Lower Providence Community Library

Strategic Plan
2014 - 2018

The Lower Providence Community Library Strategic Plan for 2014 – 2018 will guide library efforts to satisfy the changing needs of Lower Providence Township and improve the quality of library services to its residents.

LOWER PROVIDENCE
Community Library
Your portal to discovery

50 Parklane Drive
Eagleville, PA 19403
Phone: 610-666-6640
www.lowerprovidencelibrary.org

Executive Summary

The Lower Providence Community Library has been actively serving Lower Providence Township residents for nearly thirty years. It is an archive of information and provides educational, social and cultural programs and services for adults, families, students, and working professionals.

In 2014, the Lower Providence Community Library will begin to implement a five-year strategic plan based on the findings of a year-long planning and community needs assessment process. The strategic plan is designed to respond to new and emerging community trends and improve the Library's quality of service to Lower Providence Township while maintaining its commitment to being good stewards of the public's resources and trust.

The Library is a cultural and intellectual center of Lower Providence Township.

In response to community demand, social and demographic trends, and emerging technologies, the Lower Providence Community Library Strategic Plan 2014 – 2019 establishes an exciting vision for the library's future. The Library's vision is to be a center of culture, intellect, and technology in Lower Providence Township. To achieve this vision, the Library will continue to fulfill its mission of providing the highest quality library services to its patrons, including materials, resources, and services that meet community needs for education, recreation, technology, and enrichment. In addition, the Library will focus on creating opportunities for community members to use the Library as an essential gathering place, a haven for quiet study, and a portal for discovery. This vision will be achieved through the successful completion of the goals identified in the Library's strategic plan:

- Strengthen the library position as a part of the Lower Providence Township community.
- Persistently improve the library user experience.
- Develop and maintain a collection responsive to the needs and interest of the community.
- Increase technological capacity.
- Reconfigure library space to support community requests.

Given its commitment to excellence, strong leadership, record of success and enthusiastic community support, the Library is well-positioned to achieve its vision and fulfill its mission for the benefit of all Lower Providence Township residents. The Library invites all community residents and patrons to get involved in helping accomplish the goals set forth in its strategic plan for 2014 – 2018.

Section One: Library Profile

Mission
The Lower Providence Community Library provides the highest quality library services to its patrons of all ages. The materials, resources, services and facility meet community needs for education, recreation, technology, and cultural enrichment.

Vision
Lower Providence Community Library is an essential gathering place; a center of culture, intellect and technology; and a portal for discovery of information and enlightenment for its community.

Membership
The Lower Providence Community Library primarily serves Lower Providence Township and surrounding communities, and is open to all. In 2013, the Library had approximately 9,900 active members. Lower Providence Community Library cards are available to anyone who resides or pays property taxes in Lower Providence Township. A Library card entitles members to use most other Pennsylvania public libraries through the ACCESS PA program. Items can be checked out and/or returned at any of these libraries.

In addition, the Library participates in the Montgomery County Library and Information Network Consortium (MCLINC), allowing Library members to search and request materials online from any participating library in the county.

Board of Trustees, Staff, and Volunteers
The Library is governed by a seven-member Board of Trustees, which is appointed by the Township Board of Supervisors. A full-time library director heads a staff of two full-time and 17 part-time employees, as well as over 40 volunteers, who serve during the library's 60 hours of operation per week.

The Friends of the Library
The Friends of the Lower Providence Community Library is a nonprofit organization that has a three-fold mission:

- Support the growth of the Library's collection through fundraising activities specifically earmarked toward the purchase of books and reference materials.
- Sponsor programs of community interest to all age groups.
- Act as advocates and community liaisons on the library's behalf.

Since its incorporation in 1995, The Friends of the Lower Providence Community Library has raised over $175,000. The Teen Advisory Board, an arm/division of the Friends of the Lower Providence Community Library, is a group of young adults who help plan and assist with Library programs and events.

Financial Information

The Library's annual operating budget for 2013 was approximately $668,000. The Library depends on Lower Providence Township as its largest single source of support. In 2013, the township provided approximately $412,000 in operating funds from property tax revenue. Due to the large investment made by the Township, and because the Library meets all current PA library standards, these local funds were leveraged to bring in an additional $70,000 in state funding from Pennsylvania in 2013.

Facilities

The Library has one facility, located at 50 Parklane Drive in Eagleville, Pennsylvania. Built in 1996, the two-story, 11,760 square foot building houses all of the Library's collections, programs and services, equipment, and staff. Forty-two parking spaces are available outside the Library. The Library is open seven days a week year-round, except during the summer when it is closed on Sundays.

Library Usage

Library attendance in 2013 averaged 15,289 individuals per month. Circulation averaged 20,906 items per month or 697 items per day.

Collections

As of December 31, 2013, the Library's collection included 62,861 physical items; access to over 46,000 digital books, audiobooks, and magazines; and 7 electronic resources. This collection includes the following items:

- Print materials – Adult, teen, and children's fiction, nonfiction, periodicals, and reference materials (55,919 items)
- Electronic Media – DVDs, music on CD, audiobooks, preloaded digital videos (7,913 items)
- Digital collections – OverDrive ebooks and audiobooks, Freading ebooks, Zinio magazines
- Electronic Resources available to Lower Providence residents – World Book Online, LearningExpress Library, Delaware Valley Consumer Reports, Morningstar Investment Research Center, ConsumerReports.org, NoveList, Gale Virtual Reference Library.

In addition, library users had access to these electronic resources provided through Montgomery County Library District and Commonwealth Libraries:

- Electronic resources available to Montgomery County residents – OverDrive downloadable ebooks and audiobooks, Zinio digital magazines, Reference USA, Mango Languages, Ancestry.com, Tumblebooks, and Booklist.
- Electronic resources available to Pennsylvanians through Access PA POWER Library – access to thousands of full text periodical articles, newspapers, photographs, medical information, general reference, auto repair and more, for all age groups.

Programs and Services

The Library offers a variety of programs and services to the community. Programs include educational classes, book clubs, technology instruction, cultural presentations, special events, and early literacy programs, on a regular basis to adults, teens, and children. The Library offers patrons a number of services including:

- On-site Internet and computer access
- Computer classes
- Interlibrary loan
- Reference service
- Fax service
- Proctor service
- Comfortable space to read and study
- Meeting rooms
- Self-service photocopying
- AskHerePA 24/7 online live reference service

Information Technology

The Library provides the following information technology:

- Internet access via Library computer workstations or wireless access for patrons' own portable computing devices
- Nine desktop workstations equipped with Microsoft Office, Internet and other software, an Early Literacy Station and 3 desktop computers dedicated to accessing the Library's catalogue

Section Two: Methodology

In 2013, the Library Board began the process of gathering information to write a new strategic plan for the next five years for the Lower Providence Community Library. A Strategic Planning Committee comprised of Library Trustees and the Library Director oversaw the project and information gathering in order to provide a strategic plan that reflects the will and judgment of the community. The *Lower Providence Community Library Strategic Plan 2014 - 2018* articulates an institutional vision for the Library's future and establishes a set of relevant, measurable goals and objectives to guide the organization in pursuit of this vision and its mission over the next five years.

The strategic planning process was organized into two stages:

1. Community needs/visioning assessment
2. Goal setting

Strategic Planning Committee
Cathy Fennell, Committee Chair
Bruce Goldenberg, Board President
Eugene McCarthy, Board Treasurer
Lynn Burkholder, Library Director

Community Needs Assessment

Since the last comprehensive community needs assessment of Lower Providence Township, the Library has accomplished most of the goals established in the Strategic Plan 2008 – 2013 with the exception of the last goal which has been retained in the Strategic Plan 2014 – 2018. Therefore, rather than surveying current library functions which have grown immensely in the last five years, a visioning survey was conducted to see where the Library should venture in the next five years according to the requests of the community. The data and findings of the visioning survey and focus group information were then used to guide the Library's Board of Trustees and Library Director in setting strategic goals and making informed decisions regarding the allocation of resources and the development of programs, services, and infrastructure improvements. The following methods were used to build the goals and measurable objectives found in this plan:

- A community-wide survey to which 488 community members responded;
- Two staff focus groups;
- Discussion among Library Board members and staff;
- External secondary research on trends in the public library sector; and,

- Internal review of the Library's operations, facility, and collections.

Key findings from the visioning survey and focus groups were used to inform the goal setting stages of the strategic planning process. These findings appear in the next section of the strategic plan (Section 3, "Context for Planning").

Visioning

After reading the results of the visioning survey, staff recommendations, and discussion among the board members, the vision to be a cultural and intellectual center of Lower Providence Township has been expanded to include technology as a key focus. This new vision for the Library was used to set the strategic goals and objectives for the next five years.

Board of Trustees
Cathy Fennell, President
Lisa Yanak, Vice-President
Mary Shaw, Secretary
Eugene McCarthy, Treasurer
Tony Pisa
Ben Simkin
David Nawrocki

Section Three: Context for Planning Decisions

Visioning Survey 2013

Planning decisions were driven by the requests of Lower Providence Township residents and Library patrons. The Lower Providence Community Library *Visioning Survey 2013* explored the future library-related needs of Lower Providence Township. The survey and focus groups indicated the needs of the community of the present and future with recommendations for five major strategic issues for the Library's future growth and continued development as a civic institution.

Key Findings

The survey yielded several key findings, including:

Overall Satisfaction

- Most patrons desire the enhancement and expansion of the Library's current programs, services, and collections rather than a radical shift in the Library's mission and core operations
- Opportunities exist to improve customer service and communications

> *Library patrons are very satisfied with the Library's current programs, services, and collections.*

The Lower Providence Community Library is part of the community

- The Township population is growing and Library usage is increasing
- The Library is a community center and should be recognized as such
- Additional coordination between local schools, museums and/or historical centers, the township, and the local police is desirable
- All library patrons have a greater need for Library materials and services to help them learn and conduct research

Technology Needs

- Wider selection of e-books
- Apps based access to library materials and programs
- Online tutorials
- Redbox style lending machines or kiosks throughout the community for borrowing books, movies, etc.
- Downloadable music
- E-readers preloaded with popular titles to borrow

Programming, Services, and Collections Needs

- Provide more free training classes for new software and new technology
- More hands-on programs for all ages especially in crafts or technology related areas
- Health and fitness programs for all ages
- Classes on photo editing, video production, website creation, and other creative skills.
- Free literacy programs to help young children
- Programs and resources for parents and grandparents

Library as Place

- Cyber Cafe with coffee bar
- Separate used book sale area
- Quiet study/reading area
- Drive-up book return
- Enclosed study/reading area for use by individuals or small groups
- Larger space to accommodate library programs
- Larger work areas for computers.

Operational Needs

- The current Library facility requires some minor but important renovations and repair with the operational and maintenance forecast
- Space allocation is a continuing issue which needs to be addressed
- Possible renovation plans

Section Four: Strategic Goals and Objectives 2014 – 2018

1. **Strengthen the library position as a part of the Lower Providence Township community.**
   Objectives:
   - Advance and improve the relationship between the Township and the library.
   - Advocate for the Library to be a part of the new community center.
   - Create stronger partnerships with local schools, museums, historical centers, and local businesses.
   - Enhance the promotion of the library with new signage and a concerted effort to publicize the library and its programs in local area newsletters, bulletins, etc.

2. **Persistently improve the library user experience.**
   Objectives:
   - Improve and enhance the patron used library technology including the implementation of tablet/e-readers technology; online tutorials for using technology; wider selection of e-books.
   - Implement a reference/emerging technologies area to support users research and technological needs.
   - Maintain, and where possible, expand the current level of customer service.

3. **Develop and maintain a collection responsive to the needs and interests of the community.**
   Objectives:
   - Increase community participation in collection development by actively reaching out to community members about collection acquisitions.
   - Improve current collections de-selection system to better reflect community usage patterns.
   - Increase availability of popular titles in all genres.
   - Maintain current promotion of new releases and special collection.
   - Increase awareness of electronic resources.

4. **Increase technological capacity.**
   Objectives:
   - Reevaluate WIFI and network connectivity and implement an increase in band width and speedier delivery of electronic information.
   - Increase the number of training classes for new software and new technology.
   - Implement online tutorials for new technologies, i.e. use an e-reader; how to download music, how to use an iPad/SmartPhone/tablet, etc.

- Evaluate and adopt new information technologies in response to user demand, i.e. color printer/copier.

5. **Reconfigure library space to meet community requests.**
   Objectives:
   - Draft a plan with the help of a space planner/architect for site options.
   - Develop a financial plan to support Library renovation or expansion.
   - Work with the Township on any space options that include Library renovation or expansion.
   - Present recommended course of action to the community.
   - Implement an action plan for Library renovation or expansion when needed or feasible.

Section Five: Implementation

Implementation Guidelines

The Lower Providence Community Library's Strategic Plan is a management tool to guide the work of the Board of Trustees, management and staff to develop effective programs, make better management and financial decisions, evaluate performance, and increase the value of the organization to its constituents.

The Board designates the Personnel Committee of the Board to evaluate progress and commend accomplishments on an ongoing basis. Ideally, every Board and staff member will be involved in helping to achieve one or more of the strategic goals in the plan.

Board Responsibilities

- Championing the strategic plan
- Fundraising to support the strategic plan and related capacity-building initiatives
- Providing guidance and support to staff
- Evaluating progress on an annual basis

Staff Responsibilities

- Championing the strategic plan
- Integrating strategic goals and objectives into programs and services
- Evaluating progress on an annual basis

Section Six: Evaluation

Evaluation Guidelines

The Library's Board of Trustees is responsible for monitoring and evaluating progress on implementation of the Strategic Plan. Evaluation guidelines include the following:

- Conduct evaluations on an annual basis
- Be responsive to community feedback.
- Commend and document achievements
- Terminate strategies (and programs) that are not working. Think of termination as part of a cycle of change for the better

Evaluation Questions

1. What have we achieved in the last evaluation period?
2. What are the strengths and weaknesses of this strategy?
3. What changes could we make to improve this strategy?
4. Based on the answers to these questions, should this strategy be: 1) maintained, 2) revised or, 3) replaced?

Annual Review

- Convene an annual strategic planning review meeting of the Board in November to assess long-term progress. This will allow the organization to build on its successes, identify challenges or barriers to the implementation of specific goals or objectives, and have the flexibility to alter the Strategic Plan to reflect changes in the organization's operating environment.
- In 2017, begin preparations for the next strategic planning cycle to commence the following year.