



Westport Public Library Strategic Plan

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

***Beginning July 2007**

Adopted by the Library Board of Trustees April 25, 2007

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The Westport Library: Engaging the Community, Building for the Future

This plan is the product of months of thoughtful consideration of our community's needs and desires for its public library. The work was done by the staff of the Westport Public Library, its Board of Trustees, and you, the members of our wonderful community. Reaching out to the community through the use of multiple focus groups and a survey on the Library's website, planners at the Library heard from over five hundred Westport residents who offered all kinds of worthwhile ideas and suggestions for improving the value of the Library in their lives. We listened carefully and worked together to devise a plan that we believe is responsive to the most frequently requested suggestions for improving the Library.

In the course of these efforts to learn from you we also got the clear sense that the Westport Public Library's importance to the community continues to expand well beyond its original - and still essential - role as a repository for books and a place for solitary research. Indeed, the Library has become the town's center for community activities and life-long learning, a cherished place for bringing people together to debate the issues of our day, to upgrade technology skills or to delight in film and music, art and literature-or a good cup of coffee in a precious moment of repose. In this information-intensive age, our librarians are playing a larger role than ever before in helping guide your inquiries so that your searches for knowledge are productive and the information you receive is reliable.

We have observed that in today's digital world, especially among our youth who have known no other kind of society, learning is a social activity where the boundaries between academic and social life are blurred. In this respect, it is clear that the Westport Public Library holds charms for all! More and more teens are using the Library as a place to study and to collaborate with their classmates on joint projects or to attend social events planned for them. Much younger children, their parents and their grandparents make dates to meet friends at programs in the Children's Library. Elementary school children come for chess tournaments. Local residents with home offices or limited office space of their own reserve our meeting rooms to assemble the people they need to further their objectives. Within the Library's four walls writers at all stages of their craft are nestling in their favorite spots, working on stories they want to tell. The number and variety of programs at the Westport Public Library is truly astounding and it reflects the real passion for learning which is a proud hallmark of our community.

This plan aims to ensure that the Westport Public Library remains a cherished municipal asset with a distinctive level of services. To do this it is a necessity that we must change with the times. We need a building with the versatility that permits our vision as a community to prosper. Instead of being able to expand our welcome, increasingly we are in the uncomfortable position of having to turn people away as we reach seating capacity. Our staff is stretched nearly to the limit as it works to overcome many physical limitations in the building in order to provide the excellent services we have come to expect from them. Currently, we are completing the initial steps to develop a transformation plan for the Westport Public Library that we expect will involve both renovating the Library and expanding its current footprint.

As we proceed, we will continue to include you in on the conversation. Although the word, "Public" is in the name of our Library, the Westport Public Library could not perform at its current level of excellence without the financial support of users like you. I earnestly hope you will help play a transforming role in this great civic project.

I want to conclude by thanking 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 members of the Library's Board of Trustees for their diligent stewardship, hard work, and dedication to this wonderful community institution.

Sincerely,

*James D. Seymour
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.

Stable 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 financial stability.

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

2007-2008

- a. *Podcast key library programs*
- b. *Improve the quality of library equipment such as copiers, microfilm reader/printers and fax machines*
- c. *Conduct a web usability study to ensure that patrons can easily navigate and find information on the Library's web site*
- d. *Establish a systematic approach to make sure that website content is responsive to patrons' questions*
- e. *Explore the addition of downloadable video to web services*
- f. *Evaluate Radio Frequency Identification (RFID) technology for implementation in future building plans*
- g. *Evaluate opportunities available for technology to streamline and automate routines and/or outsource services*

2008-2010

- h. *Evaluate the cost and benefits of offering real-time, online reference*
- i. *Install additional express checkouts on the main floor*
- j. *Provide wireless devices for use throughout the Library*

1.2 Implement more customer-focused services

2007-2008

- 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*
- c. *Create a “Personal Librarian” program to provide personalized service related to school projects for teens and parents*
- d. *Use a search aggregator to combine searches through all of the Library’s databases*
- e. *Offer and promote the Library as the place for regularly scheduled instruction on Internet and catalog use, Microsoft office and other software applications, email and emerging technologies*
- f. *Investigate opportunities for more convenient delivery methods*

2008-2010

- g. *Create customer profiles that allow relevant information to be pushed to interested patrons*
- h. *Market an after school homework help program*

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

2007-2008

- a. *Review and reallocate the collection budget in light of changing patterns of usage*
- b. *Continue the weeding program to renew the collection, create more open shelf space, and prepare for the building project*
- c. *Improve the quality of the DVD collection with routine cleaning and inspection*

2008-2010

- d. *Evaluate the Library’s potential to reach new audiences through new formats, including e-books and databases*

1.4 Increase library use by pre-teens and teens

2007-2008

- a. *Continue to provide staff training on working with teens*
- b. *Expand teen advisory groups to provide information and assistance in developing teens’ use of the Library*

- c. *Continue to work with the school system to sponsor teacher orientation and improve communication about homework assignments*
- d. *Explore the use of social networking technologies to reach more teens*
- e. *Develop programs to attract the interest of online gamers*
- f. *Expand the youth volunteer program with a variety of opportunities to assist the Library*

2008-2010

- g. *Create a Library newsletter targeted to teachers who work with pre-teens and teens*

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

2007-2008

- a. *Expand and institutionalize the library orientation session for all town employees, teachers and school administrators*
- b. *Create affinity groups to support social and professional communities such as writers and home-based business people*
- c. *Continue the relationship with SCORE (Senior Corps of Retired Executives) to offer Library programs for small businesses*
- d. *Develop an outreach program targeted toward community businesses*
- e. *Expand service to the homebound*

2008-2010

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

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

2007-2008

- a. *Highlight more readers' advisory information on the Library's web pages*
- b. *Continue to develop and implement readers' advisory training for staff*
- c. *Position the readers' advisory function so it is readily visible to library users*
- d. *Continue to promote the use of web-based book discussion groups and book blogs*

2008-2010

- e. *Develop a promotional campaign that emphasizes the Library staff's expertise in providing advice about current titles*

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

2007-2008

- a. *Train staff in effective marketing techniques*
- b. *Assign marketing responsibilities to specific staff members*
- c. *Explore new ways to anticipate demand and to respond to patron requests in a timely manner*

2008-2010

- d. *Create areas to provide information about library events and new selections*
- e. *Add additional merchandising areas to highlight the collection*
- f. *Evaluate the usage and future relevance of the world language collection*
- g. *Evaluate the usage and future relevance of picture file*

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

2007-2008

- a. *Offer a selection of children's DVDs with the rest of the children's collection*
- b. *Integrate a selection of audio and video materials with the adult print collections*

2008-2010

- c. *Relocate the parking lot book return to provide greater ease of use for drivers (as part of new building project)*

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

2007-2008

- a. *Find new sources of program support in the community*
- b. *Develop a series of programs focusing on hot topic issues that can be brought to the local level for discussion and debate*
- c. *Seek additional co-sponsors/partners for these programs*

- 2.2 Offer new programs to attract children, teens and adults who may not currently use the Library. Develop staff to act as intellectual facilitators to develop new programming and to guide new participants**

2007-2008

- a. *Open the Library for “First Friday” family focused programming on the first Friday evening of every month*
- b. *Increase collaboration with local arts institutions to present programs highlighting and complementing community arts events and exhibits*

2008-2010

- c. *Evaluate “First Friday” usage and consider opening the Library every Friday night*

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

2007-2008

- a. *Work with the Library’s architect to develop ideas for expanding and transforming the building*
- b. *Preview and test ideas for the new building with the community through meetings involving the architect*
- c. *Make changes in the current Library to conduct a “trial run” of new concepts for the expanded Library*
- d. *Work with the architect to develop schematic drawings that depict the Library of the future*
- e. *Work with town government and the community to obtain support for the building expansion and to develop a campus concept for the Library’s area of town*

3.2 Launch “The Library for the Future” building campaign in 2008, in time for the 100th anniversary of the Library

2007-2008

- a. *Meet with key community members to explain and promote plans for expanding and transforming the Library and obtain feedback*
- b. *Organize a campaign committee and recruit and train campaign volunteers*

- c. *Develop campaign materials for mailing to the community and for use in the media*
- d. *Create the internal processes required to manage donor pledges and gifts*
- e. *Launch the multi-year “The Library of the Future” fundraising campaign*

3.3 Create an organizational structure to ensure a successful building project

2007-2008

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

2008-2010

- 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

2007-2008

- a. *Host programs that create an opportunity to learn about the transformation of public libraries*
- b. *Create a Second Life presence representing ideas for the new Library*

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

2007-2008

- a. *Develop targeted marketing promotional materials to continuously attract the interest of specific groups – e.g. business owners, entrepreneurs, arts professionals.*
- b. *Promote on-site tours and “coffees” in the café for newcomers and other groups*
- c. *Create a changing “Top Ten” list of facts for local media regarding what everyone needs to know about the Library*

2008-2010

- d. *Assess staffing needs for a full time marketing/community relations position*

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

2007-2008

- a. *Launch a campaign to get a Library card to every Westport student*
- b. *Work with the town to establish the Library as a key component of the emergency preparedness plan and as a place of refuge*
- c. *Cooperate with local businesses to develop complementary marketing programs to encourage Library use*
- d. *Expand the Library's ability to provide information and resources for real time and online book clubs*

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

2007-2008

- 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

2007-2008

- a. *Work with the Advisory Council each year to help identify critical issues for their attention and support*
- b. *Assist the Friends of the Library to realign their goals with the new plan*
- c. *Identify new potential Library support leaders and enlist their involvement*
- d. *Identify groups of people who share service and support interests with 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

2007-2008

- 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. *Revisit the orientation program for new staff members for compliance and measurement issues*
- 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*

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

2007-2008

- a. *Establish goals for hiring staff to meet new demands*
- b. *Plan for technology upgrades and replacements*
- c. *Investigate RFID for use in current building for book returns*

Strategic Issue: Stable Financial Support

Goal 7: Develop a wider base of stable financial sources of support for the Library, including an endowment that can provide supplemental income

Strategies:

7.1 Establish fund raising targets for the strategic and building plans

2007-2008

- a. *Create a new committee comprised of members of all the Board's functional committees to establish a financial strategy for the next few years*

- b. Develop a fundraising target and capital campaign strategy to support building expansion*
- c. Set a specific fundraising goal for the Library's endowment to ensure ongoing library support*
- d. Examine additional ways that the Friends organization can strengthen the Library's development activities*

7.2 Increase contributions to the Library annual appeal campaign

2007-2008

- a. Create a committee composed of Trustees, Advisory Council members, Friends, and other Library stakeholders to lead the annual appeal*
- b. Provide fundraising training for the annual appeal committee*
- c. Expand the list of prospects to include all Library users*
- d. Establish a cultivation committee to plan events targeted to attract new donors*
- e. Consider the need for adding a full time development professional to the Library staff*
- f. Develop web pages specifically focused on the annual appeal, capital and endowment campaigns*

7.3 Increase funding for Library collections

2007-2008

- 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*
- 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

2007-2008

- 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:

<p>Measure levels of community satisfaction</p>	<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
<p>Monitor and measure levels of support</p>	<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
<p>Measure and analyze customer use</p>	<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
<p>Improve Library efficiency and effectiveness</p>	<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
<p>Increase the level of awareness</p>	<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
<p>Monitor the success of the community forum series</p>	<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, 2006

Consultants

Alan Burger
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¹ 2006 WPL Survey results