



Leading the Way: A Strategic Plan for the Westport Public Library 2004 – 2007

Adopted by the Library Board of Trustees

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I. A Message from the President of the Westport Public Library Board of Trustees

To the Community:

A large measure of the success of the Westport Public Library to date is due not just to the hard work and dedication of the high quality staff of the Library or the devotion and hard work of the Trustees, but also to the input, suggestions and support that we receive from the community. One of our major objectives is to ensure that the Library meets your needs and serves the whole community to the best of our ability.

We are now in the last year of the three year strategic plan begun in 2004 which was the result of the concerted efforts of many people from within the community. It is based on feedback we received from focus groups, interviews and research from which we were able to capture, assess and understand the needs and the desires of the community for its Library.

The common thread that has been very evident is that the Library is and should continue to be the center of this vital, dynamic and engaged community – that it should deliver products and services to help its patrons think, work and thrive, but that the Library should also provide programs to inspire and expand our minds and our lives as well as space in which groups may gather for meetings for study, work, education and entertainment. The support and encouragement of the community is critical to our success in fulfilling these goals.

We are now into the last year of the 2004 strategic plan. Our Board has once again reviewed the plan and this revised and updated version of the plan reflects and acknowledges the accomplishments achieved since its inception. It also highlights the next stages of our goals and what we need to do to achieve them. We are continually reaching out to the community to evaluate our progress and to determine where we need to improve or change.

As we finish this plan and begin to develop our next three year strategic plan (beginning in fiscal year 2008) we will again work closely with you to determine how best we can continue to provide the highest level of service, cutting-edge technology and a physical space and context to meet the ever changing needs of this community.

I close by expressing my appreciation for your confidence and for your support of the Library as a central institution in Westport. I would also like to express my gratitude to Maxine Bleiweis, our Director, for her inspired and energetic leadership and to the fine staff that she has assembled, as well as to the dedicated members of the Board of Trustees. Together we have made significant progress in meeting the goals we laid out in our 2004 strategic plan. Together we will establish and meet even more challenging goals for our next strategic plan.

*James D. Seymour
President, Board of Trustees
September, 2006*

II. Where We Are Going – Library Vision, Mission and Values

A. A Long Term Vision for the Westport Public Library:

The Westport Public Library will be the community's department store for the mind – a place for dynamic learning and personal growth.

As the Westport Public Library works to fulfill this vision, the Library and library users will experience the following when they use the Library and its services. The Library will:

- serve as a hub for community activity for all ages, from children and teens, to older adults.
- provide warm inviting space that provides opportunities for quiet study, conversation, browsing and formal programs.
- bring people together to provide an intellectual and cultural focus for the community.
- offer materials, programs and staff to support life-long learning.
- provide both a physical and virtual library readily accessible to the entire community when and where they need it.

B. Our Mission

The Westport Public Library, a sanctuary for all, offers unrestricted access to information, programs, and resources to satisfy the community's intellectual curiosity, provide enjoyment, and enhance the quality of life.

C. Our Values

Adhering to these values will ensure that we remain focused on a set of commonly held principles, ensuring consistency in our individual expectations and actions.

Within the **community** we will:

- provide equal access to all regardless of individual abilities.
- be responsive, sensitive, and non-judgmental in recognition of the diversity of our community.
- act as central focus for the community's personal and cognitive growth.
- proactively seek out opportunities to collaborate with individuals and community leaders, ensuring that their interests are heard, understood and accommodated.

As an organization the **Library** will:

- provide barrier free access to the Library and its collection, and ensure that our facility is clean, safe and welcoming.
- assure excellence in both the depth and breadth in our collections by assessing and responding to the changing demands of the community, without bias towards individual beliefs or interests.
- promote the Library in the delivery of its services and development initiatives through both traditional and modern communication methodology.
- conduct its business matters consistently with contractual agreements, state regulations and governing laws.
- maintain a modern facility and value technology, innovation and change.
- provide for the growth of the Library through ongoing promotion, sound financial development and comprehensive fiduciary oversight.

In recognition that our **staff and colleagues** will define our success, we will:

- recognize and embrace change as an integral part of the Library's evolution in response to dynamic changes occurring in our community.
- act and communicate towards all in an ethical and honest manner without regard to an individual's race, religion, political or personal interest.
- recognize and take advantage of the diversity and unique talents of the staff.
- promote staff development for professional growth as a shared commitment between employees and their managers.
- establish and communicate expectations of each other ensuring that relationships are positive and productive.

D. Strategic Issues

After reviewing the information from the focus groups and analyzing usage and demographic trends, library planners were able to organize the large amounts of information into a group of eight strategic issues to be addressed in the plan. These will guide the Library during the next few years.

Customer-Focused Services

Successful libraries provide services to the community that are easy to use. The Library of the future will work more efficiently, eliminate routine or redundant tasks and provide more direct customer-focused services. Automated book checkout and return, e-mail notification for late material, one-on-one training with a librarian, extended hours, drop-in story hour programs, and after school homework centers are among the new services that need to be considered.

Facilities

The importance of versatile and functional space to a library's success can not be overstated. A sharper focus on library layout and design can both improve library functionality and enhance the aesthetic appeal to the community at large. The Westport Public Library must represent a quality of excellence to its constituents, and a consistent eye must be placed towards improving service efficiencies and the ergonomic design of library spaces. This will allow the Library a space to provide the widest variety of community activities, from quiet reading and research to group studies, social space and programs.

Raising Awareness

The Westport Public Library needs to continuously communicate all that it has to offer. Current and potential patrons should easily know what the Library has, where to find it, and how to use it. Continuous promotion, merchandising and marketing will make the Library an even more attractive destination.

Technology

The impact of information technology is transforming the way in which libraries deliver service. More resources are available both for free and for a fee via the Internet. The ever-increasing number of resources on the web makes it difficult for the average person to identify and evaluate information. The technology revolution has created an environment of information "haves" and "have-nots". Many people rely on the Library as their only source of access to technology. Increasingly the library staff will be called upon to teach and coach in the use of these technologies. State-of-the-art technology will enable the Library to accomplish its objectives more effectively.

Community Connections

By pooling resources to reach specific groups, organizations can work together to achieve common goals. The Westport Public Library can work with social service and educational agencies in the area to extend library service and reach less-advantaged groups. By pooling resources with other cultural organizations, the community will benefit from expanded programming.

Staff Development

Great staff is vital to produce great library service. The Library of the future will provide highly trained staff in sufficient numbers to support the level of service expected by the community. The Library will invest resources to ensure that staff receives continuous training and skill development so they are proficient in the conduct of their jobs.

Resource Development

The Westport Public Library depends on tax support from the town as well as private donations to deliver library services. Increasing needs for additional private and public funding will require the Library to explore other avenues for generating support.

Services to Teens

Teens are valued library users. Consistent programming, staff dedicated to this age group, library resources that support their educational and leisure time reading interests and a wide variety of programs are essential to get teens thoroughly engaged in the learning opportunities at the Library.

III. Leading the Way: Goals and Objectives

This series of eight goals and objectives addresses those strategic issues identified during the planning process that are most important to the Library's success over the period, 2004-2007.

The August 2006 update to the Strategic Plan reflects revisions and additions to the goals set for the 2006-2007 fiscal year. Nearly all goals set forth in the Strategic Plan for the prior year (2005-2006) have been met and are now an integral part of the Library's operations.

Goal 1: Provide a wide array of library services and programs to enhance the library experience

The Need:

The Westport Public Library strives to provide content and experiences that appeal to our busy community. The Library serves a diverse and growing population, from both local and surrounding areas. To continue to act as an important destination, the Library must provide both consistent and useful services while modernizing its offerings. It should seek to serve, surprise, and excite its community as an important personal and community destination.

Objectives:

1.1 Reorganize existing space to create new opportunities for library use

Strategies:

2004-2005

- a. Purchase mobile display tables that can be used to display library materials *[completed]*
- b. Use signage, furniture arrangement and other techniques to help patrons understand how to use the Library's space *[completed]*
- c. Expand café seating *[completed]*
- d. Create a collection management document to guide library staff in collection development and space planning *[completed]*
- e. Create small meeting spaces within the Library *[completed]*

2005-2006

- f. Assess opportunities for other building enhancements based on consultant's recommendations *[completed]*

2006-2007

- g. Investigate solution to separation (two floors) of children's audio and video
- h. Investigate solution to separation of language audio, video and print collections

1.2 Market library materials more effectively

Strategies:

2005-2006

- a. Identify specific areas of the collection that could be merchandized and can be displayed outside of the normal Dewey Decimal order (e.g., travel, biographies) *[completed]*
- b. Work with marketing consultant to develop marketing materials and awareness *[completed and ongoing]*

2006-2007

- c. Provide staff training in effective marketing techniques
- d. Assign marketing responsibility to specific staff members
- e. Enhance the Dewey Decimal classification with visual clues to material location
- f. Anticipate new demand for older works of authors (i.e. when new works spark interest in backlist)
- g. Implement a more active and responsive selection process
- h. Explore enhanced display in Children's Library

- i. Evaluate usage and future relevance of world languages collection
- j. Evaluate usage and future relevance of picture file

1.3 Provide more customer-focused services

Strategies:

2004-2005

- a. Make adult and children's reference services more accessible and not intimidating to patrons *[completed and ongoing]*
- b. Standardize routines and establish standards for voice mail and e-mail *[completed and ongoing]*

2005-2006

- c. Expand "concierge-type" library service - e.g. reference by appointment, readers' advisory consultations, technology training by appointment *[completed]*
- d. Improve telephone service *[ongoing]*
- e. Make digital audio books available *[completed]*

2006-2007

- f. Create customer "profiles" so the patrons can receive information using computer technology
- g. Evaluate the need for an after school tutoring or homework help program
- h. Investigate opportunities for more personalized service, such as delivery of library materials (to commuters, etc.)
- i. Investigate the addition of passport services

1.4 Promote the Library and its staff as a source of advice about reading

Strategies:

2004-2005

- a. Provide readers' advisory training for staff *[completed and ongoing]*
- b. Position the readers' advisory function so it is readily visible to library users *[completed and ongoing]*
- c. Use the web page to highlight readers' advisory information *[completed and ongoing]*

2005-2006

- d. Prepare subject bibliographies that anticipate and respond to customer demands *[completed and ongoing]*

- e. Strengthen the Library's connection with local and on-line bookstores by sharing information on collection development trends and other observations *[begun, expand in 2006-2007]*
- f. Evaluate the feasibility of inaugurating web-based book discussions *[completed and ongoing]*

2006-2007

- g. Develop a promotional campaign that emphasizes the Library's distinctive talent in providing advice about current titles
- h. Create a reader's advisory team

1.5 Use technology to extend and maximize the value of library services

Strategies:

2004-2005

- a. Use e-mail to alert library users to library events and services *[completed and ongoing]*
- b. Obtain e-mail addresses of registered library users *[completed and ongoing]*
- c. Install express checkout in the children's area *[completed]*
- d. Improve the quality of library equipment such as copiers, microfilm reader/printers and fax machines *[completed and ongoing]*
- e. Establish a systematic approach to make sure that website content is responsive to patrons' questions *[completed and ongoing]*
- f. Publish electronic newsletters customized for subscriber groups with specific interests *[completed and ongoing]*
- g. Expand wireless access throughout building *[completed]*

2005-2006

- h. Investigate the cost/benefits of using smart cards, debit cards and credit cards to make it more convenient for library users to pay late fees, printing fees and other fees associated with library use *[completed and ongoing]*
- i. Install express checkout in the adult area *[completed]*

2006-2007

- j. Evaluate the cost/benefits of offering real time reference interaction online
- k. Experiment with podcasting
- l. Explore the addition of downloadable video to web services

- m. Evaluate Radio Frequency Identification (RFID) technology for implementation in future building plan
- n. Investigate purchase of new software for e-newsletters

2007 (+) Long Range Objectives

- o. Evaluate opportunities available with advanced technology to streamline routines and outsource services

1.6 Provide hours that make it easier for the community to use the Library

Strategies:

2004-2005

- a. Review the current array of hours and make recommendations for changes, including Sunday hours in the summer *[completed]*

2005-2006

- b. Evaluate the need for extended library hours during mid-term and final exam weeks *[completed by expanding café hours]*
- c. Assess changes in usage patterns to optimize hours of service *[completed]*

1.7 Provide more services, resources and programs for teens

Strategies:

2004-2005

- a. Establish closer liaison relationships with the middle schools and with the high school *[completed and ongoing]*

2006-2007

- b. Hire staff who will specialize in addressing the needs and interests of Westport's teen population *[completed]*
- c. Provide training for all staff on working with teens
- d. Create a teen advisory group to provide information and assistance in developing teens' use of the Library
- e. Provide teacher orientation and communication, including newsletter for teachers of teen students
- f. Improve communications with teachers regarding homework assignments
- g. Evaluate the use of technology to reach teens (e.g. MySpace)

1.8 Reach out to groups that are currently underutilizing the Library

Strategies:

2005-2006

- a. Develop a more formalized program for reaching the homebound and those who are temporarily unable to travel to the Library *[completed]*
- b. Provide a library orientation session for all town employees, including teachers and school administrators *[completed and ongoing]*

2006-2007

- c. Investigate creating affinity groups for social and professional communities such as writers and home-based business people
- d. Develop collections and services to serve specific groups such as business owners, home-based businesses, attorneys, caregivers, newcomers, the homebound and commuters
- e. Consider pay-as-you-go reference and research services for specific groups
- f. Provide more outreach to Main Street businesses
- g. Expand contact with and delivery service to the homebound

Goal 2: Increase the level of awareness about the Library in all segments of the community

The Need:

The Westport Public Library is more than a lender of almost 200,000 books, As services and programs grow, current and potential patrons may not be aware of the full scope of library resources or how to use them, either when visiting the Library or when using the Library's web site. From the focus groups and town meeting we learned that there are specific segments of the community who are currently underutilizing the Library – young parents, teens, entrepreneurs and those who are self-employed. The Library must identify ways to reach these groups, while finding new ways to communicate the wide range of library services to the larger public.

Objectives:

2.1 Through formal marketing strategies, increase Westporters' awareness of, and interest in, all the Library has to offer

Strategies:

2004-2005

- a. Provide articles about the Library for placement in communications outlets such as community newsletters and church and synagogue bulletins *[completed and ongoing]*
- b. Build partnerships with local realtors who can provide new homeowners and renters with information about the Library *[completed and ongoing]*
- c. Develop a brochure about the Library for new residents *[completed]*

2005-2006

- d. Establish communications strategy based on results of space planning studies *[ongoing]*

2006-2007

- e. Evaluate effectiveness of signage throughout the Library.

2.2 Create opportunities for residents to become more knowledgeable about the Library

Strategies:

2004-2005

- a. Develop on-site tours for newcomers and other target groups *[completed]*

2005-2006

- b. Appoint staff liaisons to community groups so that they can improve the Library's assistance to them *[completed and ongoing]*

2006-2007

- c. Develop a virtual/online tour of the Library accessible from the Library's home page
- d. Establish staff presence in the main lobby of the Library
- e. Hold focus groups and town meetings to learn more about the community's perceptions and ideas for the Library

Goal 3: Build broad-based community support for the Library

The Need:

The Westport Public Library can work in cooperation with social service and educational agencies in the greater Westport area to produce more events, extend library services and reach groups that might not ordinarily use the Library.

Objectives:

3.1 Develop partnerships with community agencies and schools

Strategies:

2005-2006

- a. Work with school administrators and the PTA groups to identify how the Library can collaborate and share resources and help students achieve academic success *[completed and ongoing]*
- b. Provide off-site library card registration *[completed and ongoing]*

2006-2007

- c. Identify community agencies and programs that could form an alliance with the Library

3.2 Develop partnership programs with area retailers, clubs and community organizations

Strategies:

2004-2005

- a. Provide information and resources for book clubs *[completed and ongoing]*

2005-2006

- b. Work with health professionals to promote library services that provide health and safety messages to library patrons and the larger community *[completed and ongoing]*

2006-2007

- c. Cooperate with local businesses to develop marketing programs that encourage library use

Goal 4: Establish the Library as a community forum – a place for ideas and discussion of current events

The Need:

Many focus group participants noted that the Library is one of the few public spaces in the community that can serve as the central meeting place for residents of all ages, backgrounds and interests. They observed that the Library already serves this function but could enhance this role through more thoughtful refinements in layout and seating. Residents would like to browse and linger in the Library as they meet with others in the community, attend activities, and discuss issues of domestic and international concern

Objectives:

4.1 Establish a Westport community forum program series

Strategies:

2004-2005

- a. Establish an advisory committee to identify issues for the program series *[completed]*
- b. Develop a series of programs focusing on issues that can be brought to the local level for discussion and debate *[completed and ongoing]*
- c. Seek co-sponsors/partners for these programs *[completed]*

2005-2006

- d. Explore ways for discussion to continue in the community *[completed and ongoing]*

4.2 Continue to offer programs that attract children, teens and adults

Strategies:

2004-2005

- a. Continue the “WestportREADS” program and encourage greater participation *[completed and ongoing]*
- b. Continue the Rabbit Hill Festival of Literature *[completed and ongoing]*
- c. Explore broadcast of library programs via CATV to expand the potential audience for library programs *[completed]*

2005-2006

- d. Collaborate with local arts institutions to present programs highlighting community arts events and exhibits *[completed and ongoing]*
- e. Increase the number and variety of programs for children year-round. *[completed and ongoing]*

Goal 5: Increase support for the Library by securing stable and secure sources of funding

The Need:

The Westport Public Library cannot rely solely on the town of Westport for all of its funding. Demands for library service will surpass the town's ability to provide required funding, especially in view of other municipal needs. For the Library to grow, it must receive continued support from the town as well as additional help from the Friends of the Library and other private contributors. In addition, the Library will need a significant endowment that can be relied upon to generate income each year to support services and programs that are beyond those that can be provided by existing sources.

Objectives:

5.1 Establish an enhanced annual appeal campaign for the Library

Strategies:

2004-2005

- a. Develop a fundraising appeal with funding targets for specific aspects of the campaign *[completed and ongoing]*
- b. Appoint a campaign committee composed of trustees, Friends and other library stakeholders *[completed and ongoing]*
- c. Provide fundraising training for the committee *[completed and ongoing]*
- d. Develop a list of prospects *[completed and ongoing]*

2005-2006

- e. Enable online contributions *(completed)*
- f. Add staff support to manage development efforts *[completed and ongoing]*

2006-2007

- g. Develop web pages specifically focused on the enhanced annual appeal campaign

5.2 Develop opportunities for increased support for library collections

Strategies:

2006-2007

- a. Identify materials, resources and equipment that the Library would like to purchase and announce these giving opportunities on the Library web page *[previously in 2005-2006 goals]*
- b. Develop a memorial and tribute gift program *[previously in 2005–2006 goals]*
- c. Develop a planned giving program *[previously in 2004-2005 goals]*

5.3 Enlist the help of the local business community in supporting the Library

Strategies:

2005-2006

- a. Develop a list of corporations/businesses that may be interested in sponsoring a program series, business-related services, etc. *[completed and ongoing]*

5.4 Increase the development skills of trustees, Friends and staff

Strategies:

2004-2005

- a. Work with staff to build awareness that every patron is a potential donor *[completed and ongoing]*
- b. Collect names of potential donors after positive encounters *[completed and ongoing]*
- c. Develop relationships with library users and send frequent “thank you” follow-ups *[completed and ongoing]*
- d. Increase the number of volunteers who are available to work on the Library benefit and fundraisers *[completed and ongoing]*

5.5 Identify the funding implications of the Strategic Plan

Strategies:

2006-2007

- a. Create a new committee comprised of members of all the Board's functional committees to establish a financial strategy [*previously in 2005-2006 goals*]

Goal 6: Enhance the Library's physical space

The Need:

Library patrons want attractive, welcoming space that is technologically current and large and functionally versatile enough to accommodate a growing variety of activities simultaneously – quiet reading, group study, casual conversation, technology use, research, small group meetings, and community programs.

Although relatively new, the Westport Public Library was designed and built prior to two major forces which are driving the design of today's public libraries: the desire for the bookstore/cafe and widespread public need for technology. Adding to the pressure to make library space more alluring is the public expectation that shopping, viewing and using public spaces will provide an "experience" as well as fulfill a need.

Finally, the staff does not have the "back office" operational space to work effectively or efficiently to support the current level of activity, nor is there enough room to safely handle basic shipping and receiving services.

Objectives:

6.1 Develop a marketing plan to initiate funding for "The Library of the Future" that highlights the approaching 100th anniversary of the Westport Public Library in 2008

Strategies:

2004-2005

- a. Write a building program [*completed*]
- b. Hire a space planner who can assess the current Library's shortcomings and develop a short term strategy for achieving the space improvement goals within the current "footprint" [*completed*]

- c. Examine external safety issues such as adequate outdoor lighting *[completed]*
- d. Identify the costs for making the desired Phase I improvements *[completed]*
- e. Begin the process to conceptualize a strategy for “The Library of the Future” to meet existing and future service requirements *[completed]*

2005-2006

- f. Verify the space plan proposed (“The Library of the Future” exploratory committee) *[completed]*

2006-2007

- g. Create building development strategy *[previously in 2005-2006 goals]*
- h. Develop a marketing plan to initiate fundraising for “The Library of the Future” construction, highlighting the 100th year anniversary of WPL *[previously in 2005-2006 goals]*
- i. Commence multi-year “The Library of the Future” fundraising campaign

Goal 7: Build and maintain an organization that supports the delivery of exceptional library service

The Need:

For the Library to remain successful in Westport, where residents expect excellent service, it must invest time and resources to ensure that its staff remains skilled and at the cutting edge of public library service.

Objectives:

- 7.1 Develop an ongoing program for staff development and training to meet changing organizational and community needs**

Strategies:

2004-2005

- a. Institute an annual staff development day to address management and service issues. *[completed]*
- b. Develop an orientation program for new staff members *[completed and ongoing]*

2005-2006

- c. Develop a list of tools and skills needed by staff to provide quality library service and design specific training opportunities to meet those needs *[completed]*
- d. Create a staffing plan reflecting evolving library requirements *[completed]*

2006-2007

- e. Investigate new Human Resources software for time reporting and for recruiting personnel

7.2 Develop tools that assist staff in doing their jobs more effectively

Strategies:

2004-2005

- a. Create an employee handbook and develop a new personnel manual *[completed]*
- b. Establish procedures to facilitate the budget process *[completed and ongoing]*
- c. Formalize procedures for hiring *[completed and ongoing]*
- d. Develop a records retention schedule *[completed]*
- e. Plan for technology upgrades *[completed and ongoing]*

2005-2006

- f. Develop a plan for future staffing and volunteer needs *[completed]*

2006-2007

- g. Develop an intranet for more efficient organization-wide communication
- h. Implement VPN (virtual private network) software to allow key staff to work from home
- i. Explore ways of managing email more efficiently, including staff training, rule applications, etc.

Goal 8: Foster a strong and effective group of library advocates to guide the growth and development of the Westport Public Library

The Need:

To achieve the goals of this plan, library staff, trustees, Friends, and other library stakeholders must work together in a carefully planned advocacy effort so that they can become key communicators in the community. The Library must focus on raising awareness of the Library's attributes, advocating for its needs and relaying back to library staff the public's perceptions of the Library's performance.

Objectives:

8.1 Improve the effectiveness of the Board of Trustees

Strategies:

2004-2007

- a. Provide regular orientation sessions for new and prospective trustees *[completed and ongoing]*
- b. Use technology to improve Board communications *[completed]*
- c. Ensure that the Board represents all segments and reflects the diversity of the community *[completed and ongoing]*
- d. Recruit trustees who have the needed expertise and influence within the community *[completed and ongoing]*
- e. Prepare Board members for assumption of leadership roles *[completed and ongoing]*

8.2 Develop additional stakeholder groups who could advocate for the Library

Strategies:

2004-2005

- a. Work with the Advisory Council and with the Friends of the Library to identify critical issues for their attention each year *[completed and ongoing]*
- b. Create a committee composed of trustees, members of the Advisory Council, members of the Friends, and other library stakeholders to lead the annual appeal *[completed and ongoing]*

2005-2006

- c. Maintain active involvement of former Board members *[completed and ongoing]*
- d. Identify potential library leaders and get more people involved *[completed and ongoing]*
- e. Identify affinity groups and groups of people who share interests with the Library and can contribute *[completed and ongoing]*

IV. Measuring Success

During the course of this plan, the Westport Public Library will use a number of ways to determine whether the Library is responding successfully to the community's needs. Each year, library staff and trustees will set aside time to assess their progress in meeting the goals and objectives outlined in this document. Goals and objectives will be modified depending on changing needs and circumstances during the planning cycle. The results of this annual assessment will be shared with the staff, with library stakeholders and with the groups and individuals who helped shape this plan.

In evaluating its success, the Westport Public Library will:

Measure levels of community satisfaction

2005-2006

- a. Develop and administer community needs surveys or conduct focus groups *[completed and ongoing]*

2006-2007

- b. Develop and administer customer satisfaction surveys

Monitor and measure levels of support

2004-2007

- a. Record and report levels of public and private support *[completed and ongoing]*
- b. Encourage and help guide the growth in numbers and activity level of the Friends of the Library *[completed and ongoing]*
- 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

2004-2007

- a. Record and report circulation statistics *[completed and ongoing]*
- b. Monitor collection turnover *[completed and ongoing]*
- c. Record and report numbers of library visitors *[completed and ongoing]*
- d. Record and report numbers of reference queries *[completed and ongoing]*
- e. Monitor and record numbers of people attending programs *[completed and ongoing]*
- f. Develop a method to record the frequency of computer use *[completed and ongoing]*
- g. Monitor and record frequency of use of databases and library web pages *[completed and ongoing]*
- h. Monitor the percentage of the population using the Library and set high goals for new registrations in each year of the plan *[completed and ongoing]*
- i. Develop baseline data about current library use and measure changes in use following building improvements *[completed and ongoing]*
- j. Develop baseline data about specific collections and determine levels of use if featured in special displays *[completed and ongoing]*

Improve library efficiency and effectiveness

2004-2007

- a. Measure the number of items loaned using self-checkout *[completed and ongoing]*

Increase the level of awareness

2004-2007

- a. Measure the number of new partnerships each year with realtors and other area businesses
- b. Measure the number of presentations to community groups *[ongoing]*

Monitor the success of the community forum series

2004-2007

- a. Record and report numbers of participants at programs *[completed and ongoing]*

Appendix

V. The Planning Process

Library trustees, staff 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 a town meeting, 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.

Approximately 200 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 will continue to offer service in one physical location but will extend its reach throughout the entire community through its web site and outreach services.
- Westport's population will not grow significantly but that 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.
- Westporters are willing to provide additional support needed for library services if there is something that attracts their interest and satisfies specific needs.
- the Library can become an even more important center for community activity and lifelong learning, bringing people together to share common values and concerns.

The planning process included:

Focus Groups and a Town Meeting

library staff, trustees and community residents met in a series of twelve focus group sessions and a town meeting facilitated by the planning consultant and volunteers. During these sessions participants discussed their ideas for improving library service, shared what they liked best about the Library, and identified areas needing improvement.

Meetings with Library Staff and Managers

The consultant met with library staff and the library management team on several occasions to explore concerns and solicit ideas for inclusion in the strategic plan.

Board of Trustees Retreat

The Board of Trustees met for a retreat in April 2003 to review the outcomes of the focus groups and the development of the Library's strategic plan. They developed recommendations and priorities to position the Library for the future.

Meetings of the Committee for the Future of the Library

A planning committee composed of trustees, friends, community representatives and staff met on several occasions to review the outcomes of the focus groups and town meetings, review staff and board recommendations for the plan, and finalize recommendations for future library directions.

VI. The Westport Public Library Now

One of the busiest public libraries in the country sits on the shores of the Saugatuck River. The Westport Public Library, while serving a population of 26,000, lends more materials than a number of large city libraries. For the fiscal year ending June 2006, the number of items loaned was 791,896 or 31 items for every adult and child in town. The Library's activity has increased almost 70% since renovations were completed in 1998, and now ranks as the 8th highest circulating library in New England (far surpassing Westport's 134th highest population ranking).

Attractions that draw Westporters and residents of other towns to this facility are:

- quiet reading rooms with current magazines and newspapers and incomparable views of the river
- a business reading room with carrels for laptop users alongside current business books and magazines

- a Children’s Library with books, toys, audio books and programs for kids from toddlers through teens. Nearly 2,000 children joined the summer reading club in 2006
- a Teen Alcove with the latest books and magazines for teens. Teen programs include an online summer reading club, and the “Poetry and Pizza” poetry slam. A Teen Library Services position was added in September 2006 to the library staff to serve this important population
- an Audiovisual Center with over 31,000 videotapes, DVDs, music CDs, and audio books
- reference services with professional librarians who can find answers to research questions using a wealth of information via online services, the Internet and in a large reference collection. Library users can ask questions in person, by phone or on the website (over 174,000 questions answered in the past year)
- 27 Internet workstations and wireless access for adults and for children
- personalized services to over 40 book discussion groups
- interlibrary loan services for books and magazine articles which can be located across the country or even around the world
- over 900 programs annually ranging from formal series such as The Malloy Lecture in the Arts (guests including Philippe de Montebello, Arthur Miller, Christo and Jeanne-Claude, and Billy Collins) and Technology Talks (with guests such as David Pogue) to author appearances (e.g., Erica Jong, Ann Brashares), community programs, and children’s programs
- meeting rooms accommodating groups of up to 125 people.
- art exhibits rotating quarterly in The Great Hall Gallery
- a café with light refreshments to enjoy while visiting the Library
- the Library’s web site, www.westportlibrary.org, that provides users with virtual access to the Library 24 hours per day, seven days per week. The site contains information pertaining to recommended reading, great website links, audio book downloads and online access to the Library’s holdings; in all there were almost 1.6 million electronic uses of the Library in 2005-2006

Each March, the Library sponsors the Rabbit Hill Festival of Literature, a gathering of award-winning children’s authors and illustrators. This unique symposium attracts teachers, librarians, writers, parents and children from across the region to celebrate and explore children’s literature.

In late spring, the Library hosts the Booked for the Evening gala. The recipients of the Westport Public Library Award, given to those who “nurture the love of learning and enhance our understanding of the world,” have been Tom Brokaw, E.L. Doctorow, Calvin Trillin, Wendy Wasserstein, Pete Hamill, Martin Scorsese, Arthur Mitchell, and Doris Kearns Goodwin.

The Friends of the Westport Library support all library programs, volunteer to help the Library in many ways, and organize the book sales. Volunteers stock the “Books for Sale” shelves daily in the Library, and a gigantic book sale is held in July along with two significant sales in the winter and spring.

A unique River of Names Historical Tile Mural depicts the history of Westport in pictorial tiles. An art catalog quality book published by the Library on this work of art will be used by the Westport schools in their local history curriculum.

Significant Accomplishments

Library trustees and staff can be proud of a number of significant accomplishments in the last five years that reflect the central importance of the Library to the Westport community. Among the most significant accomplishments are:

- increased town and private funding support for services
- the ability to meet demand for most titles and services
- a recognition and integration of the community’s needs into library services
- the integration of Friends of the Library services into library planning
- an increase in web-based services and technology advancements to meet new needs and expand the Library’s services to 24/7
- the inauguration of major events such as the Rabbit Hill Festival of Literature, Community Conversations, WestportREADS, Booked for the Evening and Harry Potter Night

VII. Listening to the Community

To learn more about Westporters and their library and information needs, members of the Committee for the Future invited community residents to attend a series of focus groups and a town meeting. Seven volunteer moderators and recorders along with the Library’s planning consultant conducted twelve focus groups and a town meeting discussion where they spoke with more than 200 residents about their ideas for the Library. Among the groups interviewed were:

- Newcomers to Westport
- Fourth Grade Students
- Middle School students
- High School Students
- Educators
- Business Professionals
- Out-of-Town library Users
- Regular library Users
- Stay at Home Parents
- Library Board of Trustees
- Committee for the Future of the Library
- Library Staff

A detailed report summarizing the discussion with each focus group is available in the Library’s reference department.

The Results

Westport residents and non-resident library users are enthusiastic supporters of the Library. They discussed and offered ideas for improvement during the focus group sessions. Although they were satisfied with many of the features and benefits the current Library offers, many wanted to see services enhanced and expanded to meet changing needs and to provide even better service.

These suggestions included:

- warmer, more inviting space
- more places to sit and talk
- more opportunities for social interaction and continuing education.
- a larger café
- staffing that provides more personal service.
- expanded access to the Library with more and different hours.
- expanded and easier-to-find collections
- services, programs and space specifically for teens
- changes in the Library layout to provide more seating and study space
- more access to Internet-ready computers and PC's.

Additional observations:

- research librarians are somewhat intimidating
- most Westporters aren't aware of opportunities and services available for business people at the Library
- more Westporters should know that the Library has more to offer than books on loan
- the Library should be more pro-active – reach out more to actively engage the community
- study areas need improvement
- most wouldn't think of asking the staff for adult reading recommendations but they do ask at the Children's Library and at Barnes & Noble
- very few patrons mind paying fines

The table on the following page provides information about each of the major areas identified for improvement and indicates which groups agreed that this was an important area for attention as the Library develops its plans for the future. The outcomes of these discussions provided the planning committee with a great deal of information to consider as they deliberated about future directions for the Library.

Table One: Areas Suggested for Improvement

Suggestion	Newcomers	4 th grade	Middle school	High School	Educators	Business	Out of Towners	Users	Stay at home	Board	Staff	Planning Committee
More hours				•	•	•		•			•	•
More personal service	•		•	•	•				•			•
Expanded collections	•	•			•		•	•		•		
Easier to find collections						•			•	•	•	
Larger café	•	•								•		•
Services for teens			•	•	•			•			•	
More seating						•				•		
More study space				•				•		•	•	•
More places to socialize	•		•			•		•	•	•	•	•
More PCs and Internet							•			•	•	•
More Library marketing				•		•						
More e-mail communication						•				•		
Easier to use catalog					•	•	•	•		•		•
Improved Web pages	•							•	•	•		
Warmer, inviting space		•	•	•	•			•	•	•	•	•
More meeting space	•			•				•		•		•
Improved newsletter					•		•		•			
More book advice	•	•		•			•		•	•		•
Staff nametags							•		•	•	•	•
More programs						•		•		•	•	•

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