

Ridgewood Public Library Strategic Plan 2013-2018 – Executive Summary

Strategic Vision 2013-2018

Library transforming from storehouse into community destination, where:

- Residents follow their passions, develop their interests, improve their lives;
- Experiences and knowledge will be created.

Library will be:

Open	Add new Ideas, Uses, Users and Hours
Connected	More Community Groups, Resources, Communication Links to greater world
Generous	Sharing knowledge & spaces, hosted by welcoming, highly trained staff

To meet evolving public needs & interests, Library will offer:

- Increased access to *electronic content (eBooks, digital magazines)*
- *Online music and streaming movies*, gradually phasing CD and DVD collections,
- Cultural & entertainment programs for children, teens and adults
- Personal guidance to trustworthy, quality online information & decision making

Strategic plan will require objective elements:

- Financial strength and efficiency
- Cooperation with community groups organizations
- More comfortable and welcoming building
- Innovation and careful thought

Objectives will be met through concise measurable goals, annually set, evaluated & revised by Library Board, administration, staff & community members.

Library and Community

- Community Perspective: Library is fundamental to RW values: family, knowledge, achievement
 - More books, dvds, information resources & technology
 - More programs, reading & meeting areas
 - More hours & services
- The Future. Resident lives & needs evolving. Library staff as partners. Need
 - Quality customer service, convenience, immediacy.
 - Help people develop new skills among similar others.
 - Give residents place to come with friends, or to meet new people.
 - Current Technology as path to achieve goals, enrich values
 - Convenience is anticipated standard
 - Added Clarity = efficient speedy use, update website, newsletters, signage, building layout
 - Offer choice – format of resources, quiet & active places, types of programs.
 - Library provides varied resources to give users a choice, esp. if Library is their only choice
 - Connections – library as part of a collaborative community network,
 - Assure VOR that community receives services in cost-effective, efficient manner.

Strategic Plan 2013-2018

1. Library in the Community. Establish/expand
 - Working relationships with community organizations
 - Collaborative services with schools
 - Alliances with individual businesses and business groups
 - Staff-resident advisory teams: explore new tech, programming and collections.
 - Identify/work with groups having common interests, plan programs & resources.
 - Improve communications: upgrade website, e-newsletters, social media, graphics
2. Effectiveness and efficiency – Pursue aggressively. Match services to highest expectations.
 - Install self-check: allow option of independent check out option; staff serve new ways
 - Staff teams pursue innovative services, technology, collections and programming
 - Evaluate & fund staff development needs, skills must match patron service profile
 - Collaborate with local libraries on collections and programming to reduce overlap
 - Enrich private funding by coordinating fundraising activities of Friends and Foundation
 - BOT will establish, monitor and publicly review annual measurable goals to assure success
3. Welcoming, Comfortable Place
 - Upgrade Auditorium – AV, tech, seating
 - Redesign first floor – brighter, retail-oriented with self-check machines
 - Condense/transfer seldom-used materials to less active areas.
 - Remove under-utilized shelving; create new patron spaces for reading, group-study
 - Minimize size of service desks, increase staff assistance to patrons throughout Library
 - Upgrade computer & business resources, combine them into a focused area
 - Reorient Reference Room; add more study and meeting spaces, transfer inactive collections
 - Reduce Mezzanine shelving to add (modular?) meeting rooms
 - Transfer & upgrade newspaper/periodical center to bright 3rd floor.
 - Transfer, expand & upgrade Teen Area on first floor
 - Allow Café coffee and food throughout the Library if carefully consumed.
4. Innovations in Collections, Services and Programs
 - Concentrate on acquiring current, popular books to match retail-oriented remake
 - Use BCCLS to inter-loan materials of less current interest
 - Expand eBook collection: Identify user preferences, explore acquiring eBooks beyond BCCLS
 - Track usage of all media; as CD and DVDs decline, reallocate funding and spaces
 - Upgrade PC hardware and software to match highest user standards
 - Expand online reference resources/content, and focus on guiding patrons in their use
 - Emphasize active customer service, adapt models used by successful bookstores
 - Expand programming by partnering with community organizations and groups
 - Consider developing TEDx and MOOC (Massively Online Open Course) to promote coming demand for maker-doer learning

Process: The Strategic Planning Committee began work in June 2012 & has met 4 times.

- Online & Print survey - 800 residents provided comments
- Consultant led 2 public forums, 6 focus groups, interviewed 12 residents for recommendations
- Reviewed statistics from RW Library and comparative NJ libraries, as well as 2010 Census.
- BOT reviewed draft Plan, will present approved Plan for comment at a public forum.

Ridgewood Public Library



Strategic Plan 2013-2018

From the Board President



It's an exciting time to be part of the Ridgewood Library community. The Board of Trustees is proud to present this 2013-2018 Strategic Plan, outlining the results of months of work and a thoughtful process that reached deeply into our community.

We learned

- what the library is doing well
- where we have room to improve
- what our community needs our library to become, now and in the foreseeable future

If you don't chart the course, you don't get where you want to go. At the close of last year, the Library Board of Trustees set out to establish the strategic plan for the coming five years. Last year also happened to be the fifth year of the last plan that the Trustees had put in place, so we were right on time for a fresh look at the future.

Study the past if you would define the future. To start the process we reviewed past strategic plans. We had a bit of a history lesson as we reached into earlier plans that had joined the Trustees and the Friends of the Library on a course to create the beautiful new building that we have today. We explored the plan that created the Ridgewood Public Library Foundation that invests in so much of the cutting edge technology for our library and that recognized our need to stay connected to our heritage in Ridgewood.

The way to get great ideas is to get lots of ideas. We outlined a process to engage the entire community. We spoke to a lot of people - library patrons, library employees, Village Council members, volunteers in the community, and also to some people who don't generally use the library at all. To gather wide input, we sent out flyers and emails and we handed out postcards. Our objective was to hear from as many Ridgewood voices as we could. We knew that to have a great, meaningful plan, we needed to harness the thinking of the whole community.

Finally, we developed the plan in front of you. It creates a library that is both open and connected in many new ways, and generous perhaps to a fault. This plan outlines how each of these themes will be embraced in the coming years.

The hard work is in the doing. Our objective was to develop a plan that reflected the community's desires and needs, because we desire and need the community to make it happen. We're still listening. Please let us know your thoughts. And if there's a piece of this plan that you particularly believe in, we will work with you to make it real.

Respectfully,

The Planning & Finance Committee of the Ridgewood Public Library Board of Trustees

Ridgewood Library

Strategic Vision 2013 – 2018

This Strategic Plan sets forth the broad themes that will guide a series of action-oriented annual operating plans that will transform Ridgewood Library over the next five years.

Ridgewood Library will become the place in the community where people go to follow their passions, develop their interests and improve their lives.

The Library will be

- ✦ Open – open to new ideas, open to new uses, open to more users, open more hours.
- ✦ Connected – connected to other community organizations and interest groups, connected to the community in more ways, connected to more resources, connected to new ways of achieving results, connected to the world in new ways.
- ✦ Generous – generous with its knowledge, generous with its spaces, generous with its resources, generous with its welcoming and friendly staff.

Ridgewood Library today successfully fulfills the traditional role of a Library in its community: it is a building in which resources – books, DVDs, music, technology, databases – are stored, and users come to access those resources with assistance from Library staff. This role will continue.

- ✦ Members of the community will always read, but they may want to read more content electronically on eBooks and digital magazines than on physical books and magazines, and the Library will respond.
- ✦ They may find it easier to stream movies at home, or listen to music on-line, and the Library will disengage from those collections over time.
- ✦ They will always want a range of cultural and entertainment programs to attend with their friends, and the Library will work to assure that more programs are available for adults, as well as children and teens.
- ✦ They will need trustworthy guidance to assist in making choices to respond to the overwhelming volume of information they can access on-line, and the Library will develop more ways to assist them in accessing quality information and making decisions.

But beyond these extensions of its current role, the future role of the Library will be different in a fundamental way.

Ridgewood Library will be a place where experiences and knowledge are created. Where staff members and users are partners in collaborative teams and groups that exchange information and promote

learning in the community. The Library will move from a passive activity as storehouse to an active role, as more users of the Library become makers and doers in partnership with each other and with Library staff.

Ridgewood Library will move towards that future through the steps outlined in this Strategic Plan for the years 2013 to 2018.

We know that transforming the Library will not be simple or easy – it will require financial strength and efficiency, cooperation with other community organizations and community groups, a more comfortable and welcoming building, and innovation and careful thought – and these are the objective elements of our Strategic Plan.

The Library will work to achieve the Strategic Plan's objectives by creating annual goals, and setting forth targeted, concise, action-oriented and results-driven steps. Each year's progress will be measured and evaluated and new annual goals identified. The annual goal-setting will be a collaborative process of the Library Board, administration, staff and community members.

We believe that a transformed Ridgewood Library will be well-placed to meet the expectations of the many community members who will look to the Library as a partner as they follow their passions, develop their interests and improve their lives.

The Library and the Ridgewood Community



The Community Perspective

Community residents hold the Ridgewood Library in high regard.

Common statements include, “This is a great library,” “This is a community gathering place, not just a library,” and “What a gem it is!”

Users want more – more books, more information resources and more DVDs, more programs, more places to read, study and meet, more technology, more services and more hours to be open. They understand the constraints that have limited the Library’s budget, but they ask that ways be found to make this important community resource more available and more tuned to their needs and interests. They believe that the role the Library plays in the community is fundamental to the values Ridgewood holds high – family, diversity, knowledge and achievement.

We hear you and we agree.

Residents also tell us we can do better. We can communicate better, and make our website more usable and open, we can update our collections to provide the new books and DVDs patrons want now, we can make our library building more inviting and usable, we can update our technology so we are ahead of the technology curve, not behind it, we can provide programs of interest to more members of

the community, and we can give our staff members the opportunity to spend more time providing services to library users, and to provide great customer service to all.

As one user put it, “This is a very good library that could be even better, and the community needs it to be the best it can be.”

We hear you and we agree.

The Future

The lives of the residents of the community are changing, developing and extending more quickly and broadly than ever. All age groups have access to more information, more resources and more choices to make. Every member of the community has a range of experiences from which to compare their use of the Library – they see examples of good and bad customer service every day in retail and hospitality establishments, and most of them have experienced both good and bad service and responsiveness on-line. They know what quality is, and they expect it in all the services they use. They want convenience and immediacy, and will seek it out. And more and more, they are seeking out experiences – events that have memorable value and qualities that extend beyond the immediacy of the dinner, the party, the game or the learning experience.

We also see that many in the community have a growing interest in developing new skills, or gaining mastery of new subjects, and they want to do that with others who have similar perspectives. They will come together with their friends and other members of the community to pursue common interests, whether that be music, technology, history, culture or dance, for example. We want the Library to be the place where they pursue their passions, and we want our staff to be their partners.

Technology now plays an important role in the lives of many community residents, but we know their use of technology is not exclusive of the values for which the Library stands – knowledge, service, friendship, learning and recreation – and we will not confuse technology itself for what it allows its users to achieve in their lives: convenience, clarity, choice and connections.

Convenience

In busy lives filled with many choices in limited time, our users want the convenience of using the Library when they want, communicating with staff as they wish, finding resources simply and easily without delay and disappointment, all without compromise.

This is what they expect from other places they visit, and that is the standard we will set for ourselves.

Clarity

The clarity of simple and direct communication provides the benefits of speed and efficiency. We will enhance our ability to communicate with our users at the standard they experience with other organizations they use. Our website, newsletters, signage and the layout of the Library will be enhanced to provide clarity to our users.

Choice

Many in this community have choices: where to access what they want to read now and in what form – physical book, eBook, audio book, paper or digital magazine – or where to go for what they want to do -- a variety of cultural events to attend, quiet places to think, active places to visit with friends – or how to access technology and the Internet. The Library needs to provide the resources to meet the choices they wish to make, and by doing so, will also serve better the needs of all members of the community, including those for whom the Library is the only choice.

Connections

The technology-enabled members of the community are part of a network of connections to their friends, their interests, their entertainment, and to the whole world of information. The Library must and will be a part of their network.

Together

We will provide our staff the resources to work in teams so they can plan, develop and provide new initiatives. We will look for opportunities to collaborate with interested and skilled members of the community to assure that Ridgewood Library meets their expectations. We will partner with community businesses and community not-for-profit organizations to match the Library's resources to their knowledge and expertise. We will be an active partner with the Village of Ridgewood in assuring that the community receives the services it deserves in the cost-effective and efficient manner it needs.

We will meet the future with equanimity and confidence.

We will transform Ridgewood Library.

Ridgewood Library Strategic Plan 2013-2018

- ✦ A Cultural Center of the Community where people go to follow their passions, develop their interests and improve their lives.
- ✦ An organization of financial strength and efficiency, which collaborates with other community organizations, the schools, local businesses and community groups to set in place innovative solutions to serving the Village of Ridgewood and its citizens.
- ✦ A Staff that is ready to provide 21st century solutions to respond to the needs of today's Library users of all ages, with technology resources augmenting their education, training and hospitality skills.
- ✦ A building where Library users can find a variety of welcoming and comfortable spaces to access enhanced Library resources.

1. Ridgewood Library in the Community

Ridgewood Library will actively promote working relationships within the Village of Ridgewood so that it can extend its role as a cultural center of the community.

- 1.1 Establish structured working relationships with leading Ridgewood not-for-profit community organizations to assure that the combination of experience, knowledge and resources will be easily available to the members of the community.

- 1.2 Identify opportunities to provide expanded collaborative services with the public schools.
- 1.3 Form alliances with local business groups and individual businesses to support their activities and to provide resources for Library users.
- 1.4 Identify groups of community residents with common interests and work with them to identify programming opportunities and Library resources to acquire.
- 1.5 Consider formation of a set of advisory teams consisting of Library staff members and experienced community residents to provide guidance on technology initiatives, programming and collection development.
- 1.6 To extend its role in the community, the Library will actively seek to improve its ability to communicate with its users and other members of the community, including an upgrade to its website, expansion of focused electronic newsletters and the application of more current social-software techniques, all accompanied by a redesign to assure it conveys a consistent graphic image.

2. Effectiveness and Efficiency

Ridgewood Library will take active steps to assure that it operates efficiently and effectively, and it will undertake aggressive steps to gain a strong financial footing.

- 2.1 Aggressively pursue initiatives to enhance operational efficiency, including investing in technology to support staff activities. As a first step, install self-check machines adjacent to the circulation desk to allow Library users to check out their own materials if they wish, freeing up circulation staff members to provide more services to other patrons.
- 2.2 Form innovation teams of staff members to pursue new initiatives in services, technology, collection development and programming. Match the Library's services, technology, collection and programming profile to the highest expectations of the community's residents when they visit other places, such as retail stores, public venues, and online resources. In particular, look for opportunities for staff members to interact actively with patrons in front of their desks, not passively from behind, so that they can form partnerships with users, and participate in the development of a maker and doer culture at the Library.
- 2.3 Evaluate current and continuing needs for staff development, to assure that Library Staff skills are updated to match the current and future profile of services to patrons. Assure sufficient funding for future development needs.
- 2.4 Extend collaborative activities with local libraries to reduce collection and programming overlap.
- 2.5 Coordinate the private fundraising activities of the Friends and Foundation to assure that the current needs of the Library and its users are met.
- 2.6 The Board will establish and monitor the setting of annual, measurable operational goals to assure that the elements of the Strategic Plan are carried out successfully. Review the success or failure of the operational goals in public annually.

3. A Welcoming, Comfortable Place

Ridgewood Library will assure that its users find it to be a comfortable place where they can relax, enjoy and learn; a hospitable place to meet friends, hold meetings and engage others in conversation; organized into area that support quiet contemplation, active group engagement and the convenient selection of items.

- 3.1 Identify the elements of a significant and cutting-edge upgrade to the audio-visual and computer technology of the Belcher Auditorium, to assure that it meets the highest standards that community residents expect in any venue they visit.
- 3.2 Undertake a retail-oriented redesign of the first floor shelving adjacent to the circulation desk, paired with the installation of self-check machines, to allow users to find, select and checkout materials they wish in a convenient and efficient manner.
- 3.3 Identify and remove inactive and under-utilized shelving so that the Library can devote more space to spaces that are appropriate for reading, individual and small group study, and casual engagement among Library users.
- 3.4 Reduce the footprints of the circulation and reference desks to match the staff's expected active profile of providing services to patrons in front of desks, not passively from behind.
- 3.5 Upgrade the Library's PC resources and combine them into a focused area.
- 3.6 Reorient the Reference Room away from the shelving of inactive collections towards more study and meeting spaces, by removing shelving and adding new study carrels and meeting tables.

- 3.7 Reduce the shelving on the Mezzanine, and add closed meeting rooms on the back wall.
- 3.8 Move the newspaper and periodical area to the second floor adjacent to the Ridgewood Room, and rededicate the first floor space to an expanded Teen Area.
- 3.9 Allow coffee and food obtained from the café to be carefully consumed throughout the Library.

4. Innovations in Collections, Services and Programs

Ridgewood Library will focus its collections to maximize use in a time of limited resources, modernize its services and expand and extend its programming.

- 4.1 Meet the interests of current users by concentrating on the acquisition of current popular fiction and non-fiction books to match the retail-oriented remake of the first floor. This will ensure that browsers can be more confident they will be able to find items that satisfy their interests, and will enhance the value of a visit to the Library.
- 4.2 Use the resources of BCCLS to provide interlibrary loans of items with less current interest.
- 4.3 Continue to expand the proportion of eBooks in the collection by identifying preferred uses by users; consider acquiring additional eBooks outside the resources of BCCLS.
- 4.4 Track the use of the Library's collections of music CDs and video DVDs and reduce collection resources in these areas as use declines, reallocating to popular fiction and non-fiction and eBooks.
- 4.5 Upgrade the Library's technology – PC hardware and software – to assure that it is in line with the highest standards expected by users when they access it in other venues, including their homes.
- 4.6 Provide expanded online reference resources and content, and focus on guiding users to find the most relevant electronic resource for their needs.
- 4.7 Emphasize active customer service in the Library, with staff seeking out and responding to patrons' needs. Adopt the models used by successful independent bookstores and hospitality providers.
- 4.8 Expand and extend programming by forming partnerships with community organizations and community groups with common interests, to match their knowledge and experience with the Library's resources.
- 4.9 Look for opportunities to develop TEDx and MOOC (Massively Online Open Course) offerings to promote the coming demand for maker-doer learning.

Process



The Strategic Planning Committee began work in June (?), 2012.

Members of the Committee:

[to come]

The Committee chose to work towards a focused planning process, with a bias towards identifying immediate needs that require action in the near term, and long term solutions directed to transforming the role of Ridgewood Library in the community.

The Committee engaged assistance to solicit public input in a number of venues.

More than 800 community residents provided comments and recommendations using a survey that was distributed online and was available for completion in the Library.

Two public forums were held, six focus groups (including one of library staff members) addressed matters of common interest, and a dozen community residents agreed to be engaged as individuals in sustained discussion of their thoughts and recommendations.

Statistical data from the Library and comparative New Jersey libraries was reviewed to provide a baseline for evaluation.

The Committee met on four occasions to review the process of the planning process, discuss alternative action items, and to determine the elements of the Plan.

The Plan was reviewed in draft by the Library Board, and subsequent to approval, was presented for comments at a public forum.

This Strategic Plan will guide Ridgewood Library actions for the period 2013 to 2018.



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2013

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