



*Inspiring a community to learn, create and live fully.*

**FIVE YEAR STRATEGIC PLAN  
2018-2022**

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Jennifer Podolsky, *Library Director*

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Dave Ambrosy, *EBTV Manager*

Katherine Bowden, *Circulation Manager*

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# OUR VISION

East Brunswick Public Library: A welcoming place for learning, enhancing, creating, enriching lives and making meaningful connections.

# OUR MISSION

Inspiring a community to learn, create and live fully.

# OUR VALUES

- We welcome and serve equally people of all ages, genders, religions, politics or ethnicities.
- We offer everyone a place to meet, learn, explore and create.
- We regard every patron request as important.
- We are a safe place where acceptance and tolerance is given and received.
- We encourage lifelong learning.
- We encourage open, candid, free-flowing but mutually respectful conversations.
- We nurture our community members' creativity by providing a space to share ideas, write, design, publish, make and discover.
- We offer free access to knowledge, classes, materials and talents.
- We advocate for those in the community most in need and most marginalized.

# OUR GOALS

**GOAL 1. PROGRAMMING:** Offer a diverse range of programming that is educational, informative, cultivates curiosity, and inspires collaboration within the community of East Brunswick.

**GOAL 2. COLLECTIONS & SERVICES:** Our collections and services evolve to meet changing community interests, demographics and needs.

**GOAL 3. PARTNERING:** We partner with local schools, community groups, government, business and health organizations, and township departments to offer a broader range of services.

**GOAL 4. TECHNOLOGY & INFRASTRUCTURE:** We have the technological infrastructure, locations and on-line presence to offer a borderless service to our citizens.

**GOAL 5. MARKETING:** Increase awareness that the library is a place known and valued for connecting citizens to information, knowledge, talents and systems that contribute to their success and well-being.

**GOAL 6. PROFESSIONAL:** Provide continued education so our staff can be collaborative, adaptive and knowledgeable and anticipate changing community needs.

**GOAL 7. FINANCIAL:** Increase revenue from grants, partnerships and library support organizations, and seek out new sources of revenue such as crowd-funding.

**GOAL 8. GOVERNANCE:** Adopt policies and processes which allow the library to be more agile, adaptive and accessible. Seek opportunities to implement changes that will reduce barriers to access for library customers.

# GOALS AND STRATEGIES

## GOAL 1: PROGRAMMING

*Offer a diverse range of programming that is educational, informative, cultivates curiosity, and inspires collaboration within the community of East Brunswick.*

1. Tap into the community's talents.
2. Establish a cross-township task force to design and develop programs to offer jointly at distributed locations.
3. Re-design an event scheduler as part of a dynamic reservation system for meeting, study and programming rooms.
4. Develop makerspace programming that is cross-generational and that instills an appreciation and excitement for learning amongst residents in all stages of life.
5. Use Facebook live and other social media to extend the reach of the library's programming.
6. Foster community partnerships.

## GOAL 2: COLLECTIONS AND SERVICES

*Our collections and services evolve to meet changing community interests, demographics and needs.*

1. Balance the need between physical and digital collections.
2. Explore ways that the library and schools can cost-share on purchases to leverage the funding of both entities.
3. Investigate a demand-driven collection acquisition model for books.
4. Develop new ways to keep staff apprised of changing community needs and emergent interests.
5. Expand on-line access to digital collections.
6. Implement an RFID library collections management system including statistics gathering and self-service.
7. Investigate cooperative collection development strategies with local partners like schools and other LMxAC libraries.
8. Explore the viability of outreach services such as a high technology bookmobile and community self-serve kiosks.
9. Evaluate and eliminate barriers to access such as fines and fees.

## GOAL 3: PARTNERING

*We partner with local schools, community groups, business organizations and township departments to offer a broader range of services.*

1. Welcome community participation at all levels to increase knowledge and cultural sensitivity.
2. Seek out partnerships that will bridge the digital divide and help all residents with internet connectivity.
3. Enhance marketing outreach and audiences for programs that promote wellness and quality of life.
4. Find new ways to employ volunteers in roles and initiatives that are flexible and beneficial to the quality of library services.
5. Work with schools to explore the viability and necessity of increased access to library materials



*East Brunswick Public Library teams up with non-profit organizations, community groups, businesses, schools and colleges, township departments and medical centers to offer additional programming and services to offer the community programming and services outside of the library's mission.*

# GOALS AND STRATEGIES



*To better serve library customers, East Brunswick Public Library updated its check out stations.*

## **GOAL 4. TECHNOLOGY & INFRASTRUCTURE**

We have the technological infrastructure, locations and on-line presence to offer a borderless service to our citizens.

1. Establish a 4G private network to route through the library's Internet network.
2. Explore the potential to live stream EBTv via schools and other partnerships.
3. Offer an increased number of specialized technology classes for patrons such as cad-cam, design, publishing, broadcasting, video and audio production.
4. Establish a staff training program so all staff are conversant with new and emerging technologies, especially those offered by the library.
5. Regularly survey the technology skills and information technology access needs of the East Brunswick community.

## **GOAL 5. MARKETING**

*Increase awareness that the library is a place known and valued for connecting citizens to information, knowledge, talents and systems that contribute to their success and well-being.*

1. All staff advocate on the library's behalf and everyone is seen as face of library and has knowledge of library happenings.
2. Improve signage both at the street level of the library and throughout the library building.
3. Develop a distinctive brand for the library for

which we become known.

4. Increase the impact of our outreach visits in order to cultivate and maintain relationships using methods such as an improved tracking system for community partners.
5. Expand the reach of the physical library by establishing satellite locations and kiosks throughout the community by partnering with schools, businesses and other stakeholders.
6. Collaborate with other town departments to offer services and programs with more diverse range of locations and times to suit a variety of patron needs.

## **GOAL 6. PROFESSIONAL**

*Provide continued education so our staff can be collaborative, adaptive and knowledgeable and anticipate changing community needs.*

1. Redefine the minimum skillset expected for 21st century librarianship, including technical, marketing, customer service, event creation and management skills.
2. Re-introduce staff development programs in order to train employees throughout all library departments.
3. Continue to review, evaluate and implement the library's emergency preparedness plans and procedures.



*East Brunswick Public Library regularly participates in community outreach events to register new library card holders, better connect to the community and share information about library programs and services.*

# GOALS AND STRATEGIES

4. Involve staff in finding and implementing solutions to challenges facing the library via short-term task forces and cross-functional teams.

5. Develop leadership capacity across the library.

6. Continue to provide opportunities for staff to participate actively in professional development workshops, conferences and webinars.

7. Expand safety and security measures in the library and train staff on emergency preparedness.

8. Improve our internal communication system to ensure all staff are aligned.

## GOAL 7. FINANCIAL

*Increase revenue from grants, partnerships and library support organizations, and seek out new sources of revenue such as crowd-funding.*

1. Seek sponsorships from public and private partners for special events that address their target market.

2. Seek out innovative and new ways to generate revenue for the library.

3. Explore the possibility of community sponsorships and grant opportunities to support future health initiatives with organizations who are vested in promoting a healthy community.

4. Search for opportunities to increase the number of Passport customers the library can accommodate.

5. Obtain more granular circulation data from LMxAC to better manage acquisitions and collection development.

6. Reduce printing costs by making use of digital signage.

## GOAL 8. GOVERNANCE

*Adopt policies and processes which allow the library to be more agile, adaptive and accessible. Seek opportunities to implement changes that will reduce barriers to access for library customers.*

1. Reduce or eliminate fees and fines where possible.

2. Make it easier for residents to apply for a library card.

3. Undertake mutually beneficial initiatives that include schools, profit and nonprofit businesses, real estate, healthcare, and others who can help promote the library through their unique channels.

4. Explore resource sharing with other towns and organizations.

5. Explore school libraries as satellite libraries including pick-up and drop-off locations for holds.

6. Increase accessibility to library materials and services by opening the library on Sundays year-round and opening the book drops on holidays.



*Technology classes are offered to both the community and staff to explain the latest technology services that East Brunswick Public Library uses.*

# THE STRATEGIC PLANNING PROCESS

The strategic planning process was conducted over a 12 month period. Over 100 people contributed to the process via workshops, interviews, surveys and personal communications. Participants included library staff, Friends of the Library, library board members, city officials, citizens, and representatives of business and community organizations.

Interviews were conducted with 15 staff, library board members, and stakeholders to better understand the issues facing the library and to explore new possibilities.

Four strategic planning workshops were held over a two-day period in which participants contributed their ideas through a conversation-based process. Exploring contexts and trends along with stakeholder and personal interests, participants conducted a strategic analysis of the library's ability to implement the desired changes, resulting in 123 project ideas and 14 Rich Picture illustrations, and a survey was conducted.

Project teams comprised of staff and citizens developed 16 detailed priority projects. At a subsequent Deep Dive workshop, the strategic planning committee and invited citizens explored the main issues facing the library and developed vision and issues statements, goal statements and strategies to achieve the goals, and a set of values statements.



*EB Create, the library's makerspace, provides the community with access to modern technology including robotics.*

# STRATEGIC ANALYSIS

*A strategic analysis was undertaken to better understand the environment in which the library currently operates, to identify the challenges facing the Library, and to discern the needs and wants of the community.*

**"Alternative facts":** The difficulty of finding out what is accurate and what is disinformation. There is a fear among immigrants and new Americans that they will not be able to be true, engaged citizens in our society. The political divisions created in the last several years have an effect on people's willingness to express their opinions.

**24/7, instant gratification world:** Consumers seek immediate satisfaction of their needs. People expect to obtain books, movies, music, information and other content with a few clicks. The same applies to physical goods, which is why Amazon is soaring and retail stores are dying. More and more people are watching movies at home rather than at movie theatres.

**Changes in the tax base:** Local redevelopment of Route 18 and property tax relief through an increase of new business. E-commerce is having an impact on local businesses and always impacting our tax base. Overall decline in financial resources available in East Brunswick. The growing cost of living in New Jersey and specifically in East Brunswick is causing people to move out of state.

**Changing role for librarians:** New roles for librarians include community integrator, validator of knowledge, curators of new collections such as tools and talents, mentors to train others to create and manage collections and facilitator of crucial community conversations. Increasingly libraries are employing other talents including marketers, technologists, trainers and facilitators. Libraries are playing a much bigger role in educating the public.

**Cultural change:** The immigrant community is looking for connections to their home culture and places to meet.

**Delay of financial stability:** Young people burdened with mounting student debt are staying with parents longer and starting families later. It is increasingly difficult, particularly in the Gig Economy where careers were first reduced to jobs and then tasks, to have the financial stability necessary to buy a home and raise a family.



*The Friends of the East Brunswick Public Library actively work to fundraise and serve as advocates on the library's behalf.*

**Demand for face-to-face time:** There is a growing need for venues for face-to-face communication for socialization and collaboration at the same time that on-line communication is growing.

**Different family structures:** Continued shift away from the traditional families, including growing number of people who have never married or are childless, same sex couples with families, re-partnering and extended families with multiple generations living under the one roof.

**Digital divide, new have-nots:** The divide is between those that have/do not have access to jobs, health insurance, the internet and social media, transportation, food and shelter. The Internet has changed the way people communicate, read books, and enjoy movies and music. There have been shifts away from face-to-face interaction to texting and messaging, from books to ebooks, from playing on the playground to playing games on-line, from booking hotels and flights via a travel agent, to

# STRATEGIC ANALYSIS

booking yourself online. There are new haves and have nots. You now need an internet connection to apply for a job, and libraries are providing those without wi-fi connections to gain access to services. Older citizens often lack the digital skills to interact with other generations that have grown up with social media.

**Fear of the future:** The accelerating rate of change is frightening for many people – not just technological change, but social, democratic and cultural change as well as changes in jobs and skills required. Communities are becoming increasingly diverse and one of the responses is to blame “others” for the change.

**Gap between what skills people have and what’s needed:** There is a shortage of skilled workers for the new highly technical or vocational jobs needed to support new businesses. Many existing jobs are being automated out of existence. Some manufacturing and services jobs are being offshored, particularly where there is a shortage of skilled US workers, e.g. information technology.

**Generation gap:** There are distinct cultural differences between people from the same families but born at different times, as well as different expectations of their relationships with each other and institutions – Baby Boomers, Generations X and Y, and Millennials. The current young generation who favor inner city living and walkable spaces. They have no desire for a suburban, three to five-bedroom home, nor large house blocks and lawns. Many of their social communities have moved to or developed online.

**Housing:** New housing construction is bringing in new families. Multi-generational families are living together and have diverse interests and needs. Greater housing density and increased commuting has resulted in increased traffic. East Brunswick is losing its “country charm.” The generation replacing aging population not interested in the suburban lifestyle East Brunswick offers nor can they afford to



*East Brunswick Public Library is highly regarded in the community for providing high-quality programming and events for families.*

live here given the high housing and tax rates. Insecurity in relation to healthcare: Uncertainty about the future of health insurance coverage, costs of coverage, and access to affordable care.

**Internet of Things:** We are now connecting up devices such as refrigerators, solar power systems, entertainment devices and health monitoring systems to communicate with each other. In the wider world, various infrastructure or communications systems are being connected up to provide a seamless experience.

**Library as a safe environment:** There is a growing need for a safe space, culturally, educationally and economically. Libraries remain one of the few respected institutions in society, largely due to the policy of serving everyone equally without fear or favor, and providing people with a safe space to learn, interact, and grow.

**More meetings than ever before:** There is less face-to-face interest for younger generations, who curate their lives more online than in any other way. Multicultural diversity: The population is also becoming more diverse through internal migration, and immigration including refugees. A growing backlash to immigrants. Uncertainty felt by new Americans. Increasing concerns about community

# STRATEGIC ANALYSIS



*The library has undergone several facility upgrades and improvements to be more relevant and better serve East Brunswick residents.*

**Othering:** Challenges in assimilating new Americans. Understanding of each other's differences. Lack of tolerance for others is evident at local schools.

**Policy changes in a divided nation:** Current ugliness of politics - people don't want to speak up when dirty laundry can be aired. Political leaders are unwilling to work-across the aisle for a greater purpose, focusing instead on short-term political gains. The internet provides many people with instant access to information and to each other in a positive way. However, it has also encouraged spectacular growth in bad behavior, including trolling, cyber bullying, sexting, identity theft and fake news.

**Real news vs. fake news:** Greater reliance on unreliable sources for news and information, e.g. social media and entertainment programs, causing distrust in government institutions and the information they collect and publish.

**Shift towards pro-active personal responsibility for health:** Society today is becoming more health conscious, particularly emphasizing preventive medicine, healthy lifestyles, and fitness. We are looking to prevent a health problem, rather than "fix" it. People increasingly seeking out organic ingredients and fewer processed foods. However, there is a general lack of knowledge about how to be healthy, what being healthy means, and how to pass healthy ways down to our children. At the same time, New Jersey, like many other US states, has a drug abuse issue.

**Time poor:** People are increasingly time poor. Some people have to work multiple jobs to survive. Grandparents care for children while their parents work, especially within the immigrant community.



*Through the fundraising work of the East Brunswick Public Library Foundation, the library is able to receive the support necessary to meet the challenges and needs of the community.*

# STAKEHOLDERS AND THEIR INTERESTS

The participants in the strategic planning workshops identified the following stakeholders and their needs:

**Businesses** Meeting place, training space for employees, research, networking, advertising, access to information to grow their business, possible funding from business community. Generate new business opportunities.

**Community leaders** Bring people with common interests together who want to bring change to their community.

**Children's Authors** Events to encourage reading and information use. Access to computers and printers. Special days. Learning to code. Access to tutors.

**College students** Job training, resume building, research, connecting to others.

**Community organizations** A place to meet and socialize. Offer a talent pool. A place to plan, advertise and host events

**Donors** Some people wish to be of services to the community; encourage people to donate to the library for new or special programs.

**Elders/seniors and retirees** Health care information, tax help, genealogy, training how to use technology. Conversation and social activities.

**Families Events** internet, streaming, entertainment.

**Faith-based organizations** Networking, cultural awareness, open dialogue, partnership.

**Job seekers** Resume writing, interview skills, job search.

**Food pantry** They could use ESL resources and low literacy resources to help service their clients.

**Friends of the Library** Place for a book sale, a place to meet, recognition.



*East Brunswick Public Library serves a community of all ages.*

**Healthcare Organizations** Health information dissemination; training in healthy living.

**Homebound** Ways to deliver services to seniors and others who are unable to travel to the library.

**Job applicants** Access to job listings via computers (the main way to find out about job opportunities). Job skill training/mentoring. Job fairs.

**Less well-off citizens** Access to technology, books, movies, music and other resources they are unable to afford.

**Library staff** Pleasant and safe working environment, training in new skills.

**Mentally and physically disabled** Making library more user-friendly, offer ways to assimilate and to inform the community about disability.

**Middle aged or childless** The library be an anchor for these members of the community and offer attractive Third Space for social life.

# STAKEHOLDERS AND THEIR INTERESTS

**New Americans/immigrants** Language learning, socialization, job search, learning how to get information about the community. Ways to get connected; apply for citizenship; learn English and customs. Assimilation into community. Books and resources on multiple languages. Give back by teaching about culture and languages.

**New residents** Information on East Brunswick and its services, groups, etc.

**Neighboring towns** Resources that are available in other towns that are not available locally

**Other East Brunswick services** Offer services to residents via other venues, or in partnership with other agencies.

**Parents** Parenting classes, youth services, help their children with homework and college applications. Support groups and sharing knowledge and resources.

**Political leaders** Need to meet with local policymakers and politicians to discuss and make suggestions to deal with change. Secure funding for enhancing programs. Venue for workshops and meetings with citizens to explore solutions to community challenges or issues.



*East Brunswick Public Library regularly offers special events and programming that reflect the diverse community it serves.*

**Pre-school children** Age appropriate activities so they become aware of the library, books and learning. Reading to develop their word knowledge and use, key to long term success.

**Residents** An aggregated calendar that compiles events and programs happening at community spaces all across the township.

**Schools** Partnership with the library so our offerings are seamless. Keeping up to date with school assigned reading lists to make sure they have access to materials.

**Small business** Networking, market research, tools for designing and making, business advice. Curate trades people, wedding planners and other talent we can check out.

**Students** Engaging summer programs. More study spaces/tutorial rooms. Access to books and resources aligned to the curriculum. A place to socialize. Spaces for book clubs.

**Taxpayers** Tax advice, help with tax return preparation.

**Teens** Age-appropriate activities, especially focused on career development, skills training, place to meet and socialize, entertainment. Work experience opportunities. Mentoring programs that will pass skill sets through generations. Gather the experience of seniors and create a Podcast series.

**Travelers** Passport services.

**Volunteers** Recognition for working in the library, or an opportunity to be of services to others, including creating and delivering programs for others.

**Young adults** Life skills, adulting, online programs; young adults can possibly offer their talents in programs.

# WHAT WE CAN DO

**The following assessment of how the library should operate in the future were made by the people who participated in the workshops.**

**KEEP:** Retain almost everything but add to what we do, remain open on Sundays, retain current programming, professional staff, the range of services offered, English as a Second Language courses, the Dewey Decimal system, hard copy books, meeting or study spaces, the Passport service, traditional and contemporary resources, books, databases and audio books

**ABANDON:** Remove barriers to access such as fines and fees, but abandon little else.

**RE-INVENT:** People said they wanted the following improvements: enhanced staff training, the library as a welcoming space with facilities such as a café, off-site services, improved staff and interdepartmental communication, the community center integrated with the library, partnerships with local business and other community organizations, Little Free Libraries in key places such as the bus station, more offerings that can be accessed from home, better parking, more funds from endowments, better access

to meeting spaces, more computers, a wider social media outreach, and a new kind of bookmobile.

**INVENT:** Desirable new approaches to the delivery of library services include offering the library wherever people are, be able to book a librarian, check out a talent, have drive-through services, provide low-cost tutoring, create outdoor library spaces, conduct citizenship classes, establish a toy collection, undertake a marketing campaign, increase opportunities for volunteering, fundraise for renovations or expansions including young adult space or community spaces, extended hours or different hours, tap into the people with unique and valued skillsets, provide on-line webinars, seminars, podcasts as well as broadcasts over the internet, more quiet spaces for tutors, offer an educational resource center, provide a place to hear others speak, offer transportation to and from the library for teenagers and seniors and people who can't or don't drive, have a role in developing or providing the welcome package for new arrivals to East Brunswick, develop an easier way for people to see what is going on in East Brunswick, including programmable digital signage and expanded offerings on community television.



Through out its community gallery space and instruction classes for artists of all ages and levels, East Brunswick Public Library is the arts and cultural center of the community.

# RICH PICTURE THEMES

Participants in the workshops created rich pictures to consider the optimal dynamic of the library and its stakeholders in the future. Key themes which emerged from the process:

- Make the library the town center: a vibrant center of community activities
- More parking
- Partner with business and community groups
- Create more flexible spaces, less area devoted to books
- Embed library in the community, different models
- More meeting rooms, and equipment
- Outdoor garden area
- More programs for adults
- No fines, no fees
- Library connects the community



## EAST BRUNSWICK PUBLIC LIBRARY AT A GLANCE

The following selected statistics, from FY 2016, provide a snapshot of the activities of the East Brunswick Library.

### Summary

- Budget: \$4,241,549
- Revenue – Local & Regional: \$3,552,000
- Active Borrowers: 28,249
- Service Population: 47,540
- In-person Library Visits: 386,063
- Online Library Visits: 646,763
- Library Staff: 46.03 FTE
- Facilities: 1

### Circulation

- Circulating Holdings: 185,356
- Annual Circulation: 636,108
- Adult Materials Circulation: 334,603
- Children's Materials Circulation: 250,908
- Hoopla Circulation: 2,427
- Research tool uses: 280,027

### Collections

- Expenditures Print: \$184,297
- Expenditures Audio/Visual: \$43,635
- Expenditures Digital Materials: \$66,105
- Print Collection: 138,345
- Audio/Visual Collection: 22,976
- Digital Collection: 34,314

### Technology

- Public computers: 47
- Internet Hours: 3,322
- Bandwidth: Internet, 100Mbps Verizon EVC and 150Mbps Comcast Business

# **PARTICIPANTS IN THE STRATEGIC PLANNING PROCESS**

*Many thanks to those who participated in the strategic planning process:*

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