FREE PUBLIC LIBRARY OF THE BOROUGH OF LONGPORT STRATEGIC PLAN

2020-2023

LONGPORT PUBLIC LIBRARY

2020

TABLE OF CONTENTS

I. PLAN IN A GLANCE

Core Values
- Service
- Responsiveness
- Innovation
- Accessibility

Mission

- To enrich the lives of the community by providing a center for information and knowledge. This will be achieved through the use of books, programs and up to date resources utilizing the latest technology.

Vision

- Involvement of the community regarding needs
- Living space for users
- Gathering space for users
- Gathering space for study groups
- Learning activities
- Social Interactions

Goals

- INCREASE USE - Facilitate maximum community use of library resources and services through local and remote access.
- SPREAD AWARENESS - Attain widespread community awareness of the full array of library resources and services.
- FOSTER COMMUNITY - Make the library a dynamic place to be.

Measures of Success

- High ratio of property owners: satisfied card holders (satisfaction judged through formal surveying and informal direct feedback).
- Circulation (print and digital), program attendance, and visitation increased/maintained, in keeping with rate of active card holders.
- Increased digital engagement of library's online presence.
- Staff retention and positive morale.

Selected Projects

- Improve tools for surveying to ensure responsive programming and events.
- Form a staff technology committee tasked with guiding the library's technology goals with an eye on the initiatives.

II.   CORE VALUES

Core Values

SERVICE

Among the Longport Public Library's highest priorities is patron satisfaction. Staff endeavor to provide a positive experience to every community member who comes through the door. Great customer service is a consistent focus of staff training and coaching.

RESPONSIVENESS

As our community changes with the seasons and through the years, so will the Longport Public Library. Collections, programs and initiatives are tailored to meet evolving needs, and in some cases, to introduce the community to resources of which they may not yet be aware.

INNOVATION

The Longport Public Library is in the unusual situation of having a significant non-local patron base. Innovations in delivering service are an essential part of the Library's strategy.

ACCESSIBILITY

The Longport Public Library strives to cultivate a sense of welcoming such that community members turn to us first with information requests, or for education and cultural enrichment.

III. SUMMARY

In 2019 the Longport Public Library decided to embark upon a strategic plan to guide the library's direction for the next three years. The Strategic Plan Committee convened in the summer of 2019 and worked to gather data from the community and staff. It crafted a mission for the strategic plan and identified a renewed vision for the organization. After identifying our core values and analyzing the data, we organized a comprehensive plan that will guide us into the future.

Public libraries are dynamic organizations that are most successful when they can adapt flexibly to meet changing community needs and utilize emerging technologies and trends. This plan is a living document, intended to inspire and guide our ongoing goals to best meet the needs of the Longport community while granting us the flexibility to innovate when facing challenges.

Our planning process led us to the following three strategic initiatives.

- INCREASE USE - Facilitate maximum community use of library resources and services through local and remote access.
- SPREAD AWARENESS - Attain widespread community awareness of the full array of library resources and services.
- FOSTER COMMUNITY - Make the library a dynamic community center.

IV. PLANNING PROCESS

A Strategic Plan Committee, comprised of members of the Board of Trustees and the Library Director, carried out a planning process from August 2019-January 2020.

August 2019
In August 2019, the Planning Committee convened to identify a process for strategic planning. Their initial meeting resulted in the following goals for the plan:

- Gather a Mission and Vision Statement for this plan
- Gather data from patrons, staff, and the community
- Increase efforts to gather data from Borough tax-paying non-users.
- Identify the Library's strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and challenges.
- Use data gathered to formulate strategic initiatives.
- Develop a project list to address the initiatives.

September-October 2019
Data-gathering began in September 2019. The library survey was posted online. The community was encouraged to take the survey through the library's social media platforms, monthly email newsletter, flyers, and postcard mailers. At well-attended library events, patrons were encouraged to complete the survey.

November 2019
During November 2019, the Director began analyzing data and outlining the plan. The Director presented the survey results to the Library Board at the November meeting.

December 2019
At the December meeting, a draft of the Strategic Plan was submitted to the committee for review.

One common thread of discussion with staff and Board was, "How will we ensure that we stay on target?" In order to stay on target, the strategic plan will have key areas to meet in stages. Each stage will have goals that have to be met, which will help to make sure we are keeping on track with the goals of the plan.

As outlined in the Community Background section of this document, the user base is nontraditional, due to Longport's status as a resort community. However, patrons need not be year-round residents to use the library. The Borough of Longport supported our effort to reach the community by promoting the survey through social media. A postcard directing people to the survey was also sent to community members.

V. COMMUNITY AND LIBRARY OVERVIEW

In order to effectively strategize, the Strategic Planning Committee identified the following areas of planning focus:

- Community – Comprised of the Longport community and their values, aspirations, and expectations of the Longport Public Library.
- Library Capabilities – The materials, collections, staff proficiencies, and technology available to fulfill the expectations of the Community.

By analyzing these two areas and the ways they relate to each other, the committee attempted to focus on the most needed and valued library services in order to best meet the community's expectations.

Community Overview

The Borough of Longport is a coastal resort community in Atlantic County, NJ. As in other seasonal resort communities, the library works to serve both the year-round and seasonal residents that make up the town. Adults and families residing in Longport year-round enjoy the pleasures of a small, close-knit, civic-minded community. Children attend the Margate public school system. Residents make use of restaurants, and recreational facilities and participate in a variety of civic and social organizations throughout the year. Those who consider Longport to be a seasonal destination tend to spend the majority of their time on the island during the summer months and occasionally on weekends and holidays throughout the year. Typically, these seasonal residents come to Longport during their leisure time seeking a variety of recreational and cultural opportunities. They take advantage of Longport's beaches, bays, and ocean, as well as restaurants, and recreational facilities, including the library.
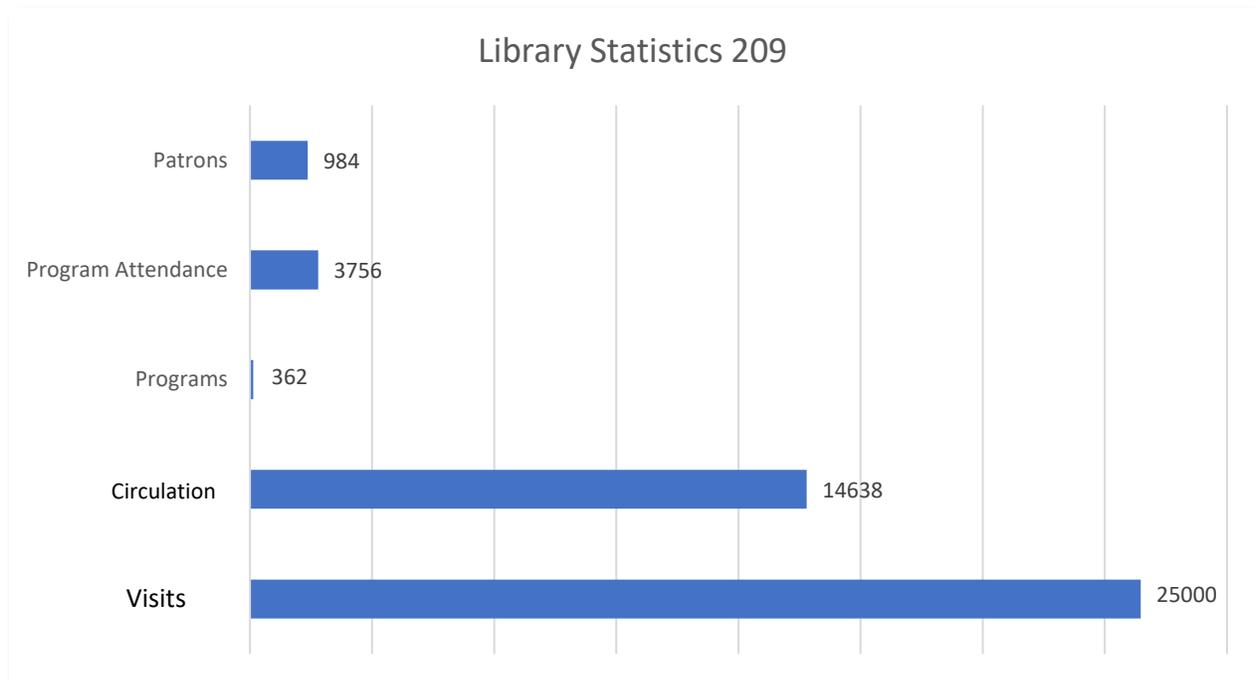
The demographics of Longport change with seasonal population migration. As a popular coastal resort community, the core population at the height of the summer exceeds 15,000. During the off-season, Longport is a community of 895 (2010 census) where the median age is 61.4. The unique nature of Longport's shifting population is reflected in housing. The 2010 census showed 1,656 housing units in Longport, of which 470 were occupied by permanent residents, with the balance for seasonal use. These statistics illustrate the difficulty of effectively reaching non-users of the LPL.

Library Overview

The Longport Public Library serves as a hub for both year-round and seasonal communities. A significant majority of year-round residents have active library cards and use them often. Many seasonal residents also have cards and use them throughout the year, taking advantage of both traditional library services as well as remote services such as online resources.

The Library is open six days per week year-round (seven days in summer), with hours until 8pm two days per week. Materials, programming, and educational and cultural opportunities are offered throughout the year. Marketing efforts have been substantially increased in recent years in an effort to ensure that residents and property owners are aware of all that the Library has to offer both onsite and remotely.

Library Use January-YTD (Year to Date)

Library Statistics 209

Category	Value
Patrons	984
Program Attendance	3756
Programs	362
Circulation	14638
Visits	25000

CIRCULATION

Library circulation continues to climb throughout the year, especially during the summer months. We attribute this to the fact that our patrons do not have to wait long for their materials and that they can also access a variety of different formats, both print and digital.

PROGRAMS

Programming is a significant part of the way we serve the community. By offering a wide range of recreational and educational programs throughout the year, we support our goal of acting as a cultural center and community hub in Longport. Ongoing efforts to balance the need for ongoing off-season programming with larger scale recreation-based summer programs continue to drive and support the process. Both program quantity and attendance continue to increase as staff and the community bring new ideas for different programs.

LIBRARY USE

With the increase in digital circulation, it is reasonable to consider the impact on library visitation. One may feel that increased off site circulation could lead to fewer library visits each year. However, library visitation has remained steady. One possible conclusion credits the increase in digital circulation to cardholders who are taking advantage of the library's remote services, while continuing to visit the physical location at the same rate.

PATRONS

The Library's patron base continues to increase card holders since we started our new ILS system in June of 2019.

- 984 patrons
  - 712 Residents
  - 272 Non-residents

When considering these figures with the demographic data shared in the community overview above, it is clear that Longport property owners largely value and use their public library. Maintaining this level of use is an ongoing goal and helps to drive the planning process.

VI. ANALYSIS & SURVEYING

To plan effectively, the committee identified a survey as the primary data gathering. The results of these efforts were used to guide the planning process. A brief summary of the data gathered is included below.

What are our strengths?
- Loyal and supportive community
- Standout customer service
- Knowledgeable & experienced staff who provide patrons with individualized and responsive service
- Collections
- Targeted & collaborative programing throughout the year
- Opportunity to offer innovative & unique services, both onsite and remotely
- Access to tools that help us market services and reach community
- Community outreach & involvement
- Location

Where can we reassess and improve?
- Signage and space (appropriate venues for programs)
- Outreach tools
- Uniform staff proficiency of all available technologies
- Historic resources available digitally
- History References

What can we do to meet community needs?
- Keep working to make the library a source of connection for entire community
- Working with local business/organizations
- Explore new social media avenues
- Expand off-season programming & pilot new formats and collections
- Surveying
- Extending hours
- Expanded training for patrons and staff & tools to support our online resources

What stands in our way?
- Space challenges
- Retail providers of books/streaming/technology

VII. STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES

Goal 1: INCREASE USE - Facilitate maximum community use of library resources and services through local and remote access.
The Longport Public Library strives to be responsive by both providing what its users are asking for, and by anticipating resources they will find useful. The Library also prides itself on the breadth of its offerings, meeting a wide variety of needs and requests.

Strategies
1. Curate digital resources to ensure they are innovative and relevant.
2. Identify new initiatives to boost year-round and seasonal visitation.
3. Modify & improve the library facility.
4. Increase collections and programming for both year-round and seasonal residents.
5. Identify new resources and programs that might be of interest to patrons.

Goal 2: SPREAD AWARENESS - Attain widespread community awareness of the full array of library resources and services.
In order for the Longport Public Library's creativity and innovation to be impactful, the community must be aware of Library resources and services. Due to the resort nature of the town, Longport experiences a great deal of turnover in community members -- making marketing a top priority.

Strategies

1. Identify opportunities for varied marketing approaches.
2. Expand staff community outreach.
3. Develop and maintain community partnerships.

Goal 3: FOSTER INNOVATION - Make the Library a creative and dynamic place to be.
The Longport Public Library is proud to support a team of enthusiastic, service-minded individuals. In turn, it is our goal to ensure that team is given opportunities to communicate and execute innovative ideas in a supportive and structured environment.

Strategies
1. Expand employee professional development process.
2. Create a framework for evaluating and implementing new technology and resources.
3. Evaluate nontraditional resources for identifying new innovations.

VIII. MEASURES OF SUCCESS

One of the most essential parts of the plan concerns our ability to gauge our progress. Below are a set of measures we will use to ensure we are meeting our objectives. They will be reviewed quarterly by the Strategic Plan Committee.

1) **Strong positive ratio of property owners: card holders.**

Ensuring the community's property owners possess and use their library cards has always been a tenet of the Library. A strong positive ratio of property owners to card holders shows that those who fund the library are making use of its collections and resources.

2) **Circulation (print and digital) and visitation increased/maintained, in keeping with rate of active card holders.**
By tracking visitation and resource use against the current rate of active card holders, library staff can be sure collections and resources are aligned with community interest, and when needed, make adjustments.

3) **High engagement in Programming through the year and in summer time.**
Continue to offer new and different programs. Keep track of attendance to see what programs work and do not work.

4) **Staff retention and positive morale.**
Our first core value is service. Ensuring that staff approach their responsibilities and the community with great service in mind is key to the library's success. By fostering an environment that supports its employees, along with their creativity and innovation, we are working to ensure the library is a creative and dynamic place for staff and patrons alike.

APPENDIX

Strategic Projects 2020-2023

Goal 1: INCREASE USE - Facilitate maximum community use of library resources and services through local and remote access.

Strategies

1. Evaluate digital services to better serve patrons, especially remote users, and ensure less barriers in accessing online resources.
   o Develop easy to use tutorials to assist patrons with the use of online resources.
2. Curate digital resources to ensure they are innovative and relevant.
   o Remove apps and databases that are underused. Use the funds to explore new resources or better support existing popular resources.
3. Expand off site programming
   o Continue to expand library programming in the community center and gazebo area.
   o Work with community partners to improve town wide programming.
   o Identify potential ways to reach library patrons who are unable to get to the library (Book Mobile, Library by Mail, programming).
4. Identify new initiatives to boost year-round and seasonal visitation.
   o Expanded cultural programming, year-round.
   o Increase nontraditional loans, including technology and games.
5. Modify & improve the Library facility.
   o Improve building signage and atmosphere.
   o Make the children's area more engaging.
   o Examine computer area and look to add additional technology equipment.
6. Identify new resources to increase remote accessibility of historic and government collection through digitization and other tools.

Goal 2: SPREAD AWARENESS - Attain widespread community awareness of the full array of library resources and services.

Strategies

1. Improve the framework for ongoing analytics.
   o Devise better tools for surveying to ensure responsive programming and events.
2. Identify opportunities for varied marketing approaches.
   o Market digital collections via both high (social media ads) and low tech (postcard mailer) tools to reach a broader demographic.
3. Develop and maintain community partnerships.
   o Share information about Library resources with community groups to increase engagement.

Goal 3: FOSTER INNOVATION - Make the Library a creative and dynamic place to be.

Strategies

1. Expand employee professional development process.
    o Gather more ongoing employee feedback concerning both broad and specific organization initiatives, through meetings.
    o Continue to encourage individual staff responsibilities.
    o Provide more opportunities for training and new duties to staff at all levels.
2. Create a framework for evaluating and implementing new technology and resources.
    o Form a staff technology committee tasked with guiding the organization's technology goals with an eye on the initiatives.
3. Evaluate nontraditional resources for identifying new innovations.
    o Encourage staff to explore technology and innovation resources and conferences to maintain awareness of emerging trends and how they might relate to the library world (virtual reality, artificial intelligence, predictive analytics, mobile commerce, etc.).