



**Wilmington**  
MEMORIAL **Library**

*Community Starts Here*

# Strategic Plan Fiscal Years 2016 –2020

**Submitted By:**

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## INTRODUCTION

In the past, public libraries had a monopoly on information. Now, anyone with Internet connectivity has the world at his fingertips. This rapid and radical shift from paper to digital information challenges libraries to find new and creative ways to serve their communities.

Wilmington Memorial Library (WML) first responded to this challenge nine years ago with a proposal to build a new library facility. After the community rejected this proposal, the Library Director and staff began implementing a facility makeover. Numerous enhancements to the existing space included aesthetic and practical changes. Operational updates that focused on increasing efficiency and offering new customer conveniences, such as self-holds, self-checkout services, and a drive up book return, proved to be very popular.

Since 2005, WML increased the number of programs offered by 50% including more diverse types of programs, such as, technology classes, one-on-one technology assistance, after hours concerts, cooking classes, robotics, author talks, domestic and foreign affairs discussion groups, and much more. This resulted in a 38% increase in program attendance. Realizing that we needed to get the word out that the public library was changing, WML created a Marketing Librarian position in 2012 with the primary responsibility of making the library a visible and integral part of the community.

Going forward, we want to remain a vibrant community hub by anticipating and evolving in ways that to best serve the community. To this end we have developed the following Strategic Plan for Fiscal Years 2016-2020. It is a dynamic, “living” document that identifies strategic goals, supporting objectives, and action items that are a direct response to the community feedback we received and our ongoing commitment to the WML’s core mission and values. While remaining attuned to an ever-changing environment, we will strive to provide Wilmington with the kind of library that benefits our users and makes our town a great place to live.

## WHAT WE DID

In January 2014, we hired strategic planning consultant, Barbara Alevras, of Sage Consulting Services, to guide us through the planning process and facilitate meetings and focus groups. We then established our key planning goals, which enabled us to create an inclusive, transparent, and detailed planning process (see *Appendix A - Strategic Planning Process Flowchart*).

To support our efforts, we invited 13 community members representing diverse Wilmington constituencies to serve on a Strategic Planning Committee (SPC). In order to provide important background information about the library and the community to the SPC, we compiled a community demographic profile and an overview of WML services and library trends in an orientation document (see *Appendix B - Strategic Planning Resource Packet*).

During its eight-month term, the SPC met four times to assist with:

- Developing community vision statements that described the ideal Wilmington
- Identifying and prioritizing those vision statements that WML could support. (see *Appendix C - Prioritized Community Vision Statements*)
- Evaluating potential WML strategic goals, objectives, and tactics
- Reviewing the final draft of WML's Strategic Plan document

## TOP 3 COMMUNITY VISION STATEMENTS THAT WML CAN SUPPORT

Wilmington cultivates lifelong learning opportunities that expand and enrich residents' personal and professional lives.

Wilmington supports a wide range of programs and services for all ages that augment formal academic offerings.

Wilmington maintains public facilities that serve as community gathering places and centers of cultural, recreational and social activity.

Throughout the strategic planning process, the SPC provided invaluable input and support.

Community feedback was critical to our ability to assess the library's priorities, services, and usage. To this end, we offered numerous opportunities for Wilmington residents to provide input by conducting:

- **Two Strengths-Weaknesses-Opportunities-Threats (SWOT) Analyses** (results presented in *Appendix D - SWOT Analysis Summary*)
- **Three Focus Groups with Target Audiences** (results presented in *Appendix E - Community Feedback Overview*)
- **Two Community Forums** (results presented in *Appendix E - Community Feedback Overview*)
- **Two Surveys** (results presented in *Appendix F - Community Survey Results* and *Appendix G - Teen Survey Results*)

We received a significant amount of feedback from approximately 450 people. To review the target audience(s) and number of participants per feedback mechanism, please see *Appendix A - Strategic Planning Process Flowchart*.

## WHAT WE LEARNED

A review of the data resulted in the identification of six primary areas of focus.



### **Staff**

The staff is respected and regarded highly. In the Trustees' and Friends of the Library Executive Board's SWOT, the "strong, positive, forward-thinking, and committed management team" and "friendly, knowledgeable, collaborative, and innovative staff" are ranked as the number one and three top strengths, respectively.

### **Technology and Training**

Many respondents appreciate the personal help with computers and technology. They think our offerings of technology access and training are valuable, but want more.

### **Literacy and Lifelong Learning**

The visioning process with the SPC emphasized the importance of the library's commitment to literacy and lifelong learning. Additionally, 89% of survey respondents strongly agreed that the library is important to the community because it supports literacy and lifelong learning.

### **Facility**

Sixty-five percent of survey respondents agreed that the library's "physical condition" needs improvement. Many commented on the building's inadequate size and layout, dated appearance, etc. Although staff repurposed space to accommodate new services and make the building more user-friendly, many of the building's limitations are structural and cannot be changed, including not being able to provide complete handicapped accessibility.

### **Marketing**

To achieve the library's mission and vision, we must communicate the library's services and value effectively to the community. In recent years, the library increased its marketing efforts, but focus group and survey results indicate that even regular users remain unaware of the full scope of the library's offerings.

## **Community**

WML's tagline, "Community Starts Here" and its mission statement, reflect the need to continue our transition from a traditional library that serves as a warehouse of tangible materials to an active "community hub" that offers both materials and experiences. Positive feedback regarding our robust programming indicates that the library is perceived as both a place for things and a place for things to do. The prioritized community vision statements include having the WML accommodate the community's need for a gathering place and a center of cultural, recreational and social activity.

## **WHAT WE ARE GOING TO DO**

The following governing principles underscore the library's commitment to serve as an important community resource; they guide us in planning for the future and serve as touchstones for how we operate daily.

### ***Vision Statement***

The Wilmington Memorial Library responds to the changing needs of the community, providing valued services and experiences in an inviting facility and connecting residents to their community and the world beyond.

### ***Mission Statement***

Wilmington Memorial Library enriches the community by promoting the joy of reading, lifelong learning, and is a welcoming place for quiet reflection and community connection.

## **Core Values**

### **Our Community**

- We listen to our community and put the public first.
- We strive for an awareness of and respect for individual needs.
- We support lifelong learning and the love of reading.

### **Our Services**

- We act with initiative, creativity, and flexibility.
- We help one another and encourage camaraderie.
- We educate and empower ourselves to meet patrons' immediate needs.
- We take pride in what we do and are committed to going the extra mile.
- We look for new ideas and opportunities.

## Our Resources

- We strive for a welcoming environment that is openly accessible to all.
- We maintain a relevant collection of materials in a variety of formats.
- We work to minimize our environmental impact.
- We are mindful of our fiscal responsibility to the community.

## Goals and Objectives

Using the above-listed governing principles as guidelines, the Library Director and staff translated the feedback collected from the recent internal and external assessments into strategic goals and supporting objectives. These goals and objectives direct the library's allocation of resources and prioritize the programs and services to be developed and delivered during the next five years.

### GOAL 1: INSPIRE THE JOY OF READING AND LIFELONG LEARNING.

**RATIONALE:** Community input reaffirmed the library's unique and important role in supporting literacy and lifelong learning. While remaining focused on strengthening our traditional resources that support this mission, we will investigate and develop new collections, services and programs that spark an interest in reading, stimulate curiosity, and attract new users to the library.

#### OBJECTIVES:

- Objective 1.1 Develop more relevant and inspiring collections.
- Objective 1.2 Expand and strengthen resources that support education and personal growth.
- Objective 1.3 Enhance programming and services that promote reading.

### GOAL 2: PROVIDE VIRTUAL AND PHYSICAL SPACES THAT MEET 21<sup>ST</sup> CENTURY NEEDS.

**RATIONALE:** Due to the need for the Town to first identify its future building priorities, this planning cycle will not include plans to build or expand the library facility. However, we will continue to use our space creatively to best meet changing needs and provide optimum service in the current facility. In addition, we will maintain an effective presence online by providing an array of services on our website.

#### OBJECTIVES:

- Objective 2.1 Facilitate digital and physical access to books, information, and ideas.
- Objective 2.2 Ensure a convenient, welcoming and easy-to-use library experience.
- Objective 2.3 Design the library space creatively to meet diverse and changing needs.

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### **GOAL 3: INCREASE COMMUNITY AWARENESS AND ENGAGEMENT.**

**RATIONALE:** We will improve our marketing strategies to ensure that residents are aware of and take full advantage of what the library offers. Outreach and collaboration with local organizations provides the opportunity for mutual enhancement of contributions to the community while fostering civic engagement. Communicating the value of the library is critical for cultivating and sustaining community support.

#### **OBJECTIVES:**

- Objective 3.1 Increase the visibility and utilization of library resources and services.
- Objective 3.2 Improve and expand mutually beneficial partnerships with schools, community organizations, and other key local groups.
- Objective 3.3 Cultivate broad support for library initiatives.

### **GOAL 4: MAXIMIZE THE IMPACT OF THE COMMUNITY'S INVESTMENT IN THE LIBRARY.**

**RATIONALE:** We want our users to always have a positive experience. We will provide the necessary tools and training in order for staff to develop and deliver excellent service. We are committed to an ongoing evaluation of our internal operations, policies and services for optimum efficiency and effectiveness.

#### **OBJECTIVES**

- Objective 4.1 Provide exceptional customer service.
- Objective 4.2 Develop and sustain a skilled and engaged staff that successfully adapts to evolving internal and external environments.
- Objective 4.3 Seek new ways to operate the library more efficiently and effectively.

#### ***Annual Action Plans***

Each year, the Library Director and staff develop an Action Plan for the following fiscal year. The Action Plan presents a list of activities, which help the library achieve its strategic goals and objectives. These activities represent new initiatives and/or tasks designed to support specific objectives and improve upon current offerings. While complementary, the Action Plan does not include ongoing operational or administrative activities.

To promote accountability and encourage progress, each activity is assigned to a staff member and includes a target date for completion. However, the Action Plan is flexible; it will

accommodate revisions as needed to respond to evolving needs and resource fluctuations. To view the Action Plan for next fiscal year, see Appendix H – *WML Action Plan FY16*.

### ***Measuring and Communicating Our Progress***

Monthly, the Library Director will report on progress made towards achieving the Strategic Plan's goals and objectives to the Board of Library Trustees and the Town Administration. In addition, the Library Director's Annual Report to the community will include a strategic plan performance "Report Card" with highlights from the calendar year.

To ensure easy public access, the Strategic Plan, its appendices, and each fiscal year's Action Plan will be available on the library's website, accompanied by documentation of completed tasks.

### ***Final Thoughts***

The WML's Strategic Plan for FY16-20 is the result of several months' work by numerous staff members, library volunteers, and local residents.

We are especially grateful for the support we received from the Strategic Planning Committee and Board of Trustees. A list of these critical contributors is available in *Appendix I – Acknowledgements*.

In addition, we appreciate the feedback the community provided. Residents' input, from users and non-users alike, was invaluable.

The Wilmington Memorial Library remains committed to evolving to meet the ever-changing needs of residents of all ages and interests. We hope to continually increase the library's value to the community and believe this *Strategic Plan* will help ensure our success.



# APPENDICES

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1. **APPENDIX A – STRATEGIC PLANNING PROCESS FLOWCHART:** The flowchart visually depicts the WML’s planning methodology, including presenting the timeline, assessment mechanisms, and process participants.
2. **APPENDIX B – STRATEGIC PLANNING RESOURCE PACKET:** This packet served as an orientation resource for the Strategic Planning Committee (SPC). It includes a demographic profile of Wilmington, a description of WML’s services and programs, and highlights of the library’s response to strategic directions in the WML’s FY10-FY15 Long Range Plan.
3. **APPENDIX C – PRIORITIZED COMMUNITY VISION STATEMENTS:** After the SPC brainstormed a series of community vision statements reflecting the ideal Wilmington, it identified and prioritized the vision statements that WML can positively impact.
4. **APPENDIX D – SWOT ANALYSIS SUMMARY:** The document summarizes the results of an environmental assessment of the WML’s strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats.
5. **APPENDIX E – COMMUNITY FEEDBACK OVERVIEW:** The overview presents highlights of the feedback and program/service ideas generated in three focus groups and two community forums. Feedback touches on the WML’s collections, services, staff, and includes opinions regarding library’s value to the community.
6. **APPENDIX F – COMMUNITY SURVEY RESULTS:** The community survey was conducted for three weeks in April 2014 and was available on the WML website and via hard copy at multiple locations in town. The raw data and narrative comments are presented in addition to summary graphs and charts.
7. **APPENDIX G – TEEN SURVEY RESULTS:** The Teen Services Librarian conducted a teen survey for two weeks in March 2014. The survey results are presented in this document.
8. **APPENDIX H – WML ACTION PLAN FY 16:** The library’s Action Plan for the upcoming fiscal year is presented in this document, including specific tasks, accountability, and target dates for completion.
9. **APPENDIX I – ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS:** The document lists key contributors to the strategic planning process.