

# Re-imagine, Repurpose, and Renew



**A Strategic Plan for the Johnson Public Library**  
**November 2017**

# Table of Contents

Planning for the Future 1

Strategic Priorities 3

We Listened 7

Accomplishments 9

Our Vision/Mission 11

Goals 15



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# Planning for the Future

**T**HE JOHNSON PUBLIC LIBRARY is planning for the future of Hackensack. Drawing on our record of more than 115 years of achievement and high-quality services, we started our planning project to guide the library's growth, allocate its resources, and shape its thinking about the future.

Conversations with local residents, community leaders, and business people, along with library staff and trustees, shaped this plan. Further, over 850 people participated in our survey or in a focus group, providing us with valuable feedback about our facility, programs, and policies.

At the same time, city leaders were publicly discussing the future role of Main Street and the areas near and around the Johnson Public Library. Our new plan—Re-imagine, Repurpose, and Renew—reflects our thoughts about the world today, as well as about Hackensack and the role our library, facility, staff, and supporters play in it.



# Strategic Priorities

# A

fter reviewing the collected information, as well as the library usage and demographic trends, the Strategic Planning Committee considered the following issues:



## Services for all residents

The library serves multiple generations: children, teens and young adults, working adults, and older adults, each with specific interests. Every day, the staff provides resources, targeted services, and space to satisfy residents' needs. Rapid changes in the way each generation uses and interacts with the library demonstrates the need to continually evaluate and adjust the library's services and programs.

The Johnson Public Library facility needs to reflect the lifestyles of Hackensack's children and families. Both current and future space requires a cohesive theme to foster interactive play and provide comfortable areas for reading, schoolwork, and technology use. The library's collection, services, and programs are designed to ensure that young children enter school ready to learn. Resources for older children will help them explore topics of personal interest, satisfy their curiosity, inspire a life-long love of reading, and support their schoolwork.

Programming that engages and a staff dedicated to providing leadership opportunities for preteens and teens are a key component of a successful library service program. A dedicated and contemporary space for teens, including space for homework help, gaming, and opportunities for social engagement, will position the library to be an irresistible destination.

Adults with limited free time try their best to balance the demands of work, growing families, aging parents, and personal issues. The library can accommodate them by extending hours (especially on Sunday), promoting digital content, offering programs of interest, and finding new ways to encourage community engagement.

Hackensack's senior and retiree population is growing. The downtown renaissance may also attract seniors to move into Hackensack, similar to Morristown's downtown resurgence. Although a large number of people will relocate during retirement, many will choose to "age in place" and remain in Hackensack or move to Hackensack from other Bergen County and area towns. The library will accommodate them in an active way by offering expanded programming and opportunities.

## Community Engagement

As a public institution, the Johnson Public Library faces a unique challenge in reminding Hackensack residents of its mission, role, resources, and relevance. This includes the opportunity to help the community re-imagine what the library means to them and how it can be more central to their lives, including a library presence in the community throughout Hackensack. The library staff can make strategic use of digital marketing and communication tools like the email newsletter, Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, and other new media to reach current and new audiences and encourage greater engagement.

## Refreshed & Repurposed Spaces

Changes in use, new technologies, and the increasing demand for more small and medium-size gathering and collaborative workspace requires the library to continually evaluate its policies, programs, and facility, especially since the library is 116 years old. As digital content increases, certain print collections need to be reduced in favor of community gathering and learning space and places for individual or group work. Some areas are prime candidates for minor refreshing to meet community expectations.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> A Space Assessment of the library building was conducted by the consultants and is available at the library.



## Digital Literacy

Digital content and new ways to download it have transformed libraries. As a result, library users are increasingly relying on staff to provide one-on-one instruction and

coaching on how to use their devices and access library content. Demand for this type of assistance continues to grow and will significantly impact the library collection, space, and staff in the future.

## Staff Development

Fully engaged and knowledgeable staff results in great customer service. Providing access to staff expected by the community and helping staff develop new skills is an important investment for the library.

## Sustainability

The Johnson Public Library is funded by tax support. Residents and local government have been reliable supporters. While the library has demonstrated thoughtful financial stewardship, increased demand may mandate exploring additional revenue streams. A Johnson Public Library Foundation or Friends of the Library can play an important role in exploring fundraising strategies that will secure the resources needed to support the priorities in this plan.



# We Listened<sup>2</sup>

# W

e continue to learn from Hackensack residents when we ask for suggestions and ideas for the future. We spoke with over 850 people and staff in focus groups and through an online and print survey. We heard about the library's need to:



- Repurpose our 116-year-old library so it better meets modern and future community needs and interests
- Rebuild collections with more new print and digital titles
- Respond more actively to the needs of teens, many of whom may not now use the library, with an expanded, separate Teen Room, more current collections, and up-to-date mobile computing devices, including gaming resources
- Respond to changes in Hackensack's demographics, such as increasing numbers of younger, dual-income couples and families, and many more singles, with services and programs that address their needs
- Expand access to technology resources
- Provide additional small and group meeting and quiet study space
- Address issues related to parking
- Encourage more community engagement by connecting residents with each other through conversation and focused discussions curated by the library or a partner
- Promote the library as the cultural, social, and intellectual destination for the community
- Increase awareness of the library's programs and all resources

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<sup>2</sup> A document entitled *Hackensack Speaks*, which includes results from the Survey and focus groups, is available at the library.

# Accomplishments

**T**he following are select achievements at the Johnson Public Library over the past few years:



- Launched Hoopla, a digital video download service, and Zinio, a digital magazine service
- Expanded the library's digital content
- Established the Center for Assistive Technology to aid visually impaired residents with software and hardware
- Established an email newsletter and grew the database to 6,000 addresses
- Launched the library Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube feed
- Established Business Information Workshops including one-on-one assistance with SCORE
- Engaged the community through a Lawyer in the Library program to discuss immigration and status questions
- Expanded citizenship classes in the library
- Added display screens to the children's department and reference desk to promote activities
- Initiated the successful Pub Trivia night
- Added new carpeting and painting in the children's room

# Our Vision/ Mission

**The Johnson Public Library:  
the community's destination  
for discovery, learning and  
making connections.**



## Our Shared Values

- We treat each other and our residents respectfully and courteously
- We anticipate and respond to changing community needs
- We offer a safe, welcoming, accessible facility that is a satisfying destination for all residents
- We provide a wide variety of programs that provoke, enlighten, inspire, and entertain
- We foster an environment of partnerships with local public and private organizations and institutions
- We hire and train staff who are eager to learn and provide every visitor with friendly and knowledgeable service
- We respect diversity of opinion and backgrounds and are tolerant of different viewpoints





# Goals

**T**hree over-arching goals will guide the library from 2018-2021.



## Goal One

**Re-imagine** the Johnson Public Library to meet residents' changing interests and needs

## Goal Two

**Repurpose** current library space to anticipate the ways people will use the library

## Goal Three

**Renew** the Johnson Public Library by securing sustainable funding, forming partnerships, and promoting the library in order to implement this plan

# GOAL One

**Re-imagine the Johnson Public Library  
to meet residents' changing interests  
and needs**



## **Objective 1: Make the Johnson Public Library the preferred local venue for engaging in thoughtful discussion and dialogue**

### **Possible Action Steps:**

- a. Offer programs that facilitate discussions on topics of interest
- b. Partner with local organizations to sponsor and facilitate these programs
- c. Dedicate informal and temporary spaces within the library, for group collaboration, gathering, and engagement
- d. Partner with local non-profit and for-profit organizations in planning and promoting cultural and civic events
- e. Build the partnership with FDU to offer unique and irresistible programing
- f. Promote the use of the lower-level conference room and meeting room for local business and civic meetings

## **Objective 2: Position and promote the Johnson Public Library as the place for discovery and personal growth for all residents**

### **Possible Action Steps:**

- a. Promote current early literacy and early learning efforts, such as 1,000 Books Before Kindergarten and add new programs geared to children and their parents
- b. Experiment with new and fun learning experiences for all ages, such as “274 Things You Can Learn” at 274 Main Street during 2018-2019 in workshops, programs, collections, etc., and market it for 274 days
- c. Offer services and resources for children and adults with learning differences
- d. Review and expand learning experiences for older adults with consistent and routine programming, including film series, book clubs, discussion groups, and other formats and offer daytime events

- e. Improve and increase STEAM (science, technology, engineering, art, and math) activities, story times, and family-related activities
- f. Contact schools via book talks, summer reading, and other activities and form partnerships/affiliations with other agencies to enhance local child literacy (such as One Card, One Student to ensure that every student has a library card)
- g. Offer more events and programs at times that allow working families to participate
- h. Expand and continue to promote career, jobseeker, college entrance, and small business help services

### **Objective 3:** **Implement new methods for delivering content, collections, and all resources**

#### **Possible Action Steps:**

- a. Develop a number of library programs that take place in the community
- b. Provide materials in Spanish and English
- c. Offer more digital content every year of the plan
- d. Assess the library's print collection, replace and refresh content, and continue to reduce collection size in specific subject areas where digital content provides better information
- e. Develop new displays for easy browsing
- f. Provide additional gaming opportunities for children and teens
- g. Explore reorganizing the collection in a non-Dewey format
- h. Improve wayfinding signage and collection organization to facilitate ease of use

### **Objective 4:** **Support access to digital services in all aspects of the library's service program**

#### **Possible Action Steps:**

- a. Write a comprehensive 3-year technology plan that meets NJ State Library requirements to address current and emerging needs, as a separate capital budget item

- b. Ensure drop-zone-free Wi-Fi access and direct wireless printing from all areas of the library, including the library grounds
- c. Offer online payment options for patrons
- d. Adapt spaces to support the use of new technologies and training/assisting people with their use

## **Objective 5:**

### **Develop a staffing plan that supports new spaces, programs, collections and hours**

#### **Possible Action Steps:**

- a. Add a full-time professional marketing and community relations position into the new staffing plan
- b. Add staff to the children's and teen areas to support this plan
- c. Ensure that all staff have the skills and competencies needed to provide confident, high-quality customer service
- d. Establish one to two staff development days annually
- e. Provide space and time for staff to engage in frequent co-learning experiences, and to present ideas from other libraries and customer service providers
- f. Evaluate the library's staffing needs, re-examine positions and purposes, and realign duties and responsibilities as positions become vacant
- g. Provide year-round Sunday hours and consider extended Friday hours

#### **Possible Key Measurements:**

- Increase the number of visits by 10% during each year of the plan
- Increase total circulation (digital and analog) by 5% during each year of the plan
- Increase program attendance to 10,000+ annually
- Provide a mobile computer technology training lab in the library using computers on wheels (charging carts)

# GOAL **TWO**

**Repurpose current library space to anticipate the ways people will use the library**



## **Objective 1: Plan for repurposing space on all floors to accommodate community interests**

### **Possible Action Steps:**

- a. Review the 2017 Space Analysis and implement as needed over the next 3-4 years
- b. Engage an architect to assess opportunities for renovation and expansion
- c. Engage a traffic consultant to work with City Hall and the library to increase parking and improve pedestrian access
- d. Create new tutoring, quiet study, and small group meeting spaces in the library
- e. Accommodate individual and community needs for new spaces to meet, collaborate, talk, or telecommute
- f. Consider creating a "Genius Bar"-type area with trained staff to assist patrons with device use, digital downloads and everyday digital needs
- g. Create a new technology instruction area/lab for everyday training
- h. Reduce the collection by removing outdated or no longer needed material, remove stacks, and repurpose space for new uses
- i. Empty the "700's room" by weeding the collection - relocate magazines and new books to this area
- j. Install more power outlets everywhere



## **Objective 2: Provide a dynamic and interactive library experience for all**

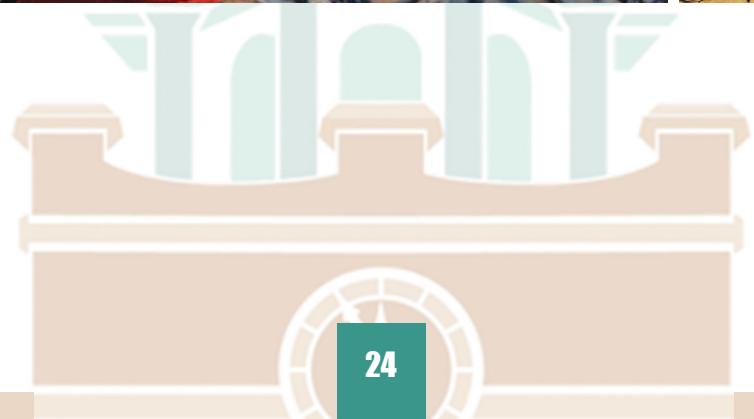
### **Possible Action Steps:**

- a. Continue to make the children's area more inviting and imaginative to foster creative play, learning, and reading
- b. Initiate planning for a separate and larger, more contemporary teen space and with more digital resources for teens
- c. Continue to upgrade the lower level Meeting Room
- d. Plan to upgrade the Main Street plaza area with large colorful banners
- e. Plan to use the plaza area for programs and activities
- f. Make the Moore Street entrance cleaner, brighter, and more welcoming (remove the birds' nests from the sign)

### **Possible Key Measurements:**

- A reduction and refresh of the collection
- Café or vending services
- Architect hired
- Parking consultant hired
- Plan in place for the new teen space





# GOAL Three

**Renew the Johnson Public Library by securing sustainable funding, forming partnerships and promoting the library in order to implement this plan**



## **Objective 1: Reposition and grow the Johnson Public Library everyday**

### **Possible Action Steps:**

- a. Develop a new and exciting branding campaign and marketing plan to match the excitement of changes in Hackensack
- b. Engage local community organizations in conversations about partnering with the library
- c. Continue to integrate new social media, such as Facebook and set goals for increasing followers
- d. Continue to improve and grow the email newsletter
- e. Participate in and contribute to Hackensack's wider planning efforts for recreation, senior services, and other efforts that may intersect with library goals, especially in the immediate downtown area

## **Objective 2: Develop a plan to ensure the financial future of the Johnson Public Library**

### **Possible Action Steps:**

- a. Review annual support from all non-tax revenue sources and identify the amount of private contributions needed to assist the library's operating budget
- b. Create an annual appeal to raise additional funds for specific projects
- c. Cultivate local business support for programs and projects that align the library with their needs
- d. Identify potential donors, talk to them about the library's strategic plan, and ask for gifts related to specific exciting projects, such as bringing back the Hackensack Leadership Program

### **Possible Key Measurements:**

- Write and launch an annual appeal
- Establish the Johnson Public Library of Hackensack Foundation
- Establish a \$1 million endowment for the 120th anniversary of the building in 2021
- Increase the number of followers to 2,000 on Facebook, 1,000 on Twitter, 500 on the JPL YouTube Channel, and increase the amount of engagement

