

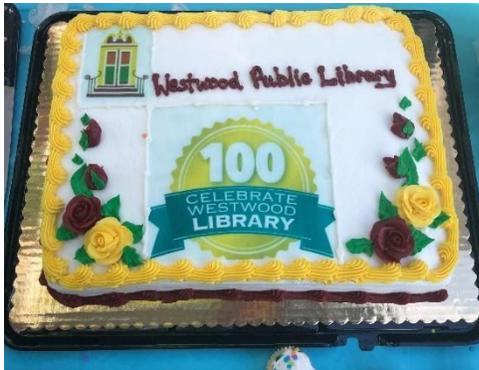
Three-Year Strategic Plan Westwood Free Public Library

2021-2023



Recent Landmarks and Accomplishments of the Last Three Years

The last three years have been eventful. The Westwood Free Public Library celebrated its 100th year anniversary and persevered through the worst pandemic in a century. Before we embark on the next strategic plan period, we take a moment to revisit the highlights of 2017-2020.



In 2019, the Library celebrated 100 years of service to the Westwood community. Many new patrons, of all ages, registered for library cards. In June, we partied with cupcakes in the Library parking lot as the town gathered in Veterans Park for a 125th birthday party for the town. In the fall, friends and patrons came together at the Library for great food from our local restaurants and live music at the 10th Taste of Westwood.

The tradition began of holding an annual birthday party to recognize and honor our patrons of 100 years or who were nearing the century mark. New citizens were welcomed in a ceremony at the Library with the mayor. The tradition started in 2017 and is now an annual event.



The Westwood Free Public Library serves patrons 24/7. Digital content has become more actively used each year; the Library expanded collections of online databases and resources in 2020 during the pandemic to meet community needs. More ESL tutor volunteers have been trained to conduct classes in-person and online.

Support from Friends of the Library fundraising has enabled additional investments in childhood literacy resources as well as live cultural and educational programs. The expanded Junior Friends program achieved community service goals and supported summer reading, holiday programs, and various children's activities.

Community engagement was a key area for development and outreach. The Library website was completely redesigned, updated, and made mobile-friendly. Social media features news, events, and frequent posts by staff and Junior Friends.

Through use of municipal capital improvement funds, fundraising efforts, grants, and state sponsored programs, the Library facility has been updated and renovated. Major repairs and changes of the last three years include:

- new energy efficient HVAC system from capital improvement funds and discounts from the NJ Clean Energy Program,
- new LED lighting fixtures, which reduced lighting costs by nearly 70%,
- new main floor enclosed meeting room for meetings and story times,
- new safe and secure front door,
- new circulation desk to welcome patrons,
- new carpeting and fresh interior painting,
- mobile shelving for flexible space usage,
- renovated and updated children's area,
- new community resource area featuring information for seniors from Westwood For All Ages,
- security cameras and new alarm system installed, and
- expanded dedicated Library street parking.

Three Year Strategic Plan Westwood Free Public Library 2021-2023

PURPOSE

The purpose of any strategic plan is to provide guidance to both the Library board and staff when considering implementation of new services, programs, areas of improvements, and developments. It is a communication tool developed collaboratively among staff and trustees. This plan includes our mission and goals with specific measurable objectives. The short-range three-year 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. The Library connects its citizens to the resources, programs, and people they need to support an informed, educated, literate, engaged, and skilled community. It not only strives to provide up-to-date resources using current technologies, but also provides education and the means necessary for the community to engage them. The Library is a welcoming place of respite and provides valuable services for a busy town.

VISION

The Library strives to contribute to the continued success and growth of the community by helping to facilitate overall goals of the municipality, providing an attractive and useful community center, supporting business through its programs and services, and 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

GUIDING PRINCIPLES

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 life-long learner.

Supporting intellectual freedom

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

Supporting children and youth

The Library joins parents, educators, and our youth in helping to raise thoughtful readers and citizens. It prioritizes efforts to close educational achievement gaps.

Supporting seniors

The Library recognizes a commitment to providing essential information and rich resources to meet the needs of our senior population.

Respecting and embracing the entire community

The Library celebrates Westwood's diversity and strives to ensure that all people feel welcome in the Library. It strives to meet the needs and expectations of every Library patron.

Demonstrating intellectual integrity and accountability

The Library serves the community with financial responsibility, honesty, and fairness. It assumes responsibility for accomplishing its goals and objectives.

Valuing staff development

The Library employees are its most valuable resource and the Library encourages their professional development and education.

Adapting and evolving

To stay relevant to patrons' changing needs and interests, the Library continuously adapts. It is a learning organization that invests in staff, technology, and infrastructure to improve essential services.

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

The Library staff at the end of 2020 includes a director, two full-time librarians, and three full-time paraprofessionals. There are eight part-time employees who handle circulation needs and other services. The position of part-time custodian was reinstated in 2018. The Library's core operations require professional and trained non-professional paid staff to run successfully. The Library encourages, trains, and manages volunteers to help strengthen the Library community.

The Friends of the Library conducts significant fundraising to finance the special programs and services that the Library provides.

The Junior Library Council (formerly the Junior Friends) provides a means for teens to engage as volunteers, develops leadership and teamwork skills, and offers teens an opportunity to achieve their community service requirements at the Library. Junior Library Council members help with various Library programs such as the Summer Reading Program and Home for the Holidays, while also providing leadership training, to make better volunteers for tomorrow.

Volunteers help make the Library more visible and useful for everyone in the community. 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 development and program opportunities to serve those for whom English is not their primary language. The Library's ESL staff train and manage volunteer tutors to help others learn English.

Key Usage Statistics

Patron visits totaled over 100,000 in 2019, an average of nearly 9,000 per month.

In 2020, 7,820 individuals were registered Library users, an increase of 13% since 2016. The Library strives to meet patron needs of a diverse community. The Library regularly assesses new patron library card registrations and circulation as well as available Borough data for demographic shifts.

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 was approximately 115,000; e-circulation saw an increase of 100% since 2016. The Bergen County Cooperative Library System (BCCLS) provides Westwood Free Public Library 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 a number of databases and online print and media resources including Udemy, Mango languages, Ancestry.com, Hoopla, Kanopy, and Acorn.

In 2020, the Library's website averaged 800 unique visits per week; its Facebook page has nearly 800 followers, and Instagram over 1,000.

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. If funding is available the Library seeks to open on Sundays in the summer months.

DEMOGRAPHICS AND COMMUNITY PROFILE

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

According to 2019 demographic data, there are 11,155 residents in Westwood, a slight decrease of less than 1% compared to 2016.

- Four percent are under five years old,
- 18.1% are between five and 17 years old,
- 6.8% are between 17 and 24 years old,
- 39.6% are between 25 and 54 years old,
- 12.5% are between 54 and 64 years old, and
- 19% are over 65 years old.

The population of 65+ year-old residents in Westwood continues to grow and will soon represent one in every five residents. The Library has partnered with Westwood For All Ages, a community organization supporting seniors, in conducting educational programs and serving as a resource area within the Library.

The ethnic composition of Westwood as of 2018 according to available data is as follows:

White/Caucasian	68.1%
Hispanic/Latino	19.0%
African American	6.6%
Asian	6.2%
Other	0.1%

In terms of ethnic composition, there has been a slight increase in Hispanic and Asian families and Library patrons compared to the demographics provided in the 2017-2020 Strategic Plan.

GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

1. Achieve Ongoing Excellence as Collection Provider

The cornerstone of the Library is the collection, which includes both print and a rapidly growing collection of electronic resources and media purchased by the Westwood Free Public Library, as well as materials available through the interlibrary lending system of the BCCLS consortium. The Library strives to provide a well-rounded collection for enjoyment and life-long learning to benefit all Westwood citizens young and old. The Library places emphasis on early childhood literacy, technology literacy, and language literacy (ESL), as well as the general reading and residential collection.

Objectives:

- a.) Allocate the budget to purchase new print and media materials and electronic resources to satisfy patrons' complete needs.
- b.) Provide materials for job search support and career transition, especially with job losses due to the pandemic.
- c.) With a growing body of viable information presented outside of normal publishing review journals, make an effort to find ways to organize and provide access to this information.
- d.) Explore cooperative buying opportunities for databases and other subscription services.
- e.) Expand early literacy programs and resources to enable young readers to be ready to enter school prepared to read, write, and listen. Meet with school personnel several times each year to align purchases and programs for curriculum support and to optimize summer reading programs.
- f.) Promote the community's understanding that patrons can request materials, as the Library actively supports "patron driven acquisition."

2. Optimize Access to Digital Content and Services

The Library's membership in BCCLS provides access to the shared eBCCLS digital catalog. The Library maintains public access computers in children's and adult areas and will continue to provide content and services that bridge the technology gap.

Objectives:

- a.) Set-up computer tutors with volunteers and staff for one-on-one technology training. As a Google For Business partner, provide ongoing training materials to the public.
- b.) Make recently purchased hotspots available to patrons that allow them to access internet at home, in addition to providing laptop borrowing. Monitor usage and expand the number of devices as necessary.
- c.) Review computers in the adult and children's areas and update or add new devices as necessary.

- d.) Offer free classes by volunteers and paid professionals in computer, software, and other device usage.
- e.) Develop a collection of materials that assist patrons in technology proficiency.
- f.) Continue to support virtual programs and meetings initiated in 2020.

3. Establish Key Services that make the Library a Community Hub

With approximately 8,500 patron visits each month, the Library is truly a community hub for group programs, meetings, tutoring, and collaborative interaction.

Objectives:

- a.) Increase flexible use of Library spaces with our dedicated new meeting room and modular shelving. Provide more space and programs for early literacy, language literacy (ESL), and technology tutoring.
- b.) Increase the number and frequency of free programs that meet the community's interests.
- c.) Sustain and grow efforts, such as the Taste of Westwood, to raise funds, engage new patrons and Friends volunteers, and draw positive attention to the Library and the town.
- d.) Connect with organizations to reach new patrons through Clergy Council, Rotary, Chamber of Commerce, Westwood Regional School District, Recreation Department, Foreign Language organizations and clubs, and other neighborhood organizations.
- e.) Continue to partner with Westwood For All Ages and Celebrate Westwood and organizations that have allowed for greater and consistent information sharing and have fostered more effective collaboration.
- f.) Promote young students to obtain and use their own library cards.

4. Promote Professional Staff Development

The Library director and staff are our most valuable resources. Keeping up with industry and technology trends is no small task. Ongoing support and staff development are key goals.

Objectives:

- a.) Establish an annual schedule for staff training and development including evolving technologies.
- b.) Ask staff to attend NJLA Conference consistently to network and bring back best practices.
- c.) Keep Board members informed and current by encouraging participation in BCCLS and NJ Trustee Association sponsored events, meetings, and webinars.
- d.) Encourage staff to attend BCCLS provided training for databases and other resources purchased through the Consortium.

5. Keep Building and Grounds Improvements in the Forefront

Through the use of capital improvement funds, fundraising efforts, grants, and state-sponsored programs, update and renovate the Library as conditions warrant. In order to provide a safe, comfortable, and aesthetically-pleasing building that can accommodate changing technologies and growing demand for flexible meeting spaces for tutoring and technology training, the Library needs to be frequently assessed and long-range plans developed and implemented.

Objectives:

- a.) Conduct an annual review of the building and grounds and prioritize needed repairs, improvements, and renovations.
- b.) Renovate the public restrooms.
- c.) Evaluate and implement additional, continuous review to improve collection display.
- d.) Explore green options for energy efficiency and environmental sensitivity.
- e.) Upgrade signage inside and outside the Library. Use signage to inform the public as well as

- promote programs and navigate the inside of the Library.
- f.) Evaluate a full building space audit by Library, especially for the renovation of the lower-level rooms and book sale sorting area.

6. Make Library Messaging a Key Outreach Initiative to Keep the Community Informed and Engaged

Focus on new models for improving communication, information alerts, Library schedules and events, patron access, and messaging.

Objectives:

- a.) Promote the Library's recently updated website as a virtual 24/7 branch of the Library. Monitor site usage and adjust and improve as needed.
- b.) Refresh and revise the Library social media presence and messaging. Monitor social media accounts and adjust and improve as needed.
- c.) Reinvent the ways that Library information seekers connect with resources such as ancestry.com. Provide continuing training as needed.
- d.) Work with the Budget and Finance Committee to 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.) Through networking with BCCLS and other libraries, and participating in conferences and webinars, keep informed about innovative services and programs that can be replicated at the Library.
- g.) Facilitate teamwork between key supporters including the Board of Trustees, Friends of the Library, and Borough Council members.
- h.) Conduct a communication audit.

LIBRARY NEEDS AND 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 89% of 2020 expenses, which was the trend during the previous strategic plan period. The municipal government has granted funds to the Library annually in excess of the state mandated third of a mil, the support of which is critical for the Library to achieve its goals and maintain its excellence.

The Friends of the Library, a 501(c) non-profit organization, also provides financial support for the Library. 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. In past years, Friends' fundraising contributed approximately 4.5% of the Library's annual budget, however, fundraising in 2020 has been severely limited due to the pandemic.

Income from fines, interest, and printer/copier usage fees are declining sharply and only represent 1.3% of total revenues in 2020 compared to approximately 4% in the recent past.

Income from state aid contributes less than 0.7% of the annual budget income.

Library reserves have also contributed to capital expenses in recent years ranging from 3- 5% of total income, but the reserves are also dwindling.

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 important to fully achieve this 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 76% in 2020. Collection acquisition and development accounted for 11.8%. Utilities, maintenance, and operating expenses comprise 12.8%.

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 will allocate 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, 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. The COVID-19 pandemic has created severe challenges that will persist. We all live in this uncertainty. Whatever the near-term outcome, the Library's plan is 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.

Board Members

Dennis Farrell, President
Suzanne Gorham, Vice President
Mike Violano, Treasurer
Linda Phayre, Secretary
Claudia Gonzales-Doell
Noeline Grefrath
Vince Fitzpatrick
Bev Karch
Frank Zimmerman

Acknowledgements

Westwood, NJ - 07675 - Demographics and Population Statistics