



Cheshire Public Library Strategic Plan: 2016-2026

Introduction

In 2006, the Cheshire Public Library completed its first-ever Strategic Plan, with a focus on Lifelong Learning, Popular Materials, and Information Literacy. As we renew our Plan a decade later, our objectives remain largely the same: We continue to focus on strengthening our community and transforming lives by offering high-quality, high-value, professional library services.

Focus Groups: Summary

Over the course of the past year, several meetings and focus groups convened, during which we asked community stakeholders to describe Cheshire's strengths, challenges, and values. Education continues to be a top priority for residents, particularly in support of STEAM-based (Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts and Math) fields.

Cheshire's residents are also concerned about local businesses and economic development. As the State of Connecticut experiences budget difficulties and decreases in economic growth, Cheshire residents are, as a result, increasingly feeling the financial pinch. As a result, Cheshire's citizens need high-value, affordable services from their town. Focus group participants expressed a desire for more diverse cultural opportunities in town, particularly in the downtown area and on weekends/evenings. The downtown area and its physical and geographical challenges (no cohesive "downtown" area, not easily walkable, few after-hours activities) were discussed in multiple sessions.

These responses are in keeping with the results of the Town of Cheshire Community Survey that was completed in 2015 by the Planning and Zoning Commission, to aid the process of writing a new Comprehensive Plan of Conservation and Development (in draft form as of this writing; slated to be approved in June of 2016). More than 80% of respondents to that survey were "not content with" current cultural interest opportunities in Cheshire, and the top two commercial or industrial development preferences were 1. Restaurants, and 2. Entertainment/cultural facilities.

Additional library focus group findings included the fact that transportation in Cheshire can be problematic, as there is no local bus service that serves the entire town seven days per week. Time constraints are an additional concern, especially for working

residents with families. Services need to be available during residents' free time, and those services need to be efficient and user-friendly.

Several respondents noted that residents are simply not aware of all of the services that the library offers. Others mentioned the need for activities and spaces for teens and pre-teens, community meeting space, social/gathering space, and quiet/study space.

Implications

The feedback from the community stakeholder focus groups indicates that while the library is on an effective strategic track, enhancements can be made in the following areas:

- Community Engagement: "Turning Outward"
- Lifelong Education: Collaboration with school community
- Customer Relations: Reduce barriers to using library services
- Marketing and Publicity: Awareness of what the library offers
- Cultural Opportunities: Address need for more events in town
- Physical Library Spaces: Long-term parking and building needs

Vision Statement

"As a community, Cheshire is Literate, Economically Sound, and Connected."

1. Literate: Print, Digital, Informational/Communication and Cultural Literacy; School Readiness
2. Economically Sound: Business-Friendly, Workforce Readiness, Entrepreneurial Support
3. Connected: Digitally Connected; Civic Engagement; Local, Regional, and Global Citizenship

Mission Statement

We have revised and simplified the library's mission statement to reflect our ultimate purpose: "**The Cheshire Public Library transforms lives and strengthens the community.**" All library staff, programs and services will be evaluated based on their outcomes and effectiveness at accomplishing this mission.

Ramona Burkey, Library Director
June 20, 2016

Carol DiPietro, Chair, Library Advisory Board
June 20, 2016

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Our Library's Values

- Open, free, and readily available access to information for all
- The freedom to seek, receive and share information
- Personal privacy
- Respect for individual differences and diversity
- Accountability and ethical stewardship of shared community resources
- Lifelong individual pursuit of learning
- Power of community engagement, connection and culture

Our Library's Purpose

- Ensure free and equal access to information and ideas
- Inspire reading, learning and independent thinking
- Support lifelong education
- Provide spaces to meet, create, and learn

Core Services

- Free services and programs tailored to our community's needs
- Free shared collections at no direct cost to patrons
- Community gathering places to learn, grow, and exchange ideas
- Early literacy programs and services
- Expert research and information assistance
- Maintain safe, effective and welcoming public spaces
- Deliver library services where needed in the community
- Excellent customer service provided with respect and courtesy

Strategic Focus Areas and Initiatives, 2016-2026:

1. Lifelong Education

- STEAM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts and Mathematics) education and exploration
- Early learning/school readiness programs and materials
- Maker Space/Maker Fairs, Digital Media Lab
- Spearhead a Cheshire Lifelong Education Council
- Harness the educational power of play for all ages
- 500 Books In the Home and 1,000 Books Before Kindergarten
- Every Child Ready to Read
- Family Place Library

2. Community Engagement

- Economic development: shared collections; literacy = predictor of success; libraries bring residents, which brings business/development

- Workforce readiness
- Embedded librarians
- Outreach activities
- Hours open
- Welcoming environment
- Community gathering place
- Exchange of ideas
- Marketing and publicity
- Focus on solving community problems, "Turning Outward"
- Support local content creators and businesses
- Genealogy/local history resources
- Civic Engagement Fair

3. "Customer-First" Focus/Customer Loyalty

- Reduce barriers to accessing library services
- Change outdated or restrictive policies, reduce fines
- Online library card applications
- Personalized service
- Info desk at entrance
- One-on-one "Book a Librarian" sessions

4. Organizational Sustainability

- Long-term space needs: capacity and functionality, comfort of users
- Parking needs
- Funding/foundation/development staff
- Alcohol policy
- Structure staff work groups around strategic focus areas
- Staff service areas based on patron needs and staff skills
- Efficient and effective operations and budgeting
- Succession Planning

Measurement/Assessment

- Outcomes-Based Measurement
- Customer Satisfaction Survey
- Net Promoter Score
- Evaluations and staff recognition based on strategic focus areas, values
- Staff set their annual goals/objectives based on strategic plan initiatives