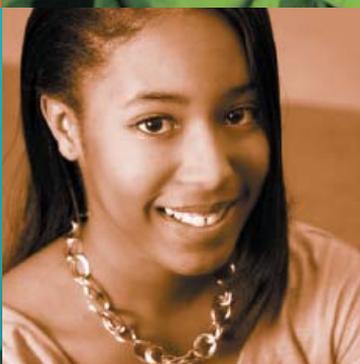


Essential in

2025



The Charlotte Mecklenburg Library is planning for the future.

In 10 years, our community will be vastly different. We will have more people, be more diverse, and need places to connect with each other. We will learn differently, and need to take advantage of new and different learning resources. In 2025, the community will want, need and demand more from its Library than ever before. The world is changing and the Library must change with it. Starting today.



“The best way to predict the future is to invent it.” – Alan Kay

In 2015, the Library embarked on a collaborative project called *Blueprint* to envision the future of our Library. We brought together a diverse group of stakeholders including the community-based Library Board of Trustees, Library staff, Mecklenburg County staff, subject matter experts, Library customers and community members. We looked at growth patterns, demographics, learning trends, shifts in technology and more.

Inspired by Elizabeth Merritt, Founding Director of the Center for the Future of Museums, who said, ‘**To survive and thrive, museums must provide something that is essential or addictive,**’ we moved ahead with the idea that a Library, too, must be essential - even addictive - to its community.

Finally, we asked ourselves these questions:

Q1. What will the community look like in 2025?

Q2. What services will people want and need from the Library in 2025?

Q3. What significant community challenges of today will still be present in 2025?

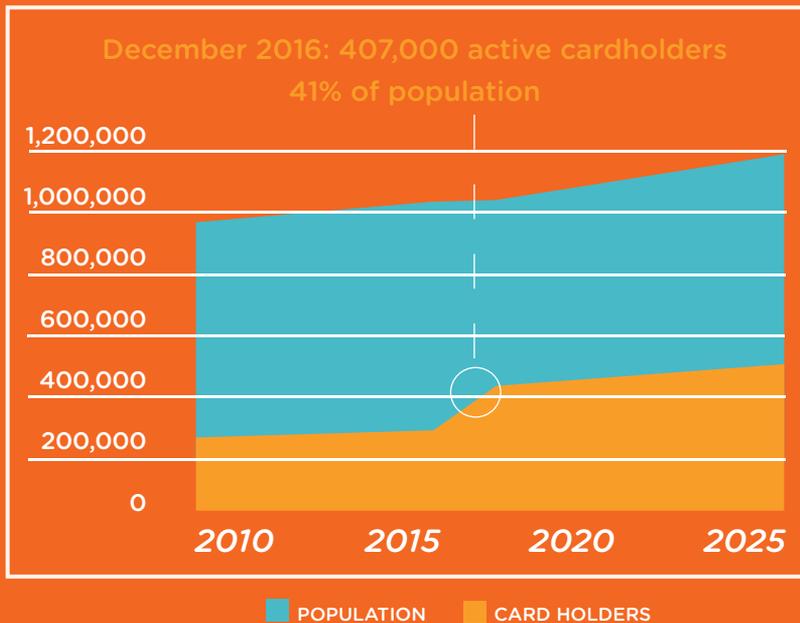
Q4. How will the Library transform to meet community needs in 2025?

Q5. What should the Library’s role in the community be?

Q1.

What will the community look like in 2025?

Population of Mecklenburg County in 2025



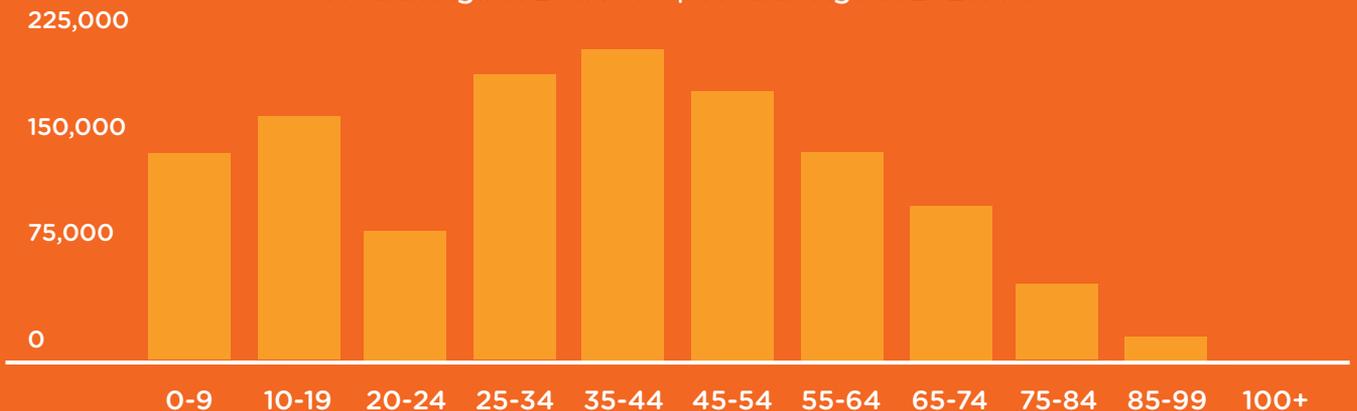
Ethnicity of Charlotte in 2025*

- 35%** White
 - 30%** African American
 - 20%** Hispanic
 - 10%** Asian American
 - 5%** Other
- *Estimate



Age Distribution in 2025

Median Age in 2015: 35 | Median Age in 2025: 38



Q2.

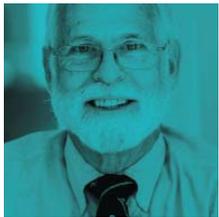
What services will people want and need from the Library in 2025?

To aid our understanding, we used learnings from stakeholder interviews to create four composite “customers.” These represent types of community members we anticipate serving as we look ahead.



Clara graduated with a double major in finance and economics, and is looking for a job. She needs a virtual-reality resume and can't afford to pay to have one professionally produced.

Using an app, Clara logged into the Library's virtual reality suite and got advice through every step using her phone camera. Clara created a virtual resume, got feedback through the Library's virtual community, and submitted it on time. She now has an interview.



James recently retired and wants to fulfill his dream of opening a restaurant. He knows nothing about starting a small business, and is intimidated by the new high-tech cooking equipment.

With help from the Library's business services department, James created a business plan and connected with the Service Corp of Retired Executives for business counseling. He participated in virtual product demos, and took 3-D tours of potential spaces.



Jenna, a mother of twins, wants to home school but is afraid her son Keith is falling behind in reading. When she tries to read him an e-book or engage him in a digital project, he squirms out of her lap.

Jenna brought Keith and his sister to storytimes at the Library, and connected with library staff who recommended resources. She has taken five virtual library courses through her phone, and is now confident in her ability to home school.



Elena, a political refugee from South America, just arrived with her infant son and young daughter. Unable to speak English, Elena can't ask for help.

After her caseworker gave her a tour of the Library, Elena discovered that she can use her phone to learn English for free. Her daughter is learning English from bilingual storytimes, and Elena is joining a refugee writing class. Elena was also able to hologram-chat with her family back home.

Q2. What services will people want and need from the Library in 2025?

We examined other libraries and even other industries to see how they were envisioning and addressing the future. We learned innovative ways we can serve the community now and in 2025.



Libraries Without Borders - The Ideas Box

"The Ideas Box is a revolutionary concept developed by Librarians Without Borders, with the aim to reach people in refugee camps and impoverished countries ... it can be assembled in less than 20 minutes. The kit consists of six boxes ... creates a space of 1,000 square meters ... includes 250 paper books, 50 e-readers with thousands of e-books, and a variety of educational apps."



Biblioboard - Mobile Library

Biblioboard provides unlimited, multi-user access to patrons around the globe, across all mobile and web platforms. BiblioBoard's diverse selection of multimedia content continues to grow every day and features works from traditional publishers, historical archives, cultural institutions, independent authors, local organizations and more.



REI - Retail Philosophy

"REI has a longstanding mission to 'inspire, educate and outfit people for a lifetime of outdoor adventure and stewardship.' REI professionals ... deliver top-tier retail experiences both in stores and online ... all this work is fueled by a passion for human-powered outdoor recreation."



"Tel Aviv Library - Shalom Tower

"... this isn't just any library. It's a mixed-up space where patrons browsing books in the stacks share a floor with clumps of tech entrepreneurs huddled around their laptops ... what has emerged is one of the most interesting reinventions of a public library anywhere in the world ... The idea to merge the old world of books with the new one of tech startups ..."



Oak Park Public Library - Book Bike

"Oak Park's Book Bike is a three-wheeled mobile library that delivers our resources throughout the village, improving community access to the library."



Q3.

What significant community challenges of today will still be present in 2025?

We turned to key community leaders for their perspectives and asked them to imagine this:

It's 2025, and a community initiative important to you has been accomplished.

How would you hope that the Library has contributed to that achievement? Here's what they said:



"The population of Mecklenburg County [will] think of the library as a welcome center, to come together ... regardless of race or language or social status."

Rocio Gonzalez, Executive Director,
Latin American Chamber of Commerce



"A dream that I have ... is that Charlotte be known as a city of readers. And I think the Library can be a big part of making that happen for our community."

Ann Clark, Superintendent,
Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools



"I believe that in 2025 the libraries will have played a leading role in closing the digital divide for our families across the city, whether it be through digital literacy training in

branches, to public Wi-Fi access ... all the way to makerspaces, robotics and digital media classes ..."

Jess George, Community Impact Manager, Google



"Children born in poverty [will] be able to read proficiently, graduate from high school with a degree that matters, work with computers and decrease the digital divide ... because

they had access to a library that was free."

Dr. Ophelia Garmon-Brown, Co-Chair,
Charlotte-Mecklenburg Community Task Force



"Great talent is attracted to communities that are literate, educated, digitally connected and ripe with opportunity. There's one place in our community that meets these

diverse needs - the public library. It has a big role to play as we strive to attract the best talent to Charlotte in 2025 and beyond."

Charles Bowman, Market President for North Carolina
and Charlotte, Bank of America



"My hope is that the Library can be an innovative thought partner with us in rethinking how we meet the needs of children and families today through 2025."

Munro Richardson, Executive Director, Read Charlotte



"I think the library of the 21st century is going to be about entrepreneurship and innovation."

Dena Diorio,
Mecklenburg County Manager

Q4.

How will the Library transform to meet community needs in 2025?

Our Service Model Team considered all of this input, and developed guiding principles for Library service.

Guiding Principles: *Our Library is and will always be -*

Essential Community
Connector

Welcoming Place
To All

Destination For
Learning

These were followed by forward-thinking goals and strategies that will inspire us into the future.

Overarching Goals

The Library will build a stronger, more informed, engaged and connected Charlotte-Mecklenburg.

The Library will create a safe, respectful environment that fosters the potential of every individual.

The Library will provide customers with relevant resources, programs and support; empowering them to learn, grow and transform.

Sample Transformative Strategies

Reimagine technologically advanced “town halls” for community learning with relevant, immediately available resources.

Build a robust online community and encourage interaction through content creation.

Ensure that staff, services, technology and events reflect the community’s diverse needs.

Ensure user-friendly, accessible online services from any device.

Become the go-to resource for lifelong learning, exploration and growth.

Increase community outreach to those with access barriers.

Q4.

How will the Library transform to meet community needs in 2025?

The Library is already making progress from these “Today” scenarios to “Tomorrow,” but by 2025 we will have fully realized these possibilities.

TODAY

-  The Library owns and controls the user experience
-  Customer-facing staff have a broad knowledge base
-  Technology, while in high demand, is out-of-date
-  Services are bilingual
-  Library facilities are book-centric
-  As digital offerings increase, 20% of population can't access digital resources at home due to lack of connectivity
-  Library staff deliver services in libraries and the community, led by staff and through partnerships
-  Library staff are guides to many different types of information and services
-  Traditional service delivery
-  Current funding mix and amount is insufficient to meet community growth
-  The Library is important

TOMORROW

-  *Customers own and control the user experience*
-  *Customer-facing staff have a broad knowledge base and specific areas of expertise*
-  *Technology is a competitive advantage for serving customers and enabling staff*
-  *Services are multilingual*
-  *Library facilities are people-centric*
-  *100% of the population can access digital resources, which represent 50% of the Library's resources*
-  *Library staff proactively cultivate and enrich customer and community relationships*
-  *Library educators deliver a differentiated and measurable learning experience*
-  *Innovative service delivery with self-service and digital tools we haven't even imagined yet*
-  *Funding model is more diversified, dependable and sustainable*
-  *The Library is ESSENTIAL*

We began by asking crucial questions. With the help of our many participants, we generated inspiring answers to meet the needs of all we serve. Not only that, but our very mission and vision evolved to achieve the changes called for in the years ahead.

Mission:

Improve lives and
build a stronger community

Vision:

The essential connector of a thriving
community of readers, leaders and learners



Q5.

What should the Library's role in the community be?

Three narratives will be a priority over the next decade:

- Improve Lives
- Build a Stronger Community
- Build a Sustainable Organization

The Library can play **four key roles**:

- Library as Trusted Source
- Library as Welcoming Place
- Library as Community Partner
- Library as Essential Leader

Strategic Community Outcomes the Library Will Contribute To

- Leading community nationally in lifelong learning
- Reputation for being a place of opportunity
- Employment rates at or above peer communities'
- Leading community nationally in economic opportunity
- Internet access, skills and knowledge in every household
- All children and youth:
 - Ready to read by kindergarten
 - Reading proficiently at third grade
 - Graduating high school prepared for career and/or college
- Caring, cohesive, connected and engaged community

Library as
Trusted Source

Library as
Welcoming
Place

Library as
Community
Partner

Library as
Essential
Leader

Blueprint Strategic Library Outcomes

Improve Lives

- Lead trainer of parents and caregivers to coach literacy and early learning
- Key provider of free technology, training and resources to increase digital proficiency and employment opportunities

Build a Stronger Community

- Key provider of resources for small businesses

Build a Sustainable Organization

- Reliable, continually advancing technology that meets customer needs
- Evidence-based outcomes and impacts for key programs and services

- Primary onboarding site and information source for new residents
- Access to services within 15 minutes of every resident
- >95% of residents agree the Library is safe, welcoming and trusted
- Reputation for being “cool” and fun

- Key source of volunteer opportunities

- Appealing, flexible, continually improving spaces that meet customer needs
- Organizational, staffing and service models in line with customer/ community needs

- Lead summer reading champion and partner
- Key partner in serving English language learners

- Key provider of resources, curriculum and learning for schools and students

- Partner of choice within the community

- Relationship with every household in Mecklenburg County
- >95% of residents believe Library is essential

- National model of collaboration with public schools
- Key community convener
- Key leader and contributor to important community initiatives

- Diverse and talented staff that reflects the community
- Employer of choice in the community
- Public per capita library funding at/ above 50th percentile among large urban peers
- Library and Foundation Boards top choices for volunteer leaders
- \$30 million endowment, 3,000 donors, and \$3 million/year in gifts, grants and earnings
- Reputation for financial stewardship and integrity
- Recognized industry leader

Charlotte Mecklenburg Library ESSENTIAL in 2025

With this vision for the future in place, we look forward to transforming how we serve this community for the decade to come and beyond.

Thank you for your support.



Blueprint Steering Team Members
David Singleton (Director of Libraries),
Jennifer Appleby (Library Board Chair)
and Lee Keesler (Library CEO)

ESSENTIAL in 2025:

The Library is integrated into every part of the community.

Library facilities are within 15 minutes of every resident, delivering cutting-edge technology and tools for success in life.

Self-service Library kiosks and online portals complement traditional services to give residents more convenient options.

Library services are personalized to individual needs, and staff who reflect the diversity of the community.

Library services and 21st century technology are accessible to everyone - including seniors, new immigrants, those living in poverty and people with disabilities.

CHARLOTTE MECKLENBURG
LiBRARY

704-416-0100 | cmlibrary.org/essential

