



STRATEGIC PLAN 2018—2021

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INTRODUCTION

The Milford Public Library traces its roots back to 1745 with the establishment of The First Society Library of Milford. Over the ensuing years, the Library facility, collections and services have drastically changed; however, what hasn't changed is the library's commitment to providing exceptional service to our community.

The Library is now poised to begin a new era of service. Our last long range plan was completed in 2001 and since then, evolving expectations, new technology, and constricted resources challenge us more strongly than ever even as we operate in an exciting time of change and transition for libraries. Our goal was to listen to our community and understand their expectations and hopes for the library while educating them on the possibilities of new, potential library services.

This Strategic Plan is the result of extensive work on the part of dedicated community members, library staff, and Library Board members who worked together to define a shared vision and mission for our library for the immediate future. In order to ground the plan in the community, we placed a lot of weight in the public knowledge gained from community conversations and other methods of engagement with the people we serve. We learned that those who live and work in Milford aspire for a greater sense of connection with one another, are facing new economic challenges and opportunities, place a high value on literacy, and desire more transparency and ease in civic awareness and engagement.

Community partnerships play a critical role in the library's success. First and foremost is the supportive relationship of the City's governing body. The City provides 96% of our funding as well as operational support of the facility through shared town services. The Friends of the Milford Library, another steadfast partner, provide financial support for most of our programs, and its volunteer members contribute their time and talent in a variety of ways. Yet always, our most treasured partnership is with the community we serve.

This three year plan charts the course for even greater community engagement, responsible growth, and enhanced offerings and services. We are proud to present this to the community and are committed to using it as our guidebook for future growth.

Christine Angeli
Library Director

PLANNING PROCESS

A successful public library reflects the needs and vision of the community it serves. In order to assure that the City of Milford was at the center of the new strategic plan for the Milford Public Library, input from a wide range of community members was sought. The resulting revised mission statement and strategic goals have been directly informed by the feedback that was received, combined with a careful look at worldwide trends and forward-thinking approaches to library services.

In crafting of the Milford Public Library's new Strategic Plan, the opinions of over 600 Milford residents were recorded. Residents participated in focus groups, took an online survey, were interviewed, and attended Advisory Council meetings. Below is a brief description of the data collection process which took place in January 2018.

- A series of four focus groups was held in January 2018. Groups were comprised of business owners, clergy, middle schoolers, and parents of young children. A total of 30 individuals participated. Four telephone interviews with "key community stakeholders" were also conducted.
- A survey, in online and paper form, was available from January 12 to February 1, 2018. 536 individuals completed the survey.
- An Advisory Council, consisting of 14 members of the Milford community, was created. This group met four times to learn about 21st century libraries and strategic planning, hear the results of the community assessment, craft a community vision, and select the library's service priorities.
- A Work Group, composed of three Board of Directors members, the library director, and four staff members, met four times to review the community needs assessment and library data, conduct a SWOT (strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, threats) analysis, develop a new mission statement, and write goals, objectives, and measurements based on selected service priorities.
- Input from Library staff was solicited through a staff survey, interviews with seven key staff members, and general participation at staff

meetings, including one session focused exclusively on the development of action steps.

- Consultants also reviewed materials including demographic and census data, city board and commission minutes and reports, and news stories.

THE COMMUNITY

The community assessment process gives the library the opportunity to take a step back and take the pulse of the community. By understanding what brings people to Milford - location, including access to highways and transportation, beach and shoreline, and connections to family members - and the current challenges they are facing - the changing economy and social isolation - a public library is able to provide responsive services and programming.

As data from surveys, focus groups, and interviews were analyzed, two major issues facing Milford residents surfaced: economic pressures and a sense of disconnection. Economic pressures are being driven by shifts in employment including increases in the “gig” economy and entrepreneurship; shifts from the traditional manufacturing base; a lack of new developable space within city boundaries; and increasing need in the community for basic social services.

Residents also expressed a sense of disconnection. While in the survey respondents reported feeling the greatest level of community interaction at community events, schools, and downtown businesses and restaurants, an interesting theme emerged. As stated by one survey respondent, “even at Oyster Fest, when the community is physically together, you only spend time with the people you already know.” There is a desire to find meaningful ways to engage with fellow residents.

understanding
accepting
forward-thinking
educated
open-minded
fun
diverse
inclusive
supportive
friendly
caring
kind
helpful
safe
open
empathetic
thoughtful
creative
intelligent
healthy
loving
peaceful
tolerant
respectful
invited
thriving
responsible
informed
non-judgmental
educational
innovative
vibrant
cultural
belonging
pride
connected
aware
diversity
knowledge
ecologically-friendly
family-friendly
considerate
sustainable
energetic
unified
engaging
charitable
honest
community-oriented
well-informed
together
active
inspirational
open-minded
fun
neighborly
cutting-edge
loyal
close-knit
generous
kindhearted
resourceful
dynamic
participative
well-educated
eclectic
community-minded
accessible
strong
organized
sharing
historical
motivated
curious
enriching
literate
warm
environmentally-conscious
collaborative
intellectual
budget-conscious

VISION AND MISSION

VISION

**WE WANT A COMMUNITY WHERE ALL
RESIDENTS HAVE OPPORTUNITIES FOR
MEANINGFUL CONNECTIONS IN AN
ENGAGING AND INCLUSIVE ENVIRONMENT.**

WE WILL FOSTER FORWARD-THINKING
IDEAS PROMOTING A CLEAR DIRECTION FOR
OUR COMMUNITY THAT IS INNOVATIVE AND
SUSTAINABLE, RECOGNIZES THE NEED FOR
COLLABORATION, AND EMBRACES ALL
SEGMENTS OF THE POPULATION.

THE LIBRARY

With a newly crafted vision and mission for the Milford community completed, the strategic planning process then looked inward at the library and the way that it is currently used by residents. An overwhelming majority of respondents think that the library is very important to the Milford community: (92%); when combined with those who responded “somewhat important,” the total reaches 99%.

Understanding how different segments of the population use the library is key to assuring that the needs of all residents are met. Survey questions asked about the use of and satisfaction with library services and programs. As part of the analysis process, responses were broken down by demographic groups, including adults with children at home and employment status.

HOW IMPORTANT ARE THE FOLLOWING TO YOU IN YOUR PERSONAL USE OF THE LIBRARY?

People with children under six were significantly more likely to say that programs are very important compared to those with no children and those with offspring who are over the age of 18 at home. Given the fact that the library is a key touchstone for parents of pre-school age children, this response reinforces the importance of designing and marketing programs that will bring them in and set them on a path as lifelong library users and supporters.

OVERALL, HOW SATISFIED ARE YOU WITH THE FOLLOWING LIBRARY RESOURCES AND SERVICES?

Students and self-employed individuals were most likely to indicate that they are not very satisfied with programs and training. As two groups that could benefit most from these services, this response presents the library with a prime opportunity to attract millennials and those facing job transitions.

WHICH OF THE FOLLOWING CHANGES BELOW WOULD ENCOURAGE YOU TO VISIT MILFORD PUBLIC LIBRARY MORE OFTEN?

54% of respondents selected “programs that are more relevant to my life,” and 49% selected “more convenient library operating hours.” As

part of this question, respondents were given the opportunity to provide their input with short answers. Much of the feedback focused on a programming gap, which was also mentioned as part of a focus group and on the need for spaces and atmosphere that draws in residents.

OPPORTUNITIES

From these responses emerged several opportunities for the library:

1. TAKING ADVANTAGE OF A PRIME LOCATION TO BECOME A WELCOMING COMMUNITY HUB

"Would be nice if there was a small café and more updated building/furniture design. Feels dated which makes me not want to spend as much time at the Library. I would go there to read if I liked the atmosphere more."

While respondents agreed that the location was excellent for most, it was observed that the building design did not indicate what was happening inside the building. It did not beckon them inside nor did it show any movement within the building. In fact, people said they often thought it was closed when it was actually open.

2. STRENGTHEN PARTNERSHIP WITH SCHOOLS

While there is a good effort to partner with the schools, the challenge of time and personal knowledge by teachers of the opportunities the public library provides to students when they are out of school made meaningful

3. CONNECT TO BUSINESS COMMUNITY

The business community emphasized the desire to be able to partner with the public library to both enhance its expertise and work toward a better prepared workforce. People who work from home were eager to have an inviting atmosphere to collaborate with others in the community, have research tools available, and share equipment.

4. CREATE OPPORTUNITIES FOR ONGOING LEARNING

People expressed the need to learn new skills on an as-needed basis rather than sign-up for a course. While online options are available, the depersonalization of those courses often does not meet the needs and the

learning styles of the individual. An effort to create the community's university was expressed.

5. ADDRESSING THE PROGRAMMING GAP

Programming for preschoolers received almost universal high praise. But people indicated that they wanted that same result for all ages. At a time when reading material is available to people in alternative ways, residents wanted to have their need to learn new skills, brush up on rusty knowledge, and explore topics together as a community in a public library setting.

"I feel the programs are geared to young children and senior citizens. I am middle-aged and my kids are teenagers and the programs don't apply to us"

MISSION STATEMENT

With these opportunities, survey results, and inspiration from library leaders in mind, the following new mission statement was created:

**THE MISSION OF THE MILFORD PUBLIC LIBRARY IS TO
INSPIRE LEARNING AND DISCOVERY THROUGH
INDIVIDUAL GROWTH AND COMMUNITY CONNECTIONS IN
AN ENGAGING AND WELCOMING ENVIRONMENT.**

GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

After listening to the community, learning about national and international trends in public libraries, and talking to library staff and key stakeholders, five goals were developed that will guide the Milford Public Library forward through the next three years. Each goal has associated objectives and measurements to hold the library and its staff accountable to its commitment to serving the community.

MILFORD PUBLIC LIBRARY'S GOALS

- Support Community Engagement
- Promote Childhood Literacy
- Satisfy Curiosity & Stimulate Imagination
- Foster Informed Citizens
- Facilitate Creation & Collaboration



GOAL #1

SUPPORT COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

COMMUNITY MEMBERS WILL HAVE OPPORTUNITIES AND SERVICES THAT REFLECT THEIR NEEDS AND INTERESTS, FEATURE COMMUNITY VOICES, BUILD AWARENESS AMONG ALL SEGMENTS OF THE COMMUNITY, AND CREATE MEANINGFUL EXPERIENCES TO CONNECT IN A WELCOMING ENVIRONMENT.

OBJECTIVES

- **Expand and strengthen outreach to community organizations**
- **Provide and promote programs and community-building opportunities**
- **Engage new and underserved communities**
- **Develop a balance of active and quiet areas**
- **Create a welcoming environment**
- **Enliven and improve exterior space**

GOAL #2

PROMOTE CHILDHOOD LITERACY

CHILDREN FROM BIRTH TO GRADE 12 WILL HAVE ENGAGING PROGRAMS AND SERVICES THAT PROMOTE COMPETENCE AND KNOWLEDGE IN ALL LITERACY SKILLS.

OBJECTIVES

- **Create welcoming and vibrant spaces** to encourage active play and hands-on experiential learning to inspire critical and creative thinking
- **Expand and cultivate opportunities that develop/enhance all types of literacy skills** (including early literacy, information literacy, and digital/technological literacy experiences).
- **Expand partnership with public/private community and home-based learning settings**
- **Children from birth to age five and their caregivers will have engaging programs and services that promote competence and knowledge in all early literacy skills**
- **School-age children will have engaging age-appropriate and developmentally-appropriate programs and services that promote competence and knowledge**
- **Offer services that support families and the community to develop the knowledge, skills, and confidence necessary to support children's learning**

GOAL #3

SATISFY CURIOSITY AND STIMULATE IMAGINATION

COMMUNITY MEMBERS WILL HAVE THE RESOURCES THEY NEED TO EXPLORE TOPICS OF PERSONAL INTEREST, ADDRESS NEW CHALLENGES, AND CONTINUE TO LEARN THROUGHOUT THEIR LIVES. THEY WILL HAVE RESOURCES AND PROGRAMS THAT ENGAGE THEIR IMAGINATIONS AND PROVIDE MEANINGFUL EXPERIENCES.

OBJECTIVES

- **Increase community awareness of the engagement with library programs, services, resources, and collections**
- **Increase quality staff interaction with patrons**
- **Introduce and support relevant technologies**
- **Build and maintain collections that inform, inspire, entertain, and stimulate imagination**
- **Provide hands-on educational opportunities**

GOAL #4

FOSTER INFORMED CITIZENS

COMMUNITY MEMBERS WILL HAVE THE INFORMATION AND SKILLS THEY NEED TO FULFILL THEIR CIVIC RESPONSIBILITIES AND TO FULLY PARTICIPATE IN THE DEMOCRATIC PROCESS.

OBJECTIVES

- **Provide opportunities that foster the civil exchange of ideas**
- **Increase outreach to civic groups**
- **The library's resources will be current, relevant, and easily accessible**

GOAL #5

FACILITATE CREATION AND COLLABORATION

COMMUNITY MEMBERS WILL HAVE A WELCOMING PLACE TO COLLABORATE ON IDEAS, AND THE RESOURCES THEY NEED TO CREATE AND SHARE CONTENT TO REACH THEIR PERSONAL AND PROFESSIONAL GOALS.

OBJECTIVES

- **Expand makerspace offerings**
- **Evaluate current space usage** to accommodate experiential learning by experimenting with the right balance between active learning space and quiet space
- **Identify business needs and build resources to support the business/entrepreneur community**

KEY FACTORS FOR SUCCESS

All of the goals stated will require some overarching changes in order to be achieved. Those changes can be categorized as:

STAFF TRAINING AND ALIGNMENT

It is recommended that the library management plot out the new work plan for the library year based on new goals and outline the human resource needs to accomplish this. Shifts in emphasis, particularly in the adult services and materials handling, will enable library staff to accomplish new goals and meet objectives. Some of the necessary shifts will require new skills. Budgeting for both time and money for training will be necessary in some cases.

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

As the emphasis shifts from physical materials to learning together as community, it will be necessary for more connections to be made and maintained by staff to new existing organizations and residents. A combination of being present at community events and the ability to make connections through conversations with community members inside the library will be paramount to the success of the plan. Policies should be reviewed to identify any that inhibit the full use of the library by community members.

SPACE RECONFIGURATION

The library was built in 1976 and has been reconfigured in small ways since that time, including anticipated construction to the children's department. Opportunities abound for improvements to outside space, enlivening the upper level, new placement of staff assistance where the patron is, and removal of large service points which act as barriers combined with more self-service kiosks. Consideration should be given for a variety of noise levels and for easy changes to the configuration of furnishings to accommodate different needs during the day and week.

KEY PARTICIPANTS IN THE PLANNING PROCESS

ADVISORY COUNCIL MEMBERS

Toni Dolan, Beth-El Center, Director
 Doug Edo, Milford Fire Department, Chief
 Dr. Elizabeth Feser, Milford Public Schools, Superintendent
 Harry Garafolo, ShopRite of Milford, Owner
 Wendy Gibbons, Milford Prevention Council, Program Director
 Augie Harrigan, Milford Education Foundation, Vice President
 Tami Jackson, Literacy Volunteers of Southern Connecticut, Director
 Gary Johnson, United Way, Director
 Steve Johnson, Department of Public Works, Acting Assistant Director and
 Open Space and Natural Resource Agent
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 James Maroney, First Choice College Placement, Owner
 Paige Miglio, Milford Arts Council, Executive Director
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 Marie Reshenk, Milford Public Schools, Retired Teacher

WORK GROUP MEMBERS

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