

**GLEN RIDGE
PUBLIC LIBRARY**
For every part of your life.

GLEN RIDGE PUBLIC LIBRARY STRATEGIC PLAN 2020-2025

Adopted by the Library Board of Trustees October 23, 2019

CONTENTS

The Committee	3
Executive Summary	4
Letter from the Library Board President	5
Mission & Vision	6
Guiding Principles	7
Strengths & Successes	8
Challenges	9
Methodology	10
About the Library & Community	11
Survey Results	12
Strategic Priorities	13
Objectives	14 - 19
References	20

THE COMMITTEE

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

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Glen Ridge Public Library assembled a committee to develop a new Strategic Plan in early 2019 with a goal to present a finalized plan to the Library Board of Trustees by the fall. Comprised of 4 Trustees, 3 Glen Ridge residents, and 3 staff members, including the Director, the committee developed this plan to lead the Library through 2025.

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. It is recommended that the Strategic Planning Committee meet annually to evaluate and adjust the objectives as necessary.

LETTER FROM THE LIBRARY BOARD PRESIDENT

In early 2019, the Glen Ridge Public Library embarked upon a major strategic-planning process designed to set the course for future growth, change and service excellence.

Through the tireless work of our strategic planning committee, comprised of staff, patrons and board members, and with the able direction of Library Director, Jennifer Breuer, the Glen Ridge Public Library Five-Year Strategic Plan 2020-2025 has been completed.

Our patron needs are constantly evolving, and we must keep pace with those changes. The need for quiet study space, meeting rooms and after-hours pick up of materials are of prime importance, and this new plan focuses on those needs.

I would like to thank Library Director, Jennifer Breuer, for the creativity and vision she brings to work each and every day. I would also like to thank our hard-working staff (key to our being voted New Jersey's favorite library), the Friends for both their volunteer and financial support, and the members of the Strategic Planning Committee. And last but not least, thank you to our patrons and community for your passion and love of our library.

Please take the time to read this document and view it as a blueprint for the future of the Glen Ridge Public Library.

Warm regards,

Carol P. Harpster

President, Glen Ridge Public Library Board of Trustees

MISSION

It is necessary and appropriate for an institution to define what it is and how it interacts with its community. Our mission remains the same and we use this as our guidepost as we move forward today and in the future.

To be a part of every resident's life by providing access to dynamic and responsive services; interesting and relevant collections; and engaging and enjoyable programs in order to fulfill a need no matter how basic or complex.

VISION

A vision statement is inspirational and aspirational. A vision guides us through our goals and assists us as we make decisions to better the library and the community we serve.

Our vision is to provide an ever-evolving and engaging public library that strives to deliver an optimal user experience to people of all ages.

OUR GUIDING PRINCIPLES

SERVICE EXCELLENCE

We are first and foremost focused on high customer satisfaction and strive to provide positive experiences for our users. Our employees are knowledgeable, friendly, conscientious, and are committed to responding to our users' needs professionally, creatively, and efficiently.

WELCOMING ATMOSPHERE

Our facility is well maintained, clean, and comfortable. We recognize the importance of the Library's unique architecture and its value within the community. Our spaces are attractive and designed for the user in mind.

INNOVATION

We pursue innovation to ensure the Library is modern, relevant, and responsive to the needs of our patrons. Enhancements and advancements in appropriate technology are implemented continuously in order to enhance services and provide efficient operations.

ACCESS TO KNOWLEDGE & INFORMATION

We provide open and equal access to information, resources, and facilities in a barrier-free way as possible. Our employees handle requests for information in a manner that protects our patrons' privacy and respects every user's right to know and read. We provide access to information that is uncensored and supports the open exchange of ideas in multiple points of view.

FOSTERING LEARNING & CREATIVITY

Through our programming, classes, collections, services, and community partnerships, we encourage the continuous intellectual growth of our users throughout their entire lives; most especially in childhood to set the foundation of lifelong learning. We support literacy and strive to provide resources for knowledge and creativity.

INTEGRITY & TRUST

We serve the residents of Glen Ridge with integrity. We are mindful of our financial responsibility to the taxpayer and operate as cost-effectively as possible. We are honest, open, and fair when working with patrons and each other.

STAFF APPRECIATION

We recognize that our staff is our most valuable resource and asset. Our employees are celebrated, respected, and teamwork is valued. We encourage staff to share their talents and grow professionally. They are provided the resources needed to allow them to perform as effectively and creatively as possible.

STRENGTHS & SUCCESSES

GEOGRAPHY

The library is centrally located within Glen Ridge, at the intersection of Bloomfield and Ridgewood Avenues. The library is easily accessible to students attending Ridgewood Avenue School and Glen Ridge High School, making it a popular destination for students after school.

The library is near public transportation. It is one block away from the Glen Ridge Train Station and NJ Transit bus lines.

PEOPLE

The library's staff is our greatest strength. Our staff is talented, knowledgeable, creative, and dedicated to the community in which we serve. Our cadre of volunteers assists our staff and supports the library's goals through the gift of their time and the sharing of their talents.

The Library Board of Trustees is a group of forward-thinking volunteers whose goal is to provide Glen Ridge with a strong, responsive library that is fiscally responsible to the taxpayer.

The Friends of the Glen Ridge Library is a non-profit organization that seeks additional funding support for the library through various fundraisers, drives, events, etc. They are our strongest supporters as advocates and ambassadors to the community.

SUPPORT OF THE COMMUNITY

In June 2019, the library was voted "New Jersey's Favorite Library" by the readers of NJ Family Magazine. This honor was only made possible by the support of the community.

The Friends of the Library's Annual Appeals of 2017 (\$23,268) and 2018 (\$20,461) surpassed fundraising goals of \$20,000 through generous donations from the community. This money directly supports the library's programming and services and represents about 3% of the overall library budget.

In addition, the Trustees and Library Director have excellent relations with the Borough Administrator, Mayor, and Councilors. They are supportive of the library and our efforts. We have several shared service agreements in place that are cost-effective and efficient; and we work together to provide the community the highest quality services. The library and Borough partner in efforts such as *Selected Shorts*, the Town-Wide Yard Sale, and the annual holiday tree lighting, just to name a few.

BCCLS

As a member of the Bergen County Cooperative System (BCCLS) since 2001, the community has access to over 5 million items, both physical and digital, throughout the 77-member libraries in Bergen, Essex, Hudson, and Passaic Counties. In addition to collections, BCCLS provides a cost-effective hidden infrastructure that is the backbone of the Glen Ridge Library. This includes the integrated library system; professional cataloging; leasing and maintenance of the staff and public computers, and its software; on-demand IT support; various professional development opportunities for all staff; and the new BCCLS-provided delivery service that moves materials quickly and efficiently across the system.

CHALLENGES

TECHNOLOGICAL COMPETITION

Newer challenges that have presented themselves to libraries are the proliferation of streaming media including the unique content creation and custom curation that these platforms provide. Home assistants instantly retrieve information, play music, and perform other helpful tasks. In addition, cars are no longer being sold with CD players, DVD players are less popular, and stereos are becoming a thing of the past. Quick delivery from online companies set expectations for users and create an instant gratification culture in which libraries must compete with. Other challenges are the vendors who are the gatekeepers to eBooks and digital audiobooks. The ever evolving licensing rules, platform fees, and expense for these items creates challenges for libraries.

FUNDING

Even though the library is funded above the NJ State minimum funding formula ^[1] and we receive generous support from the Borough, the library must seek additional annual funding support from the Friends of the Library, and seek grants and donations in order to provide the public with the library services they need and want. Expenses rise each year without relative increase in funding which always poses a challenge for that year's budget. In order to effectively respond to the community's needs outlined in this Strategic Plan, receiving funding that supports these endeavors is essential.

BUILDING CONSTRAINTS

While the library is celebrated for its architecture and historic value within the community, it does pose building challenges and limitations that arise as a result of these features. A 100-year old building creates maintenance issues due to the aging

building and keeping up with those repairs can be a challenge financially and logistically. Remaining sensitive to the library's place on the NJ Historic Register makes any update or expansion of the building limiting. In addition to the physical building, the lack of parking is often cited as one of our users' greatest barriers for visiting the library.

The current meeting space is inadequate to serve the current programming needs of the library and the community's public meeting space needs. As we respond to our residents' desire for more programming, events, and classes, the lack of large meeting spaces will pose significant challenges and hampers our progress to meeting those needs.

In addition, due to the physical open plan of the library, we are unable to provide sufficient areas for quiet study.

The single public bathroom is insufficient to accommodate the volume of people visiting the library, becomes dirty quickly, and when out of service poses a health issue. Often, there is a wait for the bathroom.

CONFLICTS WITH LOCAL EVENTS

Library events and programs are planned to avoid competing with other local happenings, but sometimes conflicts occur. By having such an engaged and involved community other opportunities take precedence and compete with library events such as sports, school-related events, other organization's events, etc.

METHODOLOGY

The Strategic Planning Committee employed the use of surveys to elicit feedback from the community and our users. The survey, developed using Survey Monkey, was distributed electronically in April/May 2019. The survey was shared via email, electronic newsletters, a paid Facebook ad, on the library's website, and via signage. Paper copies of the survey were also available at the library. In addition, the survey was available at the library's booth at the Glen Ridge Eco-Fair for the public to complete on the spot.

The survey was designed to address usage and research current perceptions, gain insight into users' future needs, solicit feedback about collections, programming, operations, and overall library services.

Three hundred fifty-three (353) surveys were completed. The majority of respondents currently live in Glen Ridge (96%). 71% of survey takers were female with 96 % living in Glen Ridge for more than one year and of those, 33% have lived in the Borough for more than 20 years. Most survey takers have children living at home with 33% under the age of 12 and 28% between 13-19. The ages of respondents were as follows: under 18 (4%); 18-24 (>1 %); 25-34 (3%); 35-44 (19%); 45-54 (33%) 55-64 (18%); and 65+ (21.5%).

The committee recommends surveying in the future to gain more details on feedback received on various topics such as "more hours" and "programs" in order to respond specifically to the community's needs.

The committee also examined data from the Census American Fact Finder and Censusreporter.org to be informed about the overall demographics of the community. A brief overview of that data is included in this plan.

ABOUT THE LIBRARY & COMMUNITY

The Glen Ridge Public Library was incorporated in 1912 and housed at Glen Ridge Hall (where the Historical Society and Foundry Bank are today). The library itself was built in 1918 by local philanthropist Henry Chapman who funded the construction with land provided by the Borough. In 1993, the library was expanded and connected to the Municipal Complex which allowed ADA access to the buildings. In 2007, the library had a year-long complete building renovation that is the library of today. In 2015, the Local History Room and Archive opened which houses the library's extensive local history collection and also provides quiet study. This renovation and the digitization of the local history collection was funded by the library's Centennial Fundraiser in 2012. Future building needs of the library include extensive roof repairs; rehabilitation of the exterior retaining walls and steps; and redesigning of spaces to provide more seating, quiet study, meeting areas, and after hours access to materials.

ABOUT THE LIBRARY

(Based on 2018 statistics)

Full Time Equivalents	10.2
Volunteer Hours	1,600
Weekly Hours of Operation	51
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Monday & Wednesday 12-8 ● Tuesday 9-8 ● Thursday, Friday & Saturday 9-5 (Closed Saturdays in July & August)	
Annual Visits	131,661
No. of Card Holders	4,572

Annual Circulation	144,471
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Adult 46,497 ● Media 25,556 ● Children's 52,663 ● Young Adult 3,345 ● Digital Collections 15,862 ● Museum Passes, Hotspots, Kindles, GoPro camera 548 	
Collection Size (physical items)	61,131
BCCLS Reciprocal Borrowing	35,429
Number of programs	517
Program attendance	11,265
Summer Reading Program	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● No. of Participants 522 ● No. of Books Read 8,351 	
Public Computer Sessions	10,182
WiFi Sessions	45,120

GLEN RIDGE DEMOGRAPHICS ^[2]

Population	7,529
Area	1.3 sq. mi
No. of Households	2,459
Median Age	42.3
Persons under 18	32.5 %
Persons 65 and older	10.1 %
Average Household Income	\$196,821
Education Level (college +)	71 %
Living in GR more than 1 year	94 %

SURVEY RESULTS

OVERVIEW

353

SURVEYS COMPLETED

DO YOU HAVE A LIBRARY CARD?

GLEN RIDGE LIBRARY CARD HOLDERS

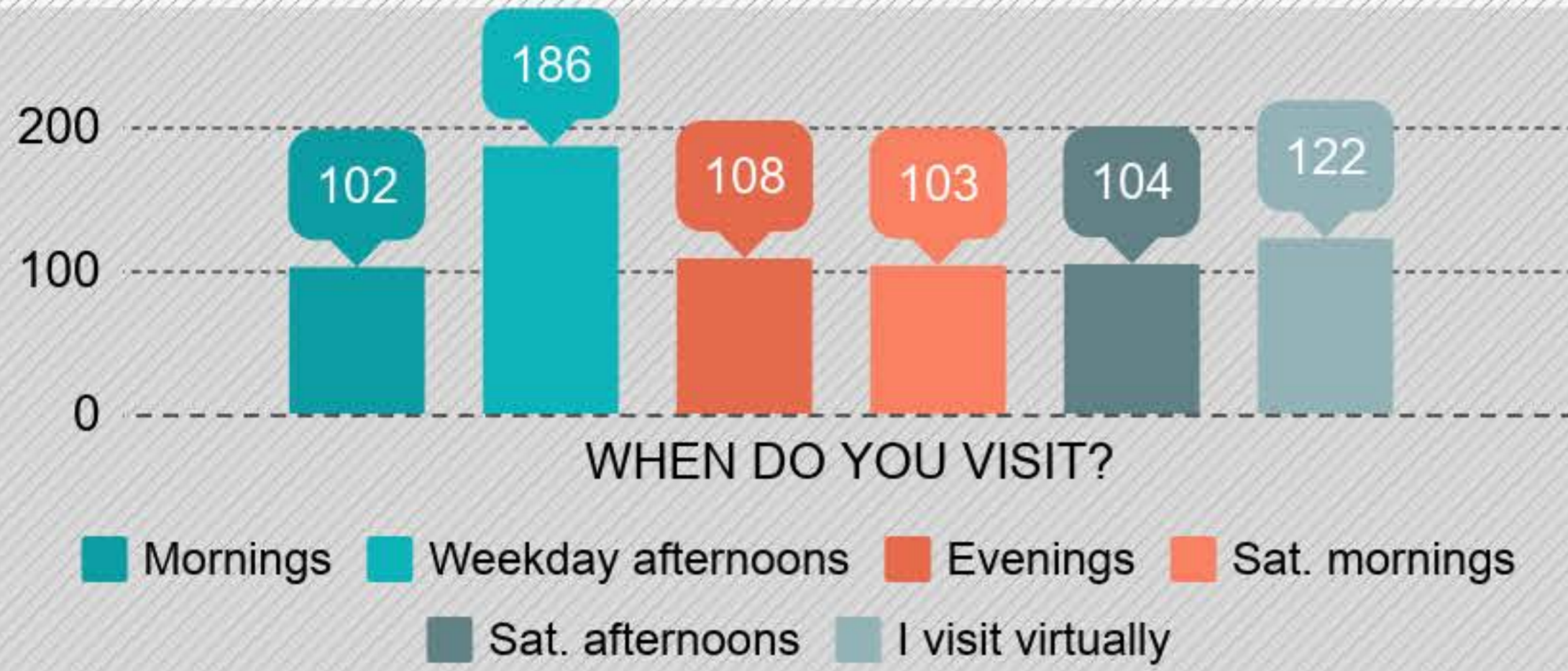
337

ANOTHER TOWN

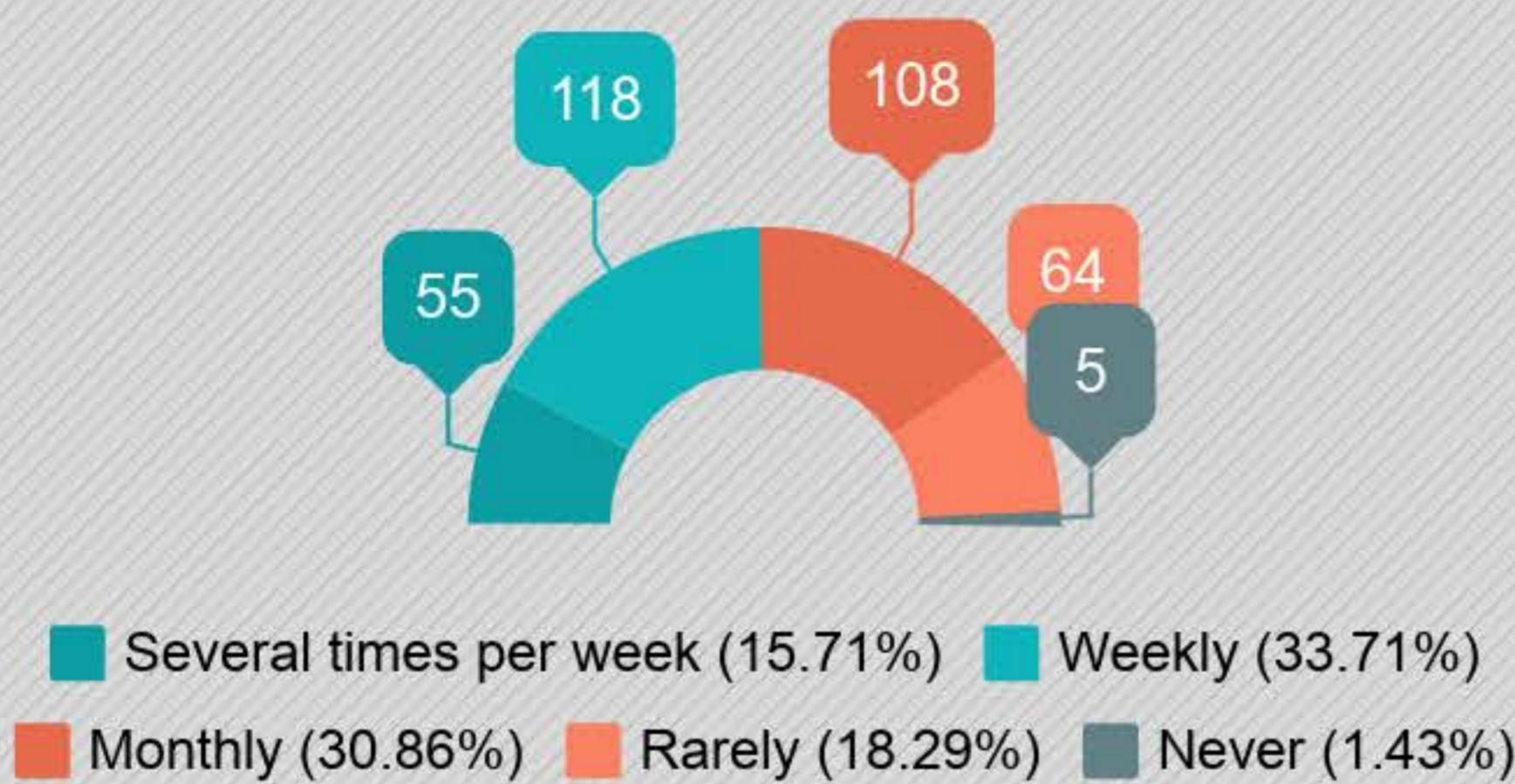
10

NO CARD

5



HOW OFTEN DO YOU USE THE LIBRARY?



- No. 1 **LACK OF PARKING**
No. 2 **INCONVENIENT HOURS**

BARRIERS TO USING THE LIBRARY

HOW DO YOU USE THE LIBRARY?

Borrow Books	93 %
Use BCCLS	55 %
Borrow DVDs	54 %
Museum Passes	45 %
Notary Public	30 %
Photocopier & Printer	27 %
Attend Children's Programs	26 %
eBooks & eAudiobooks	26 %
Read Newspapers & Magazines	25 %
Borrow Audiobooks	25 %



74 % Learn about library programs and services via email

72 % Felt they were informed about the library

MOST WANTED SERVICES

1. Use Library During Emergencies
2. Summer Saturday Hours
3. Sunday Hours
4. 24-Hour Pick Up Lockers
5. Streaming Media Services
6. More Comfortable Seating
7. More Reader's Advisory Services
8. Additional Restroom
9. Virtual Homework Help/Tutoring
10. More Collaborative Work Areas

MOST WANTED PROGRAMMING

- Author Visits & Book Discussion Groups
- Lectures
- Concerts & Musical Performances
- Movies & Films
- After School Activities for Children & Teens

WHEN ASKED WHAT USERS LIKE MOST ABOUT THE LIBRARY

THE STAFF RANKED #1



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STRATEGIC PRIORITIES

The Strategic Planning Committee developed the following strategic priorities based on the survey results. Each priority has measurable objectives that will determine the plan's overall success.

- 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**

OBJECTIVES

STRATEGIC PRIORITY 1

Provide a regular schedule of programming for all ages

When users were asked to “Think Big” the greatest amount of feedback was about programs and events. Users want more focus put towards this effort and programs as a central part of library service. The majority of respondents ranked current library programming as “good” to “excellent.”

GOALS

- 1.1 Assign staff to develop, provide, and enhance current programming offerings
- 1.2 Create an adult programming position
- 1.3 Ensure funding for programming is a budget priority and identify additional funding/partnership opportunities
- 1.4 Develop method for gathering program interests from the community

“In today’s fast-changing world, library programming is increasingly integral to enhancing library responsiveness and adaptability. Through programming, libraries identify, address, and reflect community needs; enhance their institutional capacity and services; and contribute deeply to our democratic society.”^[3]

BENCHMARKS

- 1.1 More staff has taken an active role in providing and scheduling programming
- 1.1 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 Hire new position that focuses on adult programming
- 1.3 Programming is funded by appropriation; additional funding sources and partnerships are established
- 1.4 Utilize the Public Library Association’s *Project Outcome* to measure programming satisfaction and track attendance
- 1.4 Feedback is regularly received from the community on desired programming and classes

OBJECTIVES (continued)

STRATEGIC PRIORITY 2

Seek ways to create a frictionless user experience

By identifying and removing barriers to access, enhancing engagement, and leading to positive experiences, the library strives to meet the needs of all users effectively as possible.

GOALS

- 2.1 Identify cumbersome and/or unnecessary policies or procedures
- 2.2 Support the use of technologies that improve customer satisfaction and access to content and services with consideration for patron privacy and security
- 2.3 Provide a “patron-centric” experience

“At its core, a Frictionless User Experience describes the mindset of an organization that has a customer-centric approach to offer the right content in the right channel with the right context.”^[4]

BENCHMARKS

- 2.1 Review policies and procedures and revise/remove if necessary
- 2.2 Research and implement technologies, services, and practices to make seamless and barrier-free experiences for our users
- 2.2 Support BCCLS’ efforts to improve patron experiences with the services they provide
- 2.3 Empower and support staff to help patrons to the best of their ability to provide an optimal experience

OBJECTIVES (continued)

STRATEGIC PRIORITY 3

Expand access

Providing access is a basic tenet of public library service. Libraries should strive to provide as much access to its services and collections as possible.

“All information resources that are provided directly or indirectly by the library, regardless of technology, format, or methods of delivery, should be readily, equally, and equitably accessible to all library users.”- ALA Core Values ^[5]

GOALS

- 3.1 Offer operating hours that meet the needs of the community
- 3.2 Provide services that allow patrons access to materials when the library is closed
- 3.3 Expand opportunities for the public to learn about new materials and collections
- 3.4 Maintain a well-funded material budget with sufficient funding to add formats and electronic offerings in response to patron demand and interest

BENCHMARKS

- 3.1 Increase operating hours based on specific feedback from the community
- 3.2 Install pick-up lockers that allow patrons after hours access to materials
- 3.3 Increase Reader’s Advisory services to the public
- 3.3 Provide Reader’s Advisory professional development opportunities and tools to staff
- 3.4 Ensure a materials budget that is at least 10% of the overall library budget
- 3.4 Add formats that reflect patron demand, review and add electronic resources as necessary that also provide the best value

OBJECTIVES (continued)

STRATEGIC PRIORITY 4

Elevate the library’s community presence and patron engagement through marketing and outreach

For residents to fully utilize and be aware of all the services the library offers and have the greatest return on investment, the library must make a concerted effort towards educating the community on its offerings.

GOALS

- 4.1 Formalize approach to marketing and public relations
- 4.2 Explore local options and partnerships to further educate and engage with the community
- 4.3 Dedicate more staff time to marketing and outreach
- 4.4 Increase social media presence

“Marketing allows libraries to explain to people that we aren’t just books but we are so much more. We offer many opportunities, often for free, for the entire family. Getting this message out is more difficult than you can imagine.”^[6]

BENCHMARKS

- 4.1 Develop and maintain a quarterly marketing flow chart that tracks the library’s PR efforts and frequency through various media channels
- 4.1 Institute measurement and metrics for ongoing marketing/community engagement performance review
- 4.2 Partner with organizations, schools, and businesses to increase library presence within the community
- 4.2 Develop a “library ambassador” program
- 4.3 Develop a staff position that focuses on marketing, outreach, and the library brand
- 4.4 Expand social media presence to Instagram and keep abreast of changes in social media platforms

OBJECTIVES (continued)

STRATEGIC PRIORITY 5

Further establish the library as a community center

More than just books and banks of computers, libraries are still places where individuals gather to explore, interact, and imagine.

“A vibrant center of the community... dedicated to being a central space for Glen Ridge... our library represents the heart of our town... very community oriented...” These are just some of the comments received from the survey about what people like best about the library. At the Glen Ridge Library, community-building connections are happening all the time.

GOALS

- 5.1** Add more meeting spaces for use by the library and the public
- 5.2** Strengthen our relationship with the public schools
- 5.3** Respond to and support the community during times of emergency such as severe storms or prolonged power outages
- 5.4** Support programming that encourages socialization and community meetups

In the words of Robert Putnam, “People may go to the library looking mainly for information, but they find each other there.”^[7]

BENCHMARKS

- 5.1** Create more meeting spaces for public and library use through redesigning current spaces and/or constructing new areas
- 5.2** Meet with school administrators at least once per year to discuss how the library can support students and teachers more effectively
- 5.2** Dedicate staff time to liaising with teachers and schools
- 5.3** Develop an emergency plan with Borough Administrators and the Library Board of Trustees
- 5.4** Encourage the community to use the library for social activities and meetups
- 5.4** Bring the library outside into the community as much as possible through participating in events, partnering with organizations, etc.

OBJECTIVES (continued)

STRATEGIC PRIORITY 6

Advocate for funding that supports these strategic priorities

GOALS

- 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
- 6.3** Continue to work with the Friends of the Library to advocate for financial support within the community
- 6.4** Work with Borough officials to continue strong budget support for the library

BENCHMARKS

- 6.1** Plans are in place based on the outcome of the grant and are acted on accordingly
- 6.2** Provide the community with an annual report

“Public library use in the United States is growing. Circulation and visits to U.S. libraries are increasing and a wide range of services, such as literacy classes, teen programs and public access computing, are also experiencing strong demand. But the public funding required to sustain the variety, use and appetite for library services is not keeping pace with demand.”^[8]

BENCHMARKS(continued)

- 6.2** Develop a library metric for measuring value, ROI, and library use
- 6.2** 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** Strengthen the Friends of the Library’s advocacy efforts, seek funding sources and increased donations
- 6.4** By demonstrating need, ensure a well-funded library budget appropriation above state minimums
- 6.4** 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

REFERENCES

- [1] N.J.S.A. 40:54-8. Library tax.
- a. Within every municipality governed by this article there shall annually be raised by taxation a sum equal to one-third of a mill, unless a higher rate is approved by the voters pursuant to subsection b. of this section, on every dollar of assessable property within such municipality based on the equalized valuation of such property as certified by the Director of the Division of Taxation in the Department of the Treasury in accordance with the provisions of R.S.54:4-49.
- [2] "Census Profile: Glen Ridge, NJ." *Census Reporter*, US Census Bureau, 2017, censusreporter.org/profiles/16000US3426610-glen-ridge-nj/.
- [3] Sheppard, B., Flinner, K., Norlander, R.J., Fournier, M.D. (2019). *National Impact of Library Public Programs Assessment: Phase 1, A White Paper on the Dimensions of Library Programs & the Skills and Training for Library Program Professionals*. New Knowledge Publication #IML.074.207.07. Chicago: American Library Association & New Knowledge Organization Ltd. <https://nilppa.org/>.
- [4] Pan, Jiaqi. "The Ultimate Business Competitive Advantage: The Frictionless Framework." *Medium*, The Startup, 31 May 2018, medium.com/swlh/the-ultimate-business-competitive-advantage-the-frictionless-framework-94a6f482116e.
- [5] "Core Values of Librarianship", American Library Association, July 26, 2006. <http://www.ala.org/advocacy/intfreedom/corevalues/>.
- [6] "Library Services in the Digital Age." *Pew Research Center: Internet, Science & Tech*, Pew Research Center, 22 Jan. 2013, <https://www.pewinternet.org/2013/01/22/library-services/>.
- [7] Putnam, Robert D., et al. *Better Together: Restoring the American Community*. Simon & Schuster, 2009.
- [8] De Rosa, Cathy, and Jenny Johnson. 2008. *From Awareness to Funding: A study of library support in America*. Dublin, Ohio: OCLC. <https://www.oclc.org/research/publications/all/funding.html>