



**FRIENDS
FOUNDATION**
DENVER **PUBLIC** LIBRARY

STRATEGIC PLAN

A ROADMAP FOR 2026—2028

Approved by the DPLFF Board of Directors on November 19, 2025

Executive Summary

A STRATEGIC ROADMAP FOR 2026–2028

Setting the Stage

The Denver Public Library Friends Foundation (the Friends Foundation) enters its next chapter with clarity and momentum. Building on its long partnership with Denver Public Library (the Library), this three-year plan defines how the Friends Foundation will strengthen its identity, deepen its community connections, and expand its capacity to sustain the Library’s mission for generations to come.

The Strategic Direction

The 2026–2028 Strategic Plan centers on three priorities:

- **Clarify Our Identity and Elevate Our Presence:** Establish a unified brand and voice that clearly communicates the Friends Foundation’s distinct role in advocacy and fundraising.
- **Deepen Connections and Expand Our Base:** Engage a broader, more diverse community of donors, partners, and volunteers who champion the Library’s mission.
- **Scale with Intention and Build a Sustainable Future:** Strengthen systems, staffing, and governance to ensure long-term organizational and financial resilience.

Together, these priorities define how the Friends Foundation will operate with purpose, amplify the Library’s impact, and secure the resources and relationships needed to thrive.

How the Plan Was Developed

This plan was shaped through a collaborative process led by the Friends Foundation’s staff and Board of Trustees, with participation from Library leadership and the Library Commission. Over many months, participants identified emerging opportunities, refined priorities, and aligned around a shared framework for growth. The process included a community survey; one-on-one interviews; three focus groups with civic and community leaders, donors and advocates, and library leaders; staff workshops; board and committee sessions; and joint planning meetings to ensure alignment across all stakeholders.

What This Plan Delivers

The plan translates strategic vision into practical action. It includes:

- A clear **framework** of goals, objectives, and tactics.
- A three-year **implementation roadmap** linking strategy to results.
- Measurable **metrics** to track progress and impact.
- A **structure** for accountability, alignment, and sustainability.

Looking Ahead

By focusing on clarity, connection, and capacity, the Friends Foundation will continue to strengthen the Library, building a bridge between private generosity and public good. Grounded in partnership, guided by purpose, and powered by community, this plan charts a clear path for the Friends Foundation’s next chapter.

About the Friends Foundation

Who We Are

The Friends Foundation is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization that strengthens the Library through fundraising, advocacy, and community engagement. Charitable contributions from the Friends Foundation supplement the Library's public funding—helping it accomplish its mission, enrich the community, and expand access to programs and services across Denver.

Role and Relationship to the Library

The Friends Foundation is the nonprofit partner of the Library. While the Library provides critical public services supported by taxpayer and city funding, the Friends Foundation amplifies that impact through philanthropy, advocacy, and partnerships. Together, the two organizations ensure that Denver's libraries remain innovative, equitable, and accessible to all.

The Friends Foundation:

- Raises funds to support Library programs, services, collections, and capital priorities.
- Advocates for public funding and policies that sustain and strengthen the Library.
- Builds partnerships with individuals, businesses, and community organizations that share a commitment to literacy, learning, and access.
- Engages the public through events, campaigns, and storytelling that celebrate the Library's essential role in civic life.

This close and complementary relationship enables both organizations to focus on their strengths: the Library on service delivery, and the Friends Foundation on fundraising, advocacy, and community connection.

Our Team and Operations

The Friends Foundation is governed by a volunteer Board of Trustees that provides strategic oversight, fiduciary stewardship, and community leadership. Standing committees focused on Development, Advocacy, Finance, and Executive leadership align their work with the priorities of this strategic plan.

A professional staff team, led by Executive Director Katy Anderson, manages fundraising, advocacy, operations, events, communications, and donor relations. Roles are designed to foster collaboration, efficiency, and mission alignment, ensuring that every program area (individual giving, corporate and foundation partnerships, advocacy, and events) supports the Library's highest priorities.

The Friends Foundation also manages book sales and retail operations, which generate significant earned revenue while connecting community members directly with the Library's mission.

Moving Forward

With a clear sense of purpose, structure, and partnership, the Friends Foundation now turns its focus to the future. The following goals outline how the organization will strengthen its identity, deepen community connections, and build the capacity needed to sustain the Library's mission for generations to come. Together, these priorities form a roadmap for advancing philanthropy, advocacy, and engagement—ensuring the Friends Foundation continues to serve as a trusted champion for the Library.

GOAL 1: Clarify our Identity & Elevate our Presence

We are the trusted champion of Denver Public Library, standing at the forefront of advocacy and fundraising. Our clarity of purpose and strength of message inspire growing support and deeper engagement across the Denver community.

1.1 Clarify, Communicate & Elevate Our Unique Brand

Many assume the Library is “fully funded” after the 2i campaign, creating confusion about the Friends Foundation’s role. Without a clear narrative, fundraising and advocacy will remain challenging. We will craft and consistently share a unified message that highlights the Friends Foundation’s distinct role - philanthropy, advocacy, and amplifying community impact - while expanding our visibility through coordinated marketing, media, and community engagement. Donors, partners, and the public will understand our purpose and value, leading to stronger giving, advocacy, and long-term support.

- 1.1.1 Launch awareness-building efforts rooted in our mission and mapped in alignment with the Library’s strategic plan, including coordinated marketing campaigns tied to major Friends Foundation and Library initiatives, events, and messaging goals
- 1.1.2 Refresh and update digital and print collateral to align the Friends Foundation and the Library, strengthening visibility through integrated PR, media, and digital strategies that expand social presence and share impact stories
- 1.1.3 Equip board, staff, ambassadors, and community representatives with clear messaging and advocacy tools including training, talking points, and an elevator pitch to ensure consistency across all audiences
- 1.1.4 Create an annual “State of the Library” event to showcase thought leadership and timely content

1.2 Strengthen Advocacy Presence & Influence

As the Library’s voice in the local political arena, the Friends Foundation must be equipped to lead advocacy with confidence and credibility. We will activate our Advocacy Committee, build strategic partnerships, and ensure consistent communication with civic leaders. The Friends Foundation will be recognized as a respected, effective advocate for the Library’s funding and future.

- 1.2.1 Create and implement annual advocacy plan aligned with Library priorities
- 1.2.2 Host civic leader briefings and Library tours
- 1.2.3 Identify and cultivate community partners to amplify advocacy efforts in specific communities and neighborhoods
- 1.2.4 Build a recruitment plan and pipeline of individuals with political acumen and connections for board and advocacy committee service

1.3 Strengthen Internal Alignment Around Identity

Foundation Board, Library Commission, and staff across the Library and the Friends Foundation must be unified in how they describe the Friends Foundation’s identity. Without alignment, external confusion will persist. We will embed shared language into board orientations, committee charters, and staff onboarding, ensuring everyone speaks with one voice. Stronger internal cohesion will translate to greater external credibility and influence.

- 1.3.1 Facilitate annual board, staff, commission, and Library leaders’ alignment session on the Friends Foundation’s role
- 1.3.2 Share Friends Foundation communications to key Library leaders so they understand our function and how we can elevate their work through advocacy and fundraising

Implementation

Over the next three years, the Friends Foundation will strengthen its visibility, advocacy presence, and internal alignment - building a clear, consistent, and confident identity as the trusted champion of the Library. This roadmap prioritizes clarity over expansion, ensuring that message, structure, and voice are unified across staff, board, and partners before elevating the Foundation’s external presence.

| | Focus | Key Actions and Outcomes |
|------|--|---|
| 2026 | Clarify Identity and Align Messaging | The first year focuses on defining and communicating the Friends Foundation’s distinct identity. The team will refine messaging, align internally with the Library’s communications strategy, and pilot tools that create shared understanding across staff, board, and ambassadors. Early actions include developing new taglines and collateral, launching awareness-building campaigns with clear branding, and initiating the Ambassador Program. An alignment retreat with the Library and the Library Commission will clarify shared roles and language. The team will also establish the first advocacy plan, begin outreach to civic leaders, and map community partnerships to prepare for future neighborhood engagement. |
| 2027 | Elevate Visibility and Engage Community | With clarity in place, the second year emphasizes visibility and outreach. The Friends Foundation will launch a coordinated marketing campaign across digital, print, and community channels, supported by refreshed collateral and photography. Advocacy work will expand through civic tours, community partnerships, and new relationships with neighborhood groups. The Ambassador Program will become fully active, and messaging toolkits will be rolled out across board and committee structures. The first “State of the Library” event will debut as a visible platform for shared storytelling and leadership, supported by sponsor partnerships. |
| 2028 | Sustain Momentum and Deepen Advocacy and Brand Presence | By the third year, the Friends Foundation will operate with a clear, consistent identity and recognized voice. External campaigns and community partnerships will continue on an annual rhythm, advocacy will remain embedded in board and committee practice, and the Foundation’s brand will be widely understood and trusted across Denver. Regular alignment sessions with the Library will sustain internal cohesion, ensuring all communications, events, and advocacy efforts continue to advance a unified message and shared purpose. |

GOAL 2: Deepen Connections & Expand Our Base

We are at the center of a vibrant circle of supporters deeply connected to Denver Public Library. Our relationships with donors, partners, and advocates fuel philanthropy and advocacy that extend the Library's reach and strengthen its role as a cornerstone of Denver's civic and cultural life.

2.1 Broaden & Diversify Our Supporter Base

A wider, more diverse supporter network will expand our reach, increase revenue, and reflect Denver's whole community. We will recruit and engage new donors, volunteers, and partners, especially younger audiences, diverse communities, and civic and community leaders, through outreach, events, and accessible entry points. Guided by our commitment to diversity, equity, inclusion, and accessibility, we will ensure that our efforts reflect and welcome all who value the Library. Our supporter community will grow in size and diversity, creating a more sustainable and representative base of champions for the Library.

- 2.1.1 Expand opportunities for all Library cardholders and patrons to give
- 2.1.2 Design membership/loyalty structures that encourage long-term commitment

2.2 Deepen Donor & Volunteer Engagement

Retaining and nurturing current donors and volunteers is as critical as acquiring new ones. Strong stewardship builds loyalty and maximizes lifetime support. We will strengthen stewardship practices, enhance volunteer experiences, and create deeper mission-aligned engagement touchpoints. Donors and volunteers will feel valued, connected, and eager to continue and grow their involvement and support.

- 2.2.1 Build moves management plans for major donors and top volunteers
- 2.2.2 Activate staff, volunteers, and ambassadors to host small-group experiences
- 2.2.3 Leverage storytelling to connect donors and volunteers directly to Library impact

2.3 Strengthen Community & Civic Partnerships

Partnerships with civic leaders, peer nonprofits, and local businesses amplify impact and elevate the Friends Foundation's relevance. We will expand collaborations that connect the Library to Denver's cultural, civic, and philanthropic landscape. Stronger partnerships will increase advocacy influence, open new revenue streams, and embed the Library more deeply in the city's fabric.

- 2.3.1 Formalize annual partnership plans with the Library's Community Partnerships team and expand new Friends Foundation-led collaborations with civic and cultural institutions
- 2.3.2 Increase speaking opportunities and group presentations to expand our brand recognition and base
- 2.3.3 Partner with the Library to "sponsor" their events, invite patron participation, and support their presence in the community

Implementation

Over the next three years, the Friends Foundation will focus on deepening relationships and broadening its community of supporters - creating an inclusive network of donors, volunteers, and partners that reflects the diversity and vibrancy of Denver. This roadmap emphasizes intentional relationship-building, strong stewardship, and meaningful engagement that turns initial connections into lasting commitment.

| | Focus | Key Actions and Outcomes |
|------|--|--|
| 2026 | Engage Community and Build Foundations for Growth | The first year focuses on expanding access, awareness, and participation. The Friends Foundation will introduce new giving pathways in collaboration with the Library—testing donation prompts through card renewals, online systems, and Library checkout points. Staff will pilot small-group experiences that connect supporters with the Library’s mission and begin collecting impact stories to strengthen future communications. Foundational work will also include identifying and cultivating potential major donors through a new Moves Management plan and establishing early alignment with the Library’s Community Partnerships team to coordinate shared outreach efforts. |
| 2027 | Expand Reach, Deepen Loyalty, and Strengthen Engagement | With foundational systems in place, year two centers on broadening engagement and deepening long-term commitment. Giving and engagement tools will scale across branches and digital platforms, supported by new membership and loyalty structures that reward sustained giving and participation. Storytelling will expand through videos, social features, and co-branded partnership initiatives that highlight the Library’s community impact. Cultivation efforts will include more structured donor tours, speaking engagements, and expanded ambassador participation. Collaboration with the Library’s Community Partnerships team will produce new civic and cultural partnerships, and the Friends Foundation’s presence at Library and community events will become more visible and coordinated. |
| 2028 | Sustain Connections and Strengthen Community Partnerships | By the third year, the Friends Foundation’s supporter network will be broader, more diverse, and deeply connected to the Library’s mission. Integrated giving systems and engagement programs will operate smoothly and be refreshed annually based on feedback. Membership and stewardship structures will provide predictable renewal and recognition opportunities, while partnerships and community collaborations will continue on a steady rhythm. Regular evaluation of events, partnerships, and engagement ROI will guide refinement and sustainability, ensuring that the Friends Foundation maintains meaningful, lasting relationships with donors, volunteers, and community champions who collectively strengthen the Library’s reach and impact. |

GOAL 3: Scale with Intention & Build a Sustainable Future

We grow with intention by balancing stewardship of staff and funds with strategic evolution. By investing in our people, modernizing systems, and diversifying revenue and programs, we ensure a sustainable future for the Friends Foundation and its partnership with Denver Public Library.

3.1 Strengthen Organizational Infrastructure

Sustainable growth requires strong systems, staffing, and governance. Without them, the Friends Foundation risks burnout, inefficiency, and missed opportunities. We will invest in staff capacity, streamline operations, and refine board engagement structures to match our evolving scope. The Friends Foundation will operate with clarity, efficiency, and alignment, enabling us to scale without overextending.

- 3.1.1 Conduct organizational capacity review and adjust staffing to meet needs of this plan and the Friends Foundation's future
- 3.1.2 Modernize internal systems and processes
- 3.1.3 Align board structure, committees, expectations, and skillsets
- 3.1.4 Strengthen professional development for staff and board

3.2 Diversify & Stabilize Revenue Streams

Reliance on a few sources of revenue limits growth and sustainability. Expanding into new and balanced funding areas ensures resilience against market or political shifts. We will refine revenue targets across annual giving, major/planned gifts, corporate and foundation support, book sales, events, and our endowments with strategies tailored to each. A balanced, predictable revenue portfolio will ensure long-term stability and sustained support for the Library.

- 3.2.1 Establish multi-year revenue targets for each Library program or service category
- 3.2.2 Grow individual major, planned, and multi-year giving programs
- 3.2.3 Design and implement entity engagement and fundraising strategy
- 3.2.4 Plan and prepare for endowment growth campaign
- 3.2.5 Evolve and grow Book Business reach and revenue (store, sales, and online)

3.3 Innovate & Adapt with Agility

The pace of change requires the Friends Foundation to be nimble and innovative. Building adaptability into our culture and systems will ensure relevance. We will pilot new fundraising approaches, explore technology-enabled engagement, and maintain a posture of learning and adaptation. The Friends Foundation will be prepared to seize opportunities and navigate challenges with creativity and resilience.

- 3.3.1 Pilot new fundraising models
- 3.3.2 Leverage digital tools and automation to enhance engagement and steward donors and volunteers more effectively
- 3.3.3 Adopt an iterative, learning-driven approach

Implementation

Over the next three years, the Friends Foundation will scale deliberately - fortifying staffing, systems, and governance; balancing and growing revenue; and embedding a culture of learning and adaptation. The emphasis is on building the internal capacity to execute today while positioning the organization for sustained growth tomorrow.

| | Focus | Key Actions and Outcomes |
|------|---|--|
| 2026 | Fortify Foundations and Align | The first year focuses on building internal strength and preparing for sustainable growth. The Friends Foundation will complete a staff capacity and workload review, clarify roles, and engage board committees in identifying organizational priorities. Core systems for finance, data, and donor management will be audited to determine technology needs and integration opportunities. Governance structures will be assessed, professional development plans established, and an internal learning culture initiated. On the revenue side, the team will collaborate with Library leadership to set multi-year fundraising targets, evaluate Book Business operations, and explore readiness for an endowment campaign. Early pilots - testing new fundraising and digital automation tools - will begin to strengthen engagement and efficiency. |
| 2027 | Integrate, Diversify, and Operationalize | With a stronger foundation in place, year two focuses on implementation and expansion. Updated systems and standardized workflows will be embedded into daily operations, while staffing and governance adjustments take full effect. Major, planned, and multi-year giving programs will grow through structured pipelines and stewardship rhythms. The Friends Foundation will launch a coordinated entity engagement strategy for corporations, foundations, and government partners and implement the first phase of Book Business growth. Endowment campaign planning will progress with board participation, and automation workflows will roll out across programs to streamline donor and volunteer engagement. Successful pilots will be refined and scaled based on early results. |
| 2028 | Sustain, Scale What Works, and Build for the Long Term | By year three, the Friends Foundation will operate with mature systems, balanced revenue streams, and clear accountability. Staffing and governance structures will be reviewed and adjusted as part of ongoing evaluation, and all core systems will run on steady annual cycles. Multi-year commitments, entity partnerships, and Book Business contributions will provide predictable support, while endowment campaign preparations will move toward soft launch. Automation tools and data insights will drive greater efficiency, and a learning-driven culture will be fully institutionalized - ensuring the organization continues to adapt, improve, and sustain its mission in partnership with the Library. |

Metrics

The Friends Foundation’s metrics provide a clear, measurable way to track progress toward the goals, objectives, and tactics outlined in this plan. These indicators translate strategy into tangible outcomes - helping the organization monitor growth, assess performance, and make informed decisions about where to focus resources and energy.

Each metric aligns directly with one or more goals in the Strategic Framework, reflecting the Foundation’s commitment to accountability, transparency, and continuous improvement. The metrics emphasize both quantitative outcomes (such as revenue, donor retention, and engagement reach) and qualitative indicators (such as relationship strength, visibility, and internal alignment).

| Key Metric | Why It Matters | 2025 Baseline | 2026 Milestone | 2027 Milestone | 2028 Goal | | | | |
|--|---|---|----------------|----------------|--------------|--------------|------------|--------------|------------|
| Community understanding of the Friends Foundation’s role and brand | Builds recognition of the Friends Foundation as a vital partner to the Library and trusted steward of community investment. | 20% | 25% | 35% | 45% | | | | |
| Active donor base growth | Expands the Foundation’s base of philanthropic support, strengthening long-term sustainability and reach. | - 3,365 | +3% 3,533 | +5% 3,886 | +8% 4,469 | | | | |
| | <i>Total Annual Donors (<\$1k)</i> | 3,159 | 3,254 | 3,417 | 3,690 | | | | |
| | <i>Total Major Donors (\$1k+)</i> | 206 | 212 | 223 | 241 | | | | |
| | <i>Total Planned Gift Commitments</i> | 55 | 57 | 60 | 65 | | | | |
| Donor/Member retention rate (year-over-year) | Reflects trust, satisfaction, and the effectiveness of donor engagement efforts over time. | 65.44% <i>(2024 baseline)</i> | 65% | 68% | 70% | | | | |
| Total community engagement activities (events, partnerships, co-hosted activations) | Demonstrates visibility and community presence, advancing awareness and deepening relationships citywide. | 6 | 10 | 15 | 25 | | | | |
| Cross-participation among supporters (donors who also volunteer or advocate) | Indicates stronger connection to mission by fostering multidimensional engagement beyond giving alone. | 32 <i>(Out of 77 non-board volunteers)</i> | +5% 34 | +10% 37 | +15% 43 | | | | |
| Average digital reach and engagement rates | Measures audience reach, connection and content effectiveness in reaching new and existing supporters. | | | | | | | | |
| | | <i>Reach</i> | <i>Eng</i> | <i>Reach</i> | <i>Eng</i> | <i>Reach</i> | <i>Eng</i> | <i>Reach</i> | <i>Eng</i> |
| | <i>Email¹</i> | 12,517 | 39% | 13,000 | 40% | 14,000 | 42% | 15,200 | 45% |
| | <i>Social Media²</i> | 10,845 | 6,602 | 11,170 | 6,800 | 11,729 | 7,140 | 12,550 | 7,640 |
| | <i>Website³</i> | 4,197 | 39% | 4,500 | 41% | 4,750 | 44% | 5,000 | 48% |
| Staff satisfaction with internal systems and workflows | Supports a healthy, efficient, and motivated team - critical for executing external goals successfully. | (No baseline) | 4 or higher | 4 or higher | 4 or higher | | | | |

¹Email | Reach = number of subscribers | Engagement = email open rate

²Social Media | Reach = total followers | Engagement = content interactions (*likes, reactions, saves, comments, shares, and replies*) | Based on current platforms of Facebook, Instagram, and LinkedIn and across all types of organic, promoted, and paid posts

³Website | Reach = total visits | Engagement = percentage of visitors who visit 2+ pages, click a button, watch a video, and all visits lasting more than 10 seconds

Together, these metrics will guide annual planning, performance evaluation, and progress reporting - ensuring the Friends Foundation remains focused on meaningful results and long-term impact in partnership with the Library. Progress will be reviewed annually to inform upcoming action plans and shared transparently with the Board of Trustees.

Acknowledgments

This plan was made possible through the insight, collaboration, and dedication of many. The Friends Foundation extends deep appreciation to the staff, trustees, and community members who contributed their time, perspective, and creativity to this process.

The Friends Foundation also thanks its partners at Denver Public Library and the Library Commission, whose guidance and collaboration were integral to shaping this shared vision. Most importantly, we are grateful to the donors, volunteers, and community advocates whose ongoing support sustains the work and spirit of the Friends Foundation every day.

Friends Foundation Staff *(as of November 19, 2025)*

- Katy Anderson, Executive Director
- Marley Bogran, Book Operations Assistant
- Cara Fulmor, Philanthropy Specialist
- Liz Guillebaud, Director of Philanthropy – Corporate Giving and Special Events
- Andrea Hamilton, Manager of Philanthropy – Used Book Sales
- Pam Jewett, Director of Finance and Operations
- Jennifer Johnson, Senior Director of Philanthropy
- Lillie Lamm, Director of Marketing and Communications
- Monica Yori Peritt, Manager of Philanthropy – Database and Annual Giving

Board of Trustees *(as of November 19, 2025)*

- Judy Allender, Secretary
- Stefan Beck, Treasurer
- Andy Bishop, Trustee
- Joe Bochenek, Trustee
- Deb Brackney, Trustee
- Kim Burkhardt, Trustee
- Hillary Cimock, Trustee
- Julie Davis, Trustee
- Alton Dillard, Trustee
- Akash Madiah, Vice Chair
- Colleen Morey, Trustee
- Chris Ottele, Trustee
- Lawson Parker, Trustee
- Katie Payer, Trustee
- Jayme Ritchie, Trustee
- Danielle Reubenstein, Trustee
- Andi Rugg, Trustee
- Andy Sandage, Trustee
- Byeongsook Seo, Trustee
- Ron Tomassi, Chair
- Laurie Troge, Trustee
- Lisa Vela, Trustee

Together, we look ahead with confidence, knowing that this plan will guide our next chapter of growth—and that the Friends Foundation will continue to serve as a steadfast champion for Denver’s libraries and the people who love them.