The Ossining Public Library
A place for the community to discover, connect, and be inspired.

Strategic Plan 2017–2020
Prepared by the Ossining Public Library Board of Trustees and the Ossining Public Library Strategic Planning Committee

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Dear Ossining Residents,

Next year, 2018, is the Ossining Public Library’s 125th Anniversary of service to the Ossining community. It is with this milestone in mind that we share our new strategic plan of service with you.

The library has gone through dramatic changes since its founding in 1893. From the library’s inception as a collection of books at Park School, through the building of the Carnegie library building that the library inhabited through the first half of the 20th century, through the library’s modern, bustling building that it inhabited in the later part of the 20th century, to the new, state of the art building that we now call home, the library’s commitment to the Ossining community has remained steady. No matter where we are located, no matter the building that we inhabit, the library has remained dedicated to serving the literary, educational, and cultural needs of the Ossining community.

The library has remained committed to building and strengthening partnerships with our community organizations, our patrons, and our local agencies. Whether it’s hosting a laser tag event for teens with the Ossining Police Department, working with the Ossining Documentary and Discussion Series to facilitate timely, thought-provoking discussion, hosting the Ecuadorian Consulate to bring resources to our Ecuadorian community, or partnering with the Ossining Union Free School District on the Ossining Basics early childhood development initiative, the library is made more vital—and the community is made stronger—by these partnerships.

Our community is our reason for being. It is vitally important that the services provided by the Ossining Public Library reflect the needs, aspirations, and dreams of the Ossining community. It is with this charge that we embarked on our Strategic Planning process. We would like to thank all those who participated in the process, including the Strategic Planning Committee members, the staff and Board of Trustees of the Ossining Public Library, and the many community members who provided us with input and feedback through their participation in the process. This was truly a community effort.

We look forward to embarking on the next phase of our journey serving the Ossining Community and we are excited to present to you the plan that will guide us.

Alice Joselow, President of the Board of Trustees
Karen LaRocca-Fels, Library Director
Introduction

The Ossining Public Library’s 2017–2020 Strategic Plan will guide the Library’s Board of Trustees and the staff as they make financial, operational, technological, and space use decisions in the face of a rapidly changing environment. The Library’s Strategic Planning Committee, along with significant community involvement, including 2,204 community survey respondents or focus group participants, developed this strategic plan.

The Strategic Planning Committee began its work first by understanding and learning more about the community and then by developing a plan that responded to identified and anticipated needs and interests. By considering residents’ changing demographics, interests, and lifestyles, the plan positions the Library as a forward-looking institution rather than one bound by past successes and traditional roles. This plan is designed to evolve as the community and library change. The plan, a guide to aid the staff and Trustees in decision-making and resource allocation, should be reviewed and revised annually to ensure that the library is responding to community needs.

Both English- and Spanish-speaking residents use the Ossining Public Library heavily. This plan will assist the Library Board in identifying areas of opportunity and responding with pragmatic and inspiring solutions.
In 2015, the director and the Board began discussions about the need for a new strategic plan. By February 2016, the Board had appointed a Strategic Planning Committee to undertake this process, culminating in this strategic plan for 2017–2020.1

The Strategic Planning Committee consisted of members of the Board of Trustees, library administrators, and staff. The Board and the Strategic Planning Committee engaged the services of Leslie Burger and Alan Burger of Library Development Solutions to assist with the planning process. To prepare, the committee gathered information relating to library trends, identified service priorities, considered internal strengths and weaknesses along with external threats and opportunities, and evaluated and identified future strategic directions for the Library. A survey of the community, along with focus groups, and an open-invitation “community conversation” about the library provided invaluable information to help inform the Planning Committee’s recommendations.

1 The new director, Karen LaRocca-Fels, had recently been hired to lead the Library.
Planning Steps: Information Review

The Strategic Planning Committee reviewed library use statistics, the library’s annual report, and metrics regarding collection size, number of visits, programs and program attendance, and circulation. The Committee discussed current and future needs of all groups in Ossining’s growing community. The Committee also read and discussed recent articles about nationwide trends in publishing, technology, library, and information services.

Environmental Scan: Survey and Focus Groups, Technology Review, and Space Use Assessment

During the planning process, the consultants gathered comments and suggestions about the library’s future from eight focus groups and a Town Meeting billed as a “community conversation”.

More than 2,204 people responded to an online and print library survey that was available in either English or Spanish. This highly successful effort generated many suggestions regarding desired services, facility improvements, as well as many comments about current library services. The staff were instrumental in acquiring many responses. The consultants used this data to produce a trend and a gap analysis in a report entitled “Community Comments”. The consultants and committee members reviewed suggestions for the future to inform their recommendations.

The consultants reviewed the Library’s technology infrastructure and its public access to digital hardware, software, and training and analyzed its social media.

The consultants assessed deficiencies in the existing use of library space and provided recommendations in a report.

Planning Committee Meetings

The Strategic Planning Committee met several times to:

- Identify social, technological, and demographic trends that may affect delivery of library services
- Consider the Ossining Public Library’s internal strengths and its capacity to deliver excellent and responsive library service
- Identify the challenges the Library will face, particularly regarding increased populations and facility use and access

“It’s a good place to learn. The staff is very helpful. I love it.”
Survey respondent

“Great resource for entertainment and work.”
Survey respondent

“A good place to just sit & enjoy the Hudson River view.”
Survey respondent

“Through the years, I have used OPL while working on advanced degrees.”
Survey respondent
Library Accomplishments

Over the past several years, the Ossining Public Library has truly become the center of the Ossining community and our entire service area, which includes the Ossining School District borders. The Library is recognized as a destination for more than traditional library resources and services and for the high level of service from friendly and knowledgeable staff. In 2016, the Library was named the best public library in Westchester County by Westchester Magazine readers. Residents are able to:

- Visit and use a welcoming, comfortable, modern library facility with beautiful views of the Village and river
- Easily obtain materials from other libraries through WLS and interlibrary loan
- Download eBooks and digital audiobooks
- Learn how to use new and emerging technologies, such as eBook readers and digital tablets
- Learn a variety of languages
- Enjoy visual and performing arts through concerts and exhibits in the award-winning Budarz Theater
- Connect with the Library and other members of the community through social media
- Find out about Library events and services through the website and email newsletter
- Connect with growing numbers of community members through Mah-Jong, knitting groups, book clubs, lectures, and exhibits
- Visit local museums and aquariums using the Museum Pass program
- Work from the Library using free Wi-Fi and high-speed Internet
- Get assistance from committed customer service staff members by phone or email

“OPL does a particularly nice job with its community events. The topics are very interesting and the auditorium is comfortable with good acoustics. I also enjoy the art and photography exhibits on the lower level.”

Survey respondent
Much has changed since the Library’s previous plan. Among the most significant trends that the staff, director, and the Library Board have observed are the following:

- People rely less on traditional reference and research tools and are more focused on civic engagement, attending programs, using the Wi-Fi or a computer, and learning.

- The Library is a place of community and learning for old and new residents and new immigrants of all ages.

- Digital literacy is a fundamental skill that libraries can develop to help all ages navigate the world of information, employment, communication, and entertainment.

- Digital devices have become untethered from our desktops allowing us to connect anytime and anywhere.
Learning is everywhere and all the time. The world is our classroom and the Library engages its users in exploration.

Increased telecommuting, entrepreneurism, and self-employment are creating new and nontraditional demands for the use of Library space and resources.

The challenges faced by the Library Board of Trustees and staff in response to these trends include the need to:

1. Create a new vision and mission for the Library that respects traditional services and at the same time moves ahead to create a future for new generations; and

2. Respond with new services and discontinue those that are no longer needed; repurpose spaces that support new uses to remain relevant to all residents.
After reviewing the information from the survey, Board and staff discussions, focus groups, and planning meetings, and analyzing usage and demographic trends, the Strategic Planning Committee organized it into issues to which the Library would respond in its plan.

User Experience, Staff Investment, and a Welcoming Space

Although the Ossining Public Library building is only 10 years old, changes in Ossining’s demographics, the ways in which people use the Library, new digital resources, and continued demand for more public gathering and work areas requires it to evaluate its space. There is an ongoing need to accommodate people’s changing needs and interests. If you consider that the iPhone and iPad are only 10 and 7 years old respectively, we can see that the world has changed since we opened.

The friendly and knowledgeable staff is an enduring image of the Library, according to residents. As the Library considers its future, it is important to meet the changing demands of the community. Investing resources to ensure that staff members receive ongoing development needed to provide outstanding service is essential. The Library will also emphasize the need to attract, hire, and retain skilled staff. The Library will continue to review work processes for effectiveness and efficiencies and to free up staff for new roles as needed.

"Everyone is always very friendly and helpful when I go in person or when I call. It is a really terrific place and so welcoming." Survey respondent

2 We Hear You – A summary report of comments by Ossining residents about the Ossining Public Library
The World is Digital—Innovate, Integrate and Lead

In order to innovate, integrate, and lead in digital resources, the Library will need to make staffing, purchasing, and financial commitments to keep up with residents’ needs and interests.

Digital information technology has already transformed people and libraries. Increasingly, people bring their own devices to the Library to use the Wi-Fi and the seating. There are also people in Ossining who rely on the Library as their primary source of access to the Internet, computers, and other devices. The Library is available for use by all in the community regardless of access to their own digital devices. Daily, Library staff are asked about and expected to provide one-on-one instruction and coaching in the use of new technologies. The demand will continue to increase for the foreseeable future. The survey identified a significant trend that will have an impact on the Library and the way in which it provides content. Fifty-nine percent of survey respondents identified themselves as users of digital devices for reading books, magazines or newspapers.

Services for All Ages and all People—Building New Partnerships

The Library will continue to serve all age groups. Routine and topical programming and staff dedicated to all are key components of our success. Dedicated library resources that support the diverse cultural, language, intellectual, and social needs of all residents are essential to our uniting as one community. Our greatest strength is being a safe welcoming place for everyone in our service area and that we are continuously looking to collaborate locally.
The Library’s vision and mission will provide the guiding direction that the Library follows for the next several years. Goals and objectives identify specific strategic actions that will help the board, staff, and community achieve the mission.

**VISION:**
The Ossining Public Library will be the community’s center for lifelong learning.

**MISSION:**
The Ossining Public Library enriches, connects, and inspires our community.
Shared Values

The staff, Board, and community of the Ossining Public Library believe that the Library is important to people’s lives. This translates into values that guide our activities and behavior every day. The Ossining Public Library provides:

- Knowledgeable, friendly staff who treat everyone with respect and sincerity
- Collections, services, entertainment, and information that respond to our community’s interests and needs
- Collaborative programs for an informed and engaged community that bring residents of all ages and backgrounds together
- Space that is safe, welcoming, comfortable, and encourages community interaction
- Technology that helps people live, learn, work, and grow
Strategic Goals

Goal 1
The Ossining Public Library will enrich, engage and inspire people by providing meaningful experiences

Goal 2
The Ossining Public Library will provide the leadership, staff, facilities and technology required to meet community needs and interests

Goal 3
The Library will secure the support, advocacy and financial resources necessary to ensure its future
GOAL 1
The Ossining Public Library will enrich, engage and inspire people by providing meaningful experiences

OBJECTIVES:

1.1 The Library will continually assess and change its current collections and services

1.2 The Library will support the community’s needs for lifelong learning with resources and programs that engage and delight the entire Ossining community

1.3 The Library will respond to increased needs for access to the Library and its resources by residents

GOAL 2
The Ossining Public Library will provide the leadership, staff, facilities and technology required to meet community needs and interests

OBJECTIVES:

2.1 The Library will invest in the staff and Board

2.2 The Library will invest in technology resources and repurposing space

GOAL 3
The Library will secure the support, advocacy, and financial resources necessary to ensure its future

OBJECTIVES:

3.1 The Library will improve its messaging and image to the community

3.2 The Library will increase its public/private partnerships