

## The Strategic Planning Process

Strategic planning began in early 2016, when all staff members were introduced to the Aspen Institute's People Place, and Platform vision of public libraries. At that point, Staff members were invited to complete several of the initial Aspen planning exercises. At the same time, staff members who were interested in serving on the Planning Team began to explore additional planning tools such as the American Library Association's classic planning tool, *New Planning for Results*, and the more recent ALA *Libraries Transform* resources developed in conjunction with the Harwood Institute. Finally, several staff members found *The Purpose-Based Library* by John Huber and Steven Potter to be a relevant planning resource.

In June 2016, all staff were invited to participate in a half-day event designed to encourage employees to assess their job roles in terms of the functions or services provided to the public, rather than as location-based assignments. In addition, staff were encouraged to "dream for the future" by listing ideas for changes and improvements in three categories: doable immediately, doable with additional effort, and "pie in the sky" – projects that require planning and additional resources in terms of staff and funding.

At this point, a 10 member staff planning team was identified, representing all library divisions and locations. Together, this group established a planning 5-6 month timeline consisting of three phases: organizational self-assessment, community needs assessment, and plan development.

In phase one, in addition to the activities already completed by staff members, two members of the planning team worked on evaluating existing library performance measures using annual statistics as well as Analytics On Demand, a geographic information system (GIS) that combines local demographic data with information from a library's ILS to generate real-time reports on circulation trends and patron lifestyles. Finally, staff in each library division as well as the Library Board and Library Foundation, were asked to complete the Aspen Institute's SOAR assessment.

Phase two activities began in June and lasted until mid-September with the creation of a community survey and a community profile. To these were added a series of Community Conversations following the Libraries Transform/Harwood Institute model.

In phase three, planning team members analyzed the survey results, the Community Conversation feedback and the staff and Library Board input. What emerged from that process were the four areas of focus and related objectives for the new plan. Team members then solicited input from staff as to appropriate initiatives for each objective. Finally, the Planning Team examined recent plans from libraries around the country to identify an appropriate structure for the final document. We are proud to share our finished product.

## **Mission**

**Welcoming all, the West Hartford Public Library brings people, information and ideas together to enrich lives and strengthen our diverse community.**

## **Vision**

All people in West Hartford will have the opportunity to use the Public Library to empower themselves to reach their potential, to pursue life-long learning, and to access ideas and information freely in order to enrich the cultural, social and economic vitality of our town.

## **Values**

West Hartford Public Library values its staff and their ability to:

- Inspire patrons to discover and pursue their talents by providing the tools and the environment for creative collaboration.
- Provide professional, friendly service to each patron, every time they use library resources.
- Strengthen our diverse community by promoting literacy and lifelong learning
- Be a welcoming center for free and equal access to information; a place where knowledge and community connections are built.
- Explore and embrace new information technologies and assist patrons in learning the skills needed to use them.

The Library operates efficiently and effectively on behalf of the Town of West Hartford.

*Explore - Learn - Connect*

*Approved by the West Hartford Public Library Board,  
November 28, 2016.*

# West Hartford Public Library Strategic Plan 2017-2022

## Enhance Access to Information

Objective A: Develop collections that reflect community interests and provide access via preferred formats and media

1. Explore ways to increase patron-driven collection development
2. Support and launch efforts to provide library collections and services in non-traditional settings
3. Provide public access to unique local content through continued collection development and digitization projects
4. Expand Readers Advisory services to increase discoverability of books

Objective B: Increase awareness and use of library resources

1. Increase number of library cardholders
2. Expand staff awareness and expertise in subscription databases
3. Improve public awareness and expertise in subscription databases
4. Increase children's and teens' use of online resources through the libraries

Objective C: Connect our community to the online world and emerging technology

1. Advance digital literacy, engaging users at all levels of technology proficiency
2. Upgrade library technology to enhance user experience
3. Explore ways to serve patrons for whom the library is the only access to technology

## Engage the Community

Objective A: Explore interactive digital user experiences

1. Experiment with online reader's advisory service
2. Increase use of social media
3. Allow remote access to select library programs via skype or other methods to groups who are unable to attend programs in person

Objective B: Develop a master plan for all library programming

1. Create rubrics to ensure that all library programs support the library's mission
2. Establish a programming budget line
3. Create a clear framework of program tasks and responsibilities at each library location
4. Assess new and existing programs for relevancy, timeliness, and return-on-investment

Objective C: Develop a variety of program experiences to engage all segments of our community

1. Increase multicultural programming and collections
2. Celebrate West Hartford's creative communities
3. Increase opportunities for all families to participate in library events

Objective D: Be receptive and responsive to community needs

1. Identify and cultivate two-way connections to community expertise
2. Review opportunities for neighborhood organizations to utilize library space
3. Explore opportunities to offer classes on library resources in community locations

Objective E: Strengthen Volunteer Program

1. Develop volunteer management plan and identify staff facilitator(s)
2. Explore options to recognize volunteers

## **Maximize Physical and Virtual space**

Objective A: Offer flexible spaces that meet the evolving needs of our customers

1. Evaluate current space use at each library location with respect to collections, programs and user services.
2. Create environments that accommodate existing and emerging technologies and facilitate digital learning
3. Create library spaces designed to support innovative educational and cultural services
4. Encourage creativity and collaborative learning in our digital and non-digital spaces

Objective B: As facilities are upgraded, incorporate features to allow for increased and improved customer service

1. Upgrade and refresh library space to make WHPL a comfortable and easy to use environment
2. Explore ways to make Main/adult level more welcoming and inviting
3. Use new technologies and systems that allow staff to focus on direct user experience

Objective C: Meet community expectations for open hours by developing schedules based on local demand.

1. Reevaluate all library hours to make most functional/useful to WH residents by library location.
2. Explore additional funding for adding service hours

Objective D: Offer a website that engages our customers and meets their evolving needs

1. Review and clarify staff responsibilities via a website and content
2. Develop a process for assessing website usability
3. Increase online services and program offerings

## **Practice Good Stewardship; strengthen the Library's capacity to fulfill its mission**

### Objective A: Evaluate the Library's Service Model to Increase Opportunities for Staff to Teach and Inspire Users

1. Working with staff teams, review existing procedures and workflow to optimize customer service and efficiency
2. Advance the on-going implementation of a supported self-service model to increase use, and enhance the ability of staff to focus on targeted service goals
3. Use new technologies and systems to allow staff to focus on direct user service
4. As facilities are upgraded, incorporate features to allow for increased and improved customer service
5. Create a long-term staffing, professional development, and performance plan to incorporate expected changes in library service models

### Objective B: Maximize opportunities for ongoing staff development

1. Encourage all full-time staff to participate in professional conferences, workshops, or roundtables 2-3 times annually.
2. Provide two all-staff development opportunities each year.

### Objective C: Review internal financial, budgeting and spending procedures

1. Work with town finance department to review internal controls for purchasing and invoice approval
2. Streamline purchasing across the system
3. Work with town finance department to revise budget categories to reflect organizational changes

### Objective D: Focus on pursuing local and national grant opportunities

1. Identify existing staff member(s) with skills to discover and write grants
2. Encourage all professional staff to work with grant writer to develop grant-funded projects

### Objective E: Expand fund development efforts through a variety of methods

1. Work with the West Hartford Library Foundation, Inc. and Friends of the West Hartford Library to define and distinguish their roles vis a vis fund raising for the West Hartford Public Library
2. In conjunction with the Foundation and Friends, develop a coordinated, written Development Plan. The Plan shall include, but not be limited to:
  - a. Prioritized strategies with key targets and time frames by segment, to facilitate each organization's ability to raise funds from private donors through donor cultivation
  - b. Menus of donor options/levels with personalization of donor materials. Development of additional donor cultivation materials, whether for an Annual Giving Campaign or for

singular Capital or other Major Projects should identify ways to help and support the Library such as sponsorships for library programs and/or services, Library Wish List Programs and other purposes to be identified from time to time

- c. Mechanisms to ensure that contributions are recognized in a timely and appropriate manner. Thought should be given to ways to recognize contributions by giving level
- d. Strategies to support planned giving as well as specific gifts for the endowment of the Library