Strategic Plan
2023 - 2028

BERNARDSVILLE PUBLIC LIBRARY
DISCOVER, LEARN, AND GROW WITH A LIBRARY THAT KNOWS YOU!
Strategic Plan of the Bernardsville Public Library
2023-2028

Discover, Learn, and Grow with a Library that Knows You

Mission
The Bernardsville Public Library enriches our community through resources, experiences, and opportunities.

Vision
The Bernardsville Public Library will provide exemplary resources, expertise, opportunities, and experiences for the growth, knowledge, and enjoyment of our multifaceted community.
Introduction
A Word from the Strategic Planning Committee Chair

I wish to extend my heartfelt gratitude to the members of our community, the dedicated library staff, and the individuals associated with both the Friends of the Bernardsville Library and the Bernardsville Library Foundation who graciously participated in the strategic planning endeavor.

The library staff exhibited unwavering commitment by allocating time for comprehensive collaborative efforts among all team members, allowing us to assess the library's strengths and identify areas where improvements could optimize our services in better alignment with the evolving needs of our community. Their daily immersion in the library's operations uniquely positions them to provide valuable insights and recommendations that significantly enrich the planning process.

The participation of community stakeholders in the planning process yielded invaluable insights regarding areas of operational success and prospective avenues for enhancement. Our engagement with patrons, community leaders, and representatives from partner organizations proved instrumental in acquiring diverse perspectives. This comprehensive approach ensures that our strategic planning initiative will comprehensively address the multifaceted needs of the entire community.

We extend our gratitude to the dedicated members of the Bernardsville Borough Council, who diligently strive to harmonize the diverse requirements of the borough annually, while consistently acknowledging the pivotal role that library services play in our community.

Thank you, one and all.

Nancy Verduin
Library Board of Trustees
The Values of Bernardsville Public Library:

- Welcomes our community and serves a broad patron base
- Fosters learning and literacy across diverse ages, subject matters, needs, and interests
- Provides critical tools for building prosperity in the community
- Responds with creative and innovative solutions when challenges arise
- Is driven by the Bernardsville community’s needs and choices
- Is a forward-thinking organization
- Engages, supports, and develops each employee
- Proactively seeks partnerships between staff, community organizations, and patrons to maximize the Library’s impact
- Offers an inclusive myriad of diverse resources and experiences and upholds the ALA Bill of Rights

The Bernardsville Public Library Exemplifies Value In:

- Equitably increasing the value of residence in our community through transparent and accountable stewardship of community resources
- Collaborating towards opportunities for every member and population of our unique community to grow
- Maximizing community through a variety of partnerships and consortia memberships in the MAIN Library Alliance, the Raritan Valley Federation (RVF), and the Morris Union Federation (MUF).
- Offering high levels of professionalism and courtesy in service
  - Promoting exceptional internal and external customer service
  - Building a culture of internal and external respect
  - Persisting in offering the highest-quality of services that resources can support
- Anticipating and adapting to Bernardsville’s diverse and dynamic needs with efficiency and innovation
Communication Goal
Develop and execute a communication plan towards informative engagement.

Effectively interact with individuals and organizations in our community towards increased awareness, use, and esteem of our broad resources, experiences, and services.

- Assess current means of communication in comparison to regional peers
- Craft communication protocols and an overarching plan
- Articulate reasons to use the library across multiple channels and populations
- Build awareness of the breadth and scale of library services
- Advocate to stakeholders and seek the community’s communication of their own value of the Library to stakeholders

- Diverse Community and Varied Means for Communication- Understanding that the Bernardsville community has varied populations and there are an endless variety of communication means, the Bernardsville Public Library will use best practices in sharing and seeking information about the services, events, resources, and value to the community that the library offers.

- Staff Development- Developing key staff towards a high-level of expertise in communicating is inherent in this process, as is developing all staff to have basic knowledge of the Library’s communications and practices for the purposes of informing themselves and the public.

- Volume- Limitations in staffing, resources, and the potential to overuse communication outlets, necessitate that the Library will need to pick and choose to foster sustainable and consistent communications.

- Library Publications
  - Paper newsletters via mail, including a mini newsletter in the tax letter
  - Email newsletters to patrons via Constant Contact, Patron Point, or other means
  - Social media posts on selected platforms, including text, photos, and videos.
  - Library signage
  - Library website

- Outreach- Reaching Bernardsville community members outside of the Library’s facility, newsletters, and social media entails seeking new users where they are.
  - Physical locations for in-person outreach include Borough of Bernardsville events, such as National Night Out, Downtown Bernardsville events, other nonprofit organizations’ events, businesses, retirement communities, and local schools.
  - Media opportunities outside of library publications include regional newspapers, spotlight pieces on social media pages and channels that are
not hosted by the Library, Borough publications, school-wide communications, and cooperative sharing of library media on social media pages and channels that are hosted by other entities.

- **Quality Content Creation**-
  - The Library should feasibly and fairly maximize staff talent in creating media.
  - The Library may want to explore opportunities for students or adult volunteers to create content.

- **Administrative Support**-
  - Administration will foster a cooperative and collaborative environment for staff to explore communicating the Library’s resources, services, and events.
  - Administration will provide fluid access to information and resources to promote the Library.
Collection Goal
Curate and grow a responsive collection of valued resources that reflects our diverse communities and individuals’ differences.

- **Improve awareness of our vast collection and services**-
  As knowledge and awareness surrounding the collection and our extended resources through MAIN pose a significant barrier to optimal usage
  - Collaborate and communicate with stakeholders
  - Increase patron education on how to access resources
  - Offer highlighted drop-in office hours for assistance
  - Create and feature resource tutorials, possibly with the help of volunteers.

- **Seek feedback and input from our broad patron base**-
  As resource interests can be highly personal and unique, there should be more explicit channels for feedback and patron requests online and within the library.
  - Conduct outreach to feature resources to niche community markets.

- **Improve the findability of resources**-
  - Develop staff towards understanding the capabilities of the catalog.
  - Explore and implement discovery layer features within the catalog.
  - Examine the physical wayfinding signage, placements, and display of materials towards increased discovery through browsing within the facility.
  - Create and feature resource tutorials, possibly with the help of volunteers.

- **Amplify offerings of materials**-
  - Support staff in remaining current on knowledge of trends in literature and media use.
  - Investigate a Library of Things as space, staff, liabilities, and resources allow.
  - Explore regional libraries’ successes, failures, and expenses in their unique offerings, including their libraries of things.

- **Remove outdated materials from the space**-
  - Expand weeding efforts using collecting use data.
  - Use caution and communicate so as to avoid community misunderstanding and potential backlash.
  - Examine the need to maintain uncommon items in consideration of MAIN membership.

- **Seek creative means to obtaining materials**-
  - Seek bestseller donations.
o Consider returning bestseller rentals.
o Solicit items for classroom kits or a library of things.
o Seek volunteers to manage and monitor requests as a service learning project.

- **Process materials efficiently and effectively**-
  o Seek staff feedback about barriers and opportunities in technical services.
o Explore appropriate volunteer support.
o Seek vendor processing and cataloging solutions.
Excel in Library Program Offerings Goal
Offer exemplary and consistent programs for patrons of all ages.

The Bernardsville Public Library has a continued history of consistently offering a pleasant mixture of traditional youth programs and book clubs in tandem with innovative and new experiences and topics in recreation and learning. At the moment of the drafting of this Strategic Plan, staffing changes placed the Library’s programs into a state of flux. Throughout the planning process, a temporary Library Intern, Youth Services staff, and the New Programming Librarian have thoughtfully crafted a lineup of programs for the summer of 2023 with a variety of both tried and true offerings with and exciting new choices. The public’s enthusiasm and resource limitations will be balanced towards optimal use of event space, staff support, and financial means.

- Assess the recent in-house programming offerings and staffing.
- Survey regional libraries’ programs.
- Increase adult programming events.
- Consider untried adult programs.
- Explore the needs of underserved communities.
- Sustain great youth programming.
- Seek community input and feedback about library programming.

Assess Bernardsville Public Library programming capabilities and needs.

Survey regional libraries’ programs.

There are many programming options offered at regional libraries, many of which share commonalities with present and past programming in the Bernardsville Public Library. Early childhood literacy and book clubs are unsurprisingly the staple offerings throughout northern New Jersey. This is unsurprising because of the natural relationship between book group discussions, early literacy, and libraries’ core missions, as well as because of New Jersey Per Capita State Aid requirements in early literacy programming. Youth STEM programming is a close second to early childhood literacy programs. Regional examples and experiences reveal a wide variety of options for educational and recreational programs for literacy, the arts, cookery, ESL, STEM, workforce development, cultural and scientific topics, wellness, social engagement, and more for patrons that are seniors, newborns, or somewhere in between.

Optimize adult programming choices.

This is a journey that is in-progress and most offerings have been received with enthusiasm. Part of these programs’ viability depends on the Library’s improved communication for awareness, information, and marketing, as well as sensitivity to the timing surrounding immediate library neighbors’ program timing to avoid redundancy or
competition for game days, movies, and more. The Bernardsville Public Library’s programs are also opportunities to amplify communication in harvesting contacts for the assessment of offerings and for the advertisement of future programs. Processes are also being implemented to send reminders to individuals who have registered to come to programs, to encourage cancellations when warranted, and to move up patrons on waitlists, so as to maximize program resources that might include planning time, consumable items, hired performers, event space, community engagement, refreshments, and more.

Consider how to support underserved communities-

- Conduct outreach to underserved populations.
- Partner with local schools, clergy, and social service organizations.
- Work with teen volunteers for program flyer translation.
- Reboot ESL programming.
- Respect and share practices concerning privacy of information.
- Remain mindful of opportunities for inclusive opportunities the library may offer to residents of diverse abilities
- Work with volunteers to preserve and celebrate local Mam language use.

Sustain Great Youth Programming

- Sustain the good work and the community’s expressed enthusiasm and satisfaction with youth programs, including regular offerings and special events.
- Expand some offerings, such as a Teen Advisory Board.

Maximize Volunteer Program

- Support extant local history and youth volunteer programs.
- Return to working with local teens, adults, and youth to support our community and amplify library offerings.
- Consider niche volunteer opportunities like temporary interns, a Mam linguistics project, media creation for social media outlets and the library website, and so on.

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Community Goal

Engage and support the varied needs individuals, organizations, and communities of Bernardsville through robust and excellent services in a welcoming and beautiful environment.

Engage our community-
  - Cultivate partnerships and services that increase the library’s positive impact, standing, and support to increase the community’s satisfaction and the Library’s value and support.

Support local businesses and organizations-
  - When possible consider local resources and partnerships.
  - Clearly communicate when businesses support the library and its affiliated organizations.

Seek out local and regional organizations that offer potential for partnerships-
  - Organizations might include those that specialize in literacy, workforce development, cultural institutions, sports, businesses, schools, health and prevention, scouting, historic preservation, government, retirees, social services, the environment, and education.
  - Attend and co-sponsor or events, and mutually share media.
  - Potential venues include the Borough of Bernardsville Centennial celebrations, business and corporate events, recreation events, Downtown Bernardsville events, Back-to-School nights, Home School Association events, Garden Club Meetings, and fundraisers. Share “Stories around Town,” akin to “Sounds around Town.”

Operate with a strong governance model towards excellence in service-
  - Clearly communicate the Library’s resources, services, and events and the administrative and financial management of library operations to the Board of Trustees, Borough Council, the Bernardsville community, and other stakeholders.
  - Earn and maintain trust
  - Balance requests and means

Foster staffing that offers services that exceed patrons’ expectations-
  - Balance needs, resources, and capabilities to optimize investing in the community’s priorities and needs.

Facilitate ongoing community feedback and input about the Library’s services, resources, events, and operations-
  - Offer opportunities and communicate a disposition the invites community feedback and participation in the Library’s operations and planning.
Facility Goal

Sensibly reflect upon, reimagine, and update our facility to provide a beautiful, welcoming, and comfortable space that reflects a balance of the community’s evolving needs within the library’s resources.

Assess the needs and potentials of the space with the community-
- Use surveys, focus groups, and interviews to understand the benefits, drawbacks, and options in changes that are under consideration for the library’s facility.
- Seek out design options and visit libraries with spaces that offer features for consideration.

Consult appropriate professionals for their expertise in modifying the library space, especially when considering any major facility change or capital investment-
- Utilize space planners, merchandisers, capital reserve replacement analysts, and/or architects to plan the indoor and outdoor spaces, patron experiences and use as they relate to the Library’s spaces, and professional expectations of the facility’s systems, furnishings, finishes, and equipment.

Particularly consider modifications that may provide:
  o small meeting rooms
  o videoconferencing spaces
  o multimedia creation spaces
  o café services
  o improved parking
  o spaces for family gathering, youth learning, and play

- Examine extant spaces which might be ripe for reimagining, particularly the Storytime Room, the Quiet Room, the Children’s Area, and Technical Services.
- Consider spaces that might be created using pods, architectural glass, walls, and new or repurposed furnishings.

Establish a capital plan to re-envision the space, address our community’s dynamic needs, and keep pace with reasonable expectations of the typical lifespan for systems and finishes-
- The Bernardsville Public Library Capital Plan should span five years and include intended new projects, facility maintenance, and budgeting plans for the purposes of state reporting.
Final Points from the Executive Director

Looking inward, outward, and forward towards sustaining robust services and meeting the present and future needs of Bernardsville’s diverse individuals and communities.

The process of creating a Strategic Plan is typically an involved endeavor, as was our committee’s process. Albeit complicated, it is an affirming exercise to articulate the Bernardsville Public Library’s values and value to our communities as we envision how we can achieve our key aspirations for the future and meet the challenges we expect to encounter. Our Board of Trustees, library staff, and library supporters are proud of our organization’s excellent and robust services that our community employs every day from within the building and inside their homes.

It was the Committee’s pleasure to hear the conversations, concepts, and stories that evolved from the Strategic Planning Committee, the library staff, community survey, and each goal’s focus groups. The library is indebted to numerous individuals for their guidance in our impeding implementation of this plan.

Our preceding five years affirm that it is impossible to know exactly what the next five years hold. Despite this uncertainty, it is useful to have our five key goals for our growth in the library’s communication, collection, program offerings, and community engagement, as well as a plan to improve our facility towards the community’s evolving needs. The library team is excited to use the insights from this process to guide sustainable growth, assessment, and the continued provision of excellence in service to the Bernardsville community.

Mary Fran Daley, MLIS
Executive Director