



Westport Public Library Strategic Plan

Engaging the Community, Building for the Future 2007* – 2010

***Beginning July 2007**

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The Westport Library: A Window to the Future

Welcome to the latest annual revision of the Westport Public Library's Strategic Plan. This plan is the collective effort of the Library's staff, its Board of Trustees and you, Westport's citizens, to address the needs of our community by continuously improving a great municipal institution.

Earlier this year Vartan Gregorian, a Presidential Medal of Freedom recipient and former President of the New York Public Library, spoke to Westport at the Library's annual Malloy Lecture in the Arts. Dr. Gregorian told all of us that night:

Libraries are a laboratory of human endeavor. They are a window to the future. They represent the link between the solitary individual and mankind, which is our community.

I cannot think of better words to use in describing the mission of our Library: "laboratory", "future", "individual", "community." The Library is not a repository of the past, but is an active "laboratory" that engages the interests and meets the needs of our community every day. The Strategic Plan is our window, our public document, which invites all who love the Library to help shape its future.

The Library is also the bridge, or link, between the individual and the community. The Library respects the rights and privacy of each person who enters our building or who engages it online, and yet offers each individual an almost endless list of possible communities to join: toddlers finding the magic of a story for the first time; students excited by shared discovery; entrepreneurs using its business resources; book clubs; the debate around Community Conversations; celebrations of Westport's past. All of this activity...but still the Library remains a refuge for those seeking solitude, a quiet sanctuary from the pressures of daily life.

Please accept the Library's offer to take part in our great civic experiment. Our goal is that everyone who lives or works in Westport will have a relationship with the Library and its many communities. Your comments and contributions are always welcome.

I want to thank Maxine Bleiweis, Director of the Westport Public Library, and her dedicated staff for their excellent and often extraordinary service to our community. I also want to thank the Library's Board of Trustees, whose members work diligently to further the Library's mission.

Sincerely,

*Andrew B. Nevas
President, Board of Trustees*

I. The Westport Public Library -- Vision and Values

The Vision of the Westport Public Library:

The Westport Public Library is a sanctuary for all that offers unrestricted access to information, programs and state of the art resources. It is a place for individual inquiry and collective learning, intellectual challenge and quiet reflection. The Westport Public Library offers enjoyable opportunities for dynamic social interaction and life-long learning that enrich the quality of life of each of its patrons, young and old alike, throughout each stage of their lives.

The Values of the Westport Public Library

The Library serves the community and each of its members according to their needs and interests.

The Library provides equal and unfettered access to all regardless of individual abilities or differences. The Library is responsive and non-judgmental in recognizing the diversity of the community it serves.

The Library provides a safe and modern facility that offers a welcoming environment for the community's intellectual and social engagement.

The Library respects the privacy and confidentiality of its patrons.

The Library maintains excellence in both the depth and breadth of its collections by continuously assessing the changing requirements of the community and by responding with innovative approaches supported by current technology.

The Library provides its staff with the training and with the opportunities for professional development necessary to keep services both relevant and excellent.

The Library is governed by sound financial management and oversight.

II. Plan Summary: A Focus on the Future

Strategic Issues

Innovative, Customer-Focused Services

To fulfill its mission, the Library must be able to provide services that are innovative, compelling, convenient and easy to use. In planning for the future, the Library will explore ways it can operate more efficiently and eliminate routine or redundant tasks in order to provide more customer-focused services.

A Hive for Intellectual and Cultural Activities

The Library provides learners of all ages with guidance and with a setting conducive to a wider search for knowledge. The Library recognizes that its staff, collections and programs - and the building that houses them all - are unique community assets that together create synergies that enhance the impact of other town institutions, schools and businesses serving the community.

A Building that Works Better

The Library requires flexible and environmentally responsible space that can host an expanded variety of activities in the 21st century: for interactive sessions with pre-readers and quiet research for writers, for lively social interaction and serene contemplation, for technology-supported business meetings and programs on a widening variety of topics that hold interest for the community. Innovative library design will optimize the utility of the existing space and improve community interaction within it.

Expanded Community Awareness

Awareness of the Library's basic services is high. However, knowledge of its broad range of attractive offerings should be expanded. To convey its many benefits, the Library needs a program of continuous and varied communication to both users and non-users in the community.

Strong and Effective Library Advocates

The Library must enlist members of the community who can effectively advocate for wide public support of the Library's vision and mission. This will be very important as the Library begins its capital campaign for the transformation of the Library.

Investment in Staff

Library staff have become information navigators for Library users. To meet its commitment to provide the excellent service expected by the community, the Library must provide the staff with ongoing technical training and customer-oriented skills development.

Increasing Financial Support

The Library currently depends upon financial support from the town as well as from private donations to deliver its services. The Library should secure additional sources of public and private funding to ensure its ability to fund its goals.

III. Strategic Issues, Goals and Strategies

Each goal and its related strategies listed below address a strategic issue outlined in part II. The Library's performance in addressing these strategic issues will determine its success in the period, 2007-10.

Strategic Issue: Innovative, Customer Focused Service

Goal 1: Provide library services, programs and public space that meet the changing and growing needs and interests of the community. With the help of state of the art technology, empower librarians to provide improved and personalized services

Strategies:

1.1 Use new technologies to add value to all library services

2008-2009

- a. *Establish a systematic approach to ensure that website content is responsive to patrons' questions*
- b. *Explore the use of video clips on the Library's web site*
- c. *Evaluate opportunities available for technology to streamline and automate routines and/or outsource services*
- d. *Evaluate offering tours and other content via wireless technology*
- e. *Upgrade the Library website using more current software*
- f. *Begin investigation of options to replace the Library's ILS (integrated library system)*

2009-2010

- g. *Evaluate Radio Frequency Identification (RFID) technology for implementation in future building plans*

- h. *Explore technologies used in retail establishments (e.g., grocery store “shopping buddy”) for application to Library activities*

1.2 Implement more customer-focused services

2008-2009

- a. *Expand the role of reference services so that reference librarians can become curators of information in new formats*
- b. *Expand “concierge-type” library service - e.g. reference by appointment, readers’ advisory consultations, technology instruction by appointment, roving staff members throughout the Library*
- c. *Expand the “Personal Librarian” program to provide personalized service related to school projects for teens and parents*
- d. *Offer and promote the Library as the place for regularly scheduled instruction on Internet and catalog use, software applications, email and emerging technologies*
- e. *Investigate opportunities for more convenient delivery methods*
- f. *Develop an after school homework help program*
- g. *Explore having a notary on staff*

2009-2010

- h. *Use a search aggregator to combine searches through all of the Library’s databases*
- i. *Create customer profiles that allow relevant information to be pushed to interested patrons*

1.3 Employ new collection development techniques to reach a broader audience of users

2008-2009

- a. *Continue the weeding program to renew the collection, create more open shelf space, and prepare for the building project*
- b. *Evaluate the Library’s potential to reach new audiences through new formats, including e-books, electronic readers and databases*
- c. *Evaluate the usage and future relevance of the world language collection*
- d. *Evaluate the usage and future relevance of the Reader Development Collection*

1.4 Increase library use by pre-teens and teens

2008-2009

- a. *Expand teen advisory groups to provide information and assistance in developing teens’ use of the Library*
- b. *Continue to work with the school system to sponsor teacher orientation and improve communication about homework assignments*

- c. *Continue to work with students to sponsor orientation and improve communication about homework assignments*
- d. *Explore the use of social networking technologies to reach more teens*
- e. *Explore how to support the ongoing work of tutors using the Library*
- f. *Continue the Girl Talk teen mentoring program*

2009-2010

- g. *Expand the youth volunteer program with a variety of opportunities to assist the Library*
- h. *Create a Library newsletter targeted to those who work with pre-teens and teens*

1.5 Increase use by adult groups that are currently underutilizing the Library

2008-2009

- a. *Expand and institutionalize the library orientation session for all town employees, teachers and school administrators*
- b. *Expand and institutionalize the library orientation session for college students*
- c. *Create affinity groups to support communities such as writers and home-based business people*
- d. *Develop outreach targeted toward community businesses*
- e. *Develop a strategy for future enhanced services to businesses and entrepreneurs*
- f. *Develop a strategy for future enhanced services to civic organizations*
- g. *Evaluate and support outreach to commuters*

2009-2010

- h. *Develop specialized collections and services to serve specific groups (business owners, home-based businesses, attorneys, caregivers, newcomers, the homebound and commuters)*
- i. *Use online communities to promote library services*

1.6 Increase the number of people using the readers' advisory service

2008-2009

- a. *Highlight more readers' advisory information on the Library's web pages*
- b. *Continue to develop and implement readers' advisory training for staff*
- c. *Continue to promote and support book discussion groups and blogs*
- d. *Develop a promotional campaign that emphasizes the Library staff's expertise in providing advice about current titles*
- e. *Explore ways for users to add reviews to the Library's web site*

1.7 Increase use of library materials by reorganizing the collection and creating more effective displays

2008-2009

- a. *Train staff in effective promotion of our resources and services*
- b. *Create areas to provide information about library events and new selections*
- c. *Add additional merchandising areas to highlight the collection*
- d. *Examine opportunities for reorganizing children's services*

2009-2010

- e. *Evaluate the usage and future relevance of picture file*

1.8 Reorganize the Library's existing space to create new opportunities for library use

2008-2009

- a. *Offer a selection of children's DVDs within the children's collection*
- b. *Integrate a selection of audio and video materials within the adult print collections*
- c. *Examine opportunities for reorganizing children's services*

Strategic Issue: A Hive for Intellectual and Cultural Activities

Goal 2: Establish the Library as a favorite destination for members of the community who want to convene for social interaction and stimulating consideration of new ideas and current events

Strategies:

2.1 Develop new partnerships and subjects to engage the Westport community on topical issues

2008-2009

- a. *Find new sources of program support in the community*
- b. *Explore partners outside the community, such as New York Public Library, the 92nd Street Y, etc.*
- c. *Offer programs and website enhancements to support non-native English speakers*

2.2 Offer new programs to attract children, teens and adults who may not currently use the Library.

2008-2009

- a. *Continue the 100th Anniversary celebration of the Library, with programs highlighting library trends for the future*

- b. *Develop staff to act as collaborators in creating new programming to attract new audiences*
- c. *Continue collaboration with local arts institutions to present programs highlighting and complementing community arts events and exhibits*
- d. *Evaluate the concept of “First Friday” family focused programming on the first Friday evening of every month*
- e. *Develop more programs for families to enjoy together.*
- f. *Develop more impromptu programs*
- g. *Explore and develop programs for women managing multiple roles*

2009-2010

- h. *Provide English conversation opportunities for au pairs and others*

Strategic Issue: A Building That Works Better

Goal 3: Create plans to build attractive, appealing and functionally versatile new space that can accommodate a wide variety of simultaneous activities

Strategies:

3.1 Develop plans for the Library of the Future

2008-2009

- a. *Work with the Library’s architect to develop ideas for expanding and transforming the building*
- b. *Make changes in the current Library to conduct a “trial run” of new concepts for the expanded Library*
- c. *Preview and test ideas for the new building with the community through meetings involving the architect*

2009-2010

- d. *Work with the architect to develop schematic drawings that depict the Library of the Future*

3.2 Position the Library for “The Library of the Future” building campaign

2008-2009

- a. *Meet with key community members to explain and promote plans for expanding and transforming the Library and obtain feedback*
- b. *Plan for a campaign committee and recruit and train campaign volunteers*
- c. *Draft campaign materials for future mailing to the community and for use in the media*

- d. *Create the internal processes required to manage donor pledges and gifts*

3.3 Create an organizational structure to ensure a successful building project

2009-2010

- a. *Establish a building advisory committee for general project oversight*
- b. *Develop a project team of experts to ensure success*
- c. *Develop a plan for ongoing operations during construction*

2010 and beyond

- a. *Begin construction on “The Library of the Future”*

Strategic Issue: Expanding Community Awareness

Goal 4: Provide ways for all segments of the community to become more aware of the Library’s resources and how to use them

Strategies:

4.1 Create opportunities for residents to learn more about the transformation of the Library

2008-2009

- a. *Host programs that create an opportunity to learn about the transformation of public libraries*

4.2 Increase Westporters’ awareness of, and interest in, all the Library has to offer through targeted communication strategies

2008-2009

- a. *Fund and implement a marketing/public relations position*
- b. *Establish a method to obtain the community’s input into programs and services*
- c. *Develop targeted marketing promotional materials to continuously attract the interest of specific groups – e.g. business owners, entrepreneurs, arts professionals.*
- d. *Promote on-site tours and “coffees” for newcomers and other groups*
- e. *Create a changing “Top Ten” list of facts for local media regarding what everyone needs to know about the Library*
- f. *Study the effectiveness of targeting emails in reaching the intended audience*

4.3 Develop mutually beneficial partnerships with community agencies, organizations, schools and businesses to strengthen the Library's service to the community

2008-2009

- a. *Expand the Library's ability to provide information and resources for real time and online book clubs*
- b. *Meet with Town agency leaders to explore opportunities for partnerships*

2009-2010

- c. *Launch a campaign to get a Library card to every Westport resident*
- d. *Cooperate with local businesses to develop complementary marketing programs to encourage Library use*

Strategic Issue: Strong and Effective Library Advocates

Goal 5: Foster a strong and effective group of Library advocates who can guide the growth and development of the Westport Public Library

Strategies:

5.1 Invest in the skills of the Board of Trustees

2008-2009

- a. *Recruit Trustees who have needed expertise and reflect the diversity of the community*
- b. *Prepare Board members for the assumption of leadership roles*

5.2 Develop additional stakeholder groups to advocate for the Library

2008-2009

- a. *Work with the Advisory Council each year to help identify critical issues for their attention and support*
- b. *Engage the Friends of the Library to support the Library's strategic goals*
- c. *Identify new potential Library support leaders and enlist their involvement*
- d. *Identify groups of people who share interest in serving the Library and who can contribute to the Library*

Strategic Issue: Investment in Staff

Goal 6: Maintain a Library staff with excellent skills supported by an administration that can deliver competent and innovative Library services and programs

Strategies:

6.1 Expand staff development and training

2008-2009

- a. *Review administrative staffing needs and depth to meet growing demands on the Library*
- b. *Continue the annual staff development day to address changing management and service issues*
- c. *Develop an orientation program for new staff members*
- d. *Revise the ongoing staffing plan to reflect evolving Library requirements for competencies*
- e. *Implement human resource software for time reporting, record keeping and recruitment*
- f. *Develop a comprehensive training program for staff*
- g. *Develop an Intranet for access to staff resources*

6.2 Provide tools and resources to help staff do their jobs more effectively

2008-2009

- a. *Establish goals for hiring staff to meet new demands*
- b. *Organize a staff Green Task Force to spearhead responsible environmental practices in the Library*

Strategic Issue: Increasing Financial Support

Goal 7: Identify and successfully secure support from a broad base of government and private sources for the Library's programs and activities

Strategies:

- 7.1 Create a comprehensive development plan to provide a blueprint for improving fund-raising and development results that will position the Library to successfully meet its immediate and long-term goals.**

2008-2009

- a. *Assess the feasibility of undertaking a capital campaign to support the transformation of the Library*
- b. *Implement a three-year development plan to diversify and increase the Library's funding streams, with a focus on foundation and corporate support, planned giving and major individual donors*

2009-2010

- c. *Enhance efforts to recruit, train and motivate qualified volunteers to support staff in promoting the goals and objectives of the development plan*
- d. *Improve and expand non-revenue generating development activities, including research, donor cultivation and professional development*
- e. *Improve and expand marketing and communication components of the development plan with emphasis on an effective annual report; standard proposals for programs, services and activities; brochures on the Library and on specific programs; improved web presence for development goals*
- f. *Set a specific fundraising goal for the Library's endowment to ensure ongoing library support*

7.2 Increase contributions to the Library annual appeal campaign**2008-2009**

- a. *Provide fundraising training for the Library Board members and volunteers*
- b. *Expand the list of prospects*
- c. *Develop web pages specifically focused on the annual appeal*

7.3 Increase funding for Library collections**2008-2009**

- a. *Continue to identify materials, resources and equipment that the Library would like to purchase and announce these giving opportunities on the Library web page*

2009-2010

- b. *Develop a memorial and tribute gift program*
- c. *Develop a planned giving program*

7.4 Enlist the local business community in supporting the Library**2008-2009**

- a. *Identify corporations/businesses that may be interested in sponsoring new program series or business-related services and collections*

IV. Measuring Success

Each year, Library staff and Trustees will set aside time to assess their progress in meeting the goals and objectives outlined in this document. In evaluating its success, the Westport Public Library will:

Measure levels of community satisfaction	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) Develop and administer specific community needs surveys (online and print) based on the results of the 2006 satisfaction/opinion survey b) Develop and administer customer satisfaction surveys c) Administer one on one exit surveys in the Library asking people for their impressions and satisfaction with specific services
Monitor and measure levels of support	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) Record and report levels of public and private support b) Encourage and help guide the growth in numbers and activity level of the Friends of the Library c) Create a semi-annual report encouraging and monitoring growth in the volunteer program d) Report to the Board of Trustees on progress toward meeting annual endowment goals
Measure and analyze customer use	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) Record and report circulation statistics b) Monitor collection turnover c) Record and report numbers of library visitors d) Record and report numbers of reference queries e) Monitor and record numbers of people attending programs f) Record the frequency of computer use g) Monitor and record frequency of use of databases and Library web pages h) Monitor the percentage of the population using the Library and set high goals for new registrations in each year of the plan i) Develop baseline data about current Library use and measure changes in use following building improvements j) Develop baseline data about specific collections and determine levels of use if featured in special displays
Improve Library efficiency and effectiveness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) Measure the number of items loaned using self-checkout b) Measure the number of items downloaded c) Measure the use of the website and other self-service information tools
Increase the level of awareness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) Measure the number of new partnerships each year with realtors and other area businesses b) Measure the number of presentations to community groups
Monitor the success of the community forum series	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) Record and report numbers of participants at programs

Appendix

The Planning Process

Library staff, Trustees and many participating residents contributed a great amount of time and energy to this planning process and to the development of the Westport Public Library's strategic plan. They were assisted by Library Development Solutions, a Princeton, New Jersey library consulting firm. Before launching the planning effort, the Library Trustees determined that the plan should reflect the needs and interests of the community served by the Library. Through the use of focus groups and an online survey, the planning committee reached out to hundreds of individuals to solicit ideas and suggestions for making the Library a more essential part of their daily lives. Library planners listened carefully to this community input, identified the most frequently requested suggestions and worked together to devise a plan to improve the Library.

More than five hundred Westport residents, reflecting all age groups and a wide variety of interests, were involved in the development of this strategic plan.

A number of key assumptions helped lay the groundwork for this plan. Planners agreed that:

- The Library has made progress in implementing its current plan by making additional space available in the Library for quiet study and other uses.
- Westport's population will not grow significantly, but families with young children will comprise the largest segment of the population.
- An increasing number of older adults will choose to remain in Westport.
- Tax support for the Library will not significantly increase over the next few years, thereby requiring the Library Trustees and staff to seek additional private support to expand library services.
- The Library has become the recognized center for community activity and lifelong learning, bringing people together to share common values and concerns.

The planning process included:

Focus Groups

Fifty-one Library staff, Trustees and community residents met in four focus group sessions facilitated by the planning consultants. During these sessions participants discussed their ideas for improving Library service, shared what they liked best about the Library, and identified areas needing improvement.

Online Survey

Four hundred and eighty five residents and Library users responded to an online survey regarding the Library. Their comments and suggestions assisted with the development of the revised plan. The survey results are available in the Library.¹

Meetings with Library Staff and Managers

The consultants met with Library staff, Trustees and the Library management team to explore concerns and to solicit ideas for inclusion in the strategic plan.

Meetings of the Planning Committee

A planning committee comprising mostly Trustees and staff met on numerous occasions to review the outcomes of the focus groups and survey, to review staff and Board recommendations for the plan, and to finalize recommendations for future Library directions.

Westport Public Library Board of Trustees*

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* Board of Trustees as of July 1, 2008

Consultants

Alan Burger
Leslie Burger

¹ 2006 WPL Survey results