

Stanislaus County Library Strategic Plan 2017-2021

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Executive Summary

The Stanislaus County Library system strategic plan for 2017-2021 is grounded in community input gathered from a broad range of stakeholders, including library customers, community members at large, and library staff and partners. The plan provides a road map for the library to address strategic goals and objectives over the next five years, specifying actionable strategies to meet each objective.

Our collaborative planning process and resulting plan sets the library on a strong course to continue to provide essential services across Stanislaus County, respond to community needs and evolving technology, and achieve our mission to engage all members of the community and offers access to information, knowledge, and the tools for innovation and personal development.

Strategic Goals and Objectives

Goal Area 1: Expand the reach of the library, particularly to key populations

- Objective 1 Increase accessibility and expand outreach to key populations.
- Objective 2 Promote existing programs and services, including eResources and programs offered in the community.

Goal Area 2: Provide responsive and creative programs and services

- Objective 1 Expand library collections, including eResources.
- Objective 2 Expand and enhance programs and services based upon community needs.
- Objective 3 Expand technological infrastructure and access to technology.
- Objective 4 Increase usability and ease of navigation for online resources.

Goal Area 3: Ensure the library is a welcoming environment that customers want to visit and where staff want to work

- Objective 1 Ensure staffing is adequate and meets community needs.
- Objective 2 Attract and retain staff.
- Objective 3 Expand volunteer program.
- Objective 4 Enhance library facilities.

Goal Area 4: Increase community connections and partnerships

- Objective 1 Expand partnerships with K-12 schools and post-secondary educational institutions.
- Objective 2 Identify community needs and potential partners to address needs.
- Objective 3 Leverage partnerships to connect people to information and services.

Acknowledgements

Many individuals contributed to the Stanislaus County Library system Strategic Plan, including community members and library leadership and staff. In particular we would like to thank the Strategic Planning Task Team for their dedication and leadership.

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Introduction

The Importance of a Strategic Plan

Public libraries provide essential community resources. They are a safe gathering and study space with programming for all ages. They offer internet access to the community, helping to bridge the digital divide at a time when such access is increasingly necessary for developing skills in technology, searching for jobs, and learning about services and opportunities. Indeed, libraries provide access to all kinds of information and media, facilitated by knowledgeable reference librarians. Public libraries aim to serve everyone, and to do so, they must gather community input and plan services accordingly.

To ensure it best meets the needs of Stanislaus County communities, our Stanislaus County Library system has completed a strategic planning process that started in 2016. This resulting strategic plan document presents an inspired vision and strategic direction for library services over the next five years.

The plan was driven by priorities identified through broad community input, enhanced by the support of library leadership and staff, and guided by a Strategic Planning Task Team. It sets realistic goals for the organization and will serve as an evolving road map that allows for flexibility as technology and community needs continue to change over time. The many stakeholders who contributed to this strategic plan have positioned our library to remain a progressive, innovative public resource serving Stanislaus County residents and the region.

About Stanislaus County

Located in California's Central Valley, Stanislaus County encompasses over 1,500 square miles. The county includes the cities of Ceres, Hughson, Modesto, Newman, Oakdale, Patterson, Riverbank, Turlock, and Waterford, as well as unincorporated communities and significant regions of national and state parkland and wildlife areas. Our county is home to a diverse community. Across the Stanislaus population (over 500,000 people), 44 percent identify as Hispanic or Latino ethnicity and 32 percent speak Spanish at home.

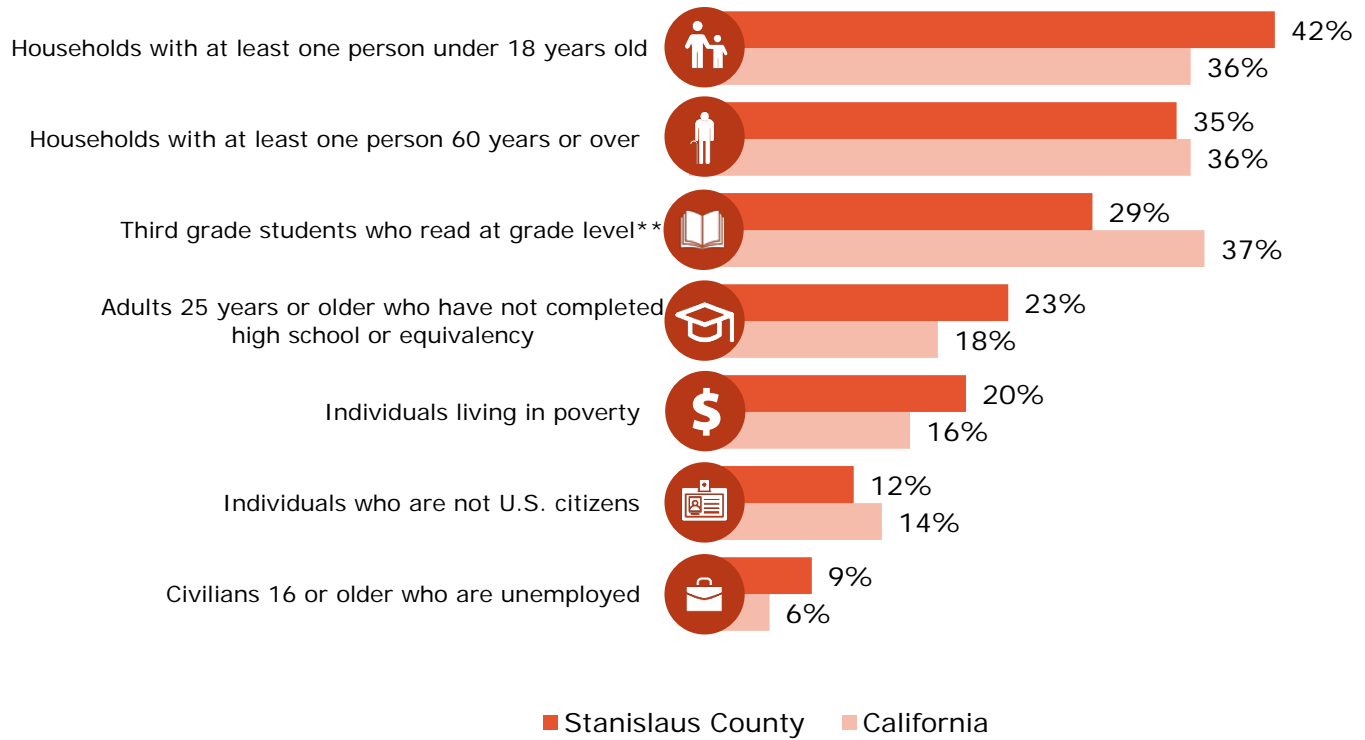
Regarding race, 75 percent identify as White, 5 percent as Asian, and 3 percent as Black or African American. Others in the community identify as American Indian or Alaska Native (1%), as Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander (1%), as two or more races (4%), or as some other race (11%).¹

The graphic below presents additional characteristics of Stanislaus County's population compared to statewide figures to show how our county is unique. Almost three-quarters of households in Stanislaus include children, whereas one-quarter include someone over age 65. Less than one-third of students in third grade read at grade level (29%), which is lower than the statewide rate.² Substantial proportions of the people in our county face challenges of limited education (23%) or living in poverty (20%), at higher rates than statewide. Many in our community are not U.S. citizens (12%). Finally, our unemployment rate of nine percent is higher than the unemployment rate across California (6%).

¹ US Census, American Community Survey 5-year estimates, 2011-2015.

² California Department of Education, California Assessment of Student Performance and Progress (CAASPP), 2015.

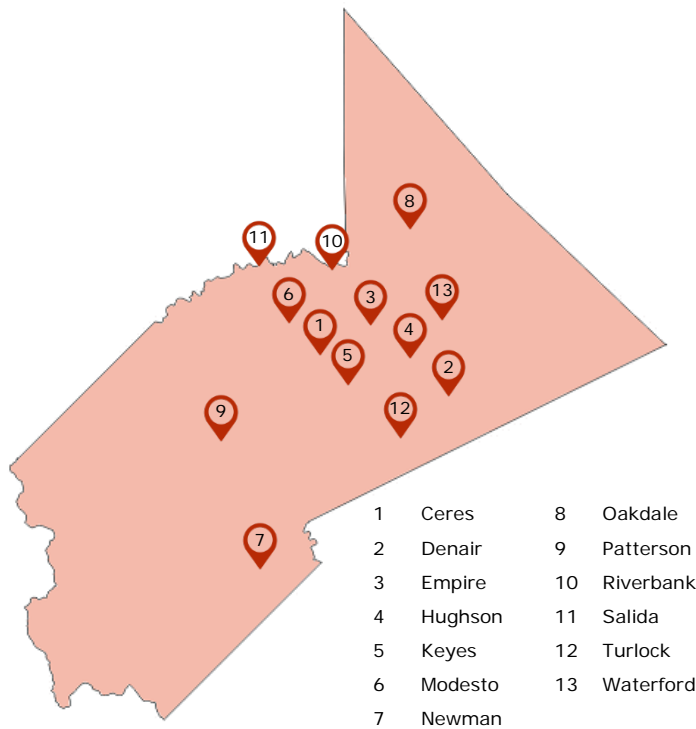
Selected Population Characteristics in Stanislaus County*



* Except where otherwise noted, data are from the US Census, American Community Survey 5-year estimates, 2011-2015.
 **California Department of Education, California Assessment of Student Performance and Progress (CAASPP), 2015.

About Stanislaus County Library System

Stanislaus County Library system has proudly served our community for over a century. Today, our thirteen community libraries operate in Ceres, Denair, Empire, Hughson, Keyes, Modesto, Newman, Oakdale, Patterson, Riverbank, Salida, Turlock, and Waterford. The map below illustrates the location of the Stanislaus County Community Libraries.



The library's vision and mission, stated below, serve as important aspirations as we strive to address community needs and priorities.

Stanislaus County Library System Vision and Mission Statements

Vision

A world in which all people are connected to each other and have access to information, knowledge, and innovative tools for personal development, community engagement, and civic participation.

Mission

Stanislaus County Library engages all members of the community and offers access to information, knowledge, and the tools for innovation and personal development.

To work toward our mission, the library provides current and objective information to residents as well as a wide range of services, including:

- A diverse collection of materials such as books, magazines, movies, and music;
- Programs and services at community library locations, including children's Story Times, adult literacy services, and Wi-Fi;
- An informative website with access to downloadable eBooks, audio books, research information on topics of interest to the public, and other resources;
- Community outreach activities; and
- Unique services such as the Veterans Resource Center, passport application processing, and citizenship information sessions.

The library's governance includes the Stanislaus County Library Advisory Board that works in cooperation with the Stanislaus County Library Director and advises the Stanislaus County Board of Supervisors on matters related to the library. The Board has up to nine members, including representatives from each supervisory district and multiple at-large members.

Each community library is also supported by a Friends of the Library group consisting of individuals interested in helping the library grow by promoting public awareness, encouraging community support, and identifying new program sources.

Library operations and services are primarily funded through a dedicated sales tax intended to support our provision of resources at a minimal cost to individual households.³ In addition, the Stanislaus Library Foundation, established in 1994 by community members, conducts fundraisers, writes grants, and cultivates donors to supplement the library's budget. Small portions of the library's budget are met through other state and federal sources and from the County General Fund.⁴

In order to use our limited resources most effectively to serve Stanislaus County residents, the library engages in regular strategic planning to reassess community needs and thoughtfully set priorities and strategies for the future. This strategic plan document outlines the process and key findings of our 2016 planning endeavor, and presents goals and strategies for 2017-2021.

³ The cost per resident is \$18.07 per year.

⁴ See the Stanislaus County Library 2015-2016 Annual Report at <http://www.stanislauslibrary.org/pdf/annualreport15-16.pdf>.

Planning Process

About the Planning Process

Our strategic planning process was guided by a Strategic Planning Task Team comprised of Stanislaus County Library Advisory Board members, Friends of the Library representatives, key library staff, and community members. The Task Team met four times during the planning process to provide ideas and feedback regarding data collection activities, findings, goal-setting, and strategies. They ensured that the process included community voices and remained true to our library's progressive mission and capacities.

The data collection activities, described below, gathered information and input from a wide range of stakeholders, including library customers, community residents, library staff, and library partners. Centering the planning process on community voices was essential to success – the more we understand our customers, the better we can design our services to meet their needs.

Broadly, the data-gathering efforts aimed to understand how the Stanislaus County Library system ensures that it is accessible to all people, identify the programs and services of most interest to current and potential customers, and determine where additional capacity is needed within the library system.

Data Collection Activities

With the assistance of Harder+Company Community Research, we collected data from June–October 2016; all information was analyzed and considered together in order to determine key themes about library use and community needs. Identified goals, objectives, and strategies presented in this plan draw from data collected through these methods:



Interviews with 30 key stakeholders were conducted with library partners, such as leadership from the local public schools; city representatives; representatives for specific populations including an ESL advocate; and Friends of the Library.



An analysis of Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats (SWOT) was conducted by the Strategic Planning Task Team. In addition to informing the identified library goals, results of the SWOT analysis were used to inform important areas to include in survey tools.



Six community meetings with residents were conducted in English and Spanish across the county, reaching 61 Stanislaus County residents. Among all participants, at least 25 percent were Spanish speakers.⁵ Meetings took place in Ceres, Patterson, Riverbank, Turlock, Salida, and Waterford.



A library staff survey was completed by 133 staff members, representing each community library. The survey was administered online.



A library customer survey was completed by 647 individuals across Stanislaus County. The survey was administered in paper form and online, and was completed in English (95%) and Spanish (5%). Of survey respondents, 76% reported that they spoke English, 21% spoke Spanish, and 3% spoke another language. Over half of survey respondents identified as White (63%), followed by Latino (23%), multi-racial (4%), Asian (3%), African American (2%), American Indian or Alaska Native (1%), and Native Hawaiian (1%).⁶ The survey was distributed on the library website, in hard-copy at community library desks, and by community partners.

Data Considerations

While the Strategic Planning Task Team strove to solicit input from as many stakeholders as possible, some communities within Stanislaus County were underrepresented. Data collection efforts may not have adequately reached residents who do not regularly use the library. Additionally, despite specific outreach efforts, Spanish speakers were underrepresented among customer survey respondents relative to the county population overall. Race, ethnicity, and language data was not collected from town hall meeting participants and key stakeholder interviewees.

In order to ensure greater participation from underrepresented communities in future engagement efforts, the Stanislaus County Library system can partner more closely with community based organizations to increase the effectiveness of outreach to difficult-to-reach residents. Future data collection efforts may also collect basic demographic data from everyone who participates in data collection activities to increase the ability to assess representation.

⁵ Demographic information was not collected from participants. This represents the number who chose to participate in the community meeting in Spanish, and is likely an underestimate since it does not capture bilingual participants who chose to participate in English.

⁶ In addition, 4% of customer survey respondents identified as some other race or ethnicity.

Achieving the Library Vision

In careful consideration of community input and gathered data, the Strategic Planning Task Team identified the priority goals for the Stanislaus County Library system over the next five years. Within each of the four goal areas that emerged, they then identified primary objectives as well as specific strategies to meet those objectives. Together, the goals, objectives, and strategies form an inspiring and actionable road map to guide library leaders and staff in addressing community needs for information, programming, and community building.

Goal Area 1: Expand the reach of the library, particularly to key populations

The Stanislaus County Library system currently offers a wide variety of programs and services that are highly valued by library customers and respond to many of the community's needs. The aim of this Goal Area is to ensure that all community members are aware of the full range of available services, and that everyone is able to access these services. To support this Goal Area, the Stanislaus County Library system will focus on expanding outreach to key populations, increasing accessibility to their programs and services, and promoting existing programs throughout the community.

Objective 1: Increase accessibility and expand outreach to key populations

- Consider services from a customer's perspective and redesign service delivery to optimize customer experience
- Coordinate with ambassadors from key populations to promote library services and programs (e.g., students promote excitement about reading among their peers through creative campaigns)
- Provide outreach services to key populations in the community (e.g., schools to reach students and families, college organizations, Hispanic business organizations, and churches to reach Spanish speakers)
- Increase marketing of online resources
- Evaluate effectiveness of promotional efforts
- Lower barriers to getting a library card (e.g., simplify application process)
- Ensure promotional materials are accessible to key populations (e.g., translate all materials to Spanish for Spanish speakers, and have large print available for seniors)
- Create consistent interior signage
- Provide transportation support (e.g., library bus routes and vouchers for students, seniors, and homeless individuals)

Objective 2: Promote existing programs and services, including eResources and programs offered in the community

- Evaluate effectiveness of promotional efforts
- Promote services and programs online and through local print media, flyers, TV, radio, and at libraries
- Use creative methods to promote existing programs and services, such as library card incentive programs (e.g. show library card at a business to receive a discount)

Goal Area 2: Provide responsive, creative programs and services

In addition to the programs already offered by the library, the strategic planning process identified a number of opportunities to respond to the emerging needs of Stanislaus County's diverse, modern, and growing population. To support this Goal Area, the Stanislaus County Library system will focus on expanding its collections (including eResources), expanding and enhancing programs and services to reflect the community's needs, expanding infrastructure that supports access to technology, and ensuring that online resources are easy to access and navigate.

Objective 1: Expand library collections, including eResources

- Conduct research to inform expansion of physical collection and eResources (e.g., analyze check-out data and customer searches to inform selection of new material)
- Expand Spanish and bilingual collection for children and adults
- Ensure customers are aware of ways to request new material

Objective 2: Expand and enhance programs and services based upon community needs

- Position and market libraries as the community's early literacy center to help children prepare for success in school and life
- Conduct research to inform program and service expansion, and evaluate efforts to enhance programs and services
- Develop expanded technology training programs (e.g., instruction on computer usage, including internet) (aligns with Objective 4)
- Expand children and teen programming (e.g., more Story Times; classes for arts and crafts, life skills, technology, science, and math; and activities for teens)
- Expand adult programs (e.g., job training, language classes, and support so they can help their children with early literacy development and homework)
- Expand programs for seniors (i.e., programs tailored to seniors and their interests, such as presentations about changes in health care and insurance, computer/internet literacy, exercise classes, and cognitive functioning classes)

- Offer more bilingual programming (e.g., Bilingual Story Time)

Objective 3: Expand technological infrastructure and access to technology

- Continue to explore innovative eResources and technology services, and expand as appropriate
- Continually upgrade computer hardware and software
- Provide additional computers and/or tablets
- Continue to improve wireless internet access

Objective 4: Increase usability and ease of navigation for online resources

- Provide hands-on trainings on eResources
- Expand online tutorials (e.g., on how to navigate the library and look for information properly)

Goal Area 3: Ensure the library is a welcoming environment that customers want to visit and where staff want to work

To ensure that community satisfaction with the Stanislaus County Library system remains high, this Goal Area aims to optimize community experiences interacting with library staff and interfacing with library facilities. To support this Goal Area, the Stanislaus County Library system will ensure staffing is adequate and responsive to community needs, continue to attract and retain qualified staff, expand the volunteer program, and make enhancements to library facilities.

Objective 1: Ensure staffing is adequate and meets community needs

- Ensure staff composition, skills, and job descriptions reflect organizational priorities and strategic goals, and align with community needs (e.g., add professional and paraprofessional staff/hours to outreach, hire IT staff for instruction/training and other IT needs)
- Provide consistent training to all staff (e.g., reference and reader's advisory training; computers, RFID, online resources)
- Expand bilingual capacity

Objective 2: Attract and retain staff

- Continue to evaluate classifications to ensure staff are properly compensated for their work
- Provide staff development and advancement opportunities (e.g., trainings and conferences)
- Update material for recruitment efforts (e.g., flyer listing the advantages of living and working in Stanislaus County)

Objective 3: Expand volunteer program

- Develop volunteer engagement opportunities that expand library capacity (e.g., home delivery)

- Partner with organizations to recruit residents with specific skills as volunteers
- Assess volunteer satisfaction and make adjustments accordingly

Objective 4: Enhance library facilities

- Continue to review facilities improvement plans and provide updates to staff and community
- Develop creative solutions to improve library spaces and facilities (e.g., refresh design to create welcoming and comfortable environment)
- Update library facilities (e.g., address facility needs, update furniture)
- Expand identified library facilities (e.g., larger library, larger community room, more reading/working space)

Goal Area 4: Increase community connections and partnerships

The overarching aim of this Goal Area is to strengthen the Stanislaus County Library system's connection with local communities, and to develop and deepen its partnerships with other organizations in the county. The expansion of partnerships with educational institutions was identified by communities as a priority, and is therefore a specific focus within this Goal Area. Additionally, the Stanislaus County Library system will continue to explore community needs, identify potential partners to address those needs, and leverage partnerships to connect people to information and services, thus enhancing the network of support for communities within the county.

Objective 1: Expand partnerships with K-12 schools and post-secondary educational institutions

- Partner with community organizations that support education
- Promote library resources that align with school curriculum (e.g., digital collection, children's audiobooks) (aligns with Goal Area 1, Objective 2)
- Expand library-school collaborations (e.g., homework tutoring program, student volunteers)
- Distribute more information in a bilingual format to schools

Objective 2: Identify community needs and potential partners to address needs

- Establish local partnerships that meet residents' needs (e.g., pop-up library at WIC office, mentoring education programs, literacy and homework help, youth art classes)
- Provide training to develop staff skills in forming strong community partnerships to collaboratively provide services
- Facilitate opportunities and allot time for library staff to learn about the needs of local communities

Objective 3: Leverage partnerships to connect people to information and services

- Provide library services in locations throughout Stanislaus County to meet community needs (e.g., expand home delivery for people who are unable to visit the library, create pop-up libraries in “book deserts” such as West Modesto, open satellite locations for difficult-to-reach populations, create a book by mail program)
- Distribute information about services in the community and areas of community concern/interest at the library (aligns with Goal Area 1)
- Partner with community organizations and local departments for informational presentations (e.g., where to go in the community with specific issues, such as assistance with water bills)
- Expand services at library to support community needs (e.g., host social services staff at library, tutors for reading and writing, citizenship services, IRS/tax services)

Implementing the Strategic Plan

This plan outlines the strategic goals and priorities that will guide the Stanislaus County Library System over the next five years (2017-2021). To operationalize the strategic plan, the Stanislaus County Library will develop an implementation plan with key tasks, timelines, and responsibilities; work with staff at each community library to determine local priorities; and work to ensure that resources are allocated to address priority goals and objectives.

Appendix A. Technology Plan

Enhancing the technological capacity of the library system is central to achieving the library's vision of increasing access to knowledge. As such, strategies to address technological improvements are integrated across goal areas in this plan. Specific strategies related to increasing use and improving capacity of technology throughout the library system are listed below.

To expand use of online resources:

- Increase marketing of online resources
- Conduct research to inform expansion of physical collection and eResources (e.g., analyze check-out data and customer searches to inform selection of new material)
- Provide hands-on trainings on eResources
- Expand online tutorials (e.g., on how to navigate the library and look for information properly)

To expand library customers' capacity to engage with technology:

- Develop expanded technology training programs (e.g., instruction on computer usage, including internet)
- Expand children and teen programming (e.g., more Story Times; classes for arts and crafts, life skills, technology, science, and math; and activities for teens)
- Expand programs for seniors (i.e., programs tailored to seniors and their interests, such as presentations about changes in health care and insurance, computer/internet literacy, exercise classes, and cognitive functioning classes)

To increase technology infrastructure across library facilities:

- Continue to explore innovative eResources and technology services, and expand as appropriate
- Continually upgrade computer hardware and software
- Provide additional computers and/or tablets
- Continue to improve wireless internet access

Appendix B. Facilities Plan

Creating a welcoming environment where individuals feel comfortable using library resources and engaging in programming and activities is of central importance to the Stanislaus County Library system. Goal Area 3, in particular, is focused on creating this space for customers and staff. Listed below are the strategies we are implementing to improve the physical environment and use of space in our libraries.

To increase communication about facilities' plans:

- Continue to review facilities improvement plans and provide updates to staff and community

To continually improve library spaces and facilities:

- Develop creative solutions to improve library spaces and facilities (e.g., refresh design to create welcoming and comfortable environment)
- Update library facilities (e.g., address facility needs, update furniture)
- Expand identified library facilities (e.g., larger library, larger community room, more reading/working space)

Exhibit 1 documents the details (i.e., square feet, population, and number of registered borrowers), concerns, and improvements identified for each community library facility. We are considering this information as we plan and implement improvements to our facilities.

Exhibit 1. Library facility details, concerns, and improvements

Community Library	Service Capacity/Need			Facility Concerns ⁷	Facility Improvements ⁸
	Facility Space (Sq. Feet)	Population*	Registered Borrowers		
Ceres	5,000	47,166	27,265	Facility too small Space needed for meetings, quiet study areas, Story Time	Interior remodel completed in 2015
Denair	1,851	4,506	4,006	Building in poor condition Space needed for Story Time Tables and chairs need to be replaced and updated	Needs interior remodel and expansion

⁷ Concerns are based on input from customers and library staff.

⁸ This column lists improvements that are needed, in progress, and completed.

Community Library	Service Capacity/Need			Facility Concerns ⁷	Facility Improvements ⁸
	Facility Space (Sq. Feet)	Population*	Registered Borrowers		
Empire[†]	1,920	4,286	4,039	<p>Building in extremely poor condition</p> <p>Parking lot in poor condition</p> <p>Undesirable location – need to relocate to new site</p>	Needs to be relocated to a larger facility; project underway to relocate and expand
Hughson	2,100	7,150	5,351	Wall-hung shelving to be added as needed	None
Keys	1,200	5,730	4,848	Space needed for programs	Needs to be expanded
Modesto^{††}	62,000 (37,000 currently used as public service)	211,903	201,623	<p>Space needed for studying, seating, Story Time space besides auditorium, and additional public meeting spaces</p> <p>Parking/access inconvenient (<i>Parking lot owned by City of Modesto</i>)</p> <p>Aging building in need of remodeling/renovation</p>	Needs interior remodel
Newman^{††}	2,613	10,840	8,939	<p>Possible future expansion needed due to growth in the West Side of the Valley</p> <p>Additional space needed for computers, quiet study space, seating</p>	Needs interior remodel and expansion
Oakdale^{††}	6,500	22,348	24,112	<p>Seating and study areas are limited, possible expansion within 10 years</p> <p>Space needed for study areas and computer classes</p>	Needs interior remodel and expansion
Patterson^{††}	4,070	22,590	22,218	<p>Additional space needed for studying, computers, and seating</p> <p>Parking inadequate</p>	Needs interior remodel and expansion
Riverbank^{††}	3,594	23,913	14,472	Space needed for quiet studying and computers	Needs interior remodel and expansion

Community Library	Service Capacity/Need			Facility Concerns ⁷	Facility Improvements ⁸
	Facility Space (Sq. Feet)	Population*	Registered Borrowers		
Salida ^{††}	52,000 (28,000 public space, 5,000 community room, 19,000 undeveloped tenant space)	14,039	26,768	Undeveloped space for future public service expansion Tenant space finished & leased	None
Turlock ^{††}	10,000	72,050	58,688	Severely undersized for community population Space needed for community meetings, Story Time, teens, computers, quiet studying Insufficient seating	Needs interior remodel and expansion (expansion project launched in Fiscal Year 2016-17)
Waterford ^{††}	2,075	8,788	8,113	Space needed for community meetings, Story Time, quiet studying, additional seating Parking is limited Interior needs repainting New 6,000 sq. ft. facility needed	Needs to be replaced and expanded

*Population estimate from the California Department of Finance, Demographic Research.

[†]Library facility is jointly owned by several Stanislaus County agencies.

^{††}Library facility is owned by Stanislaus County.

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