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# Community Needs Assessment Plan

October 2018 - September 2021

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## Introduction

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For more than 60 years, Jensen Memorial Library has served the Minden community as a place for entertainment, education, and community support. Every decision, change, program and service at JML is done in effort to make the library an even better place for the community.

The development of this Strategic Plan document was a combined effort of the Jensen Memorial Library Staff, the JML Board of Trustees and the City of Minden, along with input from city leaders and JML customers.

## Mission Statement

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The purpose of the Jensen Memorial Library is to meet the needs of community members by providing resources to assist in their pursuit of lifelong learning, cultural enrichment, recreation, and solutions to everyday problems.

## Organizational Objectives

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1. To serve the community as a center for reliable and timely information.
2. To support the educational, civic, and cultural activities of groups and organizations.
3. To identify community needs and to provide programs of service to meet such needs.
4. To cooperate with other organizations and develop partnerships to aid in providing such needs to the community.
5. To provide facilities for groups and/or individuals for their educational, professional and entertainment needs.
6. To provide an environment that helps customers build skills necessary for lifelong learning.

## History

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In 1906, the Minden Public Library Association was formed. Membership was open to any resident for an annual fee of 25 cents, which was used to purchase books.

A committee from the Library Association met with the County Board in August of 1906 to request a suitable room in the new courthouse be reserved for use as a library and reading room for the community. The SW room on the first floor of the courthouse was reserved for library use. Temporary housing of the library had been in the Christian Science Hall, which stood at the southeast corner of Block 28 in Minden.

The present library building was built in 1953 with funds provided by the Andrew Jensen Family. An expansion and remodeling project was completed in 1989 with federal, state and local government funding along with private support from the Minden community, and a gift from Arthur Jensen's widow Irene. At that time, an arboretum was also added to the grounds.

Between 2011 and 2014, renovations of the library were completed with funds from a bequest from the Arthur Jensen estate along with grant monies from the Nebraska Community Foundation. Updates featured the expansion of seating areas, new windows throughout the building, new furnishings, rearranging of collection areas, and addition of the Crane and Heritage Rooms.

## Overview

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### Facility

Jensen Memorial Library is located in Minden, Kearney County, Nebraska on the southwest corner of 5<sup>th</sup> Street and Kearney Avenue, one block east of the downtown square. The building is 4,900 square feet. The library's physical address is 443 North Kearney Avenue with a mailing address of P.O. Box 264, Minden, NE 68959.

Services of the library primarily cover the Minden community with services extended to residents of Kearney County. Persons outside this basic service area are also welcome to use the library.

The library is open 51 hours a week, 52 weeks a year. Holiday closings coincide with those of the City of Minden, with discretion for holidays falling on weekends.

### Operation/Budget

Jensen Memorial Library is a public institution, operating under the supervision of a five-person administrative Board of Trustees, in cooperation with the City of Minden. Members of the board are approved for selection by the Mayor and City Council.

The Board is tasked with the establishment of rules and regulations for the government, operation, and maintenance of the library. Selection of a Director is done by the Board.

Daily operations are overseen by the Director. This individual is also responsible for

supervision of budget, personnel, policies and procedures, building and grounds maintenance, and any other issues that may arise regarding the library. Reporting to the Board of Trustees takes place at monthly meetings. The Director is also responsible for working with the Minden City Council and City Administrator regarding budgets, annual reports, personnel, and other areas which concern City funds and interests.

Budget and finances of Jensen Memorial Library are managed by the Director and Board and regulated by the Minden City Council.

Administration of the Library Foundation is the responsibility of the Board of Trustees with funds managed through the Kearney County Community Foundation.

### Associations

Jensen Memorial Library is a member of the Central Plains Library System and accredited with the Nebraska Library Commission. The library has been a member of the Minden Chamber of Commerce since 2010.

The Director and Board of Trustees are certified through the Nebraska Library Commission. The Director and Youth Services Specialist are members of the Nebraska Library Association and the American Library Association.

### Service

During the 2016-2017 fiscal year:

- 22,550 items circulated.
- 2,306 registered borrowers.
- 17,438 items held in the collection.
- 181 events, classes, and workshops held bringing in 3,819 participants.
  - 161 events for children, 3,530 attendees.
  - 12 young adult events, 97 attendees.
  - 8 adult events, 192 attendees.
- 25,324 visits.

### Computers/Technology

- Four public stations with internet access, Open Office programs, B&W printer.
- Three public station with access to internet, Open Office programs, color printer.
- One public station with internet access, Open Office programs, dedicated color printer and scanner.
- Two public stations and printer in Heritage Room reserved for genealogy research.
- OpenDNS filtering software.
- WiFi access through secured and unsecured networks.
- Internet – wired and wireless – provided by Spectrum Business.
- Copier for staff and public with black & white and color capabilities.
- Microfilm reader with printer.
- Fax machine with sending capabilities for no charge.

## Community Profile

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### Location

Minden, the county seat of Kearney County in south central Nebraska, lies 13 miles south of Interstate 80 Exit 279, at the intersection of U.S. Highways 6 & 34 (east-west) and State Highway 10 (north-south). Minden is the county seat of Kearney County.

The community, with a footprint of 2.1 square miles, is 21 miles southeast of the City of Kearney and 32 miles west of the City of Hastings. This proximity allows for more job and retail opportunities; however, people often leave Minden to work and shop in one of these cities.

### Population

According to the 2010 U.S. Census, 2,923 persons lived in the Minden Community, with an estimate of 2,970 in 2018. The 45-54 age group is the largest age group (14%) with 28.8% under the age of 25 and 25.1% over the age of 65. The population skews slightly more female than male (53.5% to 46.5%). 90.6% of the population have a high school diploma with 19.2% having some form of higher education degree. Over half the population is married (54%).

### Education

Minden Public Schools consists of a public preschool, East Elementary School for grades K-3, C.L. Jones Middle School for grades 4-8 and Minden High School for grades 9-12. The school district has a total enrollment of 783 students. Each of the three schools has a library available for its students. Numerous private and religious-based preschools and daycares are available for care of young children.

2016-17 Enrollment: Elementary (K-4), 306; Middle (5-8), 256; Senior High (9-12) 221

Classroom teachers: 41.42 FTE Elementary; 23.10 FTE Secondary

Student/teacher ratio: 14.27 Elementary; 9.57 Secondary

### Language and Ethnicity

English is the primary language in the community with 3.7% of the population also speaking Spanish as the primary or secondary language. The city consists of a 96.6% Caucasian population with 5.2% recognizing themselves as Hispanic or Latino.

### Household and Family Economics

Median household income in Minden is \$48,370. The median family income is \$62,893. Only 3.3% of the population 25 years and older are currently unemployed, meanwhile 7% of all people are considered below the poverty level.

### Community Organizations

Numerous civic groups and community organizations have a presence in the Minden community. Some of these include Optimists, American Legion and Auxiliary, Boy Scouts,

Girl Scouts, 4-H Clubs, Knights of Columbus, Lions Club, Rotary Club, Red Cross, Classic Car Club, Danish Brotherhood, Gun Club, South Central Nebraska Genealogical Society, Teammates, and several County-based organizations.

Older citizens in the community are served by the Minden Senior Center for social activities, entertainment, and educational programs along with daily noon meals. The Center also provides hearing and foot care sessions, and blood pressure clinics. Bethany Home provides residential accommodations for senior and elderly long and short-term care.

The Kearney County Community Foundation has served as a go-to organization for charitable giving since 1992. The KCCF has given more than \$26,000 to support projects and programs within the county and has awarded over \$24,000 in scholarships. The foundation helps to fund community projects, meet goals, and strengthen community ties. KCCF is the administrator for several major community funds, including the JML Foundation Funds which are used for library improvements and renovations.

## Tourism

The city of Minden was established in 1876 by German immigrants and is most widely known as being the home of Harold Warp's Pioneer Village. Minden is also known as "The Christmas City" and home of the "Light of the World" pageant performed each December.

Pioneer Village serves as Minden's foremost tourist attraction and is known as one of the best planned and most comprehensive collections of Americana. Housing more than 50,000 objects in 26 buildings, the attraction also offers a motel, gift shop, and campgrounds.

In 2000, the renovated Minden Opera House opened its doors and has since served as the home to meetings, receptions, conventions, art showings, local and national theatrical and musical productions, along with other school and public events. The Minden Community Players work with a board of directors to help provide high-quality local entertainment.

Minden is also home the Kearney County Historical Museum, featuring more than 7,000 items in four buildings native to Kearney County. The museum is home to artifacts from the Minden community along with the other four towns in the county as well as historical objects including photographs, books, magazines and newspapers.

## Recreation

Local recreation opportunities supported by the city's Parks and Recreation department include an outdoor public swimming pool (open May through September), four public parks, an outdoor classroom, two public campgrounds, a public golf course, a public tennis court, and the county fairgrounds. The Minden Area Sports Commission runs summer baseball and softball programs, including T-ball and Legion Baseball teams.

Fort Kearney State Historical Park and Recreation area is fifteen miles north and west of Minden, offering a re-created military post and historical center at the Historical Park, while the Recreation Area serves as a spot for camping, fishing, swimming, and the location of a hike/bike trail which crosses both channels of the Platte River.

Harlan County Lake and the Republican River, located 50 miles southwest of Minden, are also a popular recreational area for residents. The area offers 13,000 acres of water and 75 miles of shoreline along with nature, horse, hike/bike and ATV trails, canoe and tubing areas and a motocross track along with camping, fishing, hunting, and bird-watching areas.

## *Engaging Minden: a roadmap to 2023* analysis and application

In 2012-2013, the City of Minden and its residents took part in a community planning process to develop a vision for the Minden community. Information contained in *Engaging Minden: a roadmap to 2023* was used to determine a community needs assessment. The overall vision identified for the community is “to promote and grow a diverse economic base while keeping the emphasis in overall community growth and development, including a proactive approach for attracting new residents.”

This document was developed by Miller & Associates Consulting Engineers in cooperation with the Minden City Council, Mayor Roger Jones, City Administrator Matt Cedarburg and members of the Planning & Zoning Commission. Community feedback was gathered from residents, property owners and business owners through public input sessions and a Community Needs Assessment Survey.

Major community needs brought up in this analysis included:

- Infrastructure updates including water and streets.
- Additional commercial businesses such as restaurants, hotel and retail.
- Improved gateway entrances into the city.
- Connecting with the 45 and under age group to retain current residents and attract new residents.
- Recreation and entertainment opportunities.
- Amenities and quality-of-life opportunities for the under 18 population.
- Lack of housing and job availability.

Seven main goals were established for the City in the comprehensive plan, including:

- Improve Public Infrastructure
- Create Gateway Entrances
- Housing Improvements
- Promote Commercial Development
- New Swimming Pool
- Become a Leadership Community
- Support Minden Public School District

These identified needs and goals along with the other areas of concern were taken into consideration in regard to the library’s strategic goals. Community needs addressed by the library’s strategic plan are those through which the library can most contribute to the advancement and enhancement of the community.



## *Recreational Master Plan & Pool Study for the City of Minden, Nebraska analysis and application*

In 2016, the City of Minden contracted with Miller & Associates to complete a Park and Recreational Master Plan as well as a Pool Study. This study provides long-term goals for parks and recreation in Minden, mostly in regard to facilities.

In this study, an outdoor pool and splash pad, walking and biking trails, indoor fitness facilities, and indoor shelter/meeting spaces were identified as areas of concern for citizens of Minden regarding needs not being met.

Major goals established in this plan are divided into six phases. These include:

### Phase I

- Renovation of park restrooms.
- Update and addition of signage.

### Phase II

- Construction of a Hike/Bike Loop trail.
- Renovation of the community band shell at Chautauqua Park.
- Installation of a splash pad.

### Phase III

- Relocation of the disc golf course.
- Replacement of playground equipment.

### Phase IV

- Development of a 4-plex of ballfields along with swimming pool complex.

### Phase V

- Construction of additional soccer fields.
- Demolition of old swimming pool and addition of dog park in its place.

### Phase VI

- Resurface of tennis courts.
- Replace/renovate remaining park restrooms.

While the library is unable to assist or effect many of these plans, this study does help to give direction on where the library can fill voids in accordance to the needs uncovered. This is especially notable in the indoor shelter/meeting spaces area.

In the future, this may include the library being a place for community discussion of the plan and displays of blue prints or conceptual renderings.

## Library S.W.O.T. Analysis

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### Internal Strengths

- Positive image in community.
- Wireless access and internet-access public computer stations.
- Children's play area.
- Seating and study areas and meeting room availability.
- Quick response to purchase and borrowing requests.
- Diversity of events and classes.
- Up-to-date building with pleasant atmosphere.
- Helpful and friendly staff – familiarity with community and residents.
- Genealogy Collection – variety of research databases and materials available, dedicated room, volunteer or staff to assist with research.

### Internal Weaknesses

- Limited parking – lot area consists of just four regular and one handicap parking spot and is located on a one-way alley. Street parking is limited as building is surrounded by residential lots.
- Inadequate reach to new users and program attendees.
- Publicity for events not reaching throughout community.
- Limit of handicap accessible entrances – no automatic door on interior doorways (door is propped open during operating hours).
- Inadequate use of volunteers.
- Aging technology equipment.

### External Opportunities

- Limited number of entertainment outlets in the immediate community.
- Almost 23 percent of population under the age of 18.
- Active community groups and organizations willing to work collaboratively.
- Positive relationship with other city departments and city officials.
- Community growth in new construction.
- Increase of job availability in community.

### External Threats

- Aging population.
- Proximity to larger communities with more entertainment and retail opportunities.
- Lack of housing for low- and middle-income families.
- Large percentage of population commuting out of town for work.

## Peer Comparison

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Jensen Memorial Library was compared to its peer libraries in Nebraska in accordance to standards set by the Nebraska Library Commission. ( $2,996 \pm 15\%$ , equaling seven comparison libraries).

The following are some of JML's strengths and weaknesses when considering these comparisons.

### Strengths

- Number of public service hours
- No Charge for non-resident cards
- Early literacy programs (number of programs and attendance)
- Number of FTE staff
- Operating revenue from city
- Adult summer reading participation

### Weaknesses

- Building's square footage
- No lending to other libraries
- Total Circulation and Collection Use
- Total materials held
- Materials expenditures
- Annual library visits
- Total operating revenue

# Community Needs Assessment

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## **Community Need #1: Services to Seniors**

Minden has seen major changes in services to seniors as the hospital's long-term care and assisted living facilities closed in 2018. Many of these residents moved to the Bethany Home Assisted Living facility where access to outside services are not as easily available. Additionally, the Senior Center has seen a change in administration in the last 18 months and is looking to strengthen its services and activities. On the whole, few events in Minden are designed for those aged 65 and over.

### Goal 1: Provide outreach services to Bethany Home and Minden Senior Center

- Objective 1: A short-term rotating collection of materials from the library will be established at Bethany Home. In creating this service, residents will be consulted concerning desired genres and authors they would like to see provided. Individual residents will also be able to make specific requests for checkout. This will be done by 11/1/2018.
- Objective 2: Regular visits will be scheduled to both locations. These visits will include giving updates on current happenings along with highlighting services or materials available at the library. This will begin by 2/1/2019
- Objective 3: Two JML staff members will work with activities directors at both locations to supplement their interactive activities by providing programs such as technology training, crafts, and adult storytimes. Teen Advisory Group members and other willing young people will be utilized in creating int-generational events. This will begin by 6/1/2019

### Goal 2: Offer classes and events at the library aimed at those aged 65 and over

- Objective 1: Free tax assistance services will be re-established at the library for low-income individuals and seniors. AARP and VITA will be consulted to find volunteers to provide this service. This will begin for the 2019 tax season, pending availability of volunteers.
- Objective 2: Group and individual technology classes will be offered geared toward those not considered digital natives will be offered. Students will be able to use their devices or learn on library-provided computers, Ipads, eReaders, and other devices. These classes will also include instruction in databases that are of use to this age group such as Legal Information Resource Center, Consumer Health Complete, My Heritage, and Ancestry.com. This will begin by 8/1/2019.
- Objective 5: Recreational classes will be further marketed to seniors. This includes activities already offered such as Adult Crafts, along with new activities such as Books After Dark book club. This effort will include one-on-one contact with library patrons and using non-technology-based resources such as newspaper, flyers, and direct mailings along with currently used publicity methods. This will begin with classes and events scheduled for Spring 2019.

## **Community Need # 2: Central Location for Community Information**

Citizens have expressed their concern with the lack of information about community information they see and that it would be convenient to have more information in one location and/or through one source. The library is often the place people come to find answers to questions about what is going on in the community, hence it is a natural fit for the library to be the central location for this information.

Goal 1: Several community groups/organizations currently have event calendars (some online, some not), but there is no central location for all events and important dates in the Minden community. Establishing the library as a clearinghouse for such a calendar will provide more visibility and availability.

- Objective 1: The library will research and determine a suitable resource/format through which a community calendar can be established. This resource will be of minimal or no cost to organizations wishing to take part in the calendar. The only costs may be those for a subscription or purchase of software. This will be completed by 12/15/2019.
- Objective 2: The library will work with the Minden Chamber of Commerce, City of Minden, Minden Public Schools and Minden Opera House to begin establishing guidelines for what can be posted to the calendar, who will have access to posting, and how other events can be submitted. This will be completed by 3/1/2019
- Objective 3: A beta version of the calendar will be ready to go-live by 5/1/2019, in time to help publicize summer events in the community. All participating organizations will have access and be encouraged to link to the calendar through their online presence.
- Objective 4: Following a three-month trial run, participating organizations will share feedback on the calendar and changes will be made as needed.

Goal 2: New citizens, new students and new teachers will have access to materials about where to go to find information about Minden and resources available in the community.

- Objective 1: Library staff will meet with administration from Minden Public Schools to establish the best way to get information into the hands of new students and teachers. This will be done by 5/1/2019
- Objective 2: The library will have a table at back-to-school and new student orientation nights. This table will highlight resources and services available at the library and will offer sign-up for library cards. This will begin with the 2019-20 school year.
- Objective 3: The library will work with the City of Minden to create “Welcome to the Community” bags for new citizens. Bags will include basic data the city, along with items gathered from businesses and organizations. New citizens establishing a utilities account with the city or signing up for an account at the library will receive these bags. This will be completed by 9/1/2019.

### **Community Need # 3: Indoor Meeting Space and Community Space**

Spaces to hold meetings, small gatherings, and recreational activities are highly desired among citizens of Minden. While some spaces are available, citizens have expressed the need for more spaces, especially spaces that are low or no cost, and spaces for small groups that are not part of organizations or businesses. (e.g.: study groups, one-on-one meetings, etc.). Part of the problem is a lack of knowledge regarding what spaces are available to the public.

Goal 1: Information regarding library's meeting spaces will be more widely available to the community. While library spaces are used for small group gatherings, they will be more frequently used for non-library sponsored activities.

Objective 1: Library Director and staff will make sure all information regarding library meeting room is up to date, including online, through City of Minden and Chamber of Commerce, and on signage at the library. This will be completed by 1/1/2019

Objective 2: Those seen meeting in small groups in the library will be approached and informed that there is a space available via reservation for further meetings if they wish to use the space. This will be an ongoing effort.

Objective 3: Mailers will be printed and sent to local non-profit groups, social groups, and social services organizations informing them about our meeting spaces. This will be completed by Fall 2019.

Goal 2: The library will be a more welcoming after-school study space and will be available as a place to find homework help.

Objective 1: A concerted effort will be made by library staff to welcome students looking for study spaces and staff will assist students in finding possible homework help resources. This will be an ongoing effort.

Objective 2: Library staff will speak with students and teachers to determine areas with which students may need the most assistance to determine how the library can provide support. This will be an ongoing effort.

Objective 3: The Technology Trainer will gather online resources to create an online homework help center available through the library's website. This will be completed by the beginning of the Fall 2019-2020 school year.

Goal 3: An additional space will be created at the library to serve as a storytime/events room specifically for library use. This will help to alleviate the use of the current public meeting room for library events. The current outdoor overhang seating area on the southeast corner of the building will be used for creating this room. This item has been put into the 5-year budget plan with the city.

Objective 1: Library Board of Trustees Buildings & Grounds committee, the Library Director, and the Youth Services Specialist will discuss the desired uses for the new space to determine what will be needed and what the footprint will look like. During this

time, an engineer or designer may be contacted to consult. This will be completed by 10/1/2019.

Objective 2: A timeline and budget will be established for the renovation. This will lead to developing a bid process in finding a contractor(s) for work. This will be completed in early 2020.

Objective 3: The Board of Trustees and Library Director will work with the City of Minden to determine what monies the city can/will provide for the project. Based on that number and the established budget, the Trustees and Director will work together to find grants and/or donations to supplement monies supplied by the City of Minden to complete the project. This will be completed by Fall 2020.

## Evaluation

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This plan will be reviewed by the Jensen Memorial Library Board and Library Director annually and as otherwise needed. At that time, goals and objectives will be evaluated for progress along with any possible revisions. Revisions and amendments will be added to the Strategic Plan materials.

At the end of the stated three-year period, a full assessment of these goals will be done. Additional and/or revised goals and objectives will be put in place for the next three to five-year term.

## Summary

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The Director, staff, and Board of Trustees of Jensen Memorial Library all share in the vision of continuing to improve the library through quality collections, meaningful events and activities for all ages, involvement in the community and superior customer service.

Through the aforementioned goals, the library will be able to continue to reach increasingly higher standards in these areas and overall continue excellent service to the Minden Community.



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