



HIGHLAND
PARK
PUBLIC
LIBRARY

STRATEGIC PLAN
2018-2021

STRATEGIC PLAN

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Adopted by the Library Board of Trustees on March 25, 2019

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Library Staff

Jane Stanley, Director of Library Services

Dear Members of the Community,

In 2012 the Highland Park Public Library adopted a three-year strategic plan to guide its development. That plan was a collaborative process led by the library's staff and trustees and involved many community residents.

The 2012 plan established priorities, goals, and actions to address challenges and opportunities through 2015. We're proud of our accomplishments during that period and the three years that followed. Because so much has changed since 2015 we have updated our plan to reflect the new realities associated with providing exceptional library service.

This plan builds on the library's accomplishments, our reputation for excellence, and our commitment to continuous improvement. We're focused on creating a library that is essential and irresistible to everyone in our community and that continues to be a key contributor to Highland Park's quality of life.

What does that mean in 2018 and beyond?

- Our aging facility, built to house print materials, will be adapted to accommodate changing library use.
- Parents will see the library as an essential partner in developing early literacy and social skills that foster a lifelong love of reading and learning in their children.
- Pre-teens and teens will flock to the library to collaborate with their classmates on school projects, develop their leadership skills, and find the technology they need to be prepared for the workforce.
- New English learners will find space to meet with instructors and hone their conversation skills.
- Adults will find a comfortable place to read, relax, and escape from a hectic day.
- All members of the community will find programs to expand their personal horizons and create fulfilling community connections.

We're excited about these changes and the opportunities they provide for thinking differently about what we do and how we deliver service.

The core of the Highland Park Public Library consists of a dedicated staff, civic-minded volunteers, generous donors, and enthusiastic patrons. We pledge to continue—and to enhance—the role of the library as the social, intellectual, and cultural center of our community. We hope you will support our efforts.

Jane Stanley
Director

Bruce Tucker
President, Library Board of Trustees

STRATEGIC PLAN

VISION + MISSION

Thousands of Highland Park residents who value the library's role in the community support the Highland Park Public Library. Our day to day interactions with those residents have helped shape our vision and mission for the future—our hope for Highland Park and our roadmap for getting there.

Our Vision

To remain the social, intellectual, and cultural center of our vibrant community, enabling everyone in the Borough to engage, connect, and learn throughout their lifetimes.

Our Mission

To provide welcoming space, innovative programs, rich collections, and the latest technology to make our community a better place to live, learn, and work.

STRATEGIC PLAN

VALUES

The Highland Park Public Library staff and trustees believe that we will best achieve our vision and mission by embracing these values:

STRENGTHENING EACH OTHER AND THE COMMUNITY

- We promote literacy, learning, and civic engagement to support a healthy democracy.
- We build community and understanding among our diverse population.

SUPPORTING LIFELONG LEARNING, EQUITY, AND ACCESS

- We provide an accessible, appealing, comfortable, and well-maintained library where everyone feels welcome.
- We provide resources that respond to our community's needs and interests.
- We invest in technology to create digitally literate citizens.
- We offer a great library experience with friendly, knowledgeable, and helpful staff.

PARTNERING FOR SUCCESS

- We partner and collaborate with other community organizations to extend our reach and improve our effectiveness.
- We are careful stewards of public assets and resources, including our own facility.

STRATEGIC PLAN ACCOMPLISHMENTS

The Library staff and Trustees are proud of their accomplishments since 2015.

- Full restoration of weekend hours that enable everyone in the community to enjoy the library
- Well-attended, high-quality programming with record-breaking attendance in 2017
- High-quality and well-attended children's programs
- Community and Borough support for the library's mission and budget
- New digital content including OverDrive, the New York Times Online, and online language learning
- Increased emphasis on customer service
- More teen programs
- More programs for adults and new English language learners
- Expanded media collections
- Continued success for Friends of the Library and its book sale

STRATEGIC PLAN GOALS

These five goals focus the library's priorities for the next three years:

- GOAL 1:** Re-imagine the Highland Park Public Library to support 21st century uses
- GOAL 2:** Increase community engagement with the library
- GOAL 3:** Provide technology that enables everyone to participate in our digital society
- GOAL 4:** Ensure the library's future growth and development
- GOAL 5:** Build a healthy organizational culture that improves the library's effectiveness

These goals, along with the objectives and strategies that support them, provide a framework for action as the Highland Park Public Library moves forward.

STRATEGIC PLAN

GOALS

GOAL 1: RE-IMAGINE THE HIGHLAND PARK PUBLIC LIBRARY TO SUPPORT 21ST CENTURY USES

OBJECTIVE 1: Complete a plan to address much-needed and delayed capital improvements to qualify for a NJ Public Library Construction Grant in 2019

STRATEGIES:

- Design more user-centric, open, and flexible space to enable the library to be easily reconfigured to support changing use
- Create new spaces to support quiet and group study
- Create additional seating and work space that makes the library an alternative to home or office
- Provide expanded access, including more power, for computer and laptop users
- Design a modern, flexible space for technology instruction
- Provide a home for new language learners to use language-learning programs, meet with tutors, and engage in conversation
- Modernize and upgrade the meeting room to accommodate increased program attendance
- Replace carpeting, remodel the restrooms, and address long-standing roof, heating, and cooling issues and other concerns related to deferred maintenance
- Make it easier to browse the library collection
- Create new display areas to highlight in-demand collections

OBJECTIVE 2: Refresh the library's print and digital collections to meet the changing needs of the community and create an exceptional user experience

STRATEGIES:

- Provide a smaller, refreshed collection of in-demand titles that reflect what the community wants to read, watch, and listen to
- Refresh the English language learning collection
- Grow the graphic novel, Manga, and video game collections
- Augment the eLibraryNJ OverDrive subscription with additional titles reserved only for Highland Park residents
- Provide access to streaming content via Hoopla or Kanopy
- Provide more digital content to support personal growth and discovery such as Lynda.com, HeritageQuest, or AncestryLibrary
- Provide access to online magazine subscriptions via RBDigital or Flipster

- Reevaluate the library's current database subscriptions and discontinue those with limited appeal or use

OBJECTIVE 3: Improve the library's upkeep and maintenance

- Work with the Borough's Department of Public Works to develop a cost estimate for the repair of the library parking lot and address safety concerns so that this can be included in the NJ State Library Construction Bond grant request
- Hire a cleaning contractor to provide daily cleaning and upkeep
- Identify and address immediate safety concerns

GOAL 2: INCREASE COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT

A key challenge for the library in the next several years will be to increase awareness and use of the library by greater numbers of residents throughout Highland Park. Currently, the library reaches residents through 5,934 individual card registrations. Although the library is well used and supported, we want everyone in the community to consider the library an essential and irresistible resource.

To achieve this goal the library will invite, welcome, and engage larger numbers of residents by reducing barriers to involvement. We will increase the rewards and benefits associated with participating in library programs and activities. And we will measure and increase the value of the user experience to help attract new patrons and advocates.

OBJECTIVE 1: Increase community use of the library

STRATEGIES:

- Increase the number of people using the library by 10% each year
- Continue to review and change any library policies that create barriers to use
- Introduce self-service holds and self-check to increase customer convenience
- Develop a campaign to reach new residents with information about the library

OBJECTIVE 2: Develop new programs that encourage active participation by larger numbers of residents

STRATEGIES:

- Create engaging adult programs that attract new audiences to the library
- Provide and promote online resources to support test prep and career assistance
- Continue programs that tap into the talent available in Highland Park and Rutgers
- Continue providing job, career, and résumé counseling for residents
- Continue to offer college counseling sessions and programs for rising seniors
- Launch a 1,000 Books Before Kindergarten program

OBJECTIVE 3: Provide expanded library service opportunities

STRATEGIES:

- Create valuable library experiences for middle school and high school students by providing homework help, tutors, study space, teen tech time, and other after-school programs
- Offer programs and activities for gamers

- Develop internships/work study opportunities for Rutgers and Middlesex Community College students who are interested in working with pre-teens and teens
- Offer online tutoring assistance via BrainFuse or tutor.com
- Develop services to support job seekers, new language learners, parents, older adults, immigrants, and adults in their 20s and 30s
- Establish liaisons with other community agencies to further mutual goals
- Work closely with the public and private schools to support educational success

OBJECTIVE 4: Expand advocacy efforts and reinforce the library's identity to more residents

STRATEGIES:

- Continue cross-promotion of library activities and events with local organizations and businesses
- Rebrand the library with a consistent icon and memorable tagline for use on all library print and digital materials
- Update the library's website to make it easier to navigate and find information
- Reinstate the museum pass program

OBJECTIVE 5: Increase awareness of the library

STRATEGIES:

- Increase library card registrations and the number of active cards
- Initiate a one-student, one-card campaign to get a library card into the hands of every student in Highland Park
- Continue to build on the success of the email newsletter
- Use Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter to extend the library's reach
- Use text messaging for targeted messages to library users
- Promote the Boopsie mobile app that enables residents to easily use the library catalog and search for activities and events on their smart phones

GOAL 3: PROVIDE TECHNOLOGY THAT ENABLES EVERYONE TO PARTICIPATE IN OUR DIGITAL SOCIETY

Technology is a critical component of today's library. Although the library currently serves four generations of residents and users, there are really two distinct generations: One generation consists of young "digital natives" who are comfortable and competent with current and emerging technologies. The other generation comprises "digital immigrants" who arrive at new technologies out of necessity. The challenge public libraries face lies in how to serve both groups with traditional and new formats and content and with staff that curates and facilitates use.

Calling for the complete integration of technology into all that takes place in the library, this strategic priority affects everything the library does. We want everyone in the community to consider the library the go-to place for great technology tools as well as technical assistance to help improve personal competency with software and new devices.

OBJECTIVE 1: Provide current technology to customers and staff

STRATEGIES:

- Make it easy to learn about new devices and apps by offering regular opportunities for instruction
- Upgrade the library's Wi-Fi network to accommodate more data and ensure that there are no drop zones
- Loan Wi-Fi Hot Spots for long-term in-home use
- Provide a variety of computing options for library patrons including desktop PC's, tablets and laptops
- Provide 24-inch monitors on all desktop PC's

GOAL 4: ENSURE THE LIBRARY'S CONTINUED GROWTH AND DEVELOPMENT

New and recurring financial resources will be needed to implement the strategies and achieve the goals of this plan. Continued demand for enhanced print and digital collections, operating hours, dynamic programs, and new technologies will need to be funded. The NJ Public Library Construction Bond Act provides "once in a generation funding" to support physical improvements, but there is no equivalent act to support services, collections, and staff. The Highland Park Public Library has been successful in securing private donations from many people, including annual appeal contributions, memorial gifts, and support from the Friends of the Library. The library will continue this approach with the goal of increasing private contributions each year.

OBJECTIVE ONE: Develop a plan to provide additional income for the library

STRATEGIES:

- Create a development board composed of Trustees, Friends, and other strategic partners interested parties to design and execute an ongoing development plan for the library
- Grow the library's annual appeal each year and incorporate a targeted "ask" each year, e.g. more funding for collections, children's programs, technology enhancements, etc.
- Offer naming opportunities in connection with the library renovation project
- Develop a corporate partnership program in which corporate or local business partners are offered underwriting opportunities for library services, programs, or publications
- Develop a planned giving program
- Identify gift opportunities for potential donors such as an after-school homework program, the new technology lab, Sunday hours, a language center, an adult program series, and early literacy and parenting programs

OBJECTIVE 2: Consider new recurring revenue opportunities

STRATEGIES:

- Explore opportunities for after-hours rentals of the library and meeting rooms
- Establish an annual library gala featuring an author talk followed by cocktail party/dinner
- Establish fees for DVD checkout
- Institute additional book sales, including specialized sales for children's books, etc.

OBJECTIVE 3: Undertake a capital campaign to raise funds for the building renovation.

GOAL 5: BUILD A HEALTHY ORGANIZATIONAL CULTURE THAT IMPROVES THE LIBRARY'S EFFECTIVENESS

OBJECTIVE 1: Identify key competencies for staff and provide training to ensure each staff member can confidently provide exceptional customer service

STRATEGIES:

- Provide library-wide training for all employees so all staff members can respond to customer requests for assistance
- Identify core technology competencies for all staff members
- Adopt a co-learning environment for staff in which staff members learn about new technologies on a regular basis

OBJECTIVE 2: Develop leadership opportunities for staff

STRATEGIES:

- Pair recent hires with in-house or off-site mentors who can help them develop leadership skills
- Revise position descriptions to include community engagement as an essential responsibility
- Develop a succession plan to ensure a smooth transition as senior staff depart due to retirements
- Provide opportunities to practice leadership skills for staff members through community partnerships, in professional associations, or by leading a library project

OBJECTIVE 3: Offer more opportunities for community engagement with the library through volunteer opportunities

STRATEGIES:

- Recruit interns from Rutgers University School of Communication and Information to provide both routine help and assistance with special projects
- Provide new opportunities for volunteer engagement, e.g. delivering books to the homebound, planning fund raising events, growing the annual book sale
- Work with the Friends of the Library leadership to recruit younger members of the community to become more involved in the organization