



STRATEGIC PLAN

Published October 2016, Revised May 2018, November 2021

Our Purpose:

In late spring of 2016, the library board of trustees determined the need for a set of revised strategic goals and desired outcomes. This updated and flexible plan will guide the library in service to the community, funding decisions, and facility maintenance and upgrades. The goals, outcomes, and actions are created with the input of community members and staff in the hopes of envisioning a library that serves as a foundation for the community and meets local needs.

Our Process:

In creating a plan for the future of the library, the information gathering stage is an essential piece of the strategic planning process. In order to gain a better understanding of our community, the Strategic Planning Committee (SPC) used the following methods for gathering data from the community.

- Community wide survey; teacher survey; storytime parent survey
- Information sessions led by Studio GC for the public, board of trustees, and staff
- Strategic Planning Committee (SPC) formation with staff from each department
- Staff SWOT during June 2016 in-service
- Demographic and usage statistics gathered by Studio GC
- Joint Board & Staff planning sessions in August and October
- Community leader session in September 2016

Our Mission

The La Grange Park Library is a welcoming and inclusive community center connecting residents to informational, cultural, and educational resources.

Our Vision

Enriching Lives

Our Priorities

1. People Oriented Service

- Outcome 1: Embrace a welcoming, inclusive, customer-driven culture
 - Action: Revise the language of current policy and procedure so it is friendly and inclusive while still meeting library needs and ensuring safety
 - Action: Offer cross-departmental customer service training to staff to ensure a seamless customer experience in every service area
 - Action: Develop services and resources that advance people with diverse abilities and those who identify as LGBTQ and determine accessibility and outreach best practices
- Outcome 2: Adapt services to meet customer wants and needs
 - Action: Survey the community on a regular basis and collect anecdotal data to support changes and additions to services and resources

- Action: Change selection methods to more closely align with collection trends as well as patron wants/needs
- Outcome 3: Employ and retain positive, customer service oriented individuals
 - Action: Create core competencies for staff in the areas of customer service and technology so everyone is prepared to help patrons at an expert level
 - Action: Invest in staff growth and development with a robust training budget and annual fulfillment of required continuing education hours

2. Outreach & Partnerships

- Outcome 1: Create lasting strategic partnerships with community organizations
 - Action: Work with the Chamber, Village, Park District, etc. on joint committees and events
 - Action: Partner with or expand our relationships with retirement homes, schools, and/or social service organizations
 - Action: Work with local libraries to share staff, resources, and collections for financial savings and to offer patrons who visit more than one location a variety of resources and services
- Outcome 2: Reach out to underserved populations
 - Action: Start a foreign language and ESL collection, focusing on most requested languages
 - Action: Start an English conversation group for non-native speakers to practice skills
 - Action: Determine ways in which we can better reach underserved community groups such as non-native speakers, patrons experiencing homelessness, and patrons with mental health concerns.
- Outcome 3: Expand visibility of library services beyond library walls
 - Action: Increase the visibility and use of homebound services
 - Action: Consider more off-site promotion of library services
 - Action: Engage in more aggressive advertising opportunities to reach non-users while avoiding jargon; utilize simple and effective advertising

3. Library Building

- Outcome 1: Maintain the community's investment in the library facility by carrying out necessary improvements
 - Action: Complete a master facility plan with recommendations for service upgrades and general capital outlay
 - Action: Work with a financial planner to determine funding possibilities and create a long-term plan
 - Action: Implement the master facility plan with annual updates to library equipment, furniture, and facilities
- Outcome 2: Improve the overall use of space to create a place for all to enjoy
 - Action: Purchase furniture that encourages patron use of the building as a "3rd space" or shared work space (such as comfortable seating, tables that allow for projects, tutoring, group seating) and position in strategic areas for optimal usage
 - Action: Introduce interactive, learning spaces for young children and their parents to enjoy with seating for adults
 - Action: Ensure each space is being used to its maximum potential and no "dead space" is occurring (dead space- rooms that are often closed or have too much square footage for their designated purpose)
 - Action: Extend the philosophy of space to our online presence with an accessible, user-friendly website
- Outcome 3: Create a marketing campaign to promote and explain construction
 - Action: Explain service upgrades and ways the building can be used in new and different ways
 - Action: Start a donor campaign to raise funds for room naming and other memorials

4. Technology & Content Creation

- Outcome 1: Increase the type and quantity of technology available to patrons both in house and for checkout
 - Action: Study usage statistics for our library and surrounding areas regarding checkout of technology
 - Action: Apply for technology grants to fund purchases
- Outcome 2: Invest in a makerspace
 - Action: Survey the community to determine what equipment would be popular
 - Action: Have “office hours” for when the space is open and staff are on hand to help and teach
 - Action: Offer circulating equipment: themed activity boxes; mobile hotspots; button maker, 3DS, etc.
- Outcome 3: Focus on training efforts for maximum use of technology
 - Action: Create training videos (YouTube) that patrons can watch as needed
 - Action: Keep up to date on current trends and adopt as we are able
 - Action: Increase opportunities for all types of learning: group training, one-on-one, classes, etc.

Executive Summary

November 2021

A strategic plan is never meant to live a long life, just as it is not meant to sit on a shelf and collect dust. It is intended to be used and referred to regularly. It should guide decisions, help determine new directions, and above all be a timely document that reflects current goals and priorities. The time for re-evaluating the plan comes when goals and objectives feel outdated or have already been accomplished. The information in this summary is intended to show the progress made in the strategic plan that has been in use from the fall of 2016 – the fall of 2021 and formally bring this plan to a close.

Priority One: People Oriented Service

The first outcome we hoped to achieve was to embrace a welcoming, inclusive, customer-driven culture. All patron policies were revised during the five year period that the plan has been in place, some of them more than once. A focus on patron friendly language was made as well as attention to equity and access for all visitors.

Our efforts to become a more inclusive organization are still evolving, but we’ve made progress of which we are proud. We partnered with Aspire, a local organization that works for the advancement of people with disabilities, to conduct a thorough assessment of our service to the disability community. This was a months-long process that involved surveying the community, staff, and stakeholders, a facility assessment, and evaluation of our programs to different ages. The report that followed gave the staff and board insight into how we could direct our programs and facility improvements to be more inclusive towards people with disabilities. Out of that experience, a staff led Inclusivity Task Force was formed. They have gone on to create a thorough and expansive staff toolkit that will help our employees serve a wide range of visitors of all types.

In keeping with outcome number three, we continue our efforts to hire, train, and retain excellent and qualified staff members. We implemented core competency training shortly after launching the strategic plan. These competencies are now part of the annual evaluation process for every employee.

Priority Two: Outreach & Partnerships

The list of community organizations that we partner with is extensive, but here are just a few: monthly homebound delivery and technology training at the local retirement homes, visits to the schools, Chamber of Commerce membership, Village 125th birthday committee participation, IGAs with the Park District and numerous program collaborations, Westchester Food Pantry and Lion’s Club donation site, and so many more!

We’ve started foreign language collections in both children’s and adult departments. We host bilingual storytimes in Spanish and Italian for families and adults are enjoying English conversation groups led by our talented staff.

A focus was placed on mental health and reaching the unserved throughout 2018 and 2019. Staff were trained in Mental Health First Aid through NAMI, growth mindset, and many attended a workshop for people experiencing homelessness. We began collecting donations for the local food pantry and designated a small area of the library

for free basic hygiene items that anyone could take if they had the need. All of these efforts were done to make our library more welcoming and to help our staff develop empathy for all of our visitors.

With the unexpected closure of our building in March of 2020 due to the COVID-19 pandemic, we were forced into a position of needing to expand the visibility of library services beyond our four walls. While the circumstances were not ideal, staff stepped up to the challenge of engaging with users online in a variety of ways. Library card registration moved online along with all programming. Digital content budgets were increased and usage of online resources soared. Our innovative methods for delivering physical materials to the homes of residents allowed for items to begin circulating once again, even when the library could not open to the public. These are only a few examples of the numerous ways we found to stay connected to our patrons during this life-altering time.

Priority Three: Library Building

The last several years have consisted of creating a master plan for the library building, engaging a qualified architect to carry out the design, informing the community the project and seeking their input, and securing the necessary funding to carry out the work. We've identified which equipment also needs to be replaced and ensured that the scope of the project is inclusive so there will be no need for large scale projects in the near future. A financial planner was engaged to assist with long-term projections and ensure that funds would be sufficient to cover debt payments for the next 10 – 15 years.

While the staff and community have waited patiently for the construction to begin, creative uses of space have been employed to make the most of the current building layout. The “music room” was transformed with the help of grant money and is now a comfortable, professional work and study space. The young adult department was given a fresh coat of paint, new lounge furniture, and a partition to designate collection space from social space. The children’s area is enjoying a new “tech bar” with iPads and several new pieces of furniture to replace aging items. Each department has upgraded display units which have helped highlight collections and made booklists and informational brochures more accessible and streamlined.

With the final project still in the wings, we are confident that the final result will be one that serves the community well and brings new opportunities and learning experiences to our residents.

Priority Four: Technology & Content Creation

Finally, the board and staff placed an emphasis on elevating the quantity and quality of technology available to residents while allowing for related training and programming opportunities. A \$25,000 received in 2020 allowed for the purchase of new circulating Chromebooks, upgraded laptops for in-library use, additional WiFi hotspots, and the previously mentioned iPads in the children’s department.

The children’s department purchased new kits for their audience including items for the Library of Things collection, while the adult and teen departments dove into makery equipment. Staff embarked on learning new skills needed to operate the laser cutter, vinyl cutter, button maker, 3-D printer, green screen, and more. Patrons have enjoyed one on one sessions learning how to use the equipment for their creative projects and program after program have been enjoyed by all ages using a variety of the makery tools.

The designs for the library renovation include a maker classroom on the main level and staff look forward to continuing their work in the creative arts as patrons engage with us in content creation.

While our actions may have shifted throughout the life of the strategic plan, our focus remained on *enriching the lives* of our patrons and welcoming them to the heart of their community. We hope future iterations of the strategic plan bring the same amount of pride and satisfaction in their implementation that this one did.