



2018-2021 Strategic Plan Review

The Strategic Plan adopted by the Montclair Public Library Trustees in 2018 was informed by the optimism of steady growth and community support that have been characteristics of the Montclair Public Library. This plan did not anticipate the Covid-19 pandemic. In April 2018, we had community-wide celebrations of the Library's 125th anniversary. Just two years later, both of the library buildings were closed.

While the Library was able to adapt operations to provide services to our patrons, services had to be cut back. Nonetheless, through innovation and flexibility we continued to serve our community, and we remained true to our vision to provide unlimited opportunities for lifelong learning, discovery, and community engagement and our mission to change lives every day through words, ideas, and community building. This review assesses how we met the goals of the 2018-2021 plan.

The complete plan is available on the library website at: montclairlibrary.org/about/reports-audits



Engage our community in learning, culture, and civic engagement

The plan outlined a variety of objectives to promote community engagement. We had the most success with increasing digital literacy through training and providing hotspots and laptops to check out. During the pandemic, we dramatically increased eBooks, streaming movies, online programs, and other resources.

The pandemic also created an opportunity to more clearly define the Adult School. In fact, the number of Montclair residents taking classes increased during the pandemic. We continued our efforts to collaborate with schools and community groups for the good of our entire community.

We did not achieve the "Make Noise @ MPL" objective but launched a similar initiative, Community Conversation, to promote dialogue and partnerships in 2022.

Provide and promote meaningful, substantive content and experiences for every segment of our community

Our major branding effort—A Library for All—successfully established MPL's identity and objectives. We were also very successful in rebalancing our collection to reflect user interest and popular new formats. Celebrating Montclair culture and history continued to guide our collection development, programs, and partnerships. Although our story times and youth programming were limited by the pandemic, we found ways to connect with children and families.

Our objectives to reach out to younger adults and teens were not so successful, in part because these initiatives in particular require in-person activities. The Teen Advisory Board continued to meet but their activities were restricted by the pandemic. We will continue to reach out to these essential groups to guide and promote our Library. Efforts to expand access to the Library through a comprehensive ADA plan began to be implemented in 2022.

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Be a leader in modeling innovation and reimagining libraries

Montclair led the way among NJ libraries in the development of an app and website that provide intuitive, easy ways for patrons to get what they need.

Although we did develop plans to renovate the Main Library and Bellevue Avenue Branch, we were not able to secure funding for the renovations. In 2022, we are working on a capital plan that will establish priorities for renovation and repairs in both buildings.

Stabilize and grow the Library's budget and make the Library a worthy recipient for giving

The role and growth of the Montclair Public Library Foundation have been significant achievements. The Foundation is an independent entity that supports the Library. It develops the Library's fundraising capacity by creating a unified development operation that coordinates the Library's annual capital endowment and special initiative campaigns.

Although the library budget has not increased to the levels recommended by the plan, the mix of funding—including bequests, grants, and support from the township and state—continues to evolve. While both Friends groups support the Library, they preferred to be separate organizations.

Create a staff team focused on reimagining the Library and committed to its success

The onset of the pandemic led to the retirement of some staff, while others moved on to new opportunities. During the months the Library was closed to the public, staff were downsized. Staff who remained were cross-trained in order to provide the best service to the public.

Prior to the pandemic, staff were sent to a Social Justice and Public Libraries Symposium, and key staff had enhanced supervisor training. The annual Staff In-Service Day took place in person for 2019 and 2020, and virtually in 2021 and 2022. Several staff were elected to leadership positions in the NJ Library Association, including the incoming president. The Director became president of the Freedom to Read Foundation.



Main Library
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Montclair, NJ 07042

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Bellevue Avenue Branch
185 Bellevue Avenue
Montclair, NJ 07043

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