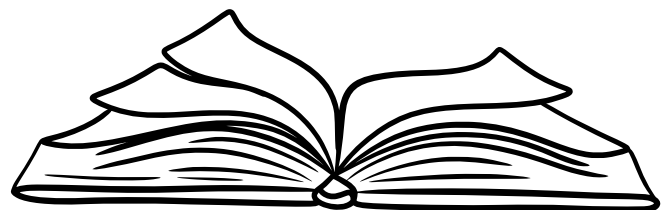


BOROUGH OF TOTOWA PUBLIC LIBRARY



THE NEXT CHAPTER

STRATEGIC PLAN
2023-2027



MISSION STATEMENT

"Inclusive community engagement is at the heart of our mission. We commit to delivering essential library services, exceptional materials, and dynamic programming to foster lifelong learning for all."



VISION STATEMENT

"Our vision is to serve as the community's central hub—a welcoming space where everyone comes together to create, connect, discover, and learn."



BOARD OF TRUSTEES

Thomas Watkins — President
Valerie D'Ambrosio — Vice President
Theresa Bronkowski — Treasurer
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Mayor John Coiro
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Theresa Bronkowski, Trustee, Borough of Totowa Public Library
Karen Kleppe Lembo M.L.S J.D , Chair - Retired Library Director and Volunteer Extraordinaire
Doreen Makoujy, Library Staff Member and Liaison to the Friends of the Library
Lynann Dragone, President of the Borough of Totowa Public Library Foundation

A MESSAGE FROM THE BOARD OF TRUSTEES

The Board of Trustees is excited to present a strategic plan outlining the library's goals and objectives for the next five years. The library has come a long way since its humble beginnings as a storefront on Union Boulevard. The essence of this strategic plan is to continue to move the library forward as we meet the needs of our growing and vibrant community while staying true to our mission and values.

The Board of Trustees would like to thank all of the library patrons, Totowa residents, and community members who participated in this process by responding to conversations, interviews and surveys.

We would also like to thank Karen Kleppe Lembo for her input, guidance, and dedication to the overall success of this endeavor.

Now, on to the next chapter!

INTRODUCTION

The Board of Trustees of the Borough of Totowa Library established a committee to create and develop a strategic plan that would guide future development of the Totowa Library.

A committee comprised of representatives from the Board of Trustees, Library administration, Foundation and Friends worked together in 2023 and 2024 to draft a strategic plan focused on a series of responses. The committee used focus groups, surveys and leadership interviews to gather input from the community. Additionally the committee reviewed circulation statistics, annual reports, and census data for the community of Totowa.

PLANNING METHODOLOGY & FINDINGS

Community Survey

The Library launched an online survey in August 2023 to seek input on the Library and its services. Over **1,067** responses were received. Highlights of note below:

Wide Range of Resources and Services:

- "The library offers so many wonderful resources, they always have what I need!"
- "The library offers a magnitude of services that are designed to include all ages and interests."
- "I feel the Totowa library offers a lot of services."

Programs and Activities:

- "Great programs for all ages."
- "Multiple activities that are always offered."
- "The Totowa Public Library is very important to me and my family [which includes three young children, 5 and under], so [need] classes/activities for their age groups."
- "Gabi's programming! She is engaging and creates relevant programs. We also love Nancy Ricca's Coding and makerspace activities. They have created a huge interest in STEM activities [with] our daughters."

Community Engagement and Support:

- "Community customer service amazing, community resident support, I witnessed over and over helping our community residents on a daily basis. Consistently helping others to support neighbors' needs."
- "Love the professional staff and always bringing life/spirit to our community."
- "We love the library and its awesome staff."
- "This library is the best; everyone is so pleasant and helpful."

Positive Staff Interactions:

- "Great staff."
- "Excellent staff."
- "I think you are doing a great job."

Suggestions for Additional Programs:

- "More cake/cupcake decorating please! I love them."
- "More STEM programs"
- "More music programs"



IN-PERSON INTERVIEWS SUMMARY

Board of Trustees members and Library staff conducted informal interviews with family, friends, and neighbors. Participants were asked to provide a letter grade for the library, suggest future purchases, share their preferred methods for receiving library centric information, and envision what the Totowa Public Library might look like in five years.

Overall Feedback: The majority of participants rated the library an "A." Reasons included:

- "So many extra programs"
- "A lot to do for my age group besides reading"
- "The library offers many wonderful programs that attract community members."

A few respondents rated it a "B" or "C," citing concerns about outdated technology, insufficient space for story time, and the need to appeal more to Gen Z.

Positive Comments: The majority of participants applauded the library and staff, some of the comments were:

- "The library hours are convenient, and it is always clean."
- "Super friendly staff."
- "Dedicated and passionate staff."
- "Staff is willing to go above and beyond."

Suggestions for Improvement: Participants provided several suggestions, including:

- "Add more cooking classes."
- "Keep refreshing and updating."
- "Purchase more resources."
- "Create a smartphone app."
- "Acquire more museum passes."
- "Develop outdoor spaces."
- "Update technology."
- "Increase space."

Preferred Communication Methods: Most respondents preferred receiving information via Facebook and email.

COMMUNITY LEADER SURVEY SUMMARY

Community leaders were sent a survey; participants included local businesses, educators, department heads, and nonprofit leaders. The survey included giving a letter grade about current library services and resources. Additionally open-ended questions were asked, regarding community engagement, emerging technologies, outreach and accessibility and preferred method of communication.

Overall Feedback: Out of over 30 respondents to date, 100% rated the library an "A," praising its great programs, extensive services, and friendly, helpful staff.

Positive Comments Include:

- "I think the library offers so many wonderful resources"
- "Great programs"
- "Amazing customer service"
- "The library offers a magnitude of services"
- "Great staff commitment"

Suggestions for Improvement:

- Explore additional services including notary and passport service
- More outdoor space
- Provide additional training opportunities for staff including linking staff with federal, state and local assistance information
- Send staff to the local senior groups to communicate the library offerings
- Partnering with the NJMVC
- Expanding evening programs

Preferred Communication Methods: The majority of the respondents preferred receiving library centric communication via email or social media.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Library has evolved exponentially since its move from Union Boulevard to Cherba Place in 1969. It has transformed from a building with books into a vibrant community center with a multitude of traditional and non-traditional offerings. That said, the goal of the strategic plan is to help shape the future of the Totowa Library as it continues to evolve to serve the residents of Totowa and beyond.

The library already plays a vital role for enriching the lives of individuals of all ages, backgrounds and interests. It is a hub for learning and creativity and community engagement. As we embark on charting the course for the future of the library it is imperative that we gather input from diverse voices representing various sectors of our community.

To identify priorities for the next five years and enable the library to use its resources most efficiently, the Board of Trustees established a committee to create and develop a strategic plan that will guide future development. This plan will provide the framework for further enhancement.

In-person conversations, online surveys, interviews and community leaders input were conducted in an effort to gather a comprehensive perspective. Circulation statistics, annual reports and census data were also reviewed and considered.

The overall result of the study revealed overwhelming positivity and affirmed that the community is genuinely satisfied and pleased with the current offerings of the Totowa Public Library. However, there is always room for improvement. That said, priorities include continuing to offer enriching lifelong learning opportunities, keeping updated and relevant materials and technology both in-person and online, ensuring regular and frequent communication, and providing a safe, inviting and welcoming space with a friendly and knowledgeable staff.

The Library, its Trustees, Friends, Foundation and staff are all committed to ensuring the successful development of this plan.

COMMUNITY PROFILE

The Borough of Totowa, located in Passaic County, northern New Jersey, spans approximately four square miles. It lies along the northern bank of the Passaic River and is bisected by Interstate 80. The southern section features retail and industrial buildings along Route 46, while the northern section, centered along Union Boulevard, includes the business district and residential areas. Totowa is bordered by Wayne to the north and west, Little Falls and the Passaic River to the south, Woodland Park to the east, Paterson to the northeast, and Haledon to the north. As of 2023, Totowa has a vibrant business community, with over 1000 businesses operating in the area (REFUSA).

Demographic Profile of the Borough of Totowa

(Source: Census.gov)

- **Population:**
 - 2010: 10,804
 - 2020: 11,065
- **Household Composition:**
 - Single-family households: 2,843
 - Multi-family households: 360
 - Apartments/Condos: 221
- **Population Distribution:**
 - Born outside the U.S.: 19.1%
 - Households speaking a language other than English at home: 33.6%
- **Racial Composition:**
 - White alone: 74.9%
 - Hispanic or Latino: 23.4%
 - Black or African American: 4.1%
 - Two or More Races: 14.2%

Economic Indicators

- **Median Household Income:** \$112,097
- **Per Capita Income:** \$50,260

Educational Indicators (Population age 25+)

- **High School Graduate:** 93.0%
- **Bachelor's Degree or Higher:** 35.6%

Educational Institutions

The Borough has two public schools:

- **Memorial School:** Serves Pre-K through third grade with 411 students.
- **Washington Park School:** Serves grades four through eight with 483 students.

Totowa residents attend **Passaic Valley Regional High School**, which has an enrollment of 1,039 students and serves students from Little Falls, Totowa, and Woodland Park. Additionally, students may apply to the **Passaic County Technical Institute** (PCTI) in Wayne, which offers various trade programs. Attendance at PCTI is free, but acceptance is required. As of 2018, about 80 students from Totowa attended PCTI.

The Academy of St. Francis of Assisi is a K-8 Catholic school operating under the Roman Catholic Diocese of Paterson. There are 147 students enrolled. Faculty and students are permitted to obtain a courtesy Totowa Library card.

BACKGROUND AND ANALYSIS OF CURRENT SITUATION AND LIBRARY PROFILE

The Borough of Totowa Public Library has served the community since 1957, evolving from its humble beginnings as a storefront on Union Boulevard with just 1,979 books. Recognizing the need for more space, supportive leadership, including the Mayor and Council and the Library Board of Trustees, secured land for a new Municipal Complex that would house the library. Mayor Sam Cherba envisioned a library as an active center for community learning.

In July 1969, the library moved to its current location, where it has undergone significant transformations over the past five decades. This includes joining a consortium and embracing the digital age in the early 1990s.

A pivotal improvement occurred in 2012 with an \$808,000 renovation project that added 2,300 square feet to the facility. This expansion enabled the library to evolve into a full-service community center, offering programs like weekly fitness classes, art classes, knitting groups, and various educational activities, transforming it into a hub for lifelong learning.

In 2022, the Main Room underwent a complete renovation, featuring a new Reading Room, updated lighting, flooring, and furnishings. This refreshed space provides residents with a comfortable and inviting environment for lifelong learning. Funding for this project included a \$139,000 grant from the New Jersey Library Construction Bond Act along with matching funds from the Mayor and Council, Board of Trustees, Foundation, and Friends of the Library.

Future capital plans include renovating the Lower Level's Meeting Room and Multi-Purpose Room, which will involve new ceilings and lighting, the addition of interior privacy walls, and new flooring. Additionally, there are plans to renovate the rear of the building to create an outdoor plaza for hosting activities and programs for all ages.

LIBRARY AT A GLANCE

Collections Purchased	2022	2023
Print Books	822	1440
E-Books	1231	1307
Audio	519	886
Video	85	80
Serial Subscriptions	12	10
Databases Purchased	6	6
Total Items	2675	3729

Collections Owned	2022	2023
Print Books	26631	26279
E-Books	7581	8888
Audio (Music)	31	30
Audio (Spoken)	475	379
Video	5455	5079
Databases Purchased	6	6
Total Items	40179	40661

Circulation	2022	2023
Adult Circulation	5977	7167
Children's Circulation	10726	11396
Electronic Circulation	4870	6392
Total Items	21573	24955
Reciprocal Circulation	2708	5075
Museum Pass & Things Circulation	150	172
Total Items	46004	55157

LIBRARY AT A GLANCE

Requests	2022	2023
Interlibrary Loans Sent	567	1992
ILLS Received	1602	2266
Total	2169	4258

Library Services	2022	2023
Attendance	25000	29748
Reference Transactions	12000	16500
Computers for Public Use	19	21
Public Computer Sessions	1078	1751
Wireless Sessions	400	2540
Total	38497	50650

Active Borrowers	2022	2023
Residents	2837	3310
Non-Residents	110	120
Total	2947	3430

Summer Reading Club	2022	2023
Participants	165	192
Total Books Read	2926	3793

LIBRARY AT A GLANCE

Library Programs	2022	2023
Children's Programs	390	661
YA Programs	7	38
Adult Programs	482	711
Total Programs	879	1410
Children's Attendance	5633	6676
YA Attendance	18	167
Adult Attendance	6886	8653
Total Attendance	12537	15496

Professional Development	2022	2023
Staff Training Hours	30	40
Trustee Training Hours	7	7
Total	37	47

THE STRATEGIC PLAN

Our Six Service Priorities

1. **Community Engagement** - Library users will discover a wide array of enriching lifelong learning opportunities
2. **Library's Physical & Virtual Environment** - Totowa Residents and beyond will experience a pleasing and welcoming environment in person and a magnitude of online services available 24/7
3. **Collection** - Library users will experience a fresh and updated collection of print and non-print materials, electronic resources and other unique collections
4. **Technology** - Library users will have access to modern technology
5. **Communication & Outreach** - The Totowa Library will position itself to serve the needs of the entire community and mindfully communicate its message regularly via various platforms
6. **Professional Development** - Library users can expect the staff to stay abreast of current trends and be equipped with the knowledge, skillset and tools to serve all members of the community

OBJECTIVES

The following objectives have been established to support the service priorities:

1. **Community Engagement**

- Continue to create and innovate new and improved activities, events, programs, and exhibits to promote lifelong learning that enhance the patrons' experience
- Create eye-catching marketing materials to increase number of registered borrowers
- Schedule regular surveys to gauge and measure patron's needs and wants

2. **Library's Physical & Virtual Environment**

- Continue to improve, modify and update the library's physical space with regards to comfort, usefulness and safety so that all Totowa residents feel welcome
- Develop and continually update capital plans including new projects and addressing current infrastructures lifespans including roof, carpet, paint, masonry, landscaping, signage and furniture
- Create a welcoming online presence including a vibrant and engaging webpage and easily accessible digital resources

3. **Collection**

- Evaluate and update current collection regularly
- Explore and expand Digital Resources often

4. **Technology**

- Evaluate current technology regularly
- Explore possible upgrades often
- Continue to monitor patrons use of technology including hardware and software devices, so that the end user is insured an enjoyable, positive and safe experience

5. **Communication & Outreach**

- Participate in various community events to reach wider audience
- Visit nontraditional locations to promote its services to populations who may not otherwise have access to or knowledge of our services
- Use various preferred methods of communication i.e. text, email, and social media

6. **Professional Development**

- Schedule regular professional development days that address current and contemporary issues and concerns including safety, service, policy and procedure
- Schedule monthly staff meetings to communicate current issues and trends and include a roundtable for staff involvement and participation
- In order to sustain and uphold a welcoming and positive user experience, the library will continue to encourage, offer and promote formal and informal learning opportunities for the staff year round

SUSTAINING AND MONITORING PROGRESS

As the plan is formally set in motion in December 2024, the Director will report to the Library Board of Trustees and the Board will review on a quarterly basis. The board will add additional objectives with the Strategic Planning Goals as they become necessary and establish priorities between these goals and objectives and the day to day operating issues that will arise.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The Board of Trustees wishes to acknowledge the efforts of all that contributed to this planning effort and look forward to the continued partnership in realizing the goals set forth in the 2023 – 2027 Strategic Plan. The Board extends their thanks to all of the individuals that participated and provided feedback and input. Now, on to the next chapter!



Approved by Board of Trustees of the Borough of Totowa Public Library
December 18, 2024



FREE PUBLIC LIBRARY BOROUGH OF TOTOWA
UNION BLVD. CIRCA 1957

