

## **STRATEGIC PLAN 2017 - 2020**

### VISION STATEMENT:

The South Plainfield Public Library is a source of pride for the town residents as a community center offering programs, education, and information resources to all ages, interests and abilities.

### MISSION STATEMENT:

The South Plainfield Public Library strives to contribute to the quality of life for every resident in the borough by being a center for life-long learning and a place for community interaction. Its mission is to provide informational, educational, leisure and cultural resources to every resident of South Plainfield regardless of age, background, or income level.

### SUMMARY:

The South Plainfield Public Library strives to contribute to the quality of life for every resident in the borough by being a center for life-long learning and a place for community interaction. Its mission is to provide informational, educational, leisure and cultural resources to every resident of South Plainfield regardless of age, background or income level. It has been achieving this mission by offering print and digital resources, programs, activities, assistance, and services since 1965 from its current location at 2484 Plainfield Avenue.

Our previous plan noted that for many years, the facility was severely undersized for the collection and community. The library was a 6,300 s.f. building that had no quiet study areas, no meeting room for programs, and no staff room. The entire non-fiction collection was housed in a mezzanine area that required patrons to climb up steps to reach. The servers were crammed into the account clerk's tiny office with a portable A/C unit to keep them from overheating. Since there was no dedicated program area, events either had to shut down essentially the entire library, or be held off-site. The lack of quiet areas in the building would often frustrate patrons, and public computer terminals were placed so close together that it sometimes discouraged people from using them.

Over the years there were several attempts to either build a new facility, or to relocate to, renovate and rent an existing building in the community. None of these efforts proved successful. The library director at that time understood that there was a desperate need, and that it was unlikely that the borough would ever be able to fund a new facility. Over her 20-year tenure, she was able to save over

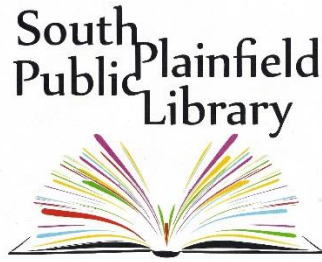
\$2,000,000.00 in capital funds. A former library trustee passed away and bequeathed the library an additional \$380,000.00, so with those monies in place the Board of Trustees began to investigate the possibility of gutting the building and putting on an addition to double the size of the facility. After consulting with architects, engineers, and project managers regarding the scope of the project and the costs of construction the board decided that they were comfortable moving ahead with this option.

The project broke ground on July 30, 2014, and the new library opened its doors to the public on February 1, 2016. The new construction added an additional 6,300 sf on, which doubled the size of the facility. Some of the new space includes :

- 3 sound proofed quiet study rooms
- A large program/meeting room
- A dedicated server room (complete with own cooling system)
- A staff break room and bathroom
- A family bathroom
- A returns processing room
- A larger children's room that includes public computers for children.
- A children's reading garden
- Additional space for collections
- Expanded staff work areas

Upon reopening the number of library card applications went from ~600/yr (in 2014) to almost 1000 (2016). Additional people were hired to ensure that all areas were adequately staffed, and to help keep up with the demand for services.

The new space has allowed us to expand our monthly programming (160 programs Jan – April 2014 v. 321 programs Jan – April 2017), house collections in the appropriate area (children's AV materials are now in the Children's Room instead of the adult area), and provide a more comfortable and quiet environment for our patrons (children's programs no longer have to be held in the adult area so people can study or work without distraction).



## LIBRARY BOARD OF TRUSTEES 2017

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### COMMUNITY PROFILE:

South Plainfield is an approximately 8.3 square mile borough located in Middlesex County. It is a stable, middle income community with a population of approximately 23,300 people. Neighboring communities include Plainfield, Piscataway and Edison.

The latest Census data reports there are 7,876 households, and 6,175 families residing in the borough.

There has been a slight increase in the community's diversity. Census data shows the racial makeup of the borough is 66.74% (15,607) White, 10.10% (2,361) Black or African American, 0.37% (87) Native American, 14.68% (3,433) Asian, 0.03% (8) Pacific Islander, 4.79% (1,120) from other races, and 3.29% (769) from two or more races. Hispanic or Latino of any race were 13.24% (3,097) of the population.

The median age is 40 years.

Approximately 51% of residents are female, while 49% are male.

There are 4 elementary schools, an intermediate (grades 5-6) school, a middle school and a high school. There is one Catholic school that serves students from preschool through eighth grade. There is also one Islamic school for students in grades K – 12.

### BACKGROUND & ANALYSIS

The South Plainfield Public Library was established in 1932, incorporated in 1941, and was housed in several spaces around town before moving to its current location in 1965. From 1965 until 2014 the facility was a 6,300 sf facility. In February of 2016 the expanded and renovated library that we know today opened its doors to the community.

The library is governed by a 9-person board of trustees, 7 of whom are appointed by the mayor with consent of the borough council. The other two statutory positions include the mayor or his representative, and the superintendent of schools or her representative. The current director has worked for the library since 1993, and has been in the role of director since 2012.

The library's departments are as follows: administration, technical services, adult, and children's departments. The library is open 7 days a week from September – June and 6 days a week in July and

August. There are 18,500 registered cardholders, and the library circulates around 170,000 items per year.

The library uses Innovative Interface's Millennium ILS. We also subscribe to their fuzzy logic search interface called Encore which allows users to search the catalog in a way that is very similar to Google. Patrons are given the option to have their photograph linked to their patron record which allows them the convenience of being able to borrow materials without having to show any physical forms of ID. The ILS is hosted off-site at a server farm in Syracuse NY. We maintain a web server, app server, telephone notification servers, firewalls, and security system servers in house.

The library's collection consists of approximately 87,000 items, and over 165,000 items circulated in 2016. There are 22 computers for public use, and we had approximately 12,000 computer sessions last year. Traditionally we have focused on programming for babies, toddlers and young children, but now that there is additional staffing and space, we have been able to expand our offerings to include programs for tweens, teens and adults. Over 13,000 people attended the approximately 600 programs that the library hosted in 2016.

The library currently employs 13 individuals, most of whom have been on staff for 10 – 29 years. There are 5 librarians (3 F/T & 2 P/T) and 9 support staff (5 F/T & 4 P/T). Even though everyone has their own role in the library, staff are mostly cross trained so there is little to no disruption to services when people are not in the building. Everyone is expected to be able to staff the circulation desk and help patrons with any general needs they may have. We try to avoid having patrons bounced between different staff people, so unless there is a specific need (such as a reference question) the staff person who is first approached will assist the patron.

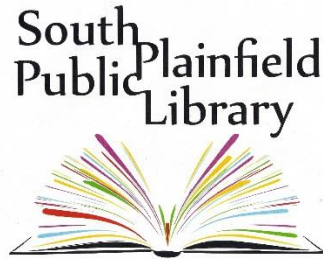
Our primary source of funding is the 1/3 of a mil formula, and we get some additional funding from state aid each year as well. The board was extremely conservative with the aforementioned building project, and everyone was surprised when it came in over time, but on budget. This means the library now has capital funds available for additional projects. In 2017 the board adopted a plan for capital projects to accomplish by 2020.

#### SERVICES:

The library offers an array of services including

- Lending books, magazines, audiobooks, music CDs, DVDs, videogames, and various equipment
- Subscriptions to online databases including language, legal resources, downloadable music, genealogical, gaming, education testing, and continuing education.
- Computer access (Internet, Microsoft Office, Wi-Fi)
- Reference and reader's advisory services
- Programming for all ages. New programs include English conversation groups, Chinese language story times, special needs sensory programming, Children's mindfulness and meditation classes, Science Club and Lego League.

- Tutoring service
- On demand (one on one) technology and computer classes
- Notary Services
- Faxing service
- Scanning service
- Quiet study rooms
- Meeting room
- Exhibition space for local artists/schools
- Digitized copies of local newspapers
- Homebound delivery service
- Museum Pass Program



## PRIORITIES:

- BUILDINGS AND GROUNDS
- VISIBILITY WITHIN COMMUNITY
- TECHNOLOGY

### 1. BUILDINGS AND GROUNDS:

Goal:

**Provide the community with a building and surrounding environment that is inviting, comfortable, safe and secure.**

We have a brand new building, but there are still things that need to be accomplished in order to present our “best face” to the public and to ensure the safety of our patrons. We were very conservative with our initial building plan, and wanted to make sure that we were able to complete the project even if it were to go over budget, so even though it is a new facility, there is still room for improvement. After spending our first year in the building, a few issues have come to our attention.

Building Issues:

- Two public bathrooms that were essentially left untouched during the renovations.
- Areas of the building that need additional security cameras.
- Windows that let in a lot of light, which causes glare on computer screens.

- Need to be able to make announcements that the entire building can hear.

Action:

- Replace the flooring, paint, and fixtures in the public bathrooms to bring it in line with the rest of the facility.
- Investigate options for window coverings to help prevent glare on screens.
- Install additional security cameras around the building.
- Install speakers and amplifier that will work with telephone system to create building wide PA system.

Grounds Issues:

- Poorly lit stairs and walkway at building's entrance.
- Areas of dirt/mud between curb and sidewalk that can be hard for those who use canes or crutches to navigate.
- Spotty patches of grass and weeds which detract from the overall effect of the new building

Action:

- Consult with professionals to determine options and have additional outdoor lighting installed to ensure that the stairs and walkway are sufficiently illuminated.
- Have the area along the sidewalk leveled and install pavers to make an even walkway from the parking area to the sidewalk so patrons don't have to walk over earth.
- Investigate landscaping services that would help get the grounds looking as they should, and install a sprinkler system to help keep grass and plantings maintained.



## 2. COMMUNITY VISIBILITY:

Goal:

**Increase the library's visibility within the community.**

Issues:

- Even with all of the publicity surrounding the new building there are still people in the community that we are not reaching.
- New patrons often express surprise at the types of items we loan, the types of programs we hold, and the services that we offer.

Action:

- Install an electronic sign in front of the building to advertise library programs, collections, and services.
- Collaborate with local organizations to present events that will reach those people who otherwise might not visit the library.
- Expand our outreach efforts to ensure that we are visible to a wider range of the community.
- Work with the borough to include information about the library into mailings that reach every household.
- Investigate the possibility of recording and distributing library programs online in order to reach people who are unable to attend.

### 3. TECHNOLOGY:

Goal:

**Provide the community with greater access to, and understanding of relevant technology.**

Issues:

- Many of our patrons rely on the library's computers for access to the Internet and word processing software.
- The setup and location of our public terminals is not conducive to teaching even small groups.
- Even with almost 20 public terminals, there are times that patrons must wait to use a computer.

Action:

- Create a mobile classroom of 10 – 15 laptops that can be set up in the multipurpose room to hold group classes on basic computer skills on a regular basis.
- When laptops are not being used for classes, allow patrons to sign up to use them in the library to help alleviate wait times.
- Develop curriculum/handouts for basic computer skill classes, and train staff so they are able to lead any of the sessions.
- Continue to keep all library computers on a 5 year replacement schedule, and continue to update to the latest versions of installed software.