with community organizations
- Economic development in the city
- Social media for additional marketing.
- AR program at the EV school
- Welcome packets for new residents which contains library information

### **External Threats:**

- Sports and other activities that occupy children's/family's time.
- Scheduling conflicts with other organizations.
- Continued loss of elderly population who were advocates and fully supported the library.
- Lack of advocacy, appreciation and library participation from city officials.
- Shortage of available and/or interested volunteers.
- The ending of MS Windows 10 and the impact it will have for library computers.

## **S.W.O.T. Strategic Plan**

The following strategies will be pursued in order to address those attainable weaknesses and threats and expand upon the opportunities and strengths that encompass the library and library personnel.

1. Design a professional trifold brochure with library information to use as a tool for marketing and promoting the library.
2. Develop a continuing marketing strategy (i.e direct mail) to better inform the public of library services and programs.
3. Reach out to homeschool organizations and families for information on how the library can be beneficial for their needs.
4. Develop more children's programs. Reinstate Pee-Wee Storytime with Day Care facility.
5. Increase informational type programs and partner with local organizations for such.
6. Stay on top of maintenance and repair issues. Search for grant opportunities to help offset facility repairs.
7. Review the possibility of extending evening hours one day a week after the winter months.
8. Plan for new lab, office and circ desk computers as Windows 10 is discontinued.

## **Library Action Plan – Community Needs Response:**

The Community Needs Response survey was designed to aid in the structure of this strategic report and to gain a better understanding and determination of how and/or if the library could help contribute its services to fulfil community needs. Many of the community concerns related to the city are beyond the scope of what the library would be able to accomplish. However, the information gathered was presented to the Mayor and City Council, along with members of the Tilden Community Alliance group.

Areas where the library may be of use are in the way of informational programming that would benefit residents of the community such as drug & alcohol addiction seminars, Red Cross training classes, Cyber security programs, entrepreneur seminars, and other topics.

Work with the Tilden Community Alliance and Economic groups to help promote available lending opportunities for area small businesses, along with supporting the businesses already established.

## **Conclusion:**

The Raymond A. Whitwer Tilden Public Library will continue its efforts to identify the needs of the public by asking questions and listening to new and existing customers, by searching out information via the newspaper, newsletters and social network sites, and by uniting with local organizations and associations. The library understands that it is beneficial to both the library and members of the community to create and maintain awareness, and to continually seek out opportunities which will generate interest and engage the public.

Upon review of this strategic plan on an annual basis, the Tilden Public Library Board and the Library Director will explore what efforts have been made, accomplishments that have occurred, and analyze the reasons for successes and failures.

*Approved by the Tilden Library Board on Sept 9, 2024,*