



# **Hoboken Public Library**

**Strategic Plan 2010-2015**

**Prepared in Cooperation with  
The Ivy Group, Ltd.  
May, 2010**

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## **Mission of Hoboken Public Library**

As a vital contributor to the quality of life of Hoboken's citizens, the Hoboken Public Library will connect people with books and information by providing a broad and diverse collection of books and other library materials, innovative programs, competent staff, timely service, appropriate technologies and an inviting facility.

## **Background**

The Hoboken Public Library (HPL) seeks to develop a Three-Five Year Master Plan that assesses current public library services, facilities, and technology in the context of community needs and local, regional, and national trends. The goal of the project is to craft a strategic plan including recommendations which will enable the Library to respond proactively to the challenges posed by aging facilities, enhanced customer service expectations, continuously evolving technologies and the inevitable societal changes.

Established in 1890, the Hoboken Public Library is the third oldest library in New Jersey. The Library offers services, resources and activities that meet the needs of all ages, from infants to adults. HPL maintains a fiction, non-fiction and reference collection totaling more than 90,000 items for children, teens, adults and seniors. Resources include print and non-print materials, online databases, large print titles, world language materials, and the Hoboken Historical Collection. HPL also offers a variety of children's story times as well as programming of interest to adults. Through its participation in the Bergen County Consortium of Libraries, HPL provides patrons interlibrary access to over 5,000,000 books, videos and tapes.

Census figures for the City of Hoboken indicate that HPL serves a population of approximately 40,000 residents. Approximately 14,000 of these residents are registered card holders. The Library is one of the City's busiest venues. A staff of 33 provides services 61 hours a week, circulates 191,000+ items per year and accommodates in excess of 217,890 visitors.



## **Hoboken Public Library Board of Trustees**

JoAnn Serrano, Board President  
Arturo Martinez, Treasurer  
Richard Del Boccio  
Jeannie Lubin  
Anna Marie Roberts  
Rose Perry  
Forde Prigot  
Mayor Dawn Zimmer, Ex-Officio  
Ilise Benun, Mayor's Alternate  
Peter Carter, Interim Superintendent  
Lina Podles, Library Director  
James Tricarico, Recording Secretary

## **A Word of Thanks**

The Hoboken Public Library wishes to thank the Hoboken City Council for its support of improved and expanded library programs and services in our community. We would also like to express our appreciation to the community leaders who gave willingly of their time to participate in our leadership interviews and the residents of Hoboken who responded to our telephone survey.

We would also like to express our appreciation to the members of the Planning Task Force who contributed their expertise, ideas and insights to our planning endeavor.

Rosalie Brereton, Senior Library Assistant  
Ona Gritz, Senior Youth Services Librarian  
Lois Gross, Head of Children's Services  
Aimee Harris, Head of Reference Department  
Laura Knittel, Community Outreach Specialist  
Matthew Latham, Reference Librarian  
Jeannie Lubin, Board Planning Committee Member  
Lina Podles, Library Director  
Joanne Serrano, Board President  
Rosary Van Ingen, Head of Circulation  
Leanne Zintl, Reference Librarian



## Project Goals

The goals of HPL's strategic planning initiative are to:

- Provide the Library's growing number of users with enhanced access to quality library services;
- Identify current strengths, weaknesses, threats, and opportunities HPL should respond to in its next strategic plan;
- Assess current HPL services and facilities in relation to area population and technology changes;
- Respond to national trends in the delivery of public library services;
- Craft a new comprehensive, long-range strategic plan which encompasses recommendations for all facets of library operations including but not limited to:
  - buildings,
  - staffing,
  - programs and services,
  - advocacy,
  - partnerships and alliances,
  - financial resources,
  - technology,
  - branding, marketing and public relations.
- Gather qualitative and quantitative information which provides a reliable foundation for thoughtful decision-making regarding how library services will be delivered in the future;
- Confirm the recommendations of the previously conducted facility assessment and consider interim solutions to relieving the pressures caused by space constraints;
- Create a drum roll that will generate interest in and support for future improvements to HPL.



## Planning Methodology

In October 2009, HPL's Board of Trustees contracted with The Ivy Group to facilitate the Library's next strategic planning process. The consulting team, led by Nancy Davis, recommended a sequence of planning activities that included the following:

- Initial planning, on-site visit, consultation, and review of key background information that would inform the planning process;
- On-site visit by library building consultant;
- A SWOT analysis developed by the Planning Task Force;
- Executive interviews with Hoboken community leaders conducted by members of the Planning Task Force;
- Random telephone survey of residents of the city of Hoboken;
- Strategic planning meeting with members of the Planning Task Force;
- Development of a three-five year strategic plan that integrates all information gathered during the strategic planning process and responds to ongoing issues raised by the community assessment;
- Presentation of the plan to the Board of Trustees and City Council;
- An in-service staff development program to present the new strategic directions to staff members who were not on the Planning Task Force.



## Executive Summary

The Hoboken Public Library's new 2010-2015 Strategic Plan is a research-based plan. A robust, far reaching planning process, afforded more than 300 people — Hoboken residents, City leaders, Library staff, and Trustees — a chance to help shape the future delivery of public library services in Hoboken.

In the past, long range plans for public libraries relied on the use of numerically driven goals, responses, and measurements. However, HPL determined that, in an environment of fiscal uncertainty and serious space constraints, it needed a more flexible approach to planning. Therefore, the 2010-2015 Plan does not emphasize strategies for increasing the size of the collection, the number of items circulated, or the number of people who come to the Library. It does not limit its vision solely to the next five years. Rather, the strategic initiatives which are the foundation of the Plan are recommended because they will have a positive long term impact on the delivery of public library services.

The Planning Task Force reviewed the results of the primary research, analyzed demographic data, and studied national trends that are shaping library services. The group subsequently identified seven opportunities for improving the performance of the Library and ensuring that the proposed improvements for service delivery can be achieved.

The seven areas of library operations that have been identified as priorities for HPL's Board and staff are:

- Address the Lack of Adequate Space;
- Increase the Ability of the Hoboken Public Library and its Supporters to Advocate for Predictable and Sufficient Funding;
- Create a Culture of Philanthropy for the Hoboken Public Library;
- Meet and Exceed the Expectations of Hoboken Residents for Access to Information Technology;
- Forge a New Brand and Look for the Hoboken Public Library;
- Sustain the Quality of Services for Hoboken's Diverse Populations Including Young Children, Teens, Seniors, and Residents of Ethnic Communities
- Position HPL to Respond to and Implement Change



## Background and Situational Analysis

Established in 1890, the Hoboken Public Library is the third oldest library in New Jersey. The Library offers services, resources and activities tailored to the needs of residents of all ages, from infants to adults. HPL maintains a fiction, non-fiction and reference collection totaling more than 90,000 items for children, teens, adults and seniors. Resources include print and non-print materials, online databases, large print titles, world language materials, and the Hoboken Historical Collection. HPL also offers a diverse menu of children's story times as well as a growing number of programs of interest to adults. Through its participation in the Bergen County Consortium of Libraries, HPL provides patrons invaluable access to over 5,000,000 books, CD's, DVD's, and audio books.

The Library is housed in a historic building which is favorably located near schools and a city park. However, limited space and parking challenge the Board and staff to satisfy the needs and preferences of City residents. Unless the Library's efforts to secure the necessary funding to renovate the Library facility and adjacent school building, it will be impossible for HPL to provide the community gathering place, a larger collection, more computers, and an expanded menu of programs which library customers say are important to them.

The Library successfully applied for a Historic Preservation Grant which will provide a portion of the funds for the conversion of the adjoining Industrial School building into appropriate space for the Library. The Library now seeks support from the City to obtain funds for the complete restoration of the of the Library's facility.

HPL is a municipal library which means, according to the State Library Code, local government appropriates 1/3 mil of equalized evaluation to operate the library. Governance is provided by a 7-member Board of Trustees. It should be noted, however, that during the time that the strategic plan was being developed, the financial crisis in New Jersey escalated, and the future level of state support for public services is not defined.

HPL's planning process is research based, and does not focus exclusively on increasing output numbers. The phased process has solicited input from key stakeholders and current and prospective library users in Hoboken. In the end, the voices of more than three hundred individuals have been heard, and offer the Library a 360 degree perspective of its programs, services, and role in Hoboken. HPL's Board and Staff are confident the strategic initiatives which are the foundation of its new long-range plan are pragmatic and chart an actionable course for the future delivery of quality public library services to residents of Hoboken.



## A Track Record of Success and Progress

The research for this plan indicates that community leaders and the general public view HPL as an institution which is well-managed and making significant progress in improving the quality of library services. This forward momentum is evidenced by:

- Shift to becoming a functional, autonomous public library governed by a Board of Trustees in accordance with New Jersey Statutes;
- Productive collaboration with town administration, Mayor and City Council;
- Enhanced accounting and bookkeeping procedures;
- A heavily used and popular Computer Center and the introduction of wireless access;
- Installation of an elevator to improve access for residents with limited mobility;
- Repairs to the roof and dome;
- Successful application for a New Jersey Historical Preservation Grant;
- Completion of space feasibility study;
- Expanded professional staff for reference, children's services, adult programming and outreach;
- 21% increase in circulation between 2008-2009;
- 28% increase in the number of visitors between 2008-2009;
- Increased visibility in the community through participation in community events, and collaboration with senior centers and the City's public housing for older residents;
- Increased Library visibility on social media websites, citywide newspapers, as well as community organizations and schools;
- Expanded hours of operation to include Sunday afternoons;
- An invigorated Friends of the Library Group which provides a higher level of support for the Library;
- Participation in statewide advocacy campaigns.



## **Hoboken Public Library: The Numbers are Impressive**

The most recent statistics for HPL show that despite the lack of space and concerns about funding, the staff is productive and making the best possible use of available resources. The statistics for 2009 are as follows:

Population served: 40,000 est.

Staff: 33 full and part time

Space: 21,000 sq. ft.

Hours of operation: 61 per week

Registered card holders: 14,543 combined resident and non-resident

Collection: 90,000 +

Computers: 27

Circulation: 191,971

Computer Use 34,794

Periodical titles: 183

Budget: \$3.3 million

Amount spent on new materials: \$265,000

Library Programs: 285

Program attendance: 8,930

Annual number of library visits: 217,890



## Profile of the City of Hoboken

Hoboken is a small, densely populated community located in northeastern New Jersey. Currently, approximately 40,000 people reside in this one square mile area where historic traditions are juxtaposed with growth, revitalization and cultural diversity. Visitors observe that Hoboken is a vibrant, youthful community with interesting ethnic restaurants, a new hotel, parks, and attractive residential areas with rows of renovated homes.

The research conducted as part of the strategic planning initiative reveals that Hoboken continues to evolve into a highly desirable and livable community. Leaders characterize Hoboken as a place where many positive changes are taking place. They perceive that City management and government are more functional than has been the case in the past, and that there is far greater interest in providing the people who live in Hoboken with higher quality public services and amenities. Newer residents of the City are more engaged in and vocal about public issues and tend to support change and improvement.

Hoboken is an ideal location for individuals who work in NYC but cannot afford to own a home or raise a family there. Development and gentrification are occurring in several parts of the City; real estate prices are rising but remain favorable when compared to NYC. The result of these factors is that Hoboken has experienced a 4% increase in population since 2000 generated by the influx of young families and a growing number of young school age children. An additional change that has generated population growth has been the trend toward more residents deciding to remain in Hoboken rather than relocate.

Input from community leaders focuses on other issues which the Library should be considering:

- Space within the City is becoming scarcer (green space preservation, room for the expansion of existing services, parking, etc.);
- Faced by the possibility of by escalating taxes, the public demands accountability regarding how their tax dollars are being used;
- Wealth is increasing for some, but there is a widening gap between the have's and have not's;
- Families with children are focused on the quality of the schools in Hoboken;
- As a result of the economic downturn, more people have lost their jobs; some businesses, such as Barnes and Noble, have closed.



## **A Profile of the Hoboken Public Library's Service Area**

### **Population Indications**

Est. Population 2008: 41,538

Percentage of Increase 2000-2006: 4%

Number of households: 21,093

Population distribution:

- Under the age of 5: 3.2%
- Under the age of 18: 11%
- 65+: 7.4%

### **Economic Indicators**

Median household income: \$106,156

Per capita income: \$74,506

Individuals below poverty level: 9%

Unemployment level 2009: 6.3%

### **Educational Indicators (for population 25+)**

High school graduate or higher: 90%

Bachelor's degree or higher: 71%

### **Cultural Indicators**

Percentage of population foreign born: 17%

Racial composition:

- Caucasian 82%
- African American 3%
- Asian 6%
- Hispanic 16%
- Other 8%

Speak a language other than English at home: 23%

(Source: US Census Bureau: 2006-2008 American Community Survey 3-Year Estimates)



## Community Needs

The research conducted for the strategic planning process reveals that although Hoboken has made significant progress, there are still community needs which the Library may be well positioned to help address. Overall, the most important research finding is that the residents of the City want and need to have a successful, proactive public library. Feedback from the community indicates that a successful library would be one which:

- Supports higher academic achievement and collaborates effectively with schools;
- Offers more services for the growing number of children under the age of ten;
- Provides appealing collections of material for leisure reading;
- Is a leader in providing access to technology and information about new technologies;
- Keeps residents informed about the Library and its services;
- Is a gathering place with opportunities for social interaction and cultural enrichment;
- Provides a neutral/non-political place in the community for the free and open exchange of ideas and opinions;
- Provides a conduit for collaboration among local organizations, city departments, and population groups;
- Helps fill the need for additional programs and services for diverse population segments including teens, seniors and Hispanic residents;
- Supports economic development and revitalization efforts in Hoboken;
- Serves as a bridge between the City's historic past and its promising future.



## **Library Needs Identified by Research and the Planning Task Force**

Analysis of the research findings by the Planning Task Force identified areas where HPL must focus its efforts over the next three to five years in order to satisfy the expectations of the community. These areas are:

- A larger and more appealing facility;
- Institutionalizing fundraising in order to create a culture of philanthropy;
- Appealing collections in a variety of formats;
- Technology which keeps pace with current trends and satisfies the expectations of customers;
- Intensified advocacy efforts/enhanced government relations to ensure that HPL has adequate and consistent funding;
- A new positioning for HPL which will better articulate the Library's vision for the future;
- Consistent branding, marketing and public relations
- Organizational structure and staffing level sufficient to support the Library's new strategic directions;
- Ability to leverage historical collection as a Library asset.



## **The Library Initiative Litmus Test**

Research and planning generate many innovative ideas. To remain focused and realistic, the consultant encouraged the Planning Task Force to evaluate the merits of strategic possibilities by applying a “library initiative litmus test.” This planning tool poses the following questions in relation to each initiative:

- Does it satisfy identified community needs in Hoboken?
- Does the Library have the necessary skill or expertise?
- Is it a “work smart” concept?
- Does it help market and brand the Library?
- Is it practical and actionable?
- Does it make “best use” of personnel and financial resources?
- Does it address multiple goals?
- Does it provide a favorable return on investment?
- Does it have the potential for community partnerships?
- Does it align the Library with education and lifelong learning?
- Does it position the Library and its facility as central to the quality of life in Hoboken?



## **Priority Strategic Initiatives**

### **Strategic Initiative One: *Address the Lack of Adequate Space***

#### **Situation**

The research for this strategic plan and the facility assessment reveals that the lack of adequate space is having a negative impact on the performance of HPL. The amount of square footage in the present facility barely satisfies New Jersey State Standards.

Population growth, proactive Library leadership and better services have generated substantially higher levels of library use. There is general agreement the Library has made the best possible use of the facility as it is now configured. If HPL is not able to increase the amount of available space, it will not be able to expand collections, services, and programs to satisfy customer demand. If this occurs, the quality of services may ultimately be diminished. The results of the planning process suggest there is an urgent need for both short and long-term solutions to overcome the limitations of the present facility.

In the short term, the Library can renovate the present facility and the space in the Industrial School. These renovations will provide visitors with a more pleasant experience and create more efficient work spaces for the staff. They will also address the need for community space and allow the Library to fully comply with ADA requirements. However, the size of the basic foot print will not change. This is a serious detriment to much needed improvements including space for a collection which will continue to grow, an enlarged and enhanced computer center, a community room for programs and meetings, and adequate quiet study space.

It is the opinion of the consulting team that HPL has to seek other solutions to its space shortage. The statistics for the past five years indicate library use is steadily increasing as services continue to improve and the City's population grows. There is every reason to believe this pattern will not change.

#### **Challenge**

Building a new library is a challenge under almost any circumstances. However, it is an even greater challenge during periods of fiscal upheaval such as the one which New Jersey is experiencing at the present time. In the absence of adequate state funding for library construction, a successful building campaign will require the full support of elected officials, foundations, and the general public. Additionally, the Board must anticipate and be prepared to cover the inevitable incremental costs for staffing, collection development, and building maintenance.



## Opportunities

The Hoboken Public Library is poised to leverage recent progress and increased public support for its efforts. There is an opportunity for the Library to help sustain the new sense of civic pride by orchestrating a successful campaign to secure public and private sector funding for construction of a renovated library building which will be a community gathering place for learning, cultural enrichment, the exchange of ideas, and a popular destination for all residents of Hoboken.

While the Library is under construction, HPL must find an alternate location in the City (possibly in the Uptown area near 13<sup>th</sup> or 14<sup>th</sup> streets) which can be used temporarily to provide services. This affords the Board and staff an opportunity to test the long term viability of and need for opening a second site in the City and to increase the awareness of HPL among families of young children who reside in this area—a market segment which is of great interest to the Library.

## Strategies

- Sustain efforts to gain maximum long-range municipal support and responsibility for the complete renovation of HPL’s facility;
- Accelerate the development of the Fundraising and Advocacy Committee to prepare it for its critically important role in the financial future of HPL;
- Develop strategies which help the community and elected officials gain a new vision and a desire for 21st century library services in Hoboken;
- Increase the Board’s capacity to oversee a capital campaign by contracting with a fundraising consultant to:
  - Assess capacity and willingness of Hoboken residents to help support an enhanced facility and expanded library services;
  - Recommend structure for a campaign committee;
  - Identify potential campaign leaders;
  - Recommend campaign messages and content for case statement and other campaign materials;
  - Assess campaign readiness and recommend timing;
  - Review prospect lists and suggest giving levels;
  - Develop a draft case statement;
  - Recommend appropriate roles in a capital campaign for Trustees, the Director, the Foundation, and for the Friends of the Library group;
  - Train Trustees in preparation for a campaign.
- Provide training for Trustees and staff regarding a library construction project and its implications;
- Educate Trustees and staff regarding trends in library buildings and associated costs;
- Enlist public support for a new library by formulating a public relations campaign which will create a “buzz” for the capital campaign and ultimately library construction;



- Identify locations in the City which the Library could rent and use as a temporary home or possibly as a permanent site for a second facility;
- Explore the merits of alternate models of service delivery such as self-service options, an online “branch”, kiosks, and library services provided in the facilities of other community organizations or government buildings.



## ***Strategic Initiative Two: Increase the ability of the Hoboken Public Library and its supporters to advocate for predictable and sufficient funding***

### **Situation**

Individuals close to the current library funding crisis in New Jersey are concerned that the financial situation may not be rectified in the short term. The uncertainties surrounding future funding mean that libraries and their supporters must continue to clearly demonstrate both the contributions they make to their communities and their financial needs.

The Hoboken Public Library Board of Trustees and Director have cultivated very positive and productive relationships and communications with City management and members of City Council. The strategic planning research suggests that leadership in Hoboken views the Library as both an asset, and in many instances, a necessity. However, the Library cannot assume the City will continue to support the Library at the current level or increase the amount it currently provides to the Library in order to compensate for future decreases in state funding.

### **Challenge**

The challenge in the future will be to develop a “case for the Library” which will resonate with City leaders. The challenge will also be to present fresh and compelling information about the many contributions the Library makes to the quality of life in Hoboken which will motivate decision makers to provide higher levels of financial support--even in the context of fiscal constraint and an environment in which there are many other serious, legitimate needs for improved public services. There will also be a need to generate enthusiasm for improved library services among grassroots supporters who will be vocal in their support for HPL.

### **Opportunity**

The Board of Trustees has the opportunity to leverage the new spirit of cooperation in Hoboken and the Library’s recent progress and successes in order to create a more secure financial outlook for the Library.

### **Strategies**

- Provide advocacy training for Trustees so that the all Board members share the responsibility for advocacy with the Director and the President of the Board;
- Define an advocacy role for the Friends of the Library group and make advocacy training available to members of its Board;
- Broaden the base of influential support by engaging the support of individuals who participated in the leadership interviews as well as leaders of other City organizations and institutions;



- Cooperate with local elected officials to strategically recruit new Trustees focusing on identifying those who have connections with important constituencies;
- Set goals for current members of the Board to have one-on-one meetings with personal contacts who are well positioned to publically support the Library's goals;
- Explore the possibility of bolstering advocacy initiatives by establishing a special task force or *ad hoc* committee comprised of individuals in the community who have a demonstrated interest in and commitment to the welfare of HPL;
- Prepare a white paper on the direct and indirect contribution the Library makes to economic development and revitalization in Hoboken;
- Update the 2007 Valuing Your Library calculations and share them with leaders and the general public;
- Broaden the base of Library supporters by making presentations to influential community groups highlighting the research findings and new strategic directions for the Library.



## **Strategic Initiative Three: *Create a Culture of Philanthropy for the Hoboken Public Library***

### **Situation**

The Hoboken Public Library cannot rely solely on public funding to cover the costs of sustaining quality services or to support special projects not covered by its annual operating budget. To date, the Library has not institutionalized its fundraising efforts. Looking to the future, fostering a “culture of giving” among prospective donors and financial supporters in the community will be vitally important.

### **Challenge**

The strategic planning process suggests developing a new philanthropic culture at HPL will be a challenge. The Library Trustees and staff have limited experience in fundraising. The Hoboken Public Library Foundation is still in the planning stage. The Friends of the Library Group has in some years raised as much as \$25,000, and the Library has made successful applications for grants. However, there have been no substantial efforts to generate financial support from other sources. The prospect of initiating fundraising efforts in the current economic environment is daunting; however, the need to develop a strategic and disciplined approach to fundraising cannot be ignored, and the Library must adopt a long-term view if it is to be successful.

### **Opportunity**

Although fundraising efforts have been undertaken over the past five years at HPL the research shows that there is more work to be done in this area. Pro-active fundraising provides new opportunities for HPL to gain visibility and credibility in Hoboken. When the Library invites the individuals who are closest to it to support it financially, it has a chance to establish life long relationships with them, reconfirm the contribution it makes to the rich texture of life in Hoboken, and articulate once again the many ways the Library supports the future goals and aspirations of the City. Finally HPL can educate residents about the limitations of current funding levels and the need for expanded financial support. Only then, can HPL offer the enhanced programs and services for which the public has expressed a desire.

### **Strategies**

- Analyze the success of other fundraising campaigns in Hoboken to learn how the campaigns were conducted, who contributed, and how much money was raised;
- Identify other libraries which have conducted successful capital campaigns and interview them to determine what made them successful;
- Try to recruit an individual to the Board who has fundraising experience with another nonprofit organization;
- Contract with a consultant to provide fundraising training for Trustees;



- Complete the work required to launch the Foundation and announce it publically; Create a development plan for the Foundation that includes capitalizing on major gifts and estate planning opportunities;
- Secure the necessary expertise and resources to plan and implement a Foundation sponsored annual giving program with mailings to all households and businesses in Hoboken;
- Maximize the potential of the Friends of the Library group by working with them to develop a strategic plan which supports HPL's new strategic directions;
- Establish fundraising goals so the Friends of the Library group can continue its role of providing funding for incubator projects and special programs and services not covered by the Library's annual operating budget.



## **Strategic Initiative Four: *Meet and exceed the expectations of Hoboken residents for access to information technology***

### **Situation**

The strategic planning process reveals residents and leaders believe one of the most important contributions HPL makes is providing technology to residents who are financially unable to purchase computers and attain Internet access for their households. Having access to up-to-date technology and residents who know how to use it to achieve their personal and professional goals is important for the community. HPL is considered the institution best positioned to provide leadership in this arena.

The staff has been extremely flexible in its ability to learn about and implement new technology. Despite the limitations caused by inadequate space and funds, the Library has managed to purchase new computers, expand online services such as online card registration, introduce social networking capabilities such as Twitter and Face Book, and conduct training programs for individuals who lack proficiency in the use of technology.

### **Challenge**

Hoboken is attracting a growing number of residents who are more experienced users of computers and information technology. These individuals—many of them young professionals and families with young children—bring with them higher expectations regarding the technology available to them at their public library. This phenomenon compounds the pressure on HPL to live up to its potential as a technology leader and to keep pace with constantly changing technologies. An additional challenge will be, despite the lack of resources, to use technology to remain relevant with people who but may have never been HPL's facility, but want to access its services and conduct business with the Library online.

### **Opportunity**

Because no viable competitor has stepped forward, HPL can become the City's turn-to resource for reliable technology and training. The Library also has an opportunity to use its technical capabilities to sustain services while the library is under construction. And finally, technology can be the Library's most important marketing tool for connecting with hard-to-reach populations such as teens, young professionals, males, and the economically disadvantaged.

### **Strategies**

- Respond to the importance of technology in HPL's internal operations and its customer services by "centralizing technology" and designating one staff person to be responsible for library technology;
- Continue to monitor the content, functionality, and navigability of HPL's website;
- Use the website to update the community on the renovation project and explore the possibility of making it possible for individuals to make online contributions;



- Increase the value of HPL to non-English language speakers by providing web content in the languages spoken most frequently in Hoboken;
- Explore alternative ways to improve and enrich computer services through the use of the portable computer lab, by providing laptops which customers can rent, offering book readers such as the Sony Reader, etc.;
- Explore the possibility of establishing a Community Technology Task Force comprised of staff, Trustees, and individuals in Hoboken who are knowledgeable about technology trends and can advise HPL about new technologies;
- In addition to the already established partnerships with HOPE and the Senior Center, identify other organizations in the public and private sectors with which HPL might establish technology partnerships for providing access and public training (schools, city agencies, etc).



## **Strategic Initiative Five: *Forge a New Brand and Look for the Hoboken Public Library***

### **Situation**

The research conducted in conjunction with HPL's planning process indicates that the general public, and to a great extent even city leaders, has a limited understanding of the diverse menu of services available at their public library. Trustees, staff, and leaders agree there is a need for a consistent marketing and public relations campaign which will increase library use and cultivate a broader base of dedicated customers. If HPL decides to proceed with a fundraising campaign and a construction project, an up-beat image and marketing messages will increase the likelihood that its expansion efforts will be successful.

### **Challenge**

HPL's staff is already stretched to provide basic library services. Allocating valuable personnel resources to marketing and public relations will further stress the situation. At the present time, the marketing and public relations function is combined with the responsibilities of the community outreach coordinator. The Board has a committee which has responsibility for overseeing advocacy, fundraising, and marketing. The challenge will be to explore ways HPL can secure the necessary marketing and public relations expertise and manpower and obtain the funds required to orchestrate a multi-dimensional marketing program and produce quality marketing materials.

### **Opportunity**

HPL has the opportunity to create a new and exciting brand for the Library which will better reflect the preferences of important market segments in the community. While HPL wants to remain faithful to its history, as it proceeds with plans for enhancing and expanding programs and services, it might be better served by a more vibrant and up-to-date image which has more appeal to the growing number of newer, younger and culturally diverse residents.

### **Strategies**

- Establish an ad hoc marketing and public relations committee which includes the member of the staff currently responsible for marketing and outreach, the Trustee with professional marketing and public relations experience, and other residents of the community who have expertise in this area;
- Develop a strategic marketing and public relations plan that supports the new directions of the Library and includes specific strategies and recommendations for communications materials for key target audiences such as teens, seniors, and Hispanic residents;
- Create a professional quality logo, tagline, and design system for the Library that will be integrated across all print materials and the website as well as all materials for the capital campaign;



- Brand and market online resources and services as a virtual branch library—a strategy which will serve it well during the period it is under construction;
- Develop a plan to communicate and leverage the results of the research study and the new strategic plan to the media, community, and elected officials (leadership breakfast, press conferences, on-going presentations to community groups, etc.);
- Launch a card registration drive to increase the percentage of Hoboken residents who have an HPL card in their wallet;
- In order to differentiate the Library from Google and other popular commercial search engines, develop strategies for articulating the unique professional capabilities of librarians.



## **Strategic Initiative Six: *Sustain the quality of services for Hoboken's diverse populations including young children, teens, seniors, and residents of ethnic communities***

### **Situation**

The telephone survey, leadership interviews, and output statistics demonstrate HPL serves a population comprised of distinctively different market segments. The research indicates that continuing to provide relevant programs and services to key constituencies such as seniors, teens, young children, and individuals in ethnic communities will be important as the Library strives to maintain its momentum and customer satisfaction.

### **Challenges**

Each market segment poses unique challenges. The number of children under the age of ten is projected to grow, and providing services to families with young children and supporting academic achievement are identified by community residents as top priorities. However, the changes in school leadership have made it difficult for the Library to establish a productive educational partnership with school administrators and school board members. An additional challenge is that many of the families with younger children are newer residents in the City, and they do not have long standing ties to HPL.

The number of older adults residing is also increasing, and HPL has made significant gains in serving this population through its outreach programs at senior centers. These programs have been successful, and HPL would like to continue to expand the range of services it provides to seniors. The installation of an elevator and bus service make the Library more senior friendly. The challenge now is to entice more seniors to actually come to the Library's facility.

Hoboken has a large and well-established Hispanic community. However, these residents are under-represented in the research. The Library staff does not believe it has been entirely successful in generating visibility with this population segment. In order to determine whether or not the Library should expand its services to Hispanic residents, the Library must gain a better understanding of the needs of these residents.

HPL recognizes that teens are their future customers and potential supporters. Teens are identified in the research as an under-served population in terms not only of library services but also other City services and programs. The lack of adequate space for resources and services for teens make it difficult to sustain recent successes with YA's. The Library has a YA librarian, an improved collection of materials for teens, and several successful teen programs. HPL has also been able to establish a good rapport with some personnel in the schools and schedule class visits. In the future, the challenges will be to extend the services it is already providing and market them more effectively to students, school personnel and elected officials.



## **Opportunity**

These market segments represent significant long term opportunities for HPL. The fact that the Library now has a Children’s Librarian and staff dedicated to community outreach and adult and senior programming makes it possible for HPL to generate a higher level of awareness with these populations. The Library can become the organization which is foremost in the minds of seniors, teens, parents of young children, and individuals in culturally diverse neighborhoods. It also has the opportunity to attract new customers and the loyalty of key supporters while at the same time addressing identified community needs.

### **Strategies for Connecting with Families with Young Children**

- Promote HPL in the community as an educational partner with the resources and expertise to help bolster academic achievement;
- Explore the possibility of sub-branding all of the library educational support services so that they can be marketed to parents, classroom teachers, administrators and school board members;
- Develop a multi-dimensional marketing plan that incorporates the use of print and electronic media and the internal marketing distribution channels of schools to reach students, parents, classroom teachers, and school administrators;
- Showcase the Library’s summer reading program and increase the percentage of school age children who participate;
- Develop information that demonstrates the educational value and positive financial impact of summer reading programs;
- Establish a long term goal of entering into a more formal agreement between HPL and school boards for how the two institutions will collaborate in the future;
- Solicit opportunities to make presentations to the School Board and PTO about services the public library provides to students and teachers;
- Leverage the ability of classroom teachers to reach large numbers of students and their parents and “drive” students to the Library by requiring them to use HPL resources for class assignments and projects;
- Explore the possibility of offering cross-training for school and public library personnel.

### ***For Serving Teens***

- Conduct research, possibly using focus groups or online surveys in cooperation with the schools, to gain a better understanding of the information needs and attitudes of teens regarding public library services;
- Cooperate with the school district to encourage teens to get community service hours by donating time at the Library (i.e., reading buddies program which matches teens with younger children who are at-risk readers, or the computer page program which uses teens to assist older adults who need assistance using computers);



- Identify other organizations in Hoboken which also provide services to teens in order to pursue potential partnerships;
- Research successful teen programs offered by other libraries and identify ones which can be easily replicated at HPL;
- Aggressively market online services and databases to teens who are frequently reluctant or unable to come into the Library;
- Consider launching online teen book discussion groups or creative writing programs;
- Explore the possibility of adding a non-voting student representative to the HPL Board of Trustees.



### ***For Serving Seniors and Active Older Adults***

- Use the current relationship with the senior center to gather information from older adults about their interests in library programs and services;
- Conduct in-library surveys of empty nesters and other active adults to learn about their preferences with regard to adult programming and gradually expand the menu of adult programs;
- Long term, consider forming a senior advisory board for soliciting direct input for programs and services;
- Conduct an audit of other organizations and agencies in Hoboken providing services to seniors to identify possible partnerships and alternate venues for senior programming;
- Include in the new strategic marketing plan specific marketing, packaging, and branding activities that promote lifelong learning, cultural enrichment, and socialization opportunities available to seniors through HPL;
- Continue to connect seniors with technology by providing training that increases their proficiency;
- Evaluate the need for a larger collection of large print books and monitor new developments in assistive technology that the Library can use to serve residents with vision and other physical challenges.

### ***For Culturally Diverse Communities***

- Conduct research with leaders or residents of the Hispanic community to explore their need for public library services;
- Capitalize on the newly established relationship with the senior center to gather information about Hispanic residents;
- Evaluate the Library's collections, programs and services and determine whether they adequately reflect research findings;
- Identify best practices used by other public libraries for providing services in culturally diverse communities;
- Identify other organizations in Hoboken offering services to the community's ethnic populations and identify the unmet needs which HPL is best positioned to address;
- Continue efforts to diversify the Board and staff;
- Integrate in the strategic marketing plan goals for communicating information about library services to Hispanic residents;



## **Strategic Initiative Seven: *Position HPL to Respond to and Implement Change***

The Hoboken Public Library has charted a course for the future which will substantially improve the Library's ability to meet the expectations of residents who use their public library. Preparing for and launching a capital campaign and a construction project are two of the most important responsibilities Trustees and staff of the Library are called upon to manage. The internal and external implications of planning and completing a renovation such as the one proposed for HPL cannot be under-estimated, and it is critical that the Board and staff are prepared to respond effectively to change.

### **Challenges**

Providing the training the Board and staff need in order to successfully oversee fundraising and construction will be essential but difficult because the new State budget has eliminated most of the funding for training programs. Additional challenges will be creating a plan which allocates staffing resources so the new strategic plan can be implemented and compensates for the fact that the Director's responsibilities will be broadened.

### **Opportunities**

HPL has the opportunity to establish a leadership position in the City by demonstrating it has the ability to orchestrate a major project in Hoboken which will benefit all of the City's residents. It will also help the City realize its aspiration to be recognized, as one leader said, as a "world class city."

### **Strategies:**

- Review HPL's mission statement to determine whether it should be updated to reflect the new strategic directions and help build a compelling case for the capital campaign;
- Redraw the Library's current organizational chart and assign the responsibilities for marketing and public relations and technology to specific individuals;
- In the absence of regional training programs, find alternate resources for Board and staff training in fundraising, construction, advocacy and marketing.



## **HOBOKEN PUBLIC LIBRARY STRENGTHS, WEAKNESSES, OPPORTUNITIES, THREATS**

At the first meeting of the Planning Task Force, members participated in an exercise to identify HPL's strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats (SWOT) to future success. During that discussion, the Task Force developed the following assessment of the Library's current operations:

### **Strengths**

- Well organized and managed
- Great historic tradition of service in community
- Up-to-date collections in multiple formats
- Historic collection which is a valuable asset
- Strong and respected children's programming for the toddler/nanny population
- Enhanced adult programming including valuable information such as housing, employment, etc.
- Flexibility in programming
- Services for diverse clientele
- Small town feeling
- Promising partnerships
- Favorable location near schools and park
- Services available seven days a week
- Dedicated, knowledgeable staff which is diversified by age and length of service
- Bilingual staff

### **Weaknesses**

- Limited, inconsistent marketing and advertising result in limited visibility in the community
- Limited customer service amenities such as self-checkout
- Space limitations limit programming
- Lack of clarity regarding mission/priorities
- Lack of clarity regarding roles of BCCLS, Bergen County, etc.
- Limited visibility and awareness of diverse services—particularly the newer or non-traditional services
- A dated brand which does not appeal to some market segments
- Limited experience with fundraising



## **Opportunities for Improvement**

- Capitalize on small town feeling
- Create opportunities for staff to continue to develop and learn from each other
- Sustain forward momentum
- Recruit bi-lingual staff/translators
- Assist customers in using library resources with which they are not familiar
- Forge more partnerships
- Leverage new positive relationship with city government
- Partnerships with local community organizations

## **Threats to Future Success**

- Increased corporate competition
- Funding reductions at state level
- Elimination of requirement for local government to provide stipulated amount of financial support
- Local political shifts might not favor library in future
- HPL may fail to raise funds for capital campaign
- There may not be adequate wealth in Hoboken to support capital campaign

**Adopted by the Board of Trustees: May 25, 2010**

