



“The best way to predict the future is to create it.”

– Alan Kay,
Computer Scientist,
Visionary

THE CHALLENGE

Imagine Pierce County in 2030. Where do people live? How do they interact with one another? How do they learn? Where do they go for recreation, for inspiration? How do they successfully navigate everyday life?

This was the challenge set to the participants at the Pierce County Library System’s Strategic Vision Workshop: Building Value in our Communities. On February 12, 2009, 55 community leaders gathered at the Pierce County Environmental Services Building to discuss these issues and to speculate on how the Pierce County Library could align its services and facilities with the community’s vision of life in 2030.

The Strategic Vision Workshop was part of an ongoing collaboration with community leaders to develop a vision for the Pierce County Library rooted firmly in community needs and priorities. It was one of several public involvement activities to prepare a 20+ year facilities master plan. The people involved in the workshop are listed at the end of this summary.

“I” **LEARNING LIBRARY** combines the best attributes of a place such as Pierce College, services such as the iPhone, and the values of public schools.

The library is a learning place where individuals come together. It complements offerings from schools and fills in educational voids. It ties people together globally. The library is the place where people gather to work, study, meet, and create together, as a complement to the solitary thrust of 24/7 technology. The library contracts with other agencies and employers to assist in creating new and needed educational opportunities.

THE ELECTRONIC GARDEN OF KNOWLEDGE LIBRARY combines the best attributes of a place such as public schools, a service such as Wi-Fi, and the values of sustainable farmland.

This library is sustainable and accessible. It has a role in eradicating illiteracy; like food, literacy is a basic human need. The atmosphere in this library is engaging, preserving culture and history. This library provides fertile ground in which to plant and grow the knowledge of tomorrow.



NEXT STEPS

Spring 2009

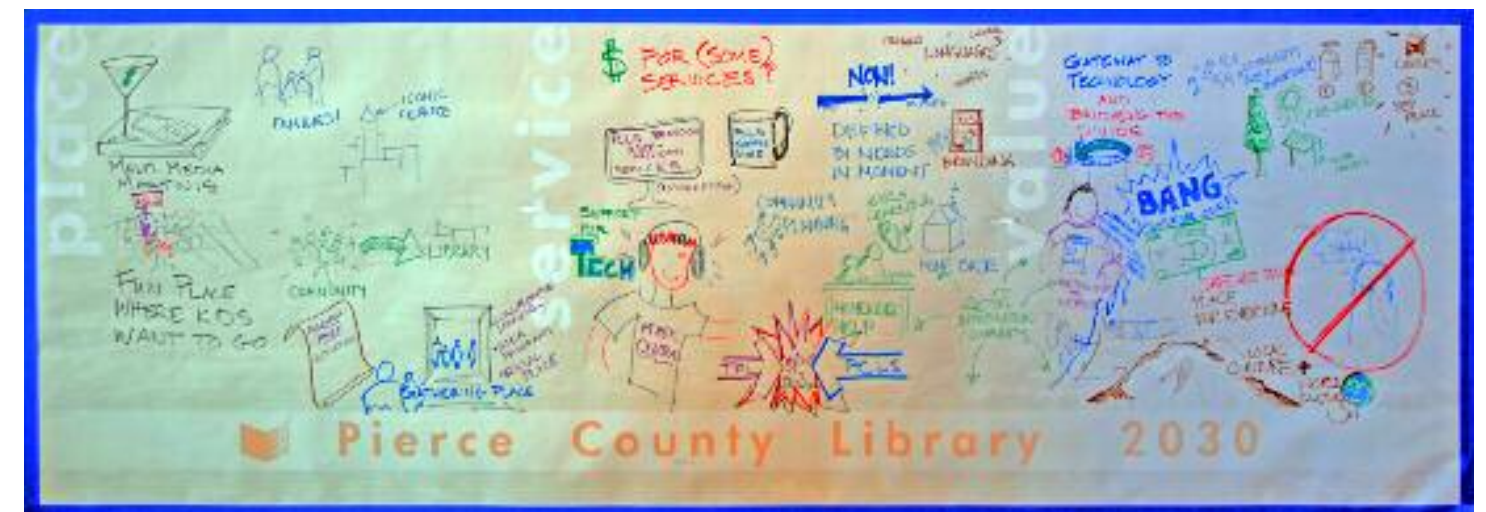
Additional community meetings to share draft recommendations for Pierce County Library 2030 and seek comments
Preliminary recommendation to the Library Board; Board asked to approve preparation of a detailed implementation report

Summer 2009

Review comments and prepare plan

Fall 2009

Communicate Pierce County Library 2030





"I" Learning Library

"Catalyst for educational opportunities"

"Not tied to place anymore"

"Open to all"

The Electronic Garden of Knowledge Library:

"Sprouting new ideas"

"Easy access"

"Inclusive institution – an American innovation"

"Grows and nurtures ideas and learning"



REIMAGINING PIERCE COUNTY LIBRARY 2030

Working in groups, the participants wove tapestries of metaphor to create five new possible perspectives on how the Library could engage the community:

THE BRIDGE LIBRARY combines the best attributes of a place such as Facebook, a service such as a farmers market, and the values of the public schools.

This library has the ability to connect everyone. It embraces technology, but at the same time it recognizes the value of people as individuals with a need to stay connected both in person and online. This library supports the community. It's a comprehensive, affordable, and happening place. It emphasizes retaining history while offering something for everyone at every stage of life.

THE UNLIMITED POSSIBILITIES LIBRARY combines the best attributes of a place such as Puget Sound, services such as YouTube, and the values of early learning.

The library is beautiful and intertwined with its community. The library's services are friendly, interactive, and free. Part of the interactivity is capturing and sharing what people are reading via the 2030-equivalent of YouTube. The library is a learning place, with expertise in early learning. The library levels the playing field for all, working in partnership with many organizations to expand its resources.

HOME WITH A VIEW LIBRARY combines the best attributes of a place such as Mt. Rainier, services such as Google, and the values of the Forza Coffee Company.

In this perspective, the library is beautiful and strong. It is a destination structure and an icon, a treasure of the community. This library is both historically significant and sustainable to last the test of generations. Services include leading technology, with customized databases. The library is a gathering place where people enjoy their coffee in a comfortable, welcoming atmosphere.



THE PROCESS

Group 4 Architecture, Research + Planning, Inc., a full-service architecture and planning firm, dedicated to creating vibrant public places that cultivate dynamic communities, facilitated the workshop. David Schnee, Principal in Group 4 Architecture, led the group through a series of focused design activities that would develop ideas about the future, using futuring techniques such as backcastings, role-playing, and metaphor to encourage visionary thinking and discussion. Participants compared the Library to other community symbols and icons, and used the attributes of other well-regarded destinations, brands, and services to identify what residents want from their Library.

Library consultants Joan Frye Williams and George Needham synthesized the comments throughout the program, linking the participants' ideas to examples of successes in other communities. Ms. Williams and Mr. Needham, Dawn Merkes, Principal in Group 4 Architecture, and Ron Sher, the Chief Executive Officer of the Third Place Company, challenged the group to incorporate emerging trends in technology, communications, public spaces, and library facilities into their discussions.





By 2030 in Pierce County...

"The public (will have) demanded that organizations remove barriers – government, societal, turf wars – and share resources."

"Small computers are a part of everything."

"The jobs of 2009 are gone; however, they've been replaced with new opportunities."

"Communities support and nurture families and children. However, adults still need to invest in children's lives."

PIERCE COUNTY 2030: THE VISION

Participants envisioned a Pierce County that will be more populous, older, more culturally diverse, and with an expanded middle class. They identified the need for continued person-to-person contact as a vital component of civic engagement.

The participants identified these positive features in Pierce County 2030:

- Broadly distributed economic development
- Progress with public transportation
- Safe neighborhoods
- Better health
- Flourishing small towns

They also suggested important challenges to be met:

- More traffic and population, resulting in further environmental degradation
- More chronic diseases
- Need for affordable housing
- Less money available to serve communities
- Difficulties in retaining open space and diverse communities
- Potential social isolation caused by increased telecommuting and other technological change

The participants acknowledged the current economic downturn and recognized the need for economic and environmental sustainability in public services.



By 2030, the Pierce County Library System...

"... is the focus of the community, the village square."

"...is a community partner: museums, schools, colleges, nonprofit organizations, cities, to leverage resources and maximize services to support communities."

"...creates a more educated community."

"...is FUN! Way fun!"

"...comes to the people, instead of expecting the people to come to it."

PIERCE COUNTY LIBRARY 2030: THE VISION

Given these insights, how will the Library effectively serve this evolving community? Many themes recurred throughout the day. In general, the participants were excited by the prospect of a Library System that is:

- Attractive
- Compelling
- Convenient
- Efficient
- Engaging
- Flexible
- Inclusive
- Influential
- Innovative
- Interactive
- Sustainable

Participants did not predict the end of books or reading. However, they did visualize Pierce County Library System in 2030 as being more concerned about being a connection/connector for people than about warehousing books and other materials

The top ranked suggestions for the Library revolved around creating an institution that's fun, that's deeply engaged in the community, and that's a valued partner with other organizations.

Transportation issues were also on participants' minds. Participants expressed interest in collocating library services with other popular destinations such as schools, retail areas, and community centers.

The participants used the metaphor of the Library as the "community's living room," a vibrant, beautiful, comfortable gathering place.

