



# **GLEN RIDGE PUBLIC LIBRARY STRATEGIC PLAN 2020-2025**

## **FINAL REPORT (NOVEMBER 2025)**

### **Overview**

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In early 2019 the Glen Ridge Public Library assembled a committee to develop a new Strategic Plan. In order to effectively determine goals, the committee examined the results of demographic research, reviewed the current challenges facing the library and what opportunities exist, and the feedback received through community surveys. Careful thought was given not only to goals that may address and impact current needs, but to those that shape the structure and resources of the library in future years.

The committee created objectives for each of the 6 key priorities and action steps through 2025. In order to determine the success and effectiveness of the various action steps, benchmarks were constructed to measure progress of the plan. It is acknowledged that any strategic plan allow for amendments should future circumstances require adaptability for relevance.

### **The Committee**

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- Jennifer Breuer, Library Director
- Edward Chang, Glen Ridge resident
- Bernice Clark-Bonnett, Trustee, Library Board of Trustees
- Carol P. Harpster, President, Library Board of Trustees
- Elizabeth Leonard, Glen Ridge resident
- Dawn Petretti-Silvera, Principal Library Assistant - Circulation/Technical Services
- Harry Rush, Vice President, Library Board of Trustees
- Linda Seyffarth, Secretary, Library Board of Trustees
- Jeanna Velechko, Glen Ridge resident
- Sydney Young, Principal Library Assistant - Youth Services

### **Strategic Priorities**

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The Strategic Planning Committee developed the following strategic priorities based on the survey results.

1. Provide a regular schedule of programming for all ages
2. Seek ways to create a frictionless user experience
3. Expand access
4. Elevate the library's community presence and patron engagement through marketing and outreach
5. Further establish the library as a community center
6. Advocate for funding that supports these strategic priorities

## Accomplishments & Challenges

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There were a lot of successes during the 2020-2025 plan period. Here are some highlights.

- The Library was granted a Library Construction Bond Act (LCBA) grant which allowed for the construction of three new study rooms, an additional public restroom, and the renovation of the Young Adult area on the top floor.
- The Friends of the Library funded the Locker Pavillion which provides 24/7 access for patrons to pick up their materials at the time that is most convenient for them and not reliant upon library hours.
- The Library provided programming for all ages with a monthly printed calendar for children and teens and an online calendar for all ages.
- Funding for programming across all age groups has been expanded and the Friends of the Library have increased their funding for the Summer Reading program.
- The Library's hours of operation were expanded to include three evenings and a total of 57 open hours per week. The Library's regular hours are Monday through Wednesday from 9AM-8PM and Thursday through Saturday from 9AM-5PM. The Library is closed on Saturdays from Independence Day through Labor Day.
- The Library has expanded their funding across all material lines including a substantial increase to the e-content line to ensure that Glen Ridge patrons have access to the materials they need in the format they prefer without extended wait times.
- The Library has worked with local groups such as Freeman Gardens, the GRDIAA, the Borough, and the Women's Club to participate in a variety of programs and events such as the Freeman Gardens storytimes, the annual GRDIA picnic, the EAC's Repair Cafe, and many more.
- A new social media management tool (Hootsuite) was implemented to allow for a more seamless reach across platforms while maximizing the security of the Library's accounts. The Library created Instagram and Threads accounts in addition to the existing Facebook and Twitter (now X) accounts.
- The Library Director is attending faculty meetings at all of the schools, is in regular communications with the school administration, and the number of teachers with library cards has increased tenfold.

A very obvious challenge during this period was the COVID-19 pandemic and how that affected the Library's ability to provide service to the community. The Library was closed and then had reduced capacity for an extended period. Despite that, the staff continued to provide excellent service with increased e-content, "grab and go" style services, and flexibility in their work schedules and locations. In 2022 the Library experienced its first book challenge which caused a considerable amount of stress and conflict within the community and the Library but thankfully was resolved successfully thanks to the commitment of the Library Board, clear policies and strong patron/community support.

## Status of Plan Objectives, Goals, and Benchmarks

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Within each goal there were a variety of goals and benchmarks. Items that were completed in **full are in bold**, items that were *partially completed are italicized*, and items that were not completed are underlined.

1. **Provide a regular schedule of programming for all ages**
  - 1.1. **Assign staff to develop, provide, and enhance current programming offerings**
    - 1.1.1. **More staff has taken an active role in providing and scheduling programming**
    - 1.1.2. **Programs have been established or expanded based on the feedback from the survey (i.e., author visits, book clubs, concerts, movies, and more after school programs for children)**
  - 1.2. **Create an adult programming position**
  - 1.3. **Ensure funding for programming is a budget priority and identify additional funding/partnership opportunities**

- 1.3.1. **Programming is funded by appropriation; additional funding sources and partnerships are established**
- 1.4. *Develop method for gathering program interests from the Community*
  - 1.4.1. Utilize the Public Library Association's Project Outcome to measure programming satisfaction and track attendance
  - 1.4.2. *Feedback is regularly received from the community on desired programming and classes*
- 2. **Seek ways to create a frictionless user experience**
  - 2.1. **Identify cumbersome and/or unnecessary policies or procedures**
    - 2.1.1. **Review policies and procedures and revise/remove if necessary**
  - 2.2. **Support the use of technologies that improve customer satisfaction and access to content and services with consideration for patron privacy and security**
    - 2.2.1. **Research and implement technologies, services, and practices to make seamless and barrier-free experiences for our users**
    - 2.2.2. **Support BCCLS' efforts to improve patron experiences with the services they provide**
  - 2.3. **Provide a "patron-centric" experience**
    - 2.3.1. **Empower and support staff to help patrons to the best of their ability to provide an optimal experience**
- 3. **Expand access**
  - 3.1. **Offer operating hours that meet the needs of the community**
    - 3.1.1. **Increase operating hours based on specific feedback from the community**
  - 3.2. **Provide services that allow patrons access to materials when the library is closed**
    - 3.2.1. **Install pick-up lockers that allow patrons after hours access to materials**
  - 3.3. *Expand opportunities for the public to learn about new materials and collections*
    - 3.3.1. *Increase Reader's Advisory services to the public*
    - 3.3.2. *Provide Reader's Advisory professional development opportunities and tools to staff*
  - 3.4. **Maintain a well-funded material budget with sufficient funding to add formats and electronic offerings in response to patron demand and interest**
    - 3.4.1. **Ensure a materials budget that is at least 10% of the overall library budget**
    - 3.4.2. **Add formats that reflect patron demand, review and add electronic resources as necessary that also provide the best value**
- 4. **Elevate the library's community presence and patron engagement through marketing and outreach**
  - 4.1. **Formalize approach to marketing and public relations**
    - 4.1.1. Develop and maintain a quarterly marketing flow chart that tracks the library's PR efforts and frequency through various media channels
    - 4.1.2. *Institute measurement and metrics for ongoing marketing/community engagement performance review*
  - 4.2. **Explore local options and partnerships to further educate and engage with the community**
    - 4.2.1. **Partner with organizations, schools, and businesses to increase library presence within the community**
    - 4.2.2. Develop a "library ambassador" program
  - 4.3. **Dedicate more staff time to marketing and outreach**
    - 4.3.1. *Develop a staff position that focuses on marketing, outreach, and the library brand*
  - 4.4. **Increase social media presence**
    - 4.4.1. **Expand social media presence to Instagram and keep abreast of changes in social media platforms**
- 5. **Further establish the library as a community center**
  - 5.1. **Add more meeting spaces for use by the library and the public**
    - 5.1.1. **Create more meeting spaces for public and library use through redesigning current spaces and/or constructing new areas**
  - 5.2. **Strengthen our relationship with the public schools**
    - 5.2.1. **Meet with school administrators at least once per year to discuss how the library can support students and teachers more effectively**
    - 5.2.2. **Dedicate staff time to liaising with teachers and schools**

- 5.3. **Respond to and support the community during times of emergency such as severe storms or prolonged power outages**
  - 5.3.1. **Develop an emergency plan with Borough Administrators and the Library Board of Trustees**
- 5.4. **Support programming that encourages socialization and community meetups**
  - 5.4.1. **Encourage the community to use the library for social activities and meetups**
  - 5.4.2. **Bring the library outside into the community as much as possible through participating in events, partnering with organizations, etc.**
- 6. **Advocate for funding that supports these strategic priorities**
  - 6.1. **Apply for NJ Construction Bond Act grant money to support reorganizing and expanding spaces**
  - 6.2. *Demonstrate the value of the library and the return on investment*
    - 6.2.1. *Develop a library metric for measuring value, ROI, and library use*
    - 6.2.2. *Promote openness and ensure transparency through the availability of Library Board meeting minutes, financial statements, and annual budget on the library's website*
  - 6.3. **Continue to work with the Friends of the Library to advocate for financial support within the community**
    - 6.3.1. **Strengthen the Friends of the Library's advocacy efforts, seek funding sources and increased donations**
  - 6.4. **Work with Borough officials to continue strong budget support for the library**
    - 6.4.1. *By demonstrating need, ensure a well-funded library budget appropriation above state minimums*
    - 6.4.2. Explore whether P.L. 2017,c.260 "Permits increase in municipal free public library tax upon voter approval" would be a viable option for the library and community

## Summary

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The Glen Ridge Public Library's 2020-2025 Strategic Plan covered a very tumultuous period as the COVID-19 pandemic hit within 3 months of the plan's start and there was a change in leadership with the former Library Director leaving in December 2021, and a new Director starting in March of 2022. Despite these unforeseen circumstances, the majority of the plan's priorities were accomplished during the five year period, although some were re-imagined in ways that the original committee may not have anticipated.

During any five year period, things are going to fluctuate and change and while a few of the individual goals and benchmarks laid out in the original plan were not met; all six strategic priorities were addressed in a substantial way. Both the Library staff and the Trustees should be recognized for their creativity and dedication for guiding the Library through an incredibly challenging time.