

Letter of Submission from the Planning Committee

We are pleased to share this exciting and ambitious Strategic Plan for 2021-2025 with you. It provides a framework for the library to meet the needs of our community and deliver higher levels of service going forward. The Red Bank residents who responded to our survey, the library staff, the Board of Trustees, the Red Bank Library Foundation, and the members of our strategic planning committee all participated in creating goals for the future. As part of the planning process, the library's Mission, Vision and Values Statements were reviewed and rewritten.

Developing this plan turned out to be a unique experience. The Library Board of Trustees began the process to develop a new plan to replace the expiring 2016-2020 plan in the fall of 2019. A committee of library staff, Board members and the public was formed and their first task was to develop a survey to gather public input. The survey went online in February 2020 as the committee planned additional outreach to the community. And then in March, the library was closed to the public because of the Covid19 pandemic and a week later staff began to work from home. Except by email or social media, community outreach was no longer possible as Red Bank shut down. Fortunately, although not as inclusive as hoped, the survey results were able to provide statistically significant information that forms the basis for many of the decisions made in this document. Strategic Planning Committee members might have been sheltering at home, but they were available for Zoom meetings and were able to continue their work using the data available. In fact, members were available for more frequent meetings and the process moved forward more quickly than expected.

The direction for the new plan was not to create a traditional many page document that sat on a shelf, but to develop a one page document that encompasses the needs of the greater community, could inspire the staff and public and be easily shared. The Mission, Vision and Values statements would define what the library expected to be, and the Key Target Areas for Performance Excellence would serve as the inclusive goals for the next five years. Each year, a new Action Plan would be developed, allowing for the flexibility needed to meet the evolving needs of our diverse and changing community. The annual Action Plan would identify specific accomplishments that would be achieved that year. The pandemic has certainly emphasized the need to be able to respond to the unexpected flexibly but maintain a focus on the highest priorities.

This process has required the contributions and assistance of many people. The Strategic Planning Committee members are listed below with grateful thanks. A special

nod goes Ann Ciabattoni, President of the Library Board of Trustees and true advocate for the planning process.

This Strategic Plan is intended to be a living document, providing a vision for the future and a direction for getting there, yet remaining flexible enough to change as our community grows. As always, the library values the comments of the public and welcomes your ideas.

Chair, James Whyte, Library Board of Trustees

Library Director Eleni Glykis

Library Staff members Sira Williams, Candyce Valor, Linda Hewitt, Cathy Tobin, Matt Hershberger, Itzel Perez

Library Board of Trustees members Sue Viscomi, Jared Ramage

Library Foundation members Michael Gordon, Beth Hanratty

Community Volunteer Patty Whyte

Youth representative Julie Castillo

Facilitator Barbara Pickell

Board Action: July 23, 2020

Process Summary

Background

The first library, a subscription service, opened in Red Bank in 1878. In 1923, the public approved tax support, creating the Red Bank Public Library. The library centennial will happen during this planning period.

Prior to the last planning process, the library was affected by severe fiscal challenges, reducing the number of open hours each week to 20, its lowest level in recent memory. The 2016-2020 Strategic Plan strongly addressed the process of returning many of the services previously lost. Under the guidance of the excellent administrators Elizabeth McDermott and Eleni Glykis, the library has been able to move forward in many areas, and remains a vital and essential service in the Red Bank community with strong community support.

The Process

The Library Board of Trustees eagerly began planning for the next Strategic Plan, to cover 2021-2025. Recognizing the need for the library to continue to improve in a rapidly changing world and wanting to avoid creating a plan that would become rapidly outdated or be relegated to a shelf, they supported creating a living document that would give guidance and direction while providing flexibility. Unlike a traditional plan, this would have two parts, a one page document identifying the Mission, Vision and Values of the library and the Key Target Areas for focus over the next 5 years. In addition, an Action Item document would identify specific actions to be taken in the next year. That document would be updated annually to reflect the changing position of the library and the opportunities in the community. The Library Board will provide an ongoing planning committee to make sure the plan is reviewed and updated regularly.

The committee's first task was to develop a survey to gather information from the community on what it valued most in the library and what the expectations and priorities were for the future. The survey was distributed beginning in Feb. 2020, with plans for a great deal of outreach into the community to gather the widest range of responses. About a month later, the library, as well as most of the Borough of Red Bank and the State of New Jersey, was shut down in response to the Covid19 pandemic. Although online survey responses continued to trickle in and the library continued to publicize the survey on the web site and social media, the committee was not able to make the outreach it had planned, particularly to the underserved communities. But Outreach to Underserved Communities proved to be one of the most valued goals by the community, making those efforts an official part of the ongoing plan.

Although smaller than hoped, the responses did show a consistent pattern that didn't change significantly as additional responses came in. The survey did supply important

feedback in several areas. The public was asked to rank 24 services by their importance, Very, Somewhat or Low Importance, or Unaware of Service. "Very Important" was the most frequent response in 18 of the 24 areas and it was greater than 50% in 17 of the 24 responses. In no case was "Low Importance" the most frequent response. The public was also asked in which areas the library was doing "Fine As Is," where it "Could Improve" and where people had "No Opinion." In all areas, the "Fine As Is" choice exceeded the "Could Improve" choice, with the "No opinion" the most prevalent response in 14 of the 24 areas. When the responses between the two categories was correlated, the provision of services that were perceived to be "Very Important" was considered to be "Fine As Is."

The public was also asked to rank 2 aspects of the library, services and the fiscal building needs, as areas of focus for the future allocation of resources. They were given 7 areas for services to rank in order of preference. Three of those areas received a median ranking of 3, two of 4, one as 5 and one as 6. The committee selected the top 3 areas and Cultural Activities to focus on over the 2021-2025 period and they have become the Key Target Areas for Performance Excellence, basically the goals of this plan. The question on the facility provided 10 areas for possible improvement, based on High, Medium or Low Priorities. In only one area was High Priority the highest response, with 7 of the 10 responses ranked as medium. Many comments indicated they liked their library "as is."

The committee felt they had a viable reflection of the wishes of the community and moved on with the plan. It established the 4 Key Target Areas for Performance Excellence as those focus areas for the library during the next five years. Subcommittees were then created to develop the Action Item list for 2021, with each committee focusing on one target area. They each developed 4 or 5 items with one or more projects for each item. The plan is extensive and includes many items that will develop over more than one year, but the committee felt that each area was important and that the flexibility of the overall plan made significant achievements possible.

The final step in the process is for the Library Board of Trustees to review and accept the Strategic Plan for 2021-2025. The Board plans to monitor the implementation and progress of the plan. They, along with the library staff, will be responsible for completing the diverse elements of the plan, and at the end of the year, reviewing and re-writing the Action Items for the next year. This process will be completed annually, with the overall plan remaining stable but the specific actions changing as needs change. The plan was developed to meet the needs of the Red Bank community, encourage innovation and reflect the changing reality of the world we live in today. It acknowledges the fact that the community is generally pleased with its library, but reflects the fact that every good organization must continue to improve to remain a dynamic and essential part of the community.

RED BANK PUBLIC LIBRARY

Strategic Plan 2021-2025



THE MISSION

The Red Bank Public Library, a cornerstone of the community, enhances the social, cultural, and intellectual life of the greater Red Bank area.

THE VISION

The library will be a vital and dynamic force, meeting the changing needs of our diverse and vibrant community.

THE VALUES

- We acknowledge that people are important, celebrate their diversity, and treat our patrons, co-workers, and volunteers with dignity and respect.
- We protect each patron's right to privacy.
- We resist censorship.
- We promote and facilitate a lifelong love of reading and learning.
- We provide free access to information technology.
- We inform our community of the services and resources available through the Library.
- We act in a professional manner with integrity, honesty, and fairness.
- We encourage staff innovation, creativity, teamwork, and superior performance.
- We conduct our business affairs economically, accurately, and responsibly.
- We stay abreast of changing trends and adapt as necessary to meet the evolving needs of our community.

Key Target Areas for Performance Excellence

Ensure school success.

Support the academic endeavors of young people and families of the greater Red Bank community from birth through high school. Prepare children to enter school ready to learn. Collaborate with school systems by providing relevant educational programs and materials. Promote curiosity and nurture a love of learning.

Connect with underserved residents.

Ensure the library is a welcoming place for all ethnic and special needs communities. Develop channels to inform people about library services and offer assistance to utilize them. Seek opportunities to partner with other organizations.

Access to computers and technology.

Afford state of the art technology and personal support that provides access to information and communication networks. Furnish equipment and software not otherwise available to support innovation. Expand options to access the collection electronically.

Highlight cultural activities.

Engage the community in the arts and humanities. Develop partnerships with the rich artistic, business and civic organizations in the area. Celebrate the diverse Red Bank Community and archive local history for future generations.

Action Item Plan for 2021

Key Target Area 1. Ensure school success

Ensure school success. Support the academic endeavors of young people and families of the greater Red Bank community from birth through high school. Perhaps children to enter school ready to learn. Collaborate with school systems by providing relevant educational programs and materials. Promote curiosity and nurture a love of learning.

1. Improve relationship with teachers:

Meet with Grade Level Leaders early in the school year at the library to provide an introduction to library resources and services.

Communicate with teachers to determine what the library can offer during the post Covid Education Recovery Period.

Host Professional Development Day for teachers to get CEUs.

Create Educator Card to allow all teachers to access RB's digital materials.

2. Encourage crossover of programming.

Participate in more school programs at the Middle & High Schools.

Invite teachers to lead programs at the library.

3. Support Curriculum, provide homework Help

Match students from RBC or RBR with younger children for tutoring.

Offer space for the school-run after school programs.

Enhance access to online resources for homework help.

Create a task force to curate content to support the educational needs of our community.

Work to mirror the school's technology at the library to enhance the educational experience.

4. Use the Library for alternate space for meetings, exhibits and performances.

Collaborate with schools to host performances and exhibit student work for display throughout the library.

Explore programming that brings families into the library together.

5. Support student success by improving and increasing community access to technology.

Investigate having hotspots and technology available for circulation.

Explore the possibility of partnering to help create a town-wide wireless network.

Assist Spanish speaking students to be fluent in technology use.

Key Target Area 2. Connect with underserved residents

Connect with underserved residents. Ensure the library is a welcoming place for all ethnic and special needs communities. Develop channels to inform people about library services and offer assistance to utilize them. Seek opportunities to partner with other organizations.

1. Build collections and digitization initiatives to meet the teaching, learning, research needs of the community.

Continue to expand collection services for non-English speaking patrons, explore digital services in addition to print collections.

Evaluate digital resources specialized for homebound, homeschool and special learners.

Evaluate and expand materials for LGBTQIA patrons.

Create a Tough Topic List for Young Adults – Displays and bookmarks.

2. Identify and implement programs and services to support our community

Participate in community pride events.

Solicit and establish a Young Adult Advisory Committee – staff to establish with the end goal of YA takeover.

Establish first generation Americans group to help navigate post-high school pathways.

Create a “Raffle” for TeenTober (<http://www.ala.org/yalsa/teentober>) – to incentivize YA recruitment initiative.

Add Little Free Libraries in various locations around town maintained by RBPL.

Provide entertainment, educational opportunities and socialization for seniors with a “Senior M.O.M.E.N.T.S.: Making - Objectives - Magical - Everyday – Not - Tiresome – Scenarios” specialized group.

3. Develop and sustain collaborations with new and existing partners

Establish contact with local parent groups.

Establish partnership with "Parents of Special Learners".

Foster Senior Center partnership.

Continue to support the RB LGBTQIA & Friends Group – ask for guidance on what the needs of the community are.

Continue to partner with the African-American community in supporting their ongoing needs re: programming and collections.

Promote the RBPL's commitment to diversity.

Partner with the Parks and Recreation for youth services.

Ask for guidance from the non-English-speaking community to identify their wants and needs for programming, collection, etc.

Provide library cards for the homeless.

Partner with school districts to promote young adult initiatives with class visits.

4. Access

Foster a more secure, comfortable, and welcoming environment with building upgrades and updates.

Construction bond will request Automatic Doors, Elevator, Bathroom Remodel.

Improve outside lighting.
Replace front step entry.
Replace front awning, upgrade entrance
Add non-slip surface for interior steps to lower level.
Deliver services at point of need.
Partner with Meals on Wheels or Lunch Break.
Establish delivery for potential patrons that cannot visit the library due to

scheduling.
Coordinate afterschool shuttle with Parks & Recreation.
Establish Senior Center “Field Trips” to the Library.
Establish a new type of library card for Senior Center members.
Optimize use of library space for learning and collaboration.
Develop single parent space for “meet up”, coordinate with CR for programming.
Evaluate & enhance Young Adult area.
Increase dedicated quiet study/conference areas.

Key Target area 3. Access to Computers and Technology

Access to computers and technology. Afford state of the art technology and personal support that provides access to information and communication networks. Furnish equipment and software not otherwise available to support innovation. Expand options to access the collection electronically.

1. Create a Technology Team.

Inventory the library's hardware and software resources and develop a management plan with a 5-6 year maintenance cycle.

Create a network security practices plan for timely application of updates and patches.

Monitor trends and recommend upgrades and new technologies.

Work to ensure software and hardware compatibility with the Schools and the Borough

2. Develop core competencies for library staff on information and communications technology.

Provide training opportunities to ensure all staff members meet those competencies.

Include meeting competencies in all annual staff evaluations.

3. Create a task force to evaluate the library's response to emergency situations and

develop ways to support community resilience initiatives.

Include members of the staff, Board and the public

Recommend best practices for the future in areas such as job seeking, employment applications, resume building, life skills, small business support.

Recommend best practices for the library in a crisis time.

One focus for consideration will be the use and archiving of social media and born digital content as well as electronic communications improvements

4. Add software and hardware to public computer options.

Add photo/video editing software, Adobe Pro and internet faxing software to at least one public computer.

Create one study/conference space that is tech enabled to support video conferencing and other emerging technology for public access.

5. The library will add software and replace hardware for staff computers.

Add photo/video editing software, Adobe Pro and content management software to at least one staff computer.

Replace at least 4 staff computers in 2021.

Provide for contingency funding to meet emergency situations.

Key Target Area 4 Cultural activities

Highlight cultural activities. Engage the community in the arts and humanities. Develop partnerships with the rich artistic and civic organizations in the area. Celebrate the diverse Red Bank Community and archive local history for future generations.

1. Build Community Partnerships, Collaborate with Other Organizations

Identify new and strengthen existing connections with current organizations within the Greater Red Bank Community.

Work with the Library Foundation on funding for library programs during this post-pandemic time when library funding may be reduced

2. Celebrate the Arts

Expand wall space at Library for exhibits

Work with architect to set up the Eisner Room to utilize as a library gallery space, providing better lighting and a display system

Look at the downstairs Meeting Room for better use of wall space for displays

Present a virtual art show exhibit.

When possible, encourage art receptions with new art displays in the library.

Bring together a team of artists/crafts people to work together.

Reach out to independent artists and have the library serve as an artist "incubator".

Sponsor an "art walk", similar to the Story Walk at Riverside Park

Sponsor a Gallery Walk- Local artist leads gallery walk through town/Also

Musician tour

Develop Guest programmers for a particular culture/food/baking.

Possibly use current story walk to display artists' works

Work to create a mural on the west side of the library.

3. Archive local history for future generations

Work with Multicultural Community to build written, visual and oral history collection of the CO-VID 19 Pandemic in Red Bank using, among other things, submissions from the public.

Create an oral history project document our local history knowledge.

4. Raise the profile of the library in the community:

Participate in Red Bank events like Halloween parade, Easter Egg Hunt, National Night Out, Memorial Day, Veteran's Day Event

5. Celebrate Traveling

Develop virtual travel programs using Virtual Reality headsets that can be checked out

Invite guest programmers to share their travel experiences remotely.

Consider Travel and Food programs

Committee identified the **Action Items with the Highest Priority** in each Key Target Area.

Committee identified the **Action Items that could be accomplished with the least expenditure of time, energy and expense** in each Key Target Area.

Selections were not unanimous but highlighted areas indicate the greatest consensus for each area.