



Strategic Plan

2025-2028

Strategic Plan

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Executive Summary

The current moment is one marked by continued global instability, rising mental health challenges, and a growing concern for the ongoing climate crisis. It is also a time of tremendous promise, where new generations are stepping forward with novel ways of connecting, sharing ideas, and advocating for a more just society. In order to move forward, as a historic institution dedicated to the betterment of our community, we need to effectively understand the needs of our constituents within this context.

Over the past three years, we have labored to define our organizational procedures so that Plymouth District Library is more responsive and effective with community-provided resources. As we reap the benefits of the changes implemented since the pandemic, we have a whole host of systems and processes that can help us actualize the needs of our community even more effectively.

This past year, staff from across the library came together in reflection, discussion, research, and analysis to develop a plan that can form the basis for our decision-making, budgeting, and service delivery.

MISSION

Plymouth District Library shares resources to create connection and opportunity for our entire community, because we are stronger together.

VISION

Plymouth District Library is the heart of an inclusive community that is engaged and empowered to shape a more vibrant future.

VALUES

- Comfort
- Generosity
- Quality
- Collaboration

GOALS

- Foster connections between residents
- Enhance communication and information sharing
- Contribute to the character of our community

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Mission and Vision

MISSION

Our mission statement speaks to the reasons why our library exists in the community. It builds the foundation for our services and spaces.

Plymouth District Library shares resources to create connection and opportunity for our entire community, because we are stronger together.

VISION

Our vision statement defines our aspirations for the community and outlines the library's role in making that vision a reality.

Plymouth District Library is the heart of an inclusive community that is engaged and empowered to shape a more vibrant future.

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Values

Our values are the guiding principles that direct how we will accomplish our vision for the community. Enduring values of public librarianship are outlined in various professional statements included in the appendices of this document. We affirm those principles and highlight the following values as unique to our institutional perspective.

COMFORT

Whether it's the comfort that comes from sitting in a cozy chair by a warm fire or a conversation with someone who really sees you, Plymouth District Library strives to provide the stability, friendliness, and inclusivity that makes everyone in our community feel at home.

GENEROSITY

Taking a cue from our community, we are generous with our time, talent, and resources. We are here; you can count on us. We give people what they need to succeed. We perform our work with a spirit of goodwill and a deep respect for the dignity of all people.

QUALITY

Built on the rich cultural heritage of our community, we strive for excellence and high standards in all that we do. Whether it's the personalized services we design or the resources we curate, our sources are trustworthy and thoughtful.

COLLABORATION

Strong communities are built on mutual trust. We strive to become active listeners and reliable partners so that we can generate ideas, find solutions, and achieve our community's shared goals. We stay transparent and accountable to stakeholders so that more people can be included in the library's work.

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Who We Are

Our values shine through in how we treat each other at work. By fostering a supportive and trusting environment, we're creating a strong foundation that helps us grow together and build an amazing organization for our wonderful community.

COMFORT

We set boundaries for ourselves that are kind and clear. We express difficult thoughts with professionalism. We stay open to hearing new perspectives, ideas, and opinions and prioritize the needs and feelings of others.

GENEROSITY

We each give our time and attention to those who need it, and we count on each other for support. We listen deeply to others, seeking to understand their needs. We give others the benefit of the doubt, assume their best intentions, and start by assuming they are trying their best.

QUALITY

We take time to recognize the effort and dedication of our colleagues. We prioritize professional growth and development and put forth our best efforts. Each of us stays accountable for our own words and actions- recognizing that we represent our entire organization.

COLLABORATION

We celebrate the fun and variety in working together. Individuals are rewarded, not just for their own performance, but how they show up for their colleagues. We work hard to bring others along, even when going it alone feels easier. When we feel out of our depth, we ask for help and acknowledge the expertise of our coworkers.

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Goals

The following goals outline our strategic priorities for the next three years. Potential strategies we will consider are listed below to provide a clearer picture of how we will approach these endeavors. Each year, we will develop measurable, time-bound objectives to help us reach these goals. These objectives will form the basis of our regular board reports, annual budget planning, and core service development going forward.

GOAL 1: Foster connections between residents.

The most prominent piece of feedback we received through our strategic planning process is that residents want to know their neighbors and feel like they are a valued piece of a tight-knit community. This sentiment is at odds with the perceived rate of growth and change that community members feel about Plymouth more generally. We also hear from service clubs, key institutions that support our community, that it has been more difficult to recruit members to participate—feeling that newer residents are more isolated from public life.

We also heard repeated calls for more intergenerational opportunities. Seniors don't want to feel isolated from the broader community; young people want access to a diverse array of mentors who can help propel them forward; and parents need support for all the challenges of family life. More connections benefit everyone and lead to a more resilient community.

The library can play an active role in cultivating relationships between residents in a number of ways. First, we can design spaces that continue to invite collaboration and connection—spaces that can be used for group activities, study sessions, or casual meet-ups that include comfortable seating and accessible technology. In many ways, the library is in need of refreshing the collaborative spaces that do exist and finding ways to increase access.

We can also find ways to infuse intergenerational opportunities into our public programs- whether through volunteering, leadership development, or interest-based activities. As we continue to organize book clubs, author talks, workshops, and cultural events that bring residents together, we can prioritize experiences that have broad appeal and invite connection between participants.

By the end of 2028, we hope to see a distinct increase in all-ages program participation, enhanced engagement on digital platforms, and positive feedback from residents regarding their sense of community and connection from residents of both the City and the Township.

GOAL 2: Enhance communication and information sharing.

Plymouth is a well-resourced community, but information about all the various opportunities that exist across can be difficult to find amid the noise of the present-day information landscape. The methods for local communications also often rely on existing social connections. We heard many community members lament the fall of the *Plymouth Observer*, as it was one of the most important ways that folks learned about what was happening. Patrons at our feedback sessions also noted a strong distrust in the level of public transparency that exists locally, but many see proactive communication as something that can bridge that perceived divide.

We seek to improve access to information outside of our walls and foster transparent communication between the library, residents, and community partners, ensuring that everyone has the resources they need to thrive. As we work through this goal, we will develop a cohesive communication plan which may include suggestions like: piloting a community newsletter, experimenting with more ways to engage patrons in providing feedback on local issues, and continuing to improve our own communication channels so that all ways of interacting with the library are accessible and easy to use.

GOAL 3: Contribute to the character of our community.

Residents across the demographic spectrum want Plymouth to feel like a “small town” and to maintain the charm that they feel currently exists, especially downtown. At the same time, there is a desire for forward momentum– upgrades to infrastructure, strong support for diversity/inclusion, and innovative opportunities to activate public spaces. We see the library playing a key role in helping our community move forward while respecting tradition and the vibrant culture that already exists.

One of the main ways that PDL can play a role in this is by updating our own facilities. The current interiors of the library haven’t been updated in around 20 years, so many finishes need to be replaced. Planned replacements for carpet, paint, and furnishings are already budgeted for the next few years. We believe that this process will play a pivotal role in fostering a strong sense of identity and pride among residents.

We also believe that the library can offer education across the community regarding the process of urbanization– which is currently seen as an existential threat to the community’s “small town” atmosphere. Becoming a more dense municipality can provide a lot of benefits, including mitigating the rising cost of living in Plymouth and making housing more affordable so that young people can actually raise a family in their hometown.

Lastly, we believe that continuing to celebrate and promote a culture of reading is one of our greatest offerings to this community. Plymouth has one of the highest per capita checkout rates in the region, demonstrating the importance of learning to our constituents. This community prides itself on being thoughtful, informed, and connected. We will be working on even more ways to make visible this aspect of our local culture over the next few years.

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Appendix A: Planning Process and Findings

A group of staff members representing each department in the organization began meeting monthly starting in January 2024 to begin preparations for the larger strategic planning process. The group developed a listing of current trends that we saw playing an important role in the wider world and future developments that will impact our community over the next few years. This listing included:

- Economic tension/inflation
- Subscriptions/on-demand services
- Sustainability
- Climate change & climate anxiety
- Library of Things/sharing economy
- Growth of home-focused hobbies and interests
- Questioning consumerism
- Desiring community and socialization
- Wireless/digital infrastructure
- 3rd places
- Population changes
- Political tensions
- Social justice
- Mental health
- Younger generation more open to discussing taboo topics
- Artificial intelligence
- Changing landscape of social media
- Technology as a default/ubiquitous
- Work/life balance
- Workplace changes (WFH, co-working spaces)
- Triple bottom line decision-making (corporate social responsibility)
- Consumers of content and experiences
- Minimalism
- Survivalism
- Entrepreneurship, vocational education, trades
- Questioning value of higher education
- Baby Boomer generation retiring

The group heard presentations from Holly Hibner on current demographic trends and Heather Pacheco on the state of our current partnerships with organizations across the community. Key takeaways from those discussions included how we can best serve the growing senior population in our community, ways to support relatively low per-pupil spending in our public school district (relative to national figures), and the need to grow our cultural understanding to serve folks from

surrounding communities instead of assuming the homogeneity expected of Plymouth residents.

Next, the group developed a research plan that helped us understand the full spectrum of needs throughout our wider community. The results of each of those groups is listed below:

One sub-group of committee members implemented a **community-wide survey** which received over 300 responses over a two month period. This survey highlighted that our current users strongly favor book checkout as their preferred library service (as opposed to meeting rooms, programs, technology, etc). The condition and availability of the parking lot was also regularly called out in survey responses as a barrier to library services. Survey respondents largely agreed that they desire a safe and inclusive community that prioritizes connection and preserving a unique community charm. Respondents also highlighted concerns around affordability of housing, overdevelopment, and tense political divisions.

Another sub-group facilitated a series of **focus groups** with members of the public and community leaders. These conversations largely replicated the findings of our survey, alongside a few other highlights. Conversations with the public underscored the importance of maintaining the “small town” character of Plymouth. Participants in multiple groups lamented the loss of the *Plymouth Observer* as a tool that brought people together. Community leaders commented on the need for better avenues of communication with the public and to facilitate more cross-collaboration between the various groups around the community.

Another subgroup held a series of public programs where patrons crafted **prototypes of their ideal library**. Patrons wanted to see more spaces to support creative art and reuse, a large play area for kids, and lots of cozy nooks for reading. There was a strong pushback to “toxic technology” and a desire for spaces that support more in-person connection and deep focus.

Another subgroup focused on program participants and asked questions to help understand the **impact of our current program lineup**. Results of these surveys

indicated that the smaller group of library event participants largely find programs to be of high quality and in alignment with what they are looking for. We learned, however, that this user group represents a significantly lower portion (about 10%) of our total usership.

Lastly, another group engaged in a series of **field studies** to evaluate the way that patrons use current library spaces. From these observations, we learned that each floor of the library has vastly different dynamics. The youth floor play area is in almost constant use and likely too small for the number of people seeking social play for their families. There are also lots of tutors looking for quieter spaces on the youth floor, signaling the need for study rooms downstairs as well as upstairs. The upper level is composed mainly of computer users (regulars who come in every day) and individuals using study rooms and tables throughout the library. On the main level, patrons seem to find what they are looking for with confidence and come in with a plan. More teens are seen on this floor, likely due to the placement of the Teen Zone. There are also vastly more non-users on the weekends than during the week.

As the group continued to meet, we analyzed the key themes that kept coming up, and synthesized our findings into the plan presented here. The group will present the plan to the library board in the Fall of 2024, after which the leadership team will provide annual objectives for the board to oversee throughout the duration of the plan.

The next strategic planning research cycle is tentatively planned for January-October 2028.

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Appendix B: Acknowledgements

STRATEGIC PLANNING COMMITTEE

Thank you to the following staff members who contributed their time and effort in producing the contents of this plan.

Shauna Anderson, Library Director
Lauren Baker, Youth Services Coordinator
Melanie Bell, Assistant Director
Michelle Berens, Technology Assistant
Marshall Draper, Facilities Technician
Lily Fronden, Technology Assistant
Pam Hakala, Library Page
Zach Hose, HR Specialist
Donna Jackson, Marketing & Visual Design Specialist
Katy Kramp, Adult Librarian
Alice McCardell, Adult Librarian
Kendra Miller, Circulation Clerk
Patty Soter, Circulation Clerk
Jeff Wears, Reference Lead
Sandy Young, Administrative Assistant

BOARD OF TRUSTEES

Thank you to the members of the Library Board of Trustees for their continual support and guidance.

Michael Pappas, Board President
Jean Walsh, Board Vice-President
Yasir Khogali, Board Treasurer
Beth Sexton, Board Secretary
Jacqueline George, Trustee
John Morrison, Trustee
Jessica Yaser, Trustee

COMMUNITY PARTNERS

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Gail Grieger, Plymouth Arts & Recreation Complex
Kurt Heise, Plymouth Township Supervisor
Marie Morrow, Plymouth-Canton United Way
Bobbi Pumilll, Plymouth Community Council on Aging
Sam Plymale, Plymouth Downtown Development Authority
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Sue Stoney, Friends of Plymouth District Library
Sally Fedus, Friends of Plymouth District Library
Billy Wright, Friends of Plymouth District Library
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Rachel Hayes, Plymouth Canton PFLAG

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Appendix C: Core Values of Librarianship

The American Library Association's Core Values articulate the profession's principles and highest aspirations. They guide and unite library workers, including staff, volunteers, trustees, advocates, and others who contribute their talents, expertise, and dedication to furthering the library mission.

The Core Values uplift and support other foundational documents, the Library Bill of Rights, the Code of Ethics, and Libraries: An American Value. These foundational documents represent the common ground upon which we can build policies, make decisions, set goals, and prioritize actions to bring equitable library access to all users. The Core Values describe the rights we seek to protect and the ethical guidelines we look to for direction.

Our Core Values are for the people who make libraries work, not the buildings they reside in or the American Library Association itself. They declare a shared set of ideals and professionalism that unites and motivates library workers, volunteers, trustees, and advocates throughout the nation.

ACCESS

Access provides opportunities for everyone in the community to obtain library resources and services with minimal disruption. Library workers create systems that ensure members of their community can freely access the information they need for learning, growth, and empowerment regardless of technology, format, or delivery methods.

EQUITY

Library workers play a crucial role in fostering equity by actively working to dismantle barriers and create spaces that are accessible, welcoming, and beneficial for all. This is accomplished by recognizing and addressing systemic barriers,

biases, and inequalities to create inclusive library environments where everyone can benefit from the library's offerings and services.

INTELLECTUAL FREEDOM & PRIVACY

Intellectual freedom empowers people to think for themselves and to make informed decisions while respecting each individual's dignity and independence. Library workers encourage people to cultivate curiosity and form ideas by questioning the world and accessing information from diverse viewpoints and formats without restrictions or censorship. The right to privacy is a crucial safeguard to this freedom, ensuring everyone has the right to develop their thoughts and opinions free of surveillance.

PUBLIC GOOD

Public good is working to improve society and protect the rights to education, literacy, and intellectual freedom. Libraries are an essential public good and are fundamental institutions in democratic societies. Library workers provide the highest service levels to create informed, connected, educated, and empowered communities.

SUSTAINABILITY

Sustainability means making choices that are good for the environment, make sense economically, and treat everyone equitably. Sustainable choices preserve physical and digital resources and keep services useful now and into the future. By supporting climate resiliency, library workers create thriving communities and care for our common good for a better tomorrow.

"Core Values of Librarianship", American Library Association, July 26, 2006

<https://www.ala.org/advocacy/advocacy/intfreedom/corevalues> (Accessed September 3, 2024)

Document ID: cb591a77-50c0-4a45-a1fb-209962a6b3d3

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Appendix D: Library Bill of Rights

The American Library Association affirms that all libraries are forums for information and ideas, and that the following basic policies should guide their services.

- I. Books and other library resources should be provided for the interest, information, and enlightenment of all people of the community the library serves. Materials should not be excluded because of the origin, background, or views of those contributing to their creation.
- II. Libraries should provide materials and information presenting all points of view on current and historical issues. Materials should not be proscribed or removed because of partisan or doctrinal disapproval.
- III. Libraries should challenge censorship in the fulfillment of their responsibility to provide information and enlightenment.
- IV. Libraries should cooperate with all persons and groups concerned with resisting abridgment of free expression and free access to ideas.
- V. A person's right to use a library should not be denied or abridged because of origin, age, background, or views.
- VI. Libraries which make exhibit spaces and meeting rooms available to the public they serve should make such facilities available on an equitable basis, regardless of the beliefs or affiliations of individuals or groups requesting their use.
- VII. All people, regardless of origin, age, background, or views, possess a right to privacy and confidentiality in their library use. Libraries should advocate for, educate about, and protect people's privacy, safeguarding all library use data, including personally identifiable information.

**Adopted June 19, 1939, by the ALA Council; amended October 14, 1944; June 18, 1948; February 2, 1961; June 27, 1967; January 23, 1980; January 29, 2019.*

***Inclusion of "age" reaffirmed January 23, 1996.*

****Although the Articles of the Library Bill of Rights are unambiguous statements of basic principles that should govern the service of all libraries, questions do arise concerning application of these principles to specific library practices. See the documents designated by the Intellectual Freedom Committee as Interpretations of the Library Bill of Rights.*