



**The
Westport
Library...**

Strategic Planning in Action

The Westport Library's 2025-2030 Strategic Plan

Introduction

In 2024, The Westport Library's transformed building turned five years old, and the Library's leadership and Board of Trustees began the process of developing a multi-year strategic plan to approach the next five years with intention and clarity. The process design was anchored in a revision of the mission, vision, and values of the organization, and focused on the emergence of a strategic plan rooted in those foundational commitments.

The strategic planning committee included staff and trustees, who collaborated at each stage with Library leadership to achieve consensus and alignment. The committee's approach was built around broad-based stakeholder engagement, leading to the plan being introduced at the start of the 2025-26 fiscal year.

This overview was prepared to document this work, while also taking the opportunity to express gratitude to the many participants who offered their time, insights, experiences, and aspirations for the Library in order to shape this strategic plan.



Vision

A future-focused library committed to lifelong learning, intellectual freedom, and creativity.

Mission

The Westport Library empowers individuals and fosters a connected, inclusive community through welcoming spaces, open exploration, the free exchange of ideas, and equitable access for all.

Values

Lifelong Learning: We inspire curiosity and support exploration through multigenerational programming and resources, fostering an environment that nurtures personal growth, self-discovery, and creativity.

Connection: We are dedicated to working with the community to create enriching experiences that promote civic participation and civil discourse, creating a dynamic, engaging environment to help our community thrive.

Belonging: We provide all members of our community with equitable access to resources in a safe and inclusive environment, ensuring that they feel welcomed and valued.

Intellectual Freedom: We believe in the transformative power of open intellectual discourse and cultural exchange, providing access to a wide array of resources and cultivating an environment where diverse perspectives enrich our collective understanding.

Creativity: We embrace innovation, technology, and exploration, welcoming new ideas, supporting new initiatives, fostering collaboration, and sparking and supporting creative expression.

Service: We actively listen to and engage with our patrons and work to ensure our offerings reflect our community's needs, wants, and interests.

Timeline

Preparatory Work: September – November 2024

In 2024, The Westport Library began its strategic planning work. The Library engaged Deliberate Innovation, a consultancy focused on design thinking and creative problem solving. In addition to a climate survey and internal interviews with staff, the Board of Trustees participated in a multi-day retreat. These foundations of understanding supported the emergence of key diagnostics that highlighted both barriers and opportunities.

Strategic Planning Foundational Work: November 2024 – July 2025

By the end of 2024, the Library's strategic planning committee was formed with three senior staff and five trustees, facilitated by John Klick of Deliberate Innovation. The committee focused first on ideation, consolidation, and finalization of the vision and mission statements. Concurrently, the committee developed draft values using the concepts and language rooted in this foundational thinking.

Stakeholder Engagement: May – June 2025

The committee's approach was rooted in principles of broad participation and community-led planning. In May, an open-access community survey was launched to gather preferences, priorities, and needs from the community. Running over a month, the survey outreach resulted in 1,400 responses, with feedback and ideas on a range of topics related to Library programs and services.

In addition, the strategic planning committee members hosted individual interviews with 15 local thought leaders representing non-profit organizations, public and private education, faith institutions, entrepreneurs, seniors, and young families. Using a semi-structured interview template, this process revealed broader community needs and also helped position the Library's planning firmly in the context of its community and other organizations' plans.

Finally, the entirety of the Library team was invited to participate in a series of staff feedback sessions on the mission, vision and values statements. These dialogues were critical in rooting the work in the living Library and ensuring representation of all stakeholders.

Goals, Objectives, Strategies, and Tactics: Summer 2025

Working from the initial diagnostics, community survey findings, key informant interviews, staff feedback, and foundational mission, vision, and values language, the committee and Library leadership turned toward the development of strategic goals. Using a matrixed framework tool, six key goals emerged as primary areas of focus. The goals were developed further into objectives to guide the work. Finally, the Library's staff leadership created strategies and tactics designed to achieve the newly established goals.

The full strategic plan was presented to staff and trustees between July and September 2025, and approved in September 2025.

Goals & Objectives

The Library's strategic plan has six goals, and each goal has objectives, which are specific and measurable results the Library aims to achieve as part of reaching its broader goals.

The first four goals are focused on the community's experiences and opportunities at the Library. The final two goals are focused on internal operations and capacity development.

1. Foster engagement in lifelong learning

- A.** Maximize and increase use of under-activated resources and target high-priority audiences.
- B.** Patrons report greater knowledge, new behaviors, and attitude shifts.
- C.** Increased engagement with reading.
- D.** Programs and the collection reflect diverse viewpoints, beliefs, and lifestyles. *
- E.** Expand opportunities for varied learning modalities, including experiential learning. *

2. Reflect, evolve, and adapt to patrons' needs

- A.** Services and offerings take into account community feedback and trends.
- B.** Patrons increasingly report feeling valued, heard, and understood in every interaction.

3. Inspire and support creativity

- A.** Increased access to AI through instruction and guidance.
- B.** Expand opportunities for varied learning modalities, including experiential learning. *
- C.** Programs and the collection reflect diverse viewpoints, beliefs, and lifestyles. *

4. Create a more connected community

- A.** There is increased engagement in opportunities for dialogue and cross-cultural understanding.
- B.** The Library offers shared spaces that are open to all, and features a range of local needs and partners.
- C.** Programs increase knowledge, behavior likelihood, and attitude shifts.

5. Ensure operational effectiveness and technological excellence

- A.** Increased use of technology and automation for greater effectiveness and efficiency.
- B.** New tools, innovations, and practices are piloted and adopted.

6. Demonstrate the Library's impact in our community

- A.** There is greater awareness of the Library's innovative cultural contributions.
- B.** There is a greater diversity in how the Library's impact is presented to the community.
- C.** There is increased availability of qualitative and quantitative impact data and stories of impact.

*An asterisk * denotes an objective that supports multiple goals.*

1 Lifelong Learning

The Library's vision, mission, and values statements all emphasize learning, the freedom to explore, and encountering new ideas as core to our services.

The Library's 2019 transformation project and investments in spaces, materials, and capacities call for us to deepen our use of these existing resources. Our strategies to foster lifelong learning celebrate and diversify the ways our community can enjoy and experience the Library.

A. Maximize and increase use of under-activated resources and target high-priority audiences.

- Expand media-based offerings through Verso Studios and Verso University.
- Expand access to and understanding of Verso Studios resources through a targeted campaign.
- Design programs and services intended for teens and young adults.

B. Patrons report greater knowledge, new behaviors, and attitude shifts.

- Capture and share patron outcomes from Library experiences.
- Use storytelling to show the transformative power of the Library.

C. Increased engagement with reading.

- Launch a reading initiative that centers reading across all of our work.

D. Programs and the collection reflect diverse viewpoints, beliefs, and lifestyles. *

- Develop the Common Ground initiative as a key resource to unite our community.
- Sequence programs to reflect a range of lived experiences and stories.

E. Expand opportunities for varied learning modalities, including experiential learning. *

- Provide more hands-on, experiential learning resources.

** denotes an objective that supports multiple goals*

A Range of Learning Pathways

The Westport Library believes in reading as a core driver of learning. Books and stories enable social learning, historical understanding, academic opportunities, and self-discovery.

In addition, we believe that learning takes many other forms — some tactile, some collective, some contextual. For this reason, our goal of Lifelong Learning focuses on expansive access to viewpoints, resources, and experiences — all at the Library.

Deliverables

- Integrated yearlong reading campaign that ties together WestportREADS, StoryFest, and other book-centric events.
- More outreach and communication about the Library's media offerings.
- Updated Common Ground Initiative program themes and framework.

Intended Outcomes

- Greater awareness of and use of the Library's experiential learning resources.
- Increased understanding of the Common Ground Initiative.
- Strengthened profile of reading as a key Library offering.



2 Reflecting our Patrons

The Library is at the core of the community: open to anyone and free to use. We exist thanks to and in service of the entire community, and we adapt continuously in that context.

Whether it's increasing the availability of a specific book, switching our digital reading platform for ease of use, or updating our service standards, we are strategically focused on being a Library that is for, of, and by the community.

A. Services and offerings take into account community feedback and trends.

- Increase public transparency into Library data.
- Diversify the use of spaces, rooms, and resources for various audiences and experience types.
- Unify feedback channels and data collection so that findings can be easily applied to improve programs and services.

B. Patrons increasingly report feeling valued, heard, and understood in every interaction.

- Adapt programs and services to meet community availability and interests.
- Roll out our Customer Service Standards for excellence in patron experiences.



Discover, Decide, Adapt

The Library's commitment to responsive and evolving practices begins with understanding and listening: discovery of how patrons use the Library, receiving feedback on what's still needed, and researching other best practices and opportunities.

This strategy is anchored in our use of existing data, as well as developing creative ways to gain new insights. We believe in the power of observation, dialogue, and analytics to reflect and adapt to our community.

Deliverables

- New pages on the Library website that share survey findings, insights, and anecdotes from patrons — and how they inform Library decisions.
- Quarterly report of key indicators for use in decision-making.
- An updated program matrix that guides diversity in public offerings based on topic, format, and audience.

Intended Outcomes

- Increased understanding of how the Library's decisions are informed by community-led feedback and insights.
- Improved documentation and access to key indicators of Library usage, gaps, and community needs.



3 Inspiring Creativity

**The creative impulse is at the origin story of all libraries:
We exist to offer free, public access to creative endeavors.**

**The Westport Library embraces creativity as a key
modality of learning and will strategically expand support
for creators, including through emerging technology.**

**We also recognize that kindling ideas requires us to affirm
our commitment to open exploration. Our programs and
collection will continue to showcase diverse viewpoints
and uphold the impartiality of the Library.**

A. Increased access to AI through instruction and guidance.

- Increase media-based training and engagement tools through Verso Studios and Verso University.
- Create a cross-functional curriculum for AI.

B. Expand opportunities for varied learning modalities, including experiential learning. *

- Diversify modalities to grow hands-on and experiential learning.

C. Programs and the collection reflect diverse viewpoints, beliefs, and lifestyles. *

- Capture and raise awareness of the presence of a range of viewpoints in the collection and via program topics and speakers.
- Maintain an active commitment to diversity and impartiality in programs and the collection.

** denotes an objective that supports multiple goals*

Partaking *and* Producing

Public library access is historically predicated on the patron taking in a resource: an idea, story, program, or even just a WiFi signal.

What if public library access also meant the opportunity to for patrons to put forth a new resource? The Westport Library embraces the creative spirit of our community by offering diverse, traditional, and technological tools to bring their own ideas to life.

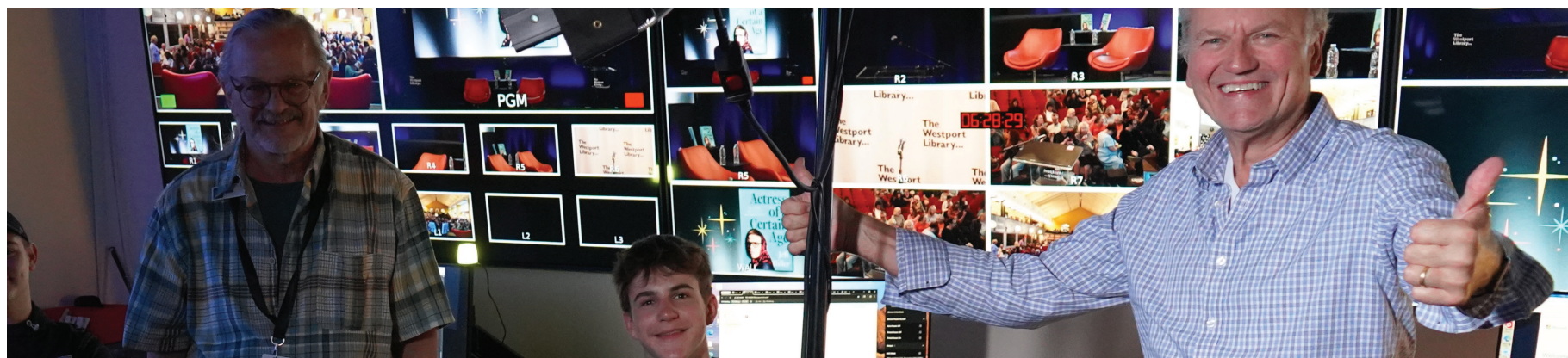
Whether it's recording a song, building a robot, or writing a new draft in a workshop, our strategy embraces the generative impulse of humans to tell their story in a way that reflects each of us as individuals.

Deliverables

- AI-based curriculum introduced for all ages.
- Pilot of new, hands-on learning opportunities through Verso Studios.
- Proactive communications about the Library's collection and program offerings of diverse and under-represented viewpoints.

Intended Outcomes

- Increased use of and participation in Verso Studios' educational and creator-focused offerings.
- Increase in the belief that the Library represents diverse viewpoints.



4 Community Connection

The Library's mission of providing equitable access for all informs its commitment to community.

We recognize the unique openness of our library as an asset that promotes inquiry, builds understanding, and fuels connection. And we understand that shared spaces, free and low-cost programs and services, and strong privacy protections are essential to a thriving community — a critical component of the Library's role in serving that community.

A. There is increased engagement in opportunities for dialogue and cross-cultural understanding.

- Develop the Common Ground initiative as a key resource to unite our community.
- Provide more hands-on, experiential learning resources. Diversify our community partnerships.

B. The Library offers shared spaces that are open to all, feature a wide range of community partners, and serve an array of community needs.

- Diversify our community partnerships.
- Roll out our Customer Service Standards for excellence in patron experiences.
- Maintain an active commitment to diversity and impartiality in programs and in our collection.

C. Programs increase knowledge and positively shift attitudes and behaviors.

- Develop the Common Ground Initiative as a key resource to increase community engagement around difficult conversations.
- Maintain an active commitment to diversity and impartiality in programs and in our collection.

** denotes an objective that supports multiple goals*

Open to Connecting

Unique among town institutions — from schools to clubs to associations — the Library has no residency requirement, membership application, or financial commitment. Additionally, the Library is impartial and does not promote or condemn points of view.

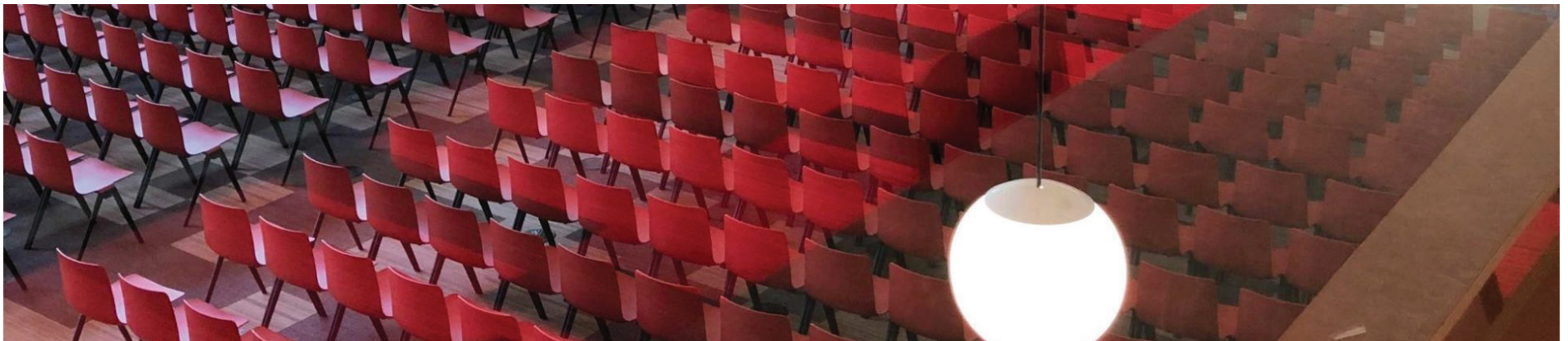
We believe that real connection is optimal in an environment of openness. Equal and free access to ideas — of all kinds and dispositions — is the bedrock of learning and the pathway to respectful, peaceful, and constructive community discourse.

Deliverables

- Updated Common Ground program themes and framework.
- Diversified list of partner organizations contributing to programs and services at the Library.

Intended Outcomes

- Increased understanding of the Common Ground Initiative.
- Increased sense of civic engagement among Library patrons and community members.
- Increase in the belief that the Library represents diverse viewpoints.



5 Operational Effectiveness

The Library is the steward of both public resources and private donations, provided for the community and individuals in it. We are committed to strategically deploying these resources to their highest and broadest purpose.

A. Increased use of technology and automation for greater effectiveness and efficiency.

- Develop technology, systems, and process adaptations for operational efficiency.
- Leverage existing technology to improve information accuracy and availability.

B. New tools, innovations, and practices are piloted and adopted.

- Expand the use of AI for workflow efficiencies.
- Establish capacity assessments and scenario-planning capabilities.
- Diversify the use of spaces, rooms, and resources for various audiences and experience types.

** denotes an objective that supports multiple goals*

Deliverables

- An updated financial system that integrates with existing technology.
- Refreshed cybersecurity and energy efficiency plans and approaches.

Intended Outcomes

- Greater staff use of function-specific AI tools.
- Increased data flows across various software systems.



6 Demonstrate Impact

The Library is accountable to the community, its staff, and its trustees to provide services and programs that meet the mandate of its mission. We believe it is a strategic imperative to demonstrate — through transparency, communications, and data-driven storytelling — how our work is creating an impact. This increases the Library's and the community's ability to hold itself accountable while also showcasing the many offerings — and achievements — of our work.

A. There is greater awareness of the Library's innovative cultural contributions.

- Share information through improved marketing and communications.

B. There is a greater diversity in how the Library's impact is presented to the community.

- Expand how, where, and to whom Library impact data is presented.
- Unify the Library's data collection strategy so that insights increasingly inform programs and services.

C. There is increased availability of qualitative and quantitative impact data and stories of impact.

- Unify the Library's data collection strategy so that insights increasingly inform programs and services.
- Develop technology, systems, and process adaptations for operational efficiency.
- Expand the use of AI for workflow efficiencies.
- audiences and experience types.

Deliverables

- Public impact page that documents and shares Library targets and successes.
- Updated and expanded feedback portals for patrons.
- Integrated software systems that capture and share information.

Intended Outcomes

- Increased access to Library impact data by staff, trustees, and patrons.
- Increased understanding of the Library's achievements and impact on the community.

** denotes an objective that supports multiple goals*

Stay engaged with The Westport Library

Contact Us:

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Library Hours:

Monday–Thursday: 9 am–9 pm
Friday: 9 am–6 pm
Saturday: 9 am–5 pm
Sunday: 1–5 pm