

Mount Vernon Public Library

The Central Library of Westchester County

Strategic Plan 2021-2025

Approved by the Board of Trustees on October 28, 2021

The 2021-2025 Strategic Plan
was accepted by unanimous vote of
The Mount Vernon Public Library Board of Trustees
on October 27, 2021

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Oscar Davis, Jr., Trustee
Hope Marable, Trustee

Timur Davis, Library Director

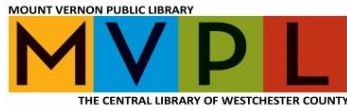


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Message from The Chair

March 19, 2021, The Mount Vernon Public Library celebrated One-Hundred and Twenty-Five Years of having been chartered by The University of the State of New York, (Now NYSDE). The last remaining of five Andrew Carnegie endowed libraries in Westchester County, it hails as Westchester's Central Library; prodigious for its ancestral grounds and architecture, unmatched advances in technology, voluminous periodical section, historical Mills Law Library, Children's Library, and landscaped garden.

On behalf of the board of trustees, It is a pleasure to present you with The Mount Vernon Public Library's Strategic Plan, FY2021 through FY2025. Herein was a collaborative effort, a year-long endeavor of in-depth research and analysis, paired with the invaluable insight of our staff, patrons, local historians, and neighboring libraries.

The end result is an attainable endeavor to fulfill the library's mission by enhancing our existing resources of space, items and collections, programs and services. This plan identifies the values, priorities, and long term goals of consideration for our director, trustees, and community stakeholders. To all who recognize the value of an engaging and vibrant hub of higher learning and education, we ask that you invest further by partnering with The Mount Vernon Public Library toward the fulfillment of these aspirations.

Mount Vernon, New York is an evolving, culturally diverse city that has produced renowned citizens across the globe; among them, E.B. White, Pulitzer Prize winning author of "Stuart Little" and "Charlotte's Webb"; Television Hall of Fame Inductee, Susan Harris, writer, producer, and creator of Emmy Award winning sitcoms "The Golden Girls" and "Soap". This rich history, along with the selfless contributions of lifelong patrons and dedicated staff, is why The Mount Vernon Public Library is an enduring community refuge that will continue to elevate and inspire civility and academia for generations to come.

Hope Marable

Trustee & Chair of Strategic Planning Committee

WHY WE HAVE A STRATEGIC PLAN

The Strategic Plan fulfills a registration requirement for libraries that are chartered by the New York State Department of Education, (NYSDE), to ensure eligibility for federal and state grants and funding.

Strategic Planning dually serves as a long-range guide, aiding the library's board of trustees in the collective role of governance and fiduciary duties of "Care, loyalty, and obedience." Purposed goals are essential, thereby promoting confidence in the managerial decisions that will impact our library's budget and services for future use.

Ultimately, the library's intention while embarking on this process, was to create a transformative, written plan of service, designed to elevate the quality of our patron's lives while they pursue intellectual successes.

VISION, MISSION, AND SHARED VALUES

THE LIBRARY'S MISSION

"The Mount Vernon Public Library connects people, information, and ideas to enrich lives and build community"

THE LIBRARY'S VISION

"The Mount Vernon Public Library is where opportunity awaits"

GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

Goal I: Create an exceptional library experience for all residents

Objectives:

- I.1 Invest in physical improvements that will make the library a comfortable, safe, welcoming space for all ages

Activities:

- a. Create functional space to support use of the library by the adult population including new seating, quiet study space, a technology hub to support public computing, space for quiet study and group meetings
- b. Reduce the stack core in the public areas to create more space for seating, technology and study. A large area of shelving has been removed from the nonfiction circulating area to create a seating area for the public. Also, the oversize books have been weeded and the young adult area has been weeded in anticipation of creating a new teen area.
- c. Provide a separate and defined space for after-school programs and homework assistance
- d. Provide an attractive, appealing and well-defined space for teens. There are plans to create a separate teen computer area with their own computers and seating area. This will separate the teen computing from the adult computing.
- e. Update and refresh the children's room and connect it to the main library
- f. Reopen the History Room after the collection has been evaluated and environmental conditions have been remediated. We are in the process of reorganizing the collection, this includes identifying the different collections in the room including vertical files, photographs, ephemera and other materials, cleaning the room, buying archival supplies, hiring a part time archivist, and promoting the collection to other local history societies.

- I.2 Provide a library collection that reflects the needs and interests of the community

Activities:

- a. Reduce the size of the collection by removing unused, infrequently used, damaged, obsolete, worn and irrelevant material from the open and closed stacks. Our collection is being continuously weeded and evaluated by all departments.
- b. Refresh the collection with new titles that support the information needs and reading interests of the community
- c. Expand the library's digital content

- d. Provide community equity so that all members of the community are represented in our collections. Make sure there is adequate materials for local populations like African Americans, Italians, Brazilians, Hispanics and other cultural groups in the collection.

I.3 Provide increased access to the library

Activities:

- a. Expand hours for the children's library to match or exceed the main library hours
- b. Expand library hours to include open hours all day on Saturday as well as part of the day on Sunday, throughout the year.
- c. Increase accessibility to parking or parking alternatives around the library. Make sure there is proper signage that is a lot available on the 2nd Avenue side of the building.

I.4 Create a rewarding work environment for staff and management that results in enhanced customer service

Activities:

- a. Resolve issues relating to the labor contract and compensation
- b. Provide funds to support off-site and internal staff development activities
- c. Support in-house staff development days quarterly
- d. Establish a regular schedule of staff meetings and department head meetings
- e. Establish an intranet or staff blog so staff can remain current on all issues
- f. Evaluate the current organizational chart to identify gaps in staffing and reorganize as needed
- g. Provide additional staffing to support information technology and IT infrastructure, marketing and development, and human resources
- h. Develop staff who are committed to a 21st century transformative library
- i. Consider the need for a full-time teen librarian as well as technology librarian.
- j. Fill gaps in staffing caused by retirement and other issues.

Goal 2: Build community and community engagement with a library that is the center for learning and opportunity

Objectives:

- 2.1 Make the Library cool again. Develop compelling and transformative programming to attract residents of all ages to the library

Activities

- a. We have initiated the 1,000 Books before Kindergarten program to engage a new generation of toddlers and parents.
- b. Develop a One Book-One City program in which all participants read and discuss the same book based on a current theme

- c. Create a Coding for Kids program that allows for hands on instruction and learning in Scratch, Raspberry Pi, and many other STEM types of projects.
- d. Increase community outreach and partnerships with the city focusing on programs like rental assistance, food programs, and other partnerships with city agencies. Improve our relations with the community and Mount Vernon City Hall.

2.2 Make the Library essential for new residents and citizens

Activities:

- a. Focus on citizenship by creating a regular citizenship class.
- b. Expand our ESL and Citizenship collection with both DVDs and books.
- c. Offer English conversation groups for people learning English
- d. Expand services (collections, resources) for Spanish speaking residents
- e. Expand literacy, both print and digital, programs.

2.3 Make the library the place to go for health, nutrition, and wellness information

Activities:

- a. Develop programs in alignment with local community organizations for nutrition, diseases, and sex education as part of community outreach.
- b. Tie the library community garden with programs on nutrition.
- c. Promote the Library as a place for health information.

2.4 Make the Library the place to go for toddlers to teens

Activities:

- a. Expand and promote early literacy programs for pre-K
- b. Partner with the school system to increase the high school graduation rate
- c. Enlist NY area children's authors to visit the library and offer readings
- d. Initiate routine poetry readings by poets and students
- e. Develop hands on music programs to learn instruments and performances
- f. Create new programs for visual and performing arts by teens

Goal 3 Ensure that everyone in Mt. Vernon can participate in today's digital society

Objectives:

3.1 Expand access to up to date technology in the library

Activities:

- a. We have expanded the number of computers available to over 50. Make them available to the public in a way that is safe for people to use.
- b. Update the software on the computers and create a designated area for people to come in and print documents.
- c. Add iMacs to the mix of public computers available for adults, teens and children
- d. Secure the bandwidth needed to support the community's needs
- e. We have expanded our Wi-Fi capability and need to secure the WIFI as well as increase the bandwidth so people can use video and streaming services easily.
- f. Offer iPads or other tablets, laptops, Chrome books or other portable devices for library patrons to use on site. This is in the processes of being done.
- g. We have a laptop/hotspot loan program for those customers who are unable to afford an in-home connection.
- h. We are providing outdoor Wi-Fi spots around the building when the library is closed

3.2 Offer a robust technology training program for all ages

Activities:

- a. The technology lab has been updated with 10 new PC computers. We also need to have iMac computers for the lab as well as devices like cell phones and tablets.
- b. Offer expanded and routine technology instruction from basics to advanced using in-house or contractual staff.
- c. The staffing for technology needs to be reevaluated so we can do classes for the patrons.
- d. Offer instruction on using apps and devices that can be helpful with issues relating to employment, education, social services, health and wellness, citizenship, finances, parenting

3.3 Make the library the go to place for residents needing assistance with technology

Activities:

- a. Provide instruction classes on how to use digital devices as well as times for people to bring in their own device to discuss use of digital devices.
- b. Make the library a dynamic digital common with devices for loan, use and trial

3.4 Establish the library as the community's help center for online transactions – job applications, online apps for passports, ID cards, birth certificates, motor vehicle issues, etc.

Activities:

- a. Survey community partners to determine the greatest need in this area

- b. Refresh and renovate the Job Information Center into a fully functioning Career Development Center with staff support for resume creation, job applications, interview skills training and another skills training
- c. Create the Mount Vernon Public Library Digital Help Center

Goal 4: Create awareness of the library as essential to people's lives and the health of the community

Objectives

4.1 Increase the reach and penetration of the library's message in the community

Activities:

- a. Reestablish our email presence in the community.
- b. Begin designing and mailing a weekly e newsletter to the library's email database using Constant Contact.
- c. Reorganize the Mount Vernon Public Library Social Media including Facebook, Twitter, Instagram and other social media sites so that there is a unified effort by multiple staff members to contact the community about events and other happenings in the library.

Make the library website easier to use and compatible with Americans with Disabilities Act requirements

The new library administration has made strides in updating and refreshing the collections, the library is in the process of being weeded. This includes weeding the shelves, checking for missing items and deleting them, and checking for items not in the system. In addition, damaged items are being removed from the collection on a continuous basis.

DESCRIPTION OF THE LIBRARY

The Mount Vernon Public Library was chartered by The State of New York in March of 1896. Andrew Carnegie, steel tycoon and benefactor of libraries, donated \$50,000 in 1904 for the construction of the building. The library, a neoclassical revival style building was designed by Edward L. Tilton.

Additions to the Library were made in 1909 and 1925. The first was financed by another Carnegie gift of \$20,000 and the second by a school bond issue of \$125,000.

In 1929, another school bond issue of \$125,000 was voted to purchase adjacent property to provide room for expansion. In the late 1930's a building program was undertaken that shaped the library as we know it today. Ground was broken in 1937 for the third addition to the building's new South Wing, completed in 1938.

In 2014, the Mount Vernon Public Library became a school district library. No longer a department of the city, the library now presents its operating budget annually for a majority vote. After years of declining funds, the library's budget has been buoyed by an enthusiastic public that approved a budget of over \$4 million for the library's first year, (2014), as an independent institution; With this change came a commitment from the library's trustee board, administration and staff, to work with the residents of Mount Vernon to create the library's shared community values.

SHARED COMMUNITY VALUES

The Mount Vernon Public Library is guided by the following principles to achieve excellence; support for intellectual freedom, literacy promotion, respect for and inclusion of the entire community, fostering a healthy democracy, forming strong partnerships, adaptability, innovation, and a professional and skilled staff that serves people of all ages, interests and abilities with fairness and equality; To provide a safe, accessible facility where people, information, and ideas come together to enrich lives and build community, and where lifelong habits of learning, self-improvement and self-expression are championed, furthermore:

We champion lifelong habits of learning, self-improvement and self-expression

We provide a unique and current collection that meets the varied needs of our community

We uphold our patron's rights to privacy and intellectual freedom

We work collaboratively with partners to achieve goals, and invest in our staff to ensure they can provide exceptional customer service

We provide a safe and welcoming environment for people of all ages

We support universal literacy and close the digital divide via accessible and up to date technology

THE STRATEGIC PLANNING PROCESS

The Strategic Planning Committee consists of four members; The library's director, one librarian, a consultant, and one board trustee that serves as chairperson. Throughout the course of several meetings, the committee identified core values based on the public's input. Trends that will affect service in coming years were discussed, as well as the strengths and weaknesses of the library and how the library could best meet the needs of the public in providing service.

Once shared values, goals, and objectives were identified, the committee outlined a course of items to achieve during the planned period of 2021-2025.

RESULTS OF COMMUNITY SURVEY

In spite of the pandemic, The Mount Vernon Public Library adapted a comprehensive study for the purpose of redefining its services to the city's community. What library services are vital to residents and what role should the library play? How does the library provide access to content, information, and entertainment whilst maintaining relevancy amidst ever-evolving technology?

The study consisted of an assessment of needs, to learn more about the community's perception of the library, to hear their ideas about how the library could be more useful, and how services could be improved. Mount Vernon residents shared their ideas via print survey and offered suggestions by participating in one of several group discussions that included library staff, community residents, and parents of small children. This ongoing dialogue resulted in valuable suggestions for the library's future direction.

Communication was solicited with non-users of the library as well, thereby further assessing the positive and negative issues impacting our services, and what expectations the public has for the library's future.

In conclusion, our community stakeholders and patrons desire conditions that will refine ease of use and access to the resources their tax dollars support.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Strategic Planning Committee

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James Finch, Consultant

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Mount Vernon Public Library Staff

Mount Vernon Public Library Board of Trustees

Friends of Mount Vernon Public Library

Survey Participants, Patrons

Stakeholder Interview Participants