



Advocacy Plan

East 38th Street Branch

Indianapolis Public Library

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[IUPUI LIS S553]

[April 28th 2016]

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BRANCH HISTORY

The Indianapolis Public Library system was founded in 1873, occupying one room in the High School Building, as it was originally a division of the Indianapolis Public Schools. The Marion County Public Library was formed in 1966 and merged with IPL two years later.

The East 38th Street branch began in 1957, in a house on Emerson Avenue. By 1962 a new building replaced the house, and the branch grew to 7,500 ft. In 2003, after 40 years of service, the building was retired, and the library moved around the corner to its current location at 5420 East 38th St. The new building is 16,000 square feet, and the property includes 60 parking spaces. There is a cultivated wetland behind the triangular-shaped building, including 300 butterfly plants and a boardwalk.

SERVICE AREA

IPL branches are arranged into service districts categorized by area and population size. These categories include Neighborhood, Community, and Regional Libraries. East 38th St. is a Community library, placing it in the middle tier. Its service area roughly covers the neighborhoods on the east side of Indianapolis between Shadeland Avenue in the East, portions of 30th 21st Sts. in the South, Fall Creek Parkway in the West, and portions of 46th and 56th Sts. to the North.

The branch's total base population is 32,289. Those under the age of 18 comprise 22.38% of the population, with 62% between the ages of 18 and 64. 24% of the population has been to college without earning a degree. 37% have earned a highschool diploma, while 18% have not graduated highschool.

With 21.65% of the population unemployed, 24.83% of the service population lives in poverty. 14.78% make less than \$10,000.00 a year. 26.4% earns between \$10,000 and \$25,000 dollars. #0% earn between \$25,000 and 50,000, while 14% earn \$50,000 to \$75,000 dollars.

The foreign-born population is 2%, with half of those immigrating from Mexico. English is primarily spoken by 96% of the population. Spanish is spoken by 3%. Within the service boundaries there are 114 places of worship, 44 schools, and 102 daycare centers.

BRANCH STATISTICS

In 2015, East 38th's door count was 72,880. The collection consists of almost 30,000 items, with 116,453 circulations last year. 74,228 computer sessions were logged. 15,000 patrons attended 750 programs.

The Indianapolis Public Library system as a whole had four million visits from patrons and over 16 million circulations across 22 branches. Almost a million computer session hours were logged. Almost 300,000 people attended a little over 12,000 programs.

Bearing in mind that the branch is a Community library, and that income and education inequality negatively impacts library use, East 38th's door count represents just about 2% of library users system-wide. Circulation represented 1% of the system total. Computer use was 7.5% of the system total, and program attendance was at 5%. These last two percentages represent a significant difference compared to other library uses. East 38th St hosted 6% of all programs planned system-wide.

CURRENT ADVOCACY EFFORTS

The Indianapolis Public Library puts advocacy at the forefront of its strategic plan, with its second of four goals being to strengthen Indianapolis neighborhoods and businesses. This goal ranks second to the goal of enriching Indianapolis' desire for personal growth and learning. In reality, these two goals go hand-in-hand. As the library promotes learning, communities are strengthened. As neighborhoods are strengthened, community members have more need of and desire for learning.

The East 38th St. branch has taken these initiatives to heart. Branch Manager Shanika Heyward won a national professional award from the American Library Association specifically as a Change Maker, due to the significant number of strategic partnerships the branch has formed with local community organizations, as well as the outreach that branch staff are encouraged to undertake. This award earned Ms. Heyward and her branch many opportunities to advocate for the library in professional journals and local news media.

East 38th St. bases most of its programs and services on and around community partnerships. The branch hosts meetings for community organizations such as the United North East Community Development Corporation, the United North East Business Association, among others, as well as providing space to various church groups. Staff provides outreach services to daycares, preschools, public, private, and charter schools, including storytimes, card registrations, and lending books to these organizations to have on-site for their students. "Pop-up" libraries are staffed by branch personnel at various places around the community, such as the YMCA and street fairs. The branch hosts a successful Job Center providing resume and job search assistance to those seeking jobs, and a yearly author fair introduces local writers to local readers.

In the past year the branch has provided services in partnership with many community organizations and their representatives, including among others:

- Washington Township Adult Education/TASC
- Northeast Corridor Quality of Life
- United Northeast Community Development Corporation
- Forest Manor Mult-Service Center
- Northeast Business Association
- Devington Neighborhood Association
- Northeast Faith-Based Corridor
- Indiana Healthy Marriage & Family Coalition
- Indianapolis Metropolitan Police Department
- Indianapolis Prosecution Division
- Keep Indianapolis Beautiful
- Indiana Black Expo
- Hope Team
- Stop the Violence Indy
- Engaing Solutions LLC
- House of God Church
- Eastside Food Desert Coalition, Inc.
- Design Bank
- Arlington Highschool

ADVOCACY CHALLENGES

Though branch-specific budget information is not broken out from IPL's budget, the library system has been operating at a deficit for several years. This is due not only to property tax caps, but also to the fact that the library does not receive all of the tax revenue it is entitled to. This revenue shortfall has repercussions for the system, and the library is left to make up the difference with grants and donations obtained through advocacy. The library board proposes a budget yearly. The City-County Counsel is responsible for approving it. Other taxes that contribute to revenue include vehicle registration fees and gambling taxes.

Additional challenges to successful advocacy, particularly for the E38 St. branch, are door count and circulation numbers when considered as a percentage of the system as a whole. Some reasons to consider for these numbers might include lack of and use of available space, local infrastructure issues, and local safety issues.

Lack of space limits services, particularly to teens, and does not support engaging adults with the print collection, thereby limiting opportunities to improve literacy. Also, with high rates of poverty in the area, many residents rely on local infrastructure, rather than personal vehicles, to reach the library. Lack of sidewalks, traffic signals, and crosswalks, coupled with the amount of crime in the area, discourages foot traffic to the library.

RECOMMENDATIONS

As previously stated, the East 38th St. branch of IPL already does a phenomenal job of advocating for itself through its involvement in the community. Representatives from various government agencies attend the community meetings held at the branch, giving these officials an opportunity to see first-hand the value the library brings to the community. However, if there are improvements to be made, doing so can not only serve the interests of our patrons, but also support advocacy efforts and the library system as a whole.

1. Improve circulation of print and online materials and services to teens by advocating internally for better use of (if not more) space.

The library building has a unique triangular, open floorplan. Half of the space is devoted to children's materials and two large children's programming spaces which go unused throughout most of the day. Perhaps a bit less than half of the remaining floorplan is designated as space for teens. It houses the YA print collection, along with adult newspapers and magazines. More often than not, it is used by adults for reading and studying. The remaining space is filled with the entertainment DVD collection, test books, the adult print

collection, 25 desktop computers, and the information desk.

(Note: The following assertions are based on observation as I do not, as yet, have access to branch circulation and sub-group usage statistics.) Despite the fact that adult patrons are the heaviest users of branch library services, they are allotted the least amount of space. Currently, the information desk is positioned in roughly the center of the space, with the computers situated around it. This aids the ability of staff to assist patrons working on the computers, however, it makes the print collection, pushed to the edges, an afterthought. The highest circulating items in the library are entertainment DVDs and test books. Because these items are placed directly in front of the door, patrons have no reason to move beyond them into the collection. Once they have found what they are looking for, they simply leave.

If adding additional space to the landlocked building is not possible, reducing or consolidating the children's collection and eliminating one of the programming areas might free up some floor space. Even simply moving the children's computers into the large open area at the end of the room could allow for shelving to be rearranged. Moving the adult print collection into one consolidated area would make the collection more cohesive. Then, also, moving the DVD collection away from the front door would allow patrons the chance to discover something new. These steps should improve circulation, and allow the branch to make an even stronger case when advocating for funds.

2. Continue to work with community organizations to improve local infrastructure and safety issues.

As local community organizations are already at work addressing these issues, the library should continue to partner with them to advocate for sidewalks, traffic signals, crime prevention, and other infrastructure which should improve library usage. And again, this increased usage will bolster the library's requests for support.

CONCLUSION

Although the East 38th St. branch is already an exceptional advocate within the local community, there is always room for improvement. These suggestions can fill minor gaps in library services and make its already strong case for support even stronger. As the branch's reputation continues to grow, the whole library system can benefit.

RESOURCES

2016 Public Council List (2016) Indianapolis, IN: Indianapolis-Marion County City-County Council

Board of Trustees (2013) *Library Capital Projects Fund Plan 2014-2016*. Indianapolis, IN: Indianapolis Public Library

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Heyward, S. (2016) *Branch Manager's Report*. Indianapolis, IN: Indianapolis Public Library.