



Five-Year Strategic Plan 2024-2028

KEY ACCOMPLISHMENTS 2021-2023

When the Westwood Library reopened after the pandemic in June 2021, key initiatives were: making the Library more accessible; expanding community engagement; creating more flexible spaces to serve a variety of objectives; and defining maintenance and investments for our aging 80 year old building to make the Library safe, secure and welcoming.

The quest to make the Library more accessible started with Board meetings conducted on Zoom. Board meetings still offer trustees, the council liaison and the public an option of participating on Zoom. Other library meetings are conducted on a hybrid basis including book clubs. The Library invested in an “owl”, a technology to make the hybrid meeting experience better for both live and virtual attendees.

The Library serves patrons 24/7. Digital content such as eBooks, eAudio and online resources have become more actively used each year. Collections of online databases



and resources meet community needs. A federal grant enabled the Library to purchase and install smart lockers outside the library; patrons can pick up books and materials 24/7.

Community outreach and engagement was another key initiative. Patrons receive Enewsletters on a regular basis. The Library website is frequently updated and is mobile-friendly. Social media posts on Facebook feature news, events, and reading recommendations by staff and the Junior Council.

Replacing stationary shelving with mobile book displays in the Library has created a more flexible environment to accommodate special events and other gatherings.

Every year the Junior Council achieved their community service goals and actively supported summer reading, home for the holiday, and various children’s activities.

Support from the Friends of the Library book sales and annual fundraising enabled additional investments in childhood literacy resources, ESL materials, museum passes as well as live cultural and educational programs.



The family of Shy Touba, a beloved Friend of the Library who passed away,

met with Director Martha Urbiel to plan and fund a memorial garden on the side of the library in Shy’s memory. This space has been used for many purposes from small group meetings to a quiet space for patrons to read to a space for meditation class.

The Library also commemorated the service of other departed Friends of the Library who dedicated their time and lives to the Library: Mary Kenny, the Friends Treasurer and Liz Bellamy, former President.

Starting in 2021, at the Director’s recommendation, the Building and Grounds Committee conducted annual surveys of the building to implement repairs by the Borough including:

- Replacement of the Slate roof above the Children’s department.
- Installing a new downstairs HVAC system.
- Repairs of foundation brickwork and masonry and leaders and gutters.
- Painting and repair of the mezzanine wall.
- Addressing persistent leaks in the roof that impacted the adult area and downstairs areas.

LAN Associates conducted a comprehensive engineering and structural review of the Library in the fall of 2022. A professional architectural study and design plans were done at the same time. These two reports defined areas of renovation to improve the Library for patrons and staff. In collaboration with the borough, the Director and Trustees will rely on the recommendations to schedule capital investments in the years to come.

Starting in 2023, the Board retained the services of attorney Douglas Zucker in accordance with the NJ State Library Trustee Manual that states: “It is recommended as a best practice that the board retain its own attorney, and that a line item be retained in the budget to pay for legal services.”

PURPOSE: The purpose of the Library’s strategic plan is to provide guidance to the Library board when considering implementation of new services, programs, areas of improvements, and developments. The plan also provides a means by which objectives and accomplishments can be reviewed and revised periodically, incorporating feedback from patrons and

community partners.

MISSION: The Westwood Free Public Library connects citizens to the resources, programs, and people to support an informed, educated, literate, engaged, and skilled community. It strives to provide up-to-date resources using current technologies. The Library is a welcoming place of respite and provides valuable services for a busy town.

VISION: The Library contributes to the continued success and growth of the community by helping to facilitate overall goals of the municipality. It supports businesses through its programs and services, and encourages positive community spirit by its involvement in programs and activities in the Borough.

GUIDING PRINCIPLES

- Promoting literacy and a love of reading for all ages
- Supporting intellectual freedom
- Providing seniors with services that meet their needs
- Respecting and embracing the entire community
- Demonstrating intellectual integrity and accountability
- Valuing staff development
- Adapting and evolving to stay relevant to patrons' changing needs and interests

LIBRARY DASHBOARD

As the population of Westwood changes and technology broadens, so does the circulation, collection, and services that the Library provides.

Staffing, Friends, and Volunteers

In 2023, Library staff includes a director, a full-time librarian, and one full time non-professional. There is an opening for a full time adult services professional. There are nine part-time employees who handle circulation needs and other services and a part-time custodian.

The Friends of the Library conducts book sales ten times a year and fund raising events to finance adult and children's programs, English as a Second Language course materials, summer reading and other services that the Library provides.

In 2022 a Garden Club of volunteers was formed to make the Library's outdoor spaces more welcoming all season round.

The Library has a long tradition of successfully providing services to adults seeking to learn or improve their English language skills. The Library's ESL staff train and manage volunteer tutors.

The Junior Library Council provides a means for teens to engage as volunteers and develop leadership and teamwork skills. This also offers teens an opportunity to achieve their community service requirements.

Key Usage Statistics

Patron visits totaled over 68,000 in 2022, making a comeback to pre-pandemic levels.

In 2022, 8500 individuals were registered Library users, an increase of 6% since 2020. The Library regularly assesses new patron library card registrations and circulation trends.

The Library is home to approximately 50,000 circulating items, including nearly 20,000 volumes of adult fiction and non-fiction, 17,000 books for children and teens, 10,000 DVDs for kids and adults, music CDs, video games, 3,000 magazine and newspaper titles, and ESL materials and media. The Library is also growing a collection of local history documents, photographs and other materials.

Annual total circulation in 2022 was approximately 119,000. The Bergen County Cooperative Library System (BCCLS) provides patrons access to a number of databases for business and job support, curriculum support, language instruction, and downloadable e-books and e-audiobooks.

In addition, with support from the Friends of the Library, the Library provides access to databases and online resources including Mango languages, Hoopla, Kanopy and Acorn.

In 2022, the Library's website averaged 2,000 unique visits per week; its Facebook and Instagram have over 1,800 followers.

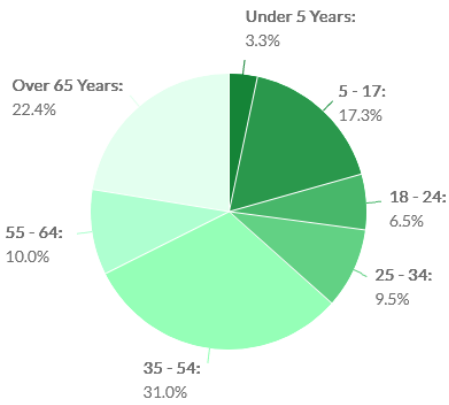
The Library provides services 24/7 online. The building is physically open to the public for a total of 57 hours per week seven days per week, from October through May. Summer hours include 47 hours per week, on weekdays Monday through Friday. As long as funding is available, the Library is open on Sundays from 1pm to 5pm in the summer months.

DEMOGRAPHICS AND COMMUNITY PROFILE

The Library serves a diversified and changing community based on age and ethnic heritage.

According to July 2022 demographic data, there are 11,186 residents in Westwood living in 4,364 households, essentially no change compared to 2019.

Age



The fastest growing population of residents are over 65 years old in Westwood and represents more than one of every five residents.

Westwood is an extremely ethnically-diverse borough. The ethnic composition of Westwood as of 2022 according to available data is as follows:

White/Caucasian	63.0%
Hispanic/Latino	21.4%
African American	5.0%
Asian	9.6%
Other	1.0%

In terms of ethnic composition, there has been a sizable increase in Asian population compared to 6.2% in 2019 and a moderate increase in Hispanic/Latino families.

97% of households have a computer and 96% have internet access.

Foreign born people are also an important part of Westwood's cultural character, accounting for 19.71% of the borough's population. 21.6% of residents 5 years and older speak a language other than English at home.

Sources:

<https://www.neighborhoodscout.com/nj/westwood>

<https://www.census.gov/quickfacts/westwoodboroughnewjersey>

GOALS and OBJECTIVES

Maintain Excellence as Collection Provider

- Use at least 10% of yearly budget on content acquisition.
- Engage in cooperative buying opportunities whenever possible.
- Expand early childhood literacy and ESL programs.
- Obtain patron feedback to showcase, organize, and deliver collections.

Optimize Access to Technology and Digital Content

- Provide classes for computer, smart devices, and software programs.
- Offer virtual and hybrid programs for patrons as needed.
- Regularly review computers and update or add new devices as necessary.

Offer Services that Make the Library a Vital Community Hub

- Assess library programs to meet needs of the community.
- Expand the Library's social media presence, website, and signage to build accessibility awareness.
- Actively partner with Westwood's schools, Westwood for All Ages, Celebrate Westwood, Westwood House, the Clergy Council, and other organizations.
- Evaluate and expand services to promote lifelong learning and make the library the cultural center of Westwood.

Promote Staff Development and Trustee Education

- Establish an annual schedule for staff training and development including evolving technologies.
- Provide funding to enable staff to attend NJLA Conference on a regular basis.
- Encourage Board members to participate in BCCLS and NJ Library Association programs.

Perform Building and Grounds Improvements to Enable Greater Usage

- In concert with Borough management conduct an annual review of the building and grounds to prioritize needed repairs, capital improvements, and renovations.
- Make the lower level spaces in the library conform to engineering study recommendations to allow for greater usage.
- Renovate restroom facilities.
- Create flexible, adaptable interior design to accommodate large and small group meetings and community events.
- Expand and update outdoor seating to promote greater use of exterior spaces.

Increase Fiscal Stability and Sustainability

- Optimize taxpayer resources and explore alternate ways to increase private support and revenue.
- Seek savings through capital and technology projects to reduce overhead operating costs.
- Support the Friends of the Library's efforts and assist them with increasing membership skilled in fund raising.
- Engage an expert to secure grant funding.

RESOURCES TO IMPLEMENT THE PLAN

The most important area of focus is securing adequate funding from all sources to achieve strategic plan goals and objectives and for the Library's long-term sustainability.

Funding: In terms of annual income, municipal support provided approximately 94.7% of 2022 expenses, which was the trend during the previous strategic plan period. In 2023 the Library received the state mandated third of a mil and a small supplement of less than \$300 from the municipal government.

The Friends of the Library, a 501(c) (3) non-profit organization, provides financial support for the Library. Funds are derived from an annual membership drive, used book sales, and the annual fund raising efforts. These funds pay for a variety of Library programs, concerts, and ESL and early literacy resources. In 2022, Friends' fundraising contributed approximately 3.7% of the Library's annual budget.

Income from fines, interest, and printer/copier usage fees represent less than 1% of total revenues in 2022.

Income from state aid also contributes less than 1% of the annual budget income.

Library reserves have also contributed to capital expenses in recent years.

It is imperative that the Library, the Board, and the Friends pursue all available means of revenue creation, while advocating for continued municipal support. Developing sustainable funding sources, including additional fundraising efforts, grants, public-private partnerships, and support of local business is essential to fully achieve this five year strategic plan.

Expenses: The Library director, staff and board have acted together to be fiscally responsible in managing Library expenses and is pledged to continue to do so. Budget allocations for staff was 72.2% in 2022.

Collection acquisition and development accounted for 10.5%. Utilities, maintenance, and operating expenses comprise 13.6%.

Friends funded programs and materials were 3.7% of expenses.

Escalating healthcare costs and increasing operating expenses challenge the Library's ability to provide robust collections and the current level of services.

It is 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 allocates resources to priorities deemed the highest in patron and community needs. The ongoing planning process includes identification of measurement tools to determine the success of various objectives in the plan and to review the plan semiannually. The overall goal is ensuring funding is targeted to initiatives that are best used and most valued.

Closing statement: The strategic plan is also a commitment to listen, question, and measure outcomes, and to address challenges and adapt as necessary.

No strategic plan is perfect because attempts to predict and manage the future are usually inadequate. The most valuable outcome of the strategic planning process is that it requires us to contemplate change, anticipate the needs and interests of our community, and chart our future as a library.

Approved December 18, 2023

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