

FY 2017-2019

Westerly Library & Wilcox Park Strategic Plan



The mission of the Memorial and Library Association is to strengthen the community and enrich lives by stimulating intellect and sparking imagination through access to literature, information, nature, and the arts.

Westerly Library & Wilcox Park FY 2016-2019 Strategic Plan

Adopted April 12, 2016
by the Memorial and Library Association Board of Trustees

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Sara Clark	Administrative Assistant, Strategic Planning Task Force; Bookkeeper, Westerly Library and Wilcox Park

Introduction

In July 2015, the Memorial and Library Association Board of Trustees engaged ESC of New England in consulting services to guide the strategic planning efforts for Westerly Library and Wilcox Park in Westerly, Rhode Island.

In order to ensure a collaborative process that fully represented the interests of the Library, the Park and the community, a Strategic Planning Task Force was organized that included a range of stakeholder experiences and viewpoints. The Task Force met regularly with the ESC Consultant Team to oversee progress, provide input, and ensure a collaborative process. A detailed work plan, created with input from the Task Force, identified key tasks, meetings, and milestones for the project. The work plan served as a road map for the project, allowing all parties to monitor progress and pacing towards mutually agreed upon goals during a three-phase process.

Phase 1: Complete Environmental Scan including External and Internal Analysis

In coordination with the Task Force, the ESC Consultant Team designed and implemented a comprehensive information-gathering protocol including interviews, surveys, group meetings, internal and external trend analysis and benchmarking against selected organizations. Specifically, this included the following data collection:

- Board of Trustees and Strategic Planning Task Force Interviews (September 2015)
- Teen Focus Group Interviews (October 2015)
- Westerly Library & Wilcox Park Employee Survey (November 2015)
- Westerly Library & Wilcox Park Strategic Plan Survey with Westerly Public Schools and Stonington Public Schools (January 2016)
- Westerly Library & Wilcox Park Community Survey (January 2016)

Concurrently, the Task Force reviewed the emerging changes to organizations similar to Westerly Library and Wilcox Park, especially public libraries. Two documents in particular (*Libraries at the Crossroads*, Pew Research Center, September, 2015 and *Confronting the Future: Strategic Visions for the 21st-Century Public Library* by R. Levien, ALA Office for Information Technology Policy, Policy Brief No. 4, June 2011) provided important contextual information to the Task Force on the current status and future trends for public libraries in this country.

The first notable finding was that American libraries are currently being challenged by many important and sometimes competing demands. For example, a majority of citizens view their libraries as essential community institutions that provide a range of critical educational programs and services to diverse groups (e.g., school children, veterans, seniors, low income individuals). This constitutes both an opportunity and a challenge.

Libraries today are certainly being challenged to change. Beyond a collection of books and media, libraries are being increasingly called upon to support and enhance local education, provide increasingly specialized programming (e.g., ESL), assist local businesses and job seekers with staying current and

attaining success in reaching new audiences and updating employment skills and, perhaps most importantly, offer timely and informed access to new forms of educational, vocational, and social technologies (e.g., eReaders, 3-D printing, classes on social media). In essence, the library is becoming more and more of an innovative community, social, and cultural hub for the benefit of many.

These demands lead to alternative visions for the library of the future with accompanying strategic choices. To what degree will a library be a physical setting versus a distributed or virtual resource, and how do these coexist? To what degree will there need to be a focus on the community versus individual user preferences in programming, resources, and staffing? Will libraries be in constant evolution rather than the more static repositories of the past, and how will materials be managed, maintained, and financed?

Through deep and sophisticated discussions about the present status and future possibilities for Westerly Library and Wilcox Park, the Task Force developed consensus on this debate which is reflected in the long-term action planning in the Technology & Innovation Action Plan; first, moving the Library and Park from a physical entity toward a virtual entity and second, from a knowledge entity to a creation entity. Both of these goals are reflected in the Technology & Innovation Action Plan.

Phase 2: Set Purpose and Direction & Redefine Mission, Vision and Values

Critical to the development of a successful Strategic Plan is an understanding of the Mission, Vision and Core Values of the organization. During the strategic planning process, Task Force members revisited the historical basis and purpose for the organization to create a clear understanding of how this would shape a future direction. Over several workshop sessions guided by the ESC Consultant Team, Task Force members updated the Mission Statement for the Library and Park with an eye toward respecting the historical relevance of the organization and wrote a Vision Statement that brands Westerly Library and Wilcox Park as a single entity that “strives to be one of the premier intellectual, cultural, and botanical assets in the region.”

Lastly, the Task Force recognized that an enduring set of Core Values did not currently exist for Westerly Library and Wilcox Park and identified five key attributes that reflect the beliefs of all who represent the organization: Stewardship, Equitable Access, Respect, Collaboration, and Enrichment.

Together, the Mission, Vision and Core Values establish a foundation for communicating the ideals of the Memorial and Library Association for the future.

Phase 3: Define How to Get There: Identify Goals, Strategies & Actions

In the last phase of the strategic planning process, the Task Force identified the Strategic Priorities to be developed as Action Plans for the new three-year Strategic Plan. Five areas emerged consistently throughout the internal and external analysis and are consistent with the intent of the updated Mission, Vision and Core Values.

The following sections provide detailed information on the mission, vision, and core values, strategic priorities, goals and resultant actions.

Mission, Vision and Core Values

MISSION

The mission of the Memorial and Library Association is to strengthen the community and enrich lives by stimulating intellect and sparking imagination through access to literature, information, nature, and the arts.

VISION

Westerly Library and Wilcox Park strives to be one of the premiere intellectual, cultural, and botanical assets in the region.

CORE VALUES

- **Stewardship** - Preserve the library and park to ensure relevance in the future with respect to our rich past.
- **Equitable Access** - Provide resources, facilities and information to as many patrons as possible
- **Respect** - Hold users, staff, supporters and property in high regard to foster an appreciation of our role within their lives and community
- **Collaboration** - Promote and facilitate cooperation and intellectual engagement amongst staff, patrons, local and the community organizations, at large.
- **Enrichment** - Bring meaningful fulfillment through our programs, resources, and nature.

TECHNOLOGY AND INOVATION

The goal of the Technology and Innovation Action Plan is to move Westerly Library and Wilcox Park more toward a virtual entity and a creation space (50% between a physical and a virtual entity and 50% between a collection and a creation space).

COMMUNITY OUTREACH AND COLLABORATION ACTION

The goal of the Community Outreach and Collaboration Action Plan is to move the Library and Park towards a community focus (50% between individual and community focus).

MARKETING AND COMMUNICATIONS

The goal of the Marketing and Communications Action Plan is to brand Westerly Library and Wilcox Park as one of the premier intellectual, cultural, and botanical assets in the region.

LEADERSHIP, STAFF DEVELOPMENT, ORGANIZATIONAL HEALTH

The goal of the Leadership and Staff Development Action Plan is to ensure the continuous development of all employees in order for the Library and Park to provide friendly customer service to all patrons, users, supporters and community members.

INFRASTRUCTURE

The goal of the Infrastructure Action Plan is to maintain the intellectual, cultural, and botanical assets at the Westerly Library and Wilcox Park.

Technology and Innovation

The driving theme of the National reports is that emerging communications technology has created a major paradigm shift in the processes of learning and innovation, the development of information, media and technology skills, and the development of life and career skills. This paradigm in turn is rapidly changing the makeup and use of libraries and will have a significant impact on the future direction of Westerly Library and Wilcox Park.

Throughout the strategic planning process the Task Force was continually faced with concerns and questions about technology. The Environmental Scan confirmed that the community depends on the Library and Park's ability to sustain the quality technology services that provide opportunities for people of all ages.

Actions

1. Determine the number and trend of daily computer and peripheral equipment (printers, copiers, fax, etc.) users to project future equipment needs.
2. Based on computer and peripheral equipment, reconfigure spaces to accommodate the needs.
3. Consider adding Wi-Fi to the Park, or a portion of the Park.
4. Hire/assign Technology Coordinator to keep up with latest technology, provide regular training sessions for staff on library technology trends and computer and peripheral equipment use, and Ensure adequate courses for staff and patrons in tech literacy
5. Research, design and create Maker Spaces for both the Library and Park in coordination with local groups including, but not limited to, local school systems, art community members, United Theater, Chorus of Westerly, WRAP
6. Create a physical and/or online library store.
7. Offer technology to be borrowed including, but not limited to iPads, laptops, hotspots
8. Develop a Collaborative Space (but not quiet space)
9. Increase the amount of documents, CDs, programs and exhibitions that offsite patrons can access through the website.
10. Add audio (via earphones) function to computers (one or more) to aid visually impaired patrons
11. Add QR Codes for Library and Park for self-Guided Tours

12. Provide touch screen computers or tablets for digital Periodicals
13. Add touch screen computers to the Children's Room
14. Rearrange the media room (CDs, DVDs) to make it more user friendly (from Tech Survey)
15. Add virtual tours of Library and Park to website, as well as special virtual programs supporting the Park (info on types of plants and trees, etc.)
16. Provide online instructional videos for library patrons for using the library's resources
17. Add a chat room to the website staffed by reference librarians with links to other appropriate staff to support online requests
18. Expand Digital Collections and purchase more digital content by digitizing the Westerly Sun, Special Collections, Westerly Park (or at least enter buildings, memorials, trees, shrubs, flowers, and gardens into digital special collections database), and local history
19. Implement iBeacons in library to push information to patrons
20. Possible Technology upgrade by participating in the town-wide fiber-optic build-out

Community Outreach and Collaboration

The world has become increasingly interconnected so libraries need to be equally interconnected to their communities – residents, businesses, civic organizations and local government. Libraries must strive to bring people and organizations together, providing opportunities to foster partnerships and deeper collaboration.

Actions

1. Continue partnership development and form alliances with organizations including, but not limited to, regional arts groups, Chamber of Commerce, Mystic Seaport, Mystic Aquarium, Senior Centers, Basic Needs Organizations
2. Advertise and support book clubs in the library for students who enjoy the same types of books
3. Identify common purposes within Westerly Library and Wilcox Park's Strategic Plan, Westerly and Stonington school system strategic plans and their municipal strategic plans
4. Create a separate teen room with updated technology equipment appropriate to the age group, with various media, and comfortable surroundings
5. Reinstate Sunday half day hours of operation
6. Add a member of the cultural community to the Board of Trustees
7. Add a member of the horticultural community to the Board of Trustees
8. In conjunction with WRAP, offer art classes in the Park
9. Determine how to better serve the outlying Westerly communities (Bradford, North End, shore communities, Pawcatuck), and specifically the seasonal residents and underserved populations
10. Display some of the library's art collection around the library
11. Increase community access to the Library by implementing a mobile book drop-off solution
12. Creation of more diverse cultural programs with a focus on other groups of patrons that could benefit from programs such as: infants, tweens, millennial and seniors including, but not limited to: computer literacy, personal finance management, instructional tours of Wilcox Park, exercise/yoga programs in Wilcox Park, and a performance series for Wilcox Park
13. Add more teen and tween programs

Marketing and Communications

The development and implementation of a Marketing Plan will insure that all Library and Park services, opportunities and resources are clearly communicated and that Westerly Library and Wilcox Park will be recognized both internally and externally as one entity. The Marketing Plan will promote Library and Park services and programs while raising the Library's and Park's profile in the region.

Actions

1. Develop and implement a Marketing Plan
2. Hire/assign a staff member who is experienced in development and marketing to better reach out to the community at large
3. Publish our technology and tech services through Website and Eblasts, local media including the Library column in the Westerly Sun
4. Add a coffee/pastry shop near the front entrance, improve lighting in the reading room and the entrance hallway, and improve appearance of main entrance to make the environment more welcoming and informal
5. Continue collaboration with URI Master Gardeners, RI Tree Council and RI Nursery and Landscape Association (RINLA)
6. Install a Park "Kiosk".
7. Implement Library Tours
8. Increase marketing and encourage Town government, business and patron use of various underutilized spaces in the Library (auditorium, Hoxie Gallery, Terrace Room) to increase their use as a community center

Leadership, Staff Development, and Organizational Health

Future library staff will become digital media mentors, fluent in the languages and structures of digital documents and data and the availability of information resources on the Internet and elsewhere. As is the case today, they will need to have a good understanding of the users and the community they serve and their distinctive needs.

Actions

1. Develop a Succession Plan.
2. Develop Employee Competencies/ Expectations
3. Develop Internal Staff Communication Plan
4. Hire /assign Development Director/Coordinator.
5. Determine appropriate staffing levels
6. Develop strategies to address culture and climate issues impacting staff in the Library and Park
7. Create Library and Park Leadership Development Plan

Facilities' infrastructure for both the Library and Park must be maintained for future growth. Seek to identify funding, for the Library and Park, that will fund both the deferred maintenance and programmatic renovation for the future.

A Facilities Master Plan will ensure proper future maintenance and be a comprehensive opportunity to review the Short-Term Building Repairs and Long-Term Projects documented by the Facilities Manager in March 2015 and August 2015 respectively.

Actions

1. Develop a Facilities Master Plan.
2. Make a request to the Town to increase community access to Library and Park by exploring parking, crosswalk, signage and lighting.



Wilcox Park, Runaway Bunny by Joan Binney Ross
Inspired by the Works of Margaret Wise Brown
Wilcox Park Centennial, September 1988