



Shaping Our Future

Wilmette Public Library
Strategic Plan
July 2018-June 2021



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Director's Message

Dear Reader,

We are so pleased to present our new strategic plan. We've been actively listening to the people of Wilmette & Kenilworth through conversations, focus groups, and surveys. You shared with us not only your opinions about the Library, but your aspirational vision for what type of community will help you thrive and grow. We have identified some meaningful trends: a desire for diverse cultural programming; discoverability of collections; intergenerational events; community partnerships; hands-on creative experiences; updated technology; collaborative spaces for gathering or learning; opportunities for civic dialogue; and a comfortable, beautiful, and welcoming environment for all.

Our Board, staff, and Friends president joined together at a two-day conference to discuss and determine our shared vision and values. I am grateful to all of the participants for their time, thoughtfulness, and energy as we developed this plan. Together, we shaped our priorities to meet the hopes and needs of both current and future library users. This plan is a smart investment in growing our local intellectual capital through our commitment to lifelong learning and opportunities for personal and professional discovery.

This plan is designed to be an evolving document, allowing for flexibility as we adjust and evaluate our services. We will launch these new initiatives over three years, while maintaining the excellent level of service that you have come to enjoy. Our community conversations showed that the library is a valued community asset, providing essential programs, collections, and services to help people navigate these times of rapid social and technological changes. As we move forward, we strive to be an inclusive community living room, where everyone feels inspired to learn and grow.

Each library is at a different chapter in writing its success story. We are very excited about the prospect of challenging ourselves to deliver the best possible library service to all of you.

Onwards and Upwards!

Heather McCammond-Watts,
Director, Wilmette Public Library District



Executive Summary

Overview

From July 2017 to March 2018, Heather McCammond-Watts, director of Wilmette Public Library, led a comprehensive planning process to develop the Library's three-year strategic plan. The Library serves the villages of Wilmette and Kenilworth with a staff of 97 employees governed by a board of trustees. The strategic planning process was guided by a planning team consisting of the director (project manager), the president and vice president of the board of trustees, and select members of the leadership team and library staff.

Our Current State

To develop an understanding of the current state of the library, data was collected from the four sources between late October and mid-December, 2017:

- Small group discussions with residents
- Questionnaire-survey interviews with residents
- Focus groups with trustees and library staff
- A cooperative telephone survey between District 39, the Park District, the Village, and the Library.

The data from these sources was analyzed and documented in a community needs assessment report.

During a strategic planning conference held January 19-20, 2018, a team comprising staff, board members, and the Friends president used the report to identify the following key strategic challenges facing Wilmette Public Library.

- Keeping our community fully informed about library services.
- Maintaining an attractive work environment with productive and fulfilled employees.
- Promoting diversity, equity, and inclusion in all aspects of the library's collections, services, and events.
- Managing balance between existing and new services while maintaining core identity.
- Optimizing use of space without compromising core services.
- Ensuring easy and convenient patron access to all library resources.
- Providing our community a forum for civic dialogue about complex issues.



Shaping Our Future

With a shared understanding of both the current state and the challenges facing the library, the strategic planners recommended improvements to the mission and vision statements. The planners engaged in a discussion of ideas regarding the direction that the library should take over the next three years. These ideas were organized into the following strategic focus areas from which goals and objectives were developed.

Growing Community - Library services strengthen community connections.

Knowledge & Discovery - Learning and discovery at the Library enrich your life.

Diversity & Inclusion - The Library is a place where all feel welcomed and served.

Sharing Resources - Effective resource investments provide outstanding library services.

Marketing & Communications - Our community is aware of the library's value and impact on the lives of residents.



Mission

The Wilmette Public Library District serves the community's informational, intellectual, cultural, social, and leisure needs.

Vision



A community inspired by a love of knowledge and discovery.



Growing Community

Focus library services to promote strong connections in our community.

As a trusted community organization, the Library occupies a unique role in our ability to connect various groups in the Village to the information they need. We know that people are busy and that time is precious, and we aim to create tools and methods for them to access information within our collections in the building as well as where they work, live, and play.

Objectives

- 1.1: Beginning October 2018, expand provision of library materials and programs outside of the established library facility.
- 1.2: By February 2019, establish a committee to explore new outreach opportunities and deepen existing partnerships.
- 1.3: By April 2020, host public forums for residents to explore and discuss community-wide issues or topics.
- 1.4: By November 2020, explore ways to connect local government, non-profits, businesses, and individuals with relevant community resources.
- 1.5: By February 2021, establish and implement a library volunteer program.



Knowledge & Discovery

Create an adaptable environment that encourages pursuit of knowledge and discovery to enrich your life.

Today's world moves at a fast pace, and patrons have become acclimated to convenient and accessible tools and services in a wide range of arenas. Our goal is to maintain an environment that celebrates truth, knowledge, and a deep collection, while positioning ourselves to be more nimble and creative in how we provide these offerings.

Objectives

- 2.1: By July 2018, create a “Library of Things” that circulates non-traditional library items.
- 2.2: By March 2019, develop a flexible, functional, and inviting interior space plan that preserves core services while meeting the evolving expectations of our community.
- 2.3: Beginning June 2019, adjust current practices to increase ease of use of physical and digital collections, e.g., fines, wait time, holds.
- 2.4: By September 2019, foster a “Culture of Yes” that allows for quick, low-cost, trial implementation of new ideas from patrons and staff.



Diversity & Inclusion

Create an inclusive environment so that all feel welcomed and served.

The Library hopes to create an environment that acknowledges and celebrates the diversity inherent in Wilmette and Kenilworth, from immigrant populations to our neighbors with differing abilities. Our close proximity to Chicago, a global city in every sense of the word, also provides a window to many types of diversity. Our collections, services, and resources should reflect the many facets of our community while also providing a gateway to exploring new cultures and viewpoints.

Objectives

- 3.1: By December 2018, develop and maintain a database of library staff and volunteers who have language skills and cultural knowledge in order to reach diverse audiences.
- 3.2: Beginning January 2019, create and adapt library services to accommodate the needs of people living with disabilities.
- 3.3: Beginning April 2019, develop intergenerational opportunities for youth and adults to work together on a shared goal.
- 3.4: By August 2019, develop a comprehensive plan to integrate diversity into library programming, services, and staff.



Sharing Resources

Allocate staff, facilities, and other resources effectively to provide outstanding library services.

Our staff and building provide the support that makes possible our outstanding collections, resources, and programs. In the same way we plan and cultivate a deep collection, we must provide resources that will allow us to support our staff, maintain our building, and renew our technologies.

Objectives

- 4.1: By December 2018, improve the library's outdoor space to provide an attractive, environmentally friendly space that maximizes safety, accessibility, and enjoyment.
- 4.2: By February 2019, refine personnel and compensation policies to equitably recruit, retain, and recognize talented staff.
- 4.3: Beginning October 2019, implement emerging technologies and provide curated digital resources to improve the user experience.
- 4.4: By December 2019, equip staff with professional development tools and leadership opportunities, and support individual paths for career growth.
- 4.5: By January 2021, implement the interior space plan referenced in Objective 2.2 with a commitment to sustainable practices.



Marketing & Communications

Increase visibility and awareness of the library's value to you and to your community.

Over recent years, we have been faced with an increasingly large number of communication channels while also expanding our services into new areas. A marketing plan will help us determine which tools serve which audiences best, and will help us to tailor our message so that patrons understand the benefit of each service, program, and collection that we provide.

Objectives

- 5.1: By September 2018, create a marketing plan and tool kit to guide staff in creating library communications that are consistent, creative, and flexible.
- 5.2: Beginning November 2018, improve internal library communications and interactions across the organization.
- 5.3: By March 2019, develop a set of tools to evaluate how the Library's services, collections, and programs are meeting the needs of the community.
- 5.4: Beginning July 2020, identify and reach out to people who are not currently aware of library services.



Acknowledgments

Strategic Planning Team

Heather McCammond-Watts, director
Kathleen O'Laughlin, Board president
Lisa McDonald, Board vice president
Sarah Beth Brown, head of community services
Patsy De Vuono, head of materials services
Betty Giorgi, head of adult services
Eva Johnson, interlibrary loan specialist
Keren Joshi, head of youth services
Jillian McKeown, librarian

Board of Trustees

Kathleen O'Laughlin, Board President
Lisa McDonald, Board VP
Jan Barshis, Board Secretary
Ronald Rogers, Board Treasurer
Stuart Wolf, Board Trustee
Ginny George, Board Trustee
Dan Johnson, Board Trustee

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Glossary of Terms

Strategic Planning - The process of developing a game plan to align and to focus the library's effort on achieving a desired future over the next 3 years (July 2018 to June 2021).

Stakeholders - People or groups of people inside and outside of the library who have some level of interest in the library system.

Needs Assessment - A review of the "as is" state of the library that includes both the perspective from within the library as well as the perspective from outside the library.

Harwood Aspirations Model - A method designed to help a group of people discover what they want (aspirations) for their community and how the library can help.

Appreciative Inquiry - A change management model based on collaborative dialogue that focuses on the positive to build consensus for a future state that all can support.

Strategic Challenge - An opportunity that the library should consider pursuing to continue succeeding in the future.

Mission - A statement of what the library does and whom the library serves.

Vision - A vivid, present-tense statement of the library's desired future state.

Strategic Focus Area - Major area in which the library wants to improve or to succeed.

Goal - A statement that describes a long-term (3-year), desired end state, result, or outcome that the library wants to achieve.

Objective - Major step or strategy to achieve a goal. Objectives are SMART--Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Results Oriented, and Time-bound.

Action Planning - The process of documenting how an objective will be accomplished during the budget year--consists of who does what by when and resources needed.