

# **Three Year Strategic Plan**

## **Westwood Free Public Library**

### **Westwood, New Jersey**

#### **2017-2020**

**Purpose:** The purpose of the long range plan is to provide guidance to both the Library Board and Staff when considering implementation of new services, programs, general areas of improvements and developments. It is a communication tool developed collaboratively among staff and trustees. The document includes goals and measurable objectives. The long range plan also provides a means by which objectives and accomplishments can be reviewed and revised periodically and incorporate feedback from patrons and community partners.

**Mission:** The Westwood Public Library connects. The Library connects its citizens to the resources, programs and people they need to make an informed, educated, literate, engaged and skilled community. It not only strives to provide up to date resources using current technologies but also provide the education and means necessary for the community to engage them. The library is a welcoming place of respite and services for a busy town.

The Library contributes to the continued success and growth of the community by helping to facilitate overall goals of the municipality by providing an attractive and useful community center, encouraging business through its programs and services, encouraging positive community spirit by its involvement in programs and activities in the Borough. Like the Brooklyn Public Library has inscribed on its door, the Westwood Free Public Library believes strongly that *"(the) Library through the joining of municipal enterprise and private generosity offers to all the people perpetual and free access to knowledge and the thought of all the ages."* Roscoe C. Brown

#### **Community Profile and Reach:**

As the population of Westwood has changed and technology has broadened, so have the circulation, collection and the services that the library provides. The following is a brief overview of the library and its current operations.

In 2016, 6,893 individuals, were registered library users an increase of 23% since 2010. Annual total circulation was in the 125,000 range including e-circulation which saw an increase of 400% since 2011. Annual visitors were about 105,000 an average of 8,750 per month. The Library's website averaged 800 unique visits per week and its Facebook page has 776 followers.

According to 2016 demographic data, there are 11,293 residents in Westwood. Of these, 2,586 are under 17 years of age or 22.9%. Another 1,976 or 17.5% of the community is over age 65. Adults between 25 and 64 years of age represent 52.6%. Only 7% of the population is between the ages of 18 to 24.

The library is open to the public for a total of 57 hours seven days a week from October through May. Hours in the summer are reduced to 47 hours per week open Monday through Friday. If funding were available the library seeks to open at least one weekend day in the summer months.

The library staff as of 2017 includes a director, two full-time librarians and three full-time equivalents. There are 6 part time employees. The Library's core operations require professional and trained non-professional paid staff to run successfully. In addition, the Library encourages, trains and manages volunteers to help strengthen the Library community. Volunteers help make the Library more visible and usable by everyone in the community. The Library's ESL staff train and manage volunteer tutors to help others where English is a second language, Library staff train and manage student volunteers seeking community service hours to help out during library programs, and the Friends of the Library conduct significant fundraising to finance the special programs and services the Library provides.

The Library strives to meet the needs of the diversity within the community. The Library regularly monitors new patron library card registrations and available borough data for demographic shifts. The Library has a long tradition of successfully providing services to adults seeking to learn or improve their English. The Library will continue to pursue collection and program opportunities to serve those for whom English is not their primary language.

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The ethnic composition of Westwood as of 2016 according to available data is as follows:

White/Caucasian	71.5%
Hispanic/Latino	15.4%
African American	6.6%
Asian	5.3%
Multiracial	1.1%
Other	.1%

New Hispanic family patrons are primarily from Mexico. The majority of Asian patrons are from Korea. There is also a sizable percentage of patrons of East Indian descent.

## **Guiding Principles**

### **Supporting intellectual freedom**

The Westwood Free Public Library enables all individuals in our community to exercise their right to access constitutionally protected information.

### **Promoting literacy and a love of reading**

Recognizing the vital importance of reading to open doors and expand horizons, the Library strives to support every patron in becoming a lifelong reader regardless of media.

### **Respecting and embracing the entire community**

We celebrate Westwood's diversity and strive to ensure that all people feel welcome in our Library. We strive to meet the needs and expectations of every Library patron.

### **Fostering a healthy democracy**

The Library is committed to building an informed community, and providing neutral ground where participation in civic life is open to all.

### **Protecting confidentiality of patron records**

The Library respects the confidentiality of our patrons' requests for information, the online sites they access, and their borrowing history.

### **Supporting children and youth**

We join parents, educators and young people in helping to raise thoughtful readers and citizens. We recognize the priority of efforts to close educational achievement gaps.

### **Supporting seniors**

The Library recognizes the need to provide essential information and rich resources to meet the needs of our senior patrons and population.

### **Forming strong partnerships**

The Library plans to extend its reach and impact in the community through partnerships with individuals, public and nonprofit agencies, community groups, educators and businesses.

### **Engaging volunteers and paid professionals for specific programs**

Volunteers support the efforts of the Friends of Westwood library, the junior friends, and instructors who provide ESL services. Recruiting paid technical experts for specific training, programs and consultation as needed.

### **Adapting and evolving**

To stay relevant to patrons' changing needs and interests, we continuously adapt. We are a learning organization and invest in our staff, technology, and infrastructure to improve essential services.

## **Goals and Objectives:**

### **1. Library as Collection Provider**

The cornerstone of the library is the collection which includes both print and electronic resources purchased by Westwood as well as materials through membership in the BCCLS consortium. The library strives to provide a well- rounded collection for the enjoyment and life- long learning benefit of all Westwood citizens young and old and toward that end a wide variety of formats are collected. The Library places emphasis on Early Literacy, Technology Literacy, Language Literacy (ESL), as well as a general reading and residential collection.

#### Objectives

- a.) Use Collection HQ, a consortium sponsored tool to assess collection so that development can be more responsive to community use.
- b.) Purchase print and electronic resources to help with bridging technology gap, Lynda.com for training for example.
- c.) Keep up with weeding. Collections must be maintained vigilantly so that new materials are visible, out dated information is removed, changes in format preferences are attended and shifts in cultural preferences, educational focuses and population shifts are incorporated.
- d.) With a growing body of viable information presented outside of normal publishing review journals, effort must be made in finding ways to organize and provide access to this information. Examples include podcasts.
- e.) Expand early literacy programs and resources to create young readers. Enable children to enter school ready to read, write, and listen

- f.) Make multicultural and multilingual materials and programming an integral part of library resources. Determine foreign language collection most viable for Westwood (Hindi, Korean, and Spanish).
- g.) Work with schools for curriculum support and to support summer reading programs.

## **2. Library as Technology Bridge:**

The means by which the collection is accessed is through technology. The Library maintains membership in BCCLS in order to provide access to the shared catalog of over 78 libraries and for the circulation system. The Library maintains public access computers which also include the Microsoft Office suite. A core business of the Westwood Library is to provide collections and services that help bridge the technology gap so that the ability to access is fully supported by the hardware, software and the education required.

Objectives

- a.) Set up computer tutors with volunteers and staff.
- b.) Review computers and update as necessary.
- c.) Offer free classes by volunteers and paid services.
- d.) Develop collection of materials to assist patrons in technology proficiency.
- e.) Set up a technology training center.
- f.) Offer more training in diverse technologies, such as smartphones, digital photography and social media.

## **3. Library as Community Hub:**

With nearly 9,000 visitors each month, the Library is truly a community hub and yet there is still a segment of the community that does not utilize the Library.

Objectives

- a.) Increase free programs that meet the community's interests.
- b.) Provide more space for tutoring (early literacy, language literacy (ESL), technology tutoring).
- c.) Provide support and materials for job search and career transition.
- d.) Improve cleanliness through improved janitorial resources/services.
- e.) Sustain and grow efforts which raise funds, engage new users, and Friends volunteers.
- f.) Connect with more organizations to reach new patrons through Clergy council, Rotary, Chamber, School District, Neighborhood Organizations, Recreation Department, Foreign Language organizations and clubs.
- g.) Explore options to create a Local History collection/section.

## **4. Library as Professional Staff**

Keeping up with publishing and technology trends is no small task.

Objectives

- a.) Encourage training with Lynda.com and outside sources.
- b.) Staff to attend NJLA Conference consistently to network and bring back best practices
- c.) Keep Board members informed and current by providing some training at each board meeting.
- d.) Encourage staff to attend all BCCLS provided training for databases and other resources purchased through the curriculum.

## **5. Library Infrastructure Improvements**

In order to provide a safe, comfortable, aesthetically pleasing building that has the ability to

accommodate changing technologies and growing demand for meeting space for the purpose of tutoring and technology training, the Library needs to be frequently assessed and long range plans put in place.

#### Objectives

- a.) Create more public space by reconfiguring the area behind staff work space into private tutor spaces and a group meeting space equipped with media resources.
- b.) Renovate the public restrooms.
- c.) Evaluate and implement changes to improve collection display.
- d.) Create space for upstairs story time room.
- e.) Add a community resource area.
- f.) Increase access by improved parking.
- g.) Explore green options for energy efficiency and environmental sensitivity.
- h.) Roof, HVAC, Parking lot are all in need of maintenance and or upgrade. Will work with municipality to get these items taken care of in a cost effective, timely manner.

### **6. Library as the Go to Place in Town**

The Library is used by an average of 9,000 patrons a month; it is host to countless programs and resources but does not have the advantage of a marketing team to ensure the word is out.

#### Objectives

- a.) Continue to develop the website as a major source of information. Encourage staff training to improve website's usefulness.
- b.) Assess adding Sunday hours during the summer to better serve patrons' needs.
- c.) Continue to partner with as many organizations as possible to expand community reach and share costs.
- d.) Continue offering programs such as Taste of Westwood, Westwood Green Screen and One Book Westwood which draw positive attention to the Library and the town.
- e.) Facilitate teamwork between key supporters including the Board of Trustees, Friends of the Library, and Borough Council members.

### **7. Library Messaging to Keep the Community Informed and Engaged.**

Focus on new models for improving information alerts, schedules, access and delivery.

#### Objectives

- a.) Promote our website as a virtual 24/7 branch of the library.
- b.) Refresh and revise the Library website and social media presence and messaging.
- c.) Reinvent the ways the Library connects information seekers with resources such as ancestry.com.
- d.) Develop a budget for outside assistance in marketing and public relations.
- e.) Pilot new ways to showcase, organize and deliver collections drawing on customer feedback, usage data and best practices.
- f.) Keep informed about innovative services and programs that can be replicated at the library.

### **Library Needs and Resources to Implement the Plan**

**Funding:** Until 2008 the library received regular annual increases in municipal support. The market recession in 2008, subsequent devaluation of real estate and borough commitments for pension funding and other obligations has kept the library budget frozen at the same amount per year. Municipal support provided approximately 87% of 2016 expenses. A serious concern is the low

probability for any substantial municipal increases in the years addressed in the strategic plan. Escalating healthcare costs and operating expense increases challenge the Library's ability to provide robust collections and the current level of services. It is imperative that the Library pursue all available means of revenue, while advocating for continued municipal support.

2017 budget allocations for staff is 76%. Collection acquisition and development accounts for 11.8%. Utilities, maintenance and operating expenses represent 12.8%. Income from materials fines, state aid and printer/copier usage fees are \$25,700 representing 3.5% of total revenues.

The Friends of the Library, a 501(c) non-profit organization, also provides financial support for library activities. Funds are derived from annual membership drives, used book sales and the annual Taste of Westwood event. These funds pay for a variety of library programs, concerts and ESL and early literacy resources.

Developing sustainable funding sources, including additional fundraising efforts, grants, public-private partnerships and local foundations is important to fully achieve the strategic plan.

It imperative for the Board and library staff to identify not just what they can do cost-effectively, but to determine what is most desired by Westwood's patrons. Our new plan will allocate resources to priorities deemed the highest in community needs. The ongoing planning process includes identification of measurement tools to determine the success of various objectives in the plan, ensuring that funding is targeted to initiatives that are best used and most valued.

**Closing statement.** A strategic plan prepares us for success in an uncertain future by institutionalizing an ability to continually adapt and evolve as the world of our community and patrons change and to manage available financial resources. Our plan is a commitment to listen, question, and measure outcomes, address challenges and adapt as necessary.

Any strategic plan is fundamentally flawed because attempts to predict and manage the future are usually inadequate. The most valuable outcome of the strategic planning process is it requires us to contemplate change, anticipate the needs and interests of our community and chart our future as a library.

## **Acknowledgments**

The committee recognizes and thanks the following libraries for their strategic plans which guided our thinking in preparing our own Strategic Plan:

THE WYCKOFF FREE PUBLIC LIBRARY Strategic Plan 2014-2016 "Our Next Chapter".

Seattle Public Library Strategic Plan 2011-2015.

Hillsdale free Public Library 5 Year Strategic Plan (2012-2017).

A Library for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century: Maplewood Memorial Library Strategic Plan 2012-15.

Data for the neighborhood statistics were gathered from: Neighborhood Scout Data for Westwood.  
<https://www.neighborhoodscout.com/nj/westwood/demographics>

## **Board Members**

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