



## **2016-2018 Strategic Plan Sayreville Free Public Library**

When a resident is asked why Sayreville is such a good place to live, they will answer "It's the library."

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## **1. VISION**

**When a resident is asked why Sayreville is such a good place to live, they will answer “It’s the library”**

## **MISSION**

**The mission of the Sayreville Public Library is to provide resources, programs, services, experiences, and an environment that collectively inspire lifelong learning, advance knowledge, and strengthen our community.**

## **2. Letter from the President of the Board of Trustees**

*Our goal is for Sayreville Public Library to be the vibrant center of the community; a place where residents of all ages can meet to share ideas, find programs to expand personal growth, and utilize resources that inspire lifelong learning.*

*In order to meet this goal, a strategic plan was developed for 2016-2018. A committee comprised of the library director, professional staff, and trustees worked to structure the plan. The committee utilized data from a needs assessment, community input from focus groups, current usage measurements, and a SWOT (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats) analysis. With this information, goals, objectives, and tactics were developed to guide us during the next three years.*

*Although budget issues are a reality and library funding has decreased significantly, we continue to look for new ways to meet the challenges facing our library in this digital age. This strategic plan will serve as a framework for library staff and the Board of Trustees to further enhance the current level of service to the community.*

*Anne Pulnik  
President, Library Board of Trustees*

### **3. Acknowledgements**

#### **Strategic Planning Committee:**

Susan Kaplan, Director  
Sue Paul, Trustee  
Lisa Payne, Trustee  
Karen Perno, Trustee  
Leah Kloc, Senior Librarian, Youth Services  
Alaina Dowd, Librarian, Adult Services  
Pamela Gunter, Librarian, Youth Services

#### **Board of Trustees:**

Christine Dominik  
Yvonne Kronowski  
Richard Nemshick  
Sue Carol Paul  
Lisa Payne  
Karen Perno  
Bernadine Puchalski  
Anne Pulnik

Our thanks to the many New Jersey public libraries that publish their excellent strategic plans, notably Cherry Hill Public Library, Westfield Memorial Library, Hamilton Free Public Library, and Ocean County Library.

#### **4. Planning Methodology**

There have been several prior planning initiatives. A strategic plan was under development in 2006 and again in 2011, but neither was completed. In 2009-2010 a needs assessment was performed by an outside consultant. The result was used as a roadmap for improvements, both large and small, and much of the assessment is still accurate and useful.

In 2015 a planning team was assembled comprising the library director, trustees, and professional librarians. The earlier needs assessment provided community input via user groups and a town hall meeting. The director and librarians conducted a SWOT analysis based on ALA guidelines. The planning team developed goals, objectives and tactics.

## 5. Executive Summary

### **Our Vision:**

**When a resident is asked why Sayreville is such a good place to live, they will answer “It’s the library.”**

Since the 2009 needs assessment, the library has made tremendous progress towards meeting the expectations of residents. The purpose of this plan is to present the ways to achieve and surpass the current and future needs and expectations of the community. To that end, we have defined the library’s mission:

**The mission of the Sayreville Public Library is to provide resources, programs, services and an environment that inspire lifelong learning, advances knowledge, and strengthens our community.**

and identified five major goals:

**Goal #1: Support the goals of the extremely diverse community through access to education and information services. Provide convenient, friendly, knowledgeable and consistent services that result in solutions for library users.**

**Goal #2: Foster a culture of innovation embracing emerging technology and information literacy**

**Goal #3: Provide a comfortable, clean, and safe environment for exploration and inspiration, for members of the community**

**Goal #4: Be a visible and engaged presence in the community**

**Goal 5: Develop and maintain a qualified, diverse, and innovative staff and encourage professional development**

The main challenges will be finding the means for: sustaining and improving service levels as funding decreases, dealing with the inadequacy of the facility to serve the increasing population, raising awareness about the library in the community, and updating and renovating the existing facility and equipment.

## 6. Profile of Sayreville Borough

The 2010 U.S. Census reported that Sayreville had 42,704 residents. The Census Bureau estimates that the 2014 population of Sayreville is 45,262, an increase of 6%. There are over 15,616 households.

	Sayreville	New Jersey
<b>Population, 2014 estimate</b>	45,262	8,938,175
<b>Population, 2010 (April 1) estimates base</b>	42,702	8,791,936
<b>Population, percent change - April 1, 2010 to July 1, 2014</b>	6.0%	1.7%
<b>Foreign born persons, percent, 2009-2013</b>	26.8%	21.2%
<b>Language other than English spoken at home, pct age 5+, 2009-2013</b>	33.7%	30.0%
<b>High school graduate or higher, percent of persons age 25+, 2009-2013</b>	91.5%	88.1%
<b>Bachelor's degree or higher, percent of persons age 25+, 2009-2013</b>	33.9%	35.8%
<b>Mean travel time to work (minutes), workers age 16+, 2009-2013</b>	34	30
<b>Per capita money income in past 12 months (2013 dollars), 2009-2013</b>	\$34,440	\$36,027
<b>Median household income, 2009-2013</b>	\$77,918	\$71,629
<b>Persons below poverty level, percent, 2009-2013</b>	5.7%	10.4%

From the needs assessment:

*Sayreville is still viewed by many as a small town of small, distinct neighborhoods where neighbors know and care about each other. The local public schools and public services are in high demand for a growing and increasingly diverse population. There are multiple generations of residents who call Sayreville home. The senior population has grown and looks forward to enjoying retirement at home in their own community. Plus there are many newer residents and new immigrants who are attracted to the area for various employment, economic or social reasons.*

	Sayreville	New Jersey
<b>White alone, percent, 2010 (a)</b>	67.0%	68.6%
<b>Black or African American alone, percent, 2010 (a)</b>	10.7%	13.7%
<b>American Indian and Alaska Native alone, percent, 2010 (a)</b>	0.2%	0.3%
<b>Asian alone, percent, 2010 (a)</b>	16.1%	8.3%
<b>Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander alone, percent, 2010 (a)</b>	Z	0.0%
<b>Two or More Races, percent, 2010</b>	2.4%	2.7%
<b>Hispanic or Latino, percent, 2010 (b)</b>	12.3%	17.7%
<b>White alone, not Hispanic or Latino, percent, 2010</b>	59.4%	59.3%

## **7. Community needs**

The library is located between the high school and the middle school, which aligns with traditional library use by students for homework and research. However, the community is now more focused on a library that provides solutions for a wider variety of needs, including using technology to conduct routine personal business, English as a second language, resources and opportunities for lifelong learning, access to information and entertainment content, and a venue for connecting with other people who share similar interests.

The library has 30 public computers which are constantly in use. Some residents do not have access to a computer at home or at work. Other visitors find it convenient to use the library computers near their work or for telecommuting. The emergence of e-government means that people who may not have computers or computer skills, are required to conduct personal business with all levels of government agencies, such as IRS, Department of Labor, the Social Security Administration, and the healthcare marketplace, and the local schools.

Convenience is a major priority of the community. They would like to see longer operating hours, and would like the library to have popular books and movies always available to borrow. Since they are offered fee based on demand access to information and entertainment by commercial providers, they would like to get the same easy, on demand access from the library for free. Patrons would like to bring or buy food and drinks in the library, which requires more outlay for cleaners.

## 8. Library profile

The library is governed by a board of trustees appointed to five year terms by the mayor. The nine member board also comprises one year appointments of a Mayor's Alternate and a Superintendent of Schools alternate.

Key facts:

- The library is an 18,000 square foot facility which was constructed in 1969. Children's and reference rooms were added in 1979.
- The library is open to the public 61 hours per week. Hours of operation include evenings, Saturdays (except in July and August), and Sundays.
- There are 20.25 FTE (full time equivalent) employees including full time and part time staff.
- From 2009-2016 funding levels have declined while the population and library use increased:

	2009	2010	2011	2012	2103	2014	2015	2016	% change
<b>Municipal aid</b>	1,823,100	1,765,697	1,731,135	1,663,741	1,566,941	1,454,833	1,460,975	1,498,367	<b>-19.95%</b>
<b>State aid</b>	37,420	19,160	19,679	18,899	18,709	18,561	18,701	18,674	<b>-50.40%</b>
<b>Receipts</b>	46,931	51,227	51,421	54,305	50,690	53,543	50,000	50,000	<b>6.54%</b>
<b>Total Funding</b>	<b>1,907,451</b>	<b>1,836,084</b>	<b>1,802,235</b>	<b>1,738,957</b>	<b>1,636,340</b>	<b>1,526,937</b>	<b>1,529,676</b>	<b>1,567,041</b>	<b>-17.85%</b>

## 9. Strengths and successes

A SWOT analysis was conducted in September 2015 to identify Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats. Input was collected from librarians, trustees, and the library director. The entire analysis is included below.

Library strengths:

- our commitment and expertise delivering excellent customer service
- a skilled workforce
- professional behavior of staff
- convenient hours of operation and ample parking
- remote access via the library website
- high quality, relevant collections and resources
- cost efficient purchasing and scheduling of staff

The library has improved services in many areas that were identified in the needs assessment. Adult programming has expanded, collections have been tied closely to patron preferences and needs, major technology upgrades have been completed, and more technology assistance and training is offered. The former reference room was renovated and redesigned as a quiet study room, offering comfortable seating, fixtures wired to enable connecting devices, and a variety of seating options for work, study, and reading. The wireless network was expanded for faster, more reliable service. Policies were developed and shared with staff to improve consistency.

## 10. Level of Use 2012-2015

	2012	2013	2014	2015 Estimated
<b>Active Cardholders</b>	<b>19950</b>	<b>22543</b>	<b>22992</b>	<b>23000</b>
<b>Library visits</b>	<b>216231</b>	<b>219990</b>	<b>214726</b>	<b>196000</b>
Circulation	221855	214116	193068	176000
ELibraryNJ loans	5362	7288	9269	10200
Database uses		6858	2716	10956
Online classes		3408	4866	3315
Zinio digital magazine uses			1177	1740
<b>Total Library Materials Used</b>	<b>227217</b>	<b>231670</b>	<b>211096</b>	<b>202211</b>
Adult programs	239	276	266	375
Childrens' programs	258	236	209	225
Teen programs	24	30	23	15
<b>Total programs</b>	<b>521</b>	<b>542</b>	<b>498</b>	<b>615</b>
<b>Website visits</b>	<b>95431</b>	<b>86721</b>	<b>93097</b>	<b>87000</b>
Unique visitors	4243	4447	4078	3603
<b>Public computer sessions</b>	<b>26627</b>	<b>28104</b>	<b>30530</b>	<b>28600</b>

## **11. Challenges and needs**

### **1. Environmental factors**

A primary concern for many residents is the library's response to the needs of Middle school and High school students directly after school. The library board and administration needs to continue to find additional ways to provide a safe and friendly environment for residents of all ages. This includes having an easy to use and un-crowded entrance and exit, easier and quieter access to the computers, especially after school. The main lobby needs to be redesigned and enlarged, to work for all library patrons and staff.

### **2. Hours and Access**

Consider expanding access to the library by adding hours on weekends and evenings. Residents comment about the need to use the library evenings and on weekends throughout the year. Library users are pleased with the weekday hours of the library and want it to become even more convenient and accessible.

### **3. Programs for all ages**

Residents see the library as an already great place for children, though there is more that can be done to attract more children and their caregivers into the library at different times. Residents also expect the library to continue to offer and expand the types of adult programs that are currently offered to include more formal ESL and citizenship classes.

### **4. Demand for instruction and assistance for standard and emerging technologies**

The challenge faced by libraries in offering technology is how to teach staff and the public to use computers to support Internet searching and other uses. There is high demand for computer instruction in various Microsoft Office applications, email, and other uses. Patrons generally expect immediate assistance using library computers, printers, and other equipment. They strongly prefer assistance rather than instructions, and employees are often interrupted from serving library users to provide technology assistance. These technology-related needs are now being met but should be expanded. This will depend on a budget that supports the existing staffing levels and programming.

## 5. Awareness

A deliberate plan is needed to inform residents about all the library offers and the value the library brings to the whole community. The library needs to develop an identity campaign using a recognizable logo, colors, and icons that are used on all library information and materials including the library card and website. A community relations professional would be helpful in developing these projects. The library needs to publicize itself as the primary place in Sayreville to come to for information and resources (print and digital), the latest bestselling book and/or DVD, and the place for relevant and fun programs for the whole family.

## 6. Sayreville has outgrown the library building

The Sayreville Public Library facility does not meet the current needs of the Sayreville community and is deficient in many areas. There is a gap of 15,420 square feet in needed library space to provide modern library service to an ever growing population. The lack of space to provide modern library services prevents the library from offering a convenient and comfortable environment in which residents can use computers, books, audio and video resources, and attend children's and adult programming.

## 12. Strategic Initiatives

***Goal #1: Support the goals of the extremely diverse community through access to education and information services. Provide convenient, friendly, knowledgeable and consistent services that result in solutions for library users.***

### **Objectives:**

- A. Offer customer-focused service throughout the organization so that users have positive experiences every time.
- B. Provide free access to vast collections of quality resources in multiple formats and languages
- C. Promote literacy, learning, and the love of reading for all ages.
- D. Embrace and support changes in community lifestyle, use of technology, and cultural preferences.
- E. Identify underserved segments of the population and expand services or marketing as needed

### **Tactics:**

- 1. Perform continual assessment and selection of materials and information resources, including comparisons with commercial on demand content streaming
- 2. Strengthen negotiation with vendors of all print and digital content for lowest pricing
- 3. Maintain and update information retrieval skills
- 4. Promote use of online resources
- 5. Continue active membership in the LMXAC library automation consortium

6. Ensure that collections are neat and well organized and that catalog records are accurate
7. Provide a robust website for convenient access to information services that the library offers (the library catalog, online holds, renewals) and easy connection to other authoritative resources.
8. Upgrade the telephone system to provide adequate extensions and typical phone features
9. Extend hours of operation and improve the facility as library resources allow.
10. Develop and review policies and procedures to improve the user experience. Implement policies and procedures consistently.
11. Enable use of credit cards at circulation, give change for printing and copying and sell prepaid copy cards.

***Goal #2: Foster a culture of innovation embracing emerging technology and information literacy***

**Objectives:**

- A. Provide free access to computers, wi-fi Internet, and scanners
- B. Ensure that library users have the skills needed to optimize their use of resources and programs.
- C. Accommodate user preferences for contacting the library using electronic resources. Understand how they use technology to conduct business and for social connections.
- D. Track changes in popular use of new and existing technology to ensure compatibility with existing library technology.
- E. Improve overall Borough communication to residents

**Tactics:**

1. Develop a technology plan to ensure adequate, reliable and robust computer access.
2. Provide patrons with assistance, training, and helpful information handouts for using computers and other popular technology devices
3. Partner with Borough IT staff to improve Borough and library communication to residents by leveraging our expertise and experience.

***Goal #3: Provide a comfortable, clean, and safe environment of knowledge for exploration and inspiration for members of the community***

**Objectives:**

- A. Offer an adequate facility for the population size with appealing, neat spaces, uncrowded spaces for circulation, collections, reference, meetings, studying, staff space, and storage
- B. Continue to provide free access to a broad variety of educational and cultural materials
- C. Continue to provide a broad variety of free programming for all ages
- D. Expand opportunities and resources that help build and unite the community and enable residents with similar interests to learn and share their knowledge
- E. Optimize the use of all areas of the existing library building
- F. Ensure the physical safety of patrons and staff

**Tactics:**

1. Seek cost effective ways to sustain collection development and programming
2. Renovate the worn interior and improve the grounds
3. Advocate for capital additions and improvements
4. Define whose responsibility and whose resources will be used to maintain and repair the facility and grounds
5. Offer classes and materials for ESL and citizenship
6. Offer discussion groups for reading, writing, and other lifelong learning
7. Apply for special project grants and traveling exhibits
8. Relocate the Young Adult room to be further from the reference desk and the quiet study room
9. Create an internet bar with easily accessible charging for phones and devices
10. Develop a service level agreement with Public Works
11. Implement and disseminate an emergency plan
12. Partner with the Borough Recycling Coordinator to implement a recycling plan including containers and signage

***Goal #4: Be a visible and engaged presence in the community***

**Objectives:**

- A. Promote the library as the sole provider of many popular services and programs in Sayreville
- B. Increase library membership to a clear majority of residents
- C. Raise awareness among local officials and commission members about the return on investment that residents receive from the library

- D. Get a seat at the table when Borough initiatives and partnerships are discussed
- E. Enable library users/supporters to make their feelings known to elected officials

**Tactics:**

1. Forge partnerships with Borough departments, agencies, commissions, and local schools
2. Foster communication and collaboration across community organizations. Bring people/organizations together to discuss issues, consider joint ways to approach issues
3. Hire a dedicated marketing/public relations specialist
4. Develop and implement a vigorous marketing plan via traditional means and social media
5. Update and expand the library BRAND
6. Seek opportunities for outreach to schools and preschools
7. Develop marketing initiatives to draw and welcome new residents
8. Cultivate partnerships with local businesses and organizations
9. Install an electronic events sign at the entrance
10. Follow local activities to identify shifts in the political environment

***Goal 5: Develop and maintain a qualified, diverse, and innovative staff and encourage professional development***

**Objectives:**

- A. Ensure that staff always deliver excellent customer service
- B. Offer consistently high quality reference and information services so that the library is seen as a trusted source of reliable information

- C. Project a highly professional image in verbal and written communications
- D. Optimize utilization of current resources and staff
- E. Advocate to patrons, elected officials, and supporters

**Tactics:**

1. Cultivate a pleasant, welcoming environment
2. Provide staff development training in customer service and other related topics
3. Continually raise awareness of key issues facing the Library, among the trustees and library staff, so that they can be informed advocates.
4. Redirect nonprofessional staff to provide assistance to patrons using technology.
5. Train and oversee more volunteers
6. Divert students who use the library for after school care away from library users and service desks

## 13. SWOT Analysis

This analysis provides an overview of the current performance of the library. It will be used as a benchmark of where we stand now, and ultimately as a tool to refine the major goals of the strategic plan and to develop objectives and strategies to attain those goals.

### **STRENGTHS**

*What are your library's strongest contributions to your community?*

*What does your library do that no one else does?*

*What do your users like best about your library?*

#### **Staff responses**

- Free access to vast collections of quality resources in multiple formats and languages
- Skilled information retrieval
- Engaged Board of Trustees
- A committed Library Director who is a strong advocate for the organization
- Free access to computers, wi-fi Internet, and scanners
- Providing assistance to users of technology devices
- Broad variety of free programming for all ages
- Book discussion groups
- Convenient location, open 61 hours per week, seven days/week, ample parking
- Comfortable seating and workspaces for the public
- Robust website
- Vigorous marketing via traditional means and social media
- Community outreach to schools and preschools
- Convenient access to the library catalog, online holds, renewals
- Skilled staff dedicated to providing excellent customer service
- Library seen as a trusted source of reliable information
- Collections, programs and services to support lifelong learning
- Friends group fundraising
- Partnerships with other area libraries, Borough departments and commissions, and schools
- Positive word-of-mouth and welcoming new users
- Library membership increasing

- Clear policies and procedures in place
- Professional staff with excellent written and oral communication skills

### **Trustee responses**

- The role that our library plays in the community has significantly increased over the years. We go beyond just offering books for borrowing and Internet resources. Our library provides a wide range of programs and services for people of all ages, backgrounds and cultural diversity. Patrons come seeking help, to connect with others, and some to get access to information and services they might need. While some patrons use the library for pleasure, others may be using it assist their career or their education.
- Patrons have expressed they like the fact that the librarians are knowledgeable in their area of expertise and also friendly and ready to assist those who need help.
- Parents of Middle Schoolers and High Schoolers like the fact that our library is within walking distance from their child's school.
- Our library is centrally located in our town.
- Place where people can connect and learn skills so they can be relevant in the digital age
- A depository of materials in a variety of formats available to all patrons
- Users like the hours of operation, the welcoming staff and options of free activities that are offered
- Reference librarians who learn the operation of new technological devices in relation to their use by the public in the library environment and elsewhere.
- Availability of computers, printers, and copy and fax machines for use by the public.
- Availability of Wi-Fi.
- Availability of on-site educational and recreational programs for all age groups.
- Most of the users I know have expressed their satisfaction in obtaining most books they have requested. They make a comparison to years back when this was not so.

## **WEAKNESSES**

*In what areas does your library have fewer resources than you need?*

*What else needs improvement?*

*What do your users wish you did better?*

### **Staff responses**

- Programs are often filled to capacity and popular materials have long waiting queues
- Inadequate staffing that are expected to provide information services as well as assist patrons with technology
- Users perceive borrowing or access validation as inconvenient
- Users perceive rules, fees, and fines as unfair or inconvenient
- Telephone system is inadequate and lacks important features
- Overall building size too small for serving the Sayreville population
- Facility cannot accommodate or absorb even reasonable noise levels or cellphone use
- Weekday influx of students after school detracts bona fide users from coming to the library and draws money away from core services to security
- Spaces for staff and storage are inadequate
- Many outdated and worn spaces need to be renovated
- Cannot accommodate or fund larger collections of popular items
- Outdated, worn circulation desk is unwelcoming and presents a bad image
- Users want to use credit cards at circulation and get change for large bills
- Lack of clarity regarding whose responsibility/budget for repair and maintenance of the library
- Many residents do not use the library - just over half the population are library users
- Lack of formal ESL classes
- Lack of formal Citizenship classes

### **Trustee responses**

- Generally speaking our library is small. The foyer/entrance usually has lines of people waiting to check out their books. It would be ideal to put on an addition or a second story.
- Not sure, but perhaps continue to provide everything for free? Also allow more time on the computers that are available for use.
- Hours of operation—survey the public to determine where need is greatest.
- Space—the need for a larger lobby and additional meeting rooms has been established.
- Communication—reach out to the public that does not know about or use the library.
- Unstable funding
- Not many new large print books available.
- Lack of lighting on library entrance sign that makes it especially difficult to see in the dark.

## **OPPORTUNITIES**

*What could you do if only your library had the resources to do it?*

*What is happening in the world now that you would like to take advantage of?*

*How can your strengths open doors to opportunities for your library?*

### **Staff responses**

- Expand the facility
- Expand the website content
- Use paid advertising to reach non-users
- Install electronic events sign at the entrance
- Renovate the interior and improve the grounds
- Train and oversee more volunteers
- Apply for large grants and traveling exhibits
- Expand teen services and relocate teen area
- Take a leading role in improving Borough communication to residents
- Internet bar with easily accessible charging for phones and devices
- Develop a technology plan
- Cultivate additional partnerships
- Branding
- Efficiency-better utilization of current resources and staff
- Innovative fundraising ideas
- ESL and Citizenship classes

### **Trustee responses**

- Build a second story or a sizeable addition and increase the size of the library in general. Add on a room specifically for a “maker space” and buy the equipment necessary for it.
- Develop a public relations campaign that focuses on all that the library and its staff have to offer.
- Prepare in-depth articles with photographs, not just announcements of upcoming events.
- Investigate available grants and write grant applications.

- Later evening hours would accommodate some working people.
- Include youth in library planning inasmuch as they are part of our future.

## **THREATS**

*What is happening in the world that could impact your library negatively?*

*What library services are provided elsewhere with greater ease for users?*

*What weaknesses leave you vulnerable to cuts in or competition for your services?*

### **Staff responses**

- All costs are rising beyond current and expected future library funding levels
- Lots of free content is available online
- Commercial vendors are offering on demand content streaming
- Prices of devices and content streaming are coming down
- Private bookstores
- Readership is declining
- Lack of direct communication between library users and elected officials to voice their needs and funding concerns
- Shifts in local political environment/new leaders with different agendas
- Competing with other municipal services for support and funding
- Becoming irrelevant

### **Trustee responses**

- Funding cuts have a negative impact on our library.
- Programs and classes that are available in larger libraries cannot be provided due to lack of funds
- Possibility of further reductions of funds that would cause cuts in staffing and services.
- Apathy on the part of the community