



Improving
LIVES

Engaging
COMMUNITY

Leading
CHANGE

**A Strategic Plan for the
Yonkers Public Library
2017–2021**

TABLE OF CONTENTS



A Plan for the Future	2
Strategic Priorities	3
We Listened	6
Our Vision, Our Mission, and Our Shared Values	8
Goals	9

Board of Trustees

Nancy L. Maron, President
Derrick Touba, Vice President
Stephen Jannetti, Treasurer
Gregory D. Arcaro
Jim Buckley
Honorable Hal B. Greenwald
Anietra Guzmán-Santana

Strategic Planning Committee

Gregory D. Arcaro, Trustee
Jim Buckley, Trustee
Laurie Antash, Staff
Carolyn Arroyo, Staff
Victoria Addo-Prempeh, Staff
Zahra Baird, Staff
Joan Daly, Staff
Edward Falcone, Library Director
Hal Greenwald, Trustee
Anietra Guzmán-Santana, Trustee
James Floyd, Staff
Mary Beth Kendrick, Staff
Melinda Lance, Staff
Nancy L. Maron, Trustee
Brandon Neider, Staff
Elyse Schreiber, Staff
Susan Thaler, Deputy Director
Aili Whelan, Staff
Christian Zabriskie, Staff

Consultants

Leslie Burger
Alan Burger
Library Development Solutions

A Special Thank You To:

Mike Spano, Mayor
Liam J. McLaughlin, City Council President
Christopher Johnson, Council Member 1st District
Corazon Pineda Isaac, Council Member 2nd District
Michael Sabatino, Council Member, 3rd District
Dennis Shepherd, Council Member 4th District
Mike Breen, Council Member 5th District
John Larkin, Council Member 6th District

We acknowledge the following people for their contributions to this plan:

Eddie Ayala
Gina Bell
Haifa Bint-Kadi
Anna Birritella
Dr. Jim Bostic
Andrea Brown
Kelly Chiarella
Linda Heyward
Christopher Johnson
Janice Lubin Kirschner
Dan Lipka
Shelley Mayer
Lucy Moreno-Casanova
Shawyn Patterson-Howard
RJ Puma
Dr. Edwin Quezada
Patty Schumann
David Tubiolo



Dear Friends and Neighbors,

On behalf of the trustees and staff of the Yonkers Public Library, we are pleased to present this 2017-2021 Strategic Plan to our community. It is the end result of a year-long process that included a deep look at current services, conversations with residents and community partners, and some informed futurecasting of trends in our field. We hope you agree that it was a valuable and insightful exercise.

When our group sat down to discuss how to frame our mission for the next five years, we reviewed the survey results, considered what we had heard in the public meetings, and asked ourselves what aspects were most important to highlight. The hundreds of educational and cultural programs we run each month for thousands of residents? The varied collection of print and online books, films, music and research tools? The well-loved buildings and much-used meeting spaces at our three branches? Finally, after much discussion, we realized that one overarching idea embraces all of these:

The Yonkers Public Library changes lives every day.

We want to be the place people go when they need information, whether for personal growth, education or entertainment. And we are already on a good path to getting there. Our three branches – Riverfront, Will, and Crestwood – are popular destinations; nearly half of city residents have YPL library cards, and we had over 800,000 visits last year. The plan outlines our approach to doing even better – not just to improve service for people using our system – though we will do that, too – but to ensure that we reach those who need us most, wherever they are.

Some wonder if, in this age of digital everything, libraries still have a job to do. The answer is an unequivocal YES! We have seen tremendous demand for our introductory programs in digital literacy, for the most cutting edge technology in our newly launched Tech Central, and many points between. This plan outlines the ways in which we can offer new avenues of service, while still providing the great programs, collections, and personalized attention that patrons have always enjoyed at YPL. And we will continue to keep the library focused on the future, as the world we live in continues to evolve.

We are grateful for the continued support of Mayor Mike Spano and the Yonkers City Council. We wish to thank the nearly 3,000 people who participated in the survey and our focus groups, and the working group that developed the plan over the course of several months. Most of all, we want to thank the people of Yonkers who use and rely on the library. We hope you will see the things you care about reflected in this plan. It is your library; we are just its caretakers. Together, we will make sure that the library continues to grow and thrive in the years ahead.

Sincerely,
Nancy L. Maron, President, Board of Trustees
Edward Falcone, Library Director



A PLAN FOR THE FUTURE

At the Yonkers Public Library we're planning for the future. With more than 120 years of history, we have a proven record of achievement, a reputation for providing responsive service, and a significant investment in library resources to serve the Yonkers community.

"Great place for community. Also for our children."

We started this planning effort to guide the next period of library growth, allocate resources, and shape our thinking about the future. This process involved as many residents as possible. Our new plan reflects our thoughts about the world today and the present and future role our library, facilities, staff, and supporters play in it.

Conversations with local residents, along with library staff and trustees, shaped this plan. In all, 2,905 Yonkers residents participated in our online survey, focus groups, or town meeting, providing us with valuable feedback about our facilities, programs, and policies.

The focus group participants included:

- 19 middle and high school students
- 16 older adults
- 18 civic, business and elected leaders
- 8 parents of young children
- 38 library staff
- 40 town meeting participants



STRATEGIC PRIORITIES



After reviewing the community needs assessment about library use and Yonkers' demographic trends, library planners identified these strategic priorities:

Close the Digital Literacy Gap

Digital content and resources have transformed the way the world works. Today, people are dependent on access to digital resources for education, employment, health care, and other services. Without access to digital resources, hardware, and high-speed, free bandwidth, large groups of Yonkers residents are at risk of being left behind. As a result, many people are increasingly reliant on library staff to provide one-on-one instruction and coaching on how to use digital devices and access digital information and content. Demand for this type of assistance is skyrocketing. Comments from the survey support this trend, which has an impact on library collections, space, staffing, and funding.

“Amazing. It truly is amazing. The staff can’t possibly be happier to help you and being on the receiving end of that makes me feel good.”

Engage the Entire Yonkers Community

The Yonkers Public Library's many resources and programs are intended to serve the entire community, so we will redouble our efforts to be sure all residents are aware of what we do and are given clear channels to report suggestions and concerns. We will do this by increasing and diversifying the ways in which we communicate. One important way is by addressing the needs of non-native English speakers, in particular Spanish-speaking residents and their families. Library staff can make strategic use of digital marketing and the most current and effective social media platforms to reach existing and new audiences to encourage greater engagement. Library staff will also engage the community with a greater presence at schools, senior centers, civic events, and similar venues.

Support Youth Enrichment

The Yonkers Public Library is open well beyond the school day. The library will continue to support early literacy and independent exploration for pre-schoolers and more formal learning for youth in grades K-12. By providing story hours and early literacy programs, the library can help pre-schoolers be ready to learn by the time they enter kindergarten. The library can enrich formal learning by providing targeted programs to ensure that all Yonkers children have the same opportunities as their peers in other Westchester towns. The library will offer programs that incorporate best education practices, leverage partnerships, and reflect a deep knowledge of the community's interests and needs with a special emphasis on programming that engages working families, at-risk youth, and those exploring college and careers.

Reimagine and Repurpose Our Space

Each of the Yonkers Public Library's locations supports the community's need to meet, learn, collaborate, talk, and work, but the demand for more library space is growing. The library needs to adapt to address changes in the way people work, read, create and use content, and interact with new technology. Increasing demand for small and medium-sized gathering and collaborative workspace requires continual evaluation of library policies, programs, and facilities. The Will and Crestwood branches are old and need updating. We will reassess all facilities with the goal of redesigning and repurposing space to meet community interests and needs. This includes creating space to support small and medium-sized meetings for community groups, cultural events, information services, and youth-only areas, and exploring the feasibility of food service. Collections will be refreshed to create space to support community gatherings, learning, and individual and group study.



Staff the Library to Meet the Changes Ahead

All those who come to the library will engage with friendly, expert staff who are accessible and trusted. In order to provide the service level expected by the community, we will make investments to help staff develop new skills and continue to grow professionally. Along with training staff to acquire new and emerging skills, staff need to be able to direct people to the social and community agencies and resources they need. The library will focus its hiring on individuals who can make a difference in serving the community—more Spanish speaking staff, individuals who want to partner with other community agencies, facilitators, mediators, technology experts, and more.

“A valuable asset to the residents of Yonkers.”

“Everyone is very welcoming & helpful”

Ensure that the Library has the Resources Needed to be Successful for the Future

Both the Board of Trustees and the Library’s administrative team have a unique responsibility to the library and residents of Yonkers to provide transparent, inspiring, and transformative leadership. Library leadership must be willing and able to lead change in order for this plan to be a success.



The Yonkers Public Library is funded primarily by steady tax support provided by residents through local government. Although the library has demonstrated thoughtful financial stewardship, increased demand may require new revenue streams. New public/private partnerships will be developed to sustain the library for future generations. The library, in cooperation with independent non-profits, including the Yonkers Public Library Foundation and Friends of the Yonkers Public Library will explore

new fundraising strategies to secure the resources needed.

WE LISTENED

W

We loved hearing our residents' ideas and suggestions about the future of our libraries. We spoke with 139 community and staff members in focus groups and heard from 2,766 people through an online and print survey. Select quotes from the survey are included in this report. We heard you tell us to:

- Reimagine, repurpose, and refresh the Will and Crestwood branches so they can better serve evolving communities
- Refresh collections with more new print titles and digital content
- Respond actively to the needs of teens and preteens with expanded programs, homework help, tutoring, after-school resources and related services and more up-to-date mobile computing devices, including gaming resources
- Respond to changes in Yonkers demographics, such as the increasing numbers of dual-income families, a growing diverse population, and more Spanish speakers, with services and programs that address their needs
- Expand access for all to digital resources and devices
- Provide additional small and group-meeting and quiet study space at Riverfront and Will
- Address parking related issues at each of the three branches
- Encourage more community engagement by connecting residents with each other through conversation and discussion
- Increase awareness of the library's collections, programs, facilities and staff expertise

The Yonkers Public Library at a glance

Chartered in 1893

3 branches

96 librarians and staff

148 public Internet terminals

3,100 programs and classes

70,000 participants in library programs

9,896 hours open (all branches)

89,300 registered cardholders

830,000 library visits

Accomplishments

While this plan outlines major new directions in the five years to come, we have not been waiting around to get started. Below is a short list of the significant improvements we have made in the last couple of years. This record of achievement speaks to the library's commitment to meeting community needs and responding with great service.



- Created and opened the state of the art “Tech Central” at the Riverfront Branch
 - Enhanced support for digital literacy by adding a full-time technology training coordinator
 - Partnered with JCY/Westchester Community Partners to expand the Summer Reading Buddies project which served more than 900 young readers in 2016
 - Reinvested in the Crestwood branch collection and appointed a librarian as the new manager
 - Launched an email newsletter to improve communication to our patrons
-
- Hosted a “Starry Night” fundraiser to support training programs at Tech Central. The event was profitable and helped us develop our fundraising capacity
 - Initiated the first phase of the Will branch modernization plan
 - Made Yonkers’ history come alive through our local digitization and oral history projects
 - Increased digital access to books, magazines, and music

Our Vision, Our Mission, and Our Shared Values

The next five years are a time of exciting change and growth for the Yonkers Public Library. To guide us, we begin with an exciting vision for the future, a clear purpose described in our mission, and shared values that guide the way we work and respond to community needs.

Our Vision

The Yonkers Public Library will be the community's place for discovery, engagement, and personal growth.

Our Mission

The Yonkers Public Library changes lives every day. Our expert, trusted staff help all the people of Yonkers find the information they need, the programs they enjoy, and the reading they love.

Our Shared Values

- We listen to our community and respond to their needs.
- We treat all people with respect and trust.
- We deliver great service, every day.
- We welcome everyone in safe, comfortable destination libraries.
- We educate, entertain, and stimulate learning through an engaging assortment of programs and collections.
- We celebrate and preserve Yonkers' history and diverse culture.
- We partner with public and private local organizations to make Yonkers a better place to live, learn, and work.
- We hire and train staff who are eager to learn and provide every person with friendly and knowledgeable service.



“Sweet, beautiful house of books. A place for everyone to come and enjoy a nice time reading, learning, having fun and other recreational activities”

GOALS



We've identified three aspirational goals to guide the Yonkers Public Library from 2017–2021:



GOAL ONE:

Engage the Entire Yonkers Community

GOAL TWO:

Increase the Yonkers Public Library's Visibility and Accessibility

GOAL THREE:

Build the Yonkers Public Library for the Next Generation

"Staff is excellent, they always greet you with a smile."

"I love this library, my kids love coming here to find books for their reports or just to read."



GOAL ONE:

Engage the Entire Yonkers Community

It is easy to think of the library as the sum of its collections and programs, and those are certainly very important. This plan, however, signals a shift in how we will continue to choose those materials and develop programming. A renewed commitment to community feedback and responding to expressed needs will permit the library to be an important partner in improving people's lives. The library will address specific groups in the community with services, programs, and special initiatives.

Objective 1: Make the Yonkers Public Library the first place all members of our community look to for lifelong learning, personal growth, and solutions to everyday challenges.

We will develop plans to focus on how our materials, programs and services can better serve specific audiences. Among the groups we will focus on are early learners, school-aged children, and working families.

Objective 2: Help to close the digital literacy gap and completely integrate digital services throughout the library.

To deliver on this goal, we will be exploring ways to improve connectivity in all three branches, continue to expand our training programs in digital skills and innovation, and create a Digital Advisory Council to advise the library on emerging trends.

Objective 3: Offer a dynamic print and digital collection of easy-to-find resources that inform, entertain, and delight all ages.

We will increase our digital collections in every year of the plan, and use technology to open up access to the rich history of Yonkers.

For example, YPL will:

- Upgrade Wi-Fi speed and connectivity in all branches
- Expand homework help services
- Kick off a city-wide campaign for young readers
- Increase digital and print resources in Spanish and other languages



GOAL TWO:

Increase the Yonkers Public Library's Accessibility and Visibility

The Yonkers Public Library is committed to making all of its collections easily available. We provide service to all and work tirelessly every day to connect residents with our resources.

Objective 1: Collaborate with other organizations and promote the library as a trusted partner for improving people's lives.

Forge and strengthen our ties to the Yonkers public schools and local non-profits, through strategic programs, grants, and fundraising.

Objective 2: Develop new ways to communicate with the community about all that the library has to offer.

We will keep Yonkers residents apprised of all of our offerings through strategic communications via social media, our newsletter and our website, as well as major citywide campaigns to support library-related aims such as literacy.

Objective 3: Increase access to the libraries and resources for all residents, especially those who may face usage obstacles.

We will be addressing all forms of barriers to use, including reviewing our physical spaces, reinvigorating the notion of librarians "in the neighborhood", services for those who have difficulty visiting us in our buildings, and expanding hours and/or locations, as is feasible.

For example, YPL will:

- Increase our reach via e-newsletter, website and social media
- Expand library hours
- Offer more services for those with learning differences

GOAL THREE:

Build the Yonkers Public Library for the Next Generation

The library will focus its efforts on continual improvement. We want the Yonkers Public Library to become a “smart organization” that learns quickly by analyzing its own data and keeping abreast of community developments.



Objective 1: Develop and enhance staff expertise and create a staffing plan that supports new spaces, programs and collections.

We will encourage staff to continue their professional development, will facilitate peer-to-peer learning among staff at all branches, and hire for specialized competencies, as needed, such as Spanish-speaking staff and a marketing and community relations manager.

Objective 2: Initiate planning to ensure that all Yonkers residents can access modern library branches.

We will find the resources for and undertake a major Master Plan for the entire library system, in order to assess existing and potential future spaces.

Objective 3: Repurpose existing space to accommodate changing community needs.

We will explore ways to repurpose the space we currently have, to maximize meeting room and collaboration spaces and to make our public services areas as easy and intuitive as possible.

Objective 4: Develop a plan to ensure the library’s financial stability for future generations.

We will develop a plan to identify new sources of revenue to help supplement our budget, through a suite of development activities including events, grants, and a comprehensive donation strategy.

For example, YPL will:

- Increase the number of meeting rooms
- Assess the possibility for café service at Riverfront and Will
- Identify new revenue streams

IN CLOSING

The plan you have just read includes a lot of big ideas. They will only come to fruition with careful and dedicated execution over the next five years. Our Strategic Planning Committee has already begun to define all of the key performance indicators we will be using to track the organization's progress over time, and our success in leading that change.

We welcome you to continue to participate in this process with us. Monthly Board meeting dates are posted on the YPL website and members of the public are always welcome to attend. We sincerely hope that you will continue to be as excited by and devoted to this institution as we are.

"The reference staff goes above and beyond to assist you. The front desk staff are always pleasant and accommodating."





