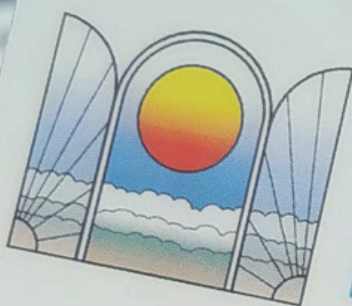


COMMUNITY CONNECTION STARTS AT THE LIBRARY

STRATEGIC PLAN

2024-2028



CAPE MAY COUNTY
LIBRARY

Cape May Court House, NJ 08210
609-463-6350



A Message from Our Director

The library belongs to the community. For me, belonging means that every resident of Cape May County experiences a feeling of welcome in their interactions with the library and finds something useful designed with them in mind.

I'm constantly reminded that welcome and belonging are a community-wide endeavor. We worked with so many inspiring partners in the preparation of this plan and had candid, forthcoming conversations with residents. You helped us step inside new shoes to consider the perceptions and experiences of Cape May County residents from diverse perspectives. To deliver value for everyone, the library needs to meet you where you are and show up in creative new ways. We couldn't be more excited to do that work.

Your appreciation and support for our amazing team of staff rang through clearly. In astute and positive ways, you shared insights about how we can take library experiences to the next level. Naturally, this will include investing in the talents and passions of our employees, coupled with tools and training to support the experiences of the future. Collaboration and connection matter as much to our internal team as they do to the residents of Cape May County as a whole.

I'm inspired by the community's contributions and support for the library system's first strategic planning process. We look forward to being inspired together over the next five years and beyond.

Andrea Orsini

Andrea Orsini, Library Director



Mission

Connecting our communities to knowledge, spaces, experiences, and one another.



Values

Our values facilitate lifelong learning.

Service

We provide human connection and assistance.

Compassion

We welcome you with empathy and respect.

Accessibility

We create an inclusive and equitable environment.

Adaptability

We approach all things with curiosity, flexibility, and resilience.



The Library in Our Community

Our nine locations invite residents to enjoy a wealth of resources and events while our Bookmobile and Outreach team venture across the county to meet you in your neighborhoods. We aim to surprise and delight you with a wealth of creative offerings, including our Library of Things, Seed Library, and free Museum Passes!



Map courtesy of the Library of Congress.

Strategic Planning Timeline

September 2022 -
January 2023

- Assembled Strategic Planning Committee (SPC)
- Designed staff assessment approach
- Conducted staff surveys and focus group

April 2023 -
October 2023

- Designed a strategic planning approach
- Conducted patron gallery walks, community interviews, and focus groups
- Administered public survey

November 2023 -
April 2024

- SPC begins designing the strategic plan
- The Library Commissioners review and provide feedback
- 2024-2028 strategic plan created

Community Engagement

Listening to Respondents and Staff



300+ responses
to a public survey



9 interviews with influential
community leaders



18 gallery walks
across nine library locations



Staff feedback on the library's
core mission, values, services,
and job satisfaction



3 roundtables with 30+
school and community
organization representatives

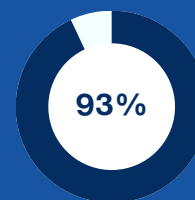


17 staff focus groups about
library values and work culture

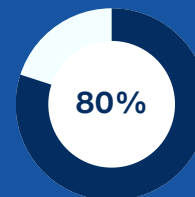
Public Survey Highlights

***What would make you more likely to visit
or access services through the library?***

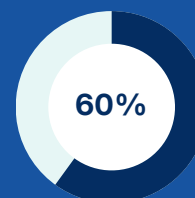
- ✓ *More events and services related to my interests.*
- ✓ *A better understanding of what CMCL provides.*
- ✓ *Access to community events.*



are highly satisfied with
the knowledgeable and
friendly staff.



of library users have a
very favorable
impression of CMCL.



said study rooms and
reading areas are
important to them.

What We Heard

Tap into the close-knit nature of the county.

Cape May County's residents repeatedly told us they exist within three degrees of separation as opposed to the traditional six. The county benefits from a strong network of community organizations and providers – enough for extensive collaboration but not so many it becomes unwieldy. The library can position itself as a hub.

“The library should partner with those who are passionate about educating the community.”

Cape May County Local Leader

Reintroduce the library to current and future audiences.

The library is well-loved in Cape May County, and respondents expressed deep appreciation for the staff, physical and digital collections, and wealth of events. However, the library could help residents access its resources to their full potential by forging stronger connections with both rural audiences and untapped users who have yet to discover that the library holds something for them. The library has room to build its reputation within diverse segments of the community.

“I wanted to work at Coffee Talk but they don't have WiFi. I was told about the Hotspots and lots of seating at the library”

Response from Stone Harbor's Gallery Walk

Take a holistic view of staff and patrons.

At the heart of the library are people – the people who open the doors each day and the people they welcome and get to know. Our research identified significant challenges and vulnerabilities many residents face, alongside joys, passions, and enthusiasm that they are eager to share with others. The library can support the development of the whole person, their extended families, and their networks.

“For those who live here year-round, CMCL has always offered enrichment and engagement. They have always offered a lot more beyond books. They are a sanctuary and a place to find like-minded individuals.”

Cape May County Local Business Partner

Strategic Priorities

We listened to our community and developed the following priorities to guide our work over the next five years.



Build Awareness

Recognize who we are and what we have to offer.



Reach Out

Join residents and partners in the community.



Emphasize Experiences

Curate inspiring spaces and opportunities that ignite your passions.



Strengthen Our Team

Foster internal connections and creativity to deliver our best work.

Build Awareness

Recognize who we are and what we have to offer.



Libraries across the country are challenging the misconception that we are just about lending books. The Cape May County Library offers diverse materials, programs, events, and services that savvy patrons absolutely love, and others would go wild for if the word got out. We are recruiting trusted sources, including current patrons, to attract new users as we revitalize and centralize our branding and representation.

Objectives

- **Make CMCL recognizable** through a unified brand and messaging.
- **Strengthen understanding of CMCL** values and offerings through local channels.
- **Increase personalized connections** with patrons by enhancing user experiences.



Build Awareness

Next Steps

- **Launch** a new brand with corresponding promotion and engagement strategies that build year over year.
- **Connect** with local media outlets and press resources to pitch library stories.
- **Expand** activities that incentivize engagement (i.e. prize giveaways, patron appreciation days).
- **Invest** in website upgrades that are intuitive and patron-centric.

Outcomes We Envision

- Patrons receive a consistent look and feel when engaging with any library service, location, or event.
- The library is a regular and familiar presence in local media through both paid and earned opportunities.
- More people from more corners of the county are using the library - a range of data tells us which strategies are working.



Reach Out

Join residents and partners in the community.



Throughout Cape May County, many community-based organizations relayed the belief that we must meet people where they are. Though the library has always served people within and beyond its walls, we strive to open more channels of communication to county residents and visitors. This invitation to understand where people gather, along with how they want to engage, provides an opportunity for deeper connection.

Objectives

- **Strengthen community partnerships** in impactful, sustainable ways.
- **Identify mutual engagement opportunities** with community organizations, clubs, and groups.
- **Spark opportunities** for diverse and intergenerational community connection.



Reach Out

Next Steps

- **Amplify** relationships with county government partners (i.e. Division of Social Services, Health Department, Department of Aging and Disability Services, Healthy Community Coalition).
- **Establish** regular breakfast meetings with partners to identify shared events and promotional opportunities.
- **Prioritize** staff collaboration for outreach and tailor outreach to individual events.

Outcomes We Envision

- Residents are knowledgeable and aware of the current landscape of county resources that support their health and well-being.
- The Cape May County community is better positioned to collaborate and solve shared challenges.
- The library is a notable, creative presence at a wide range of informal and formal local events.



Emphasize Experiences

Curate inspiring spaces and opportunities that ignite your passions.



Cape May City Library Reading Room



When patrons engage with the library, we want them to go on a journey with positive interactions from beginning to end. Our future planning will be consistently informed by gathering ideas from peer libraries worldwide, evaluating our facilities and spaces with fresh eyes, and designing events through departmental collaborations. We will refine our approaches as we hear from attendees, forming a positive feedback loop to shape new concepts around patron demand.

Objectives

- **Expand our understanding** of what facilities and experiences community members want most.
- **Broaden channels for ongoing feedback** to co-create and refine experiences.
- **Explore emerging curiosities and trends** - regionally, nationally, and in our community.



Emphasize Experiences

Next Steps

- **Evaluate** our current facilities to determine how our spaces and buildings could better serve the community.
- **Analyze** which library events have the best attendance and mechanisms to capture patron feedback about reasons for their success - including successful events hosted by other entities.
- **Assess** the current portfolio of events and offerings to identify connections, alignments, and pathways for learning.

Outcomes We Envision

- The library makes enhancements to facilities and services based on clear and compelling data from patrons.
- Audiences can easily identify “packages” of offerings and events in their wheelhouse, driving up usage and participation.
- Patrons and staff taste the joy of regularly experimenting with and strengthening new services.



Strengthen Our Team

Foster internal connections and creativity to deliver our best work.



Our best service results from the strength of our team, and we plan to progress each year through an ongoing investment in systems, practices, and organizational culture. To promote this growth, we will strive to create more opportunities for extracurricular interactions between staff. We believe embodying our stated values as we work requires a sustained commitment to relationships, staff development, and training. We appreciate the camaraderie, creativity, and professionalism of our wonderful team members and look forward to further growth.

Objectives

- **Define internal processes for communication and cross-departmental collaboration.**
- **Create opportunities for staff to advance skills and to work within areas of inspiration.**
- **Foster a robust spirit of team-building with in-person opportunities.**



Strengthen Our Team

Next Steps

- **Optimize** current tools and structures for a better return on investment (i.e. digital collaboration, committees, resource-sharing).
- **Develop** a plan to understand staff needs and areas for increasing job satisfaction and performance in current roles.
- **Identify** staff abilities and level of enthusiasm regarding new roles and opportunities. Prioritize team-building and social events.

Outcomes We Envision

- Staff lead from where they are in the organization, with strong role models and encouragement from the middle management tier.
- Staff experience willing and active collaboration among colleagues and library departments.
- Staff report a greater sense of personal satisfaction and connectedness as part of the library team.



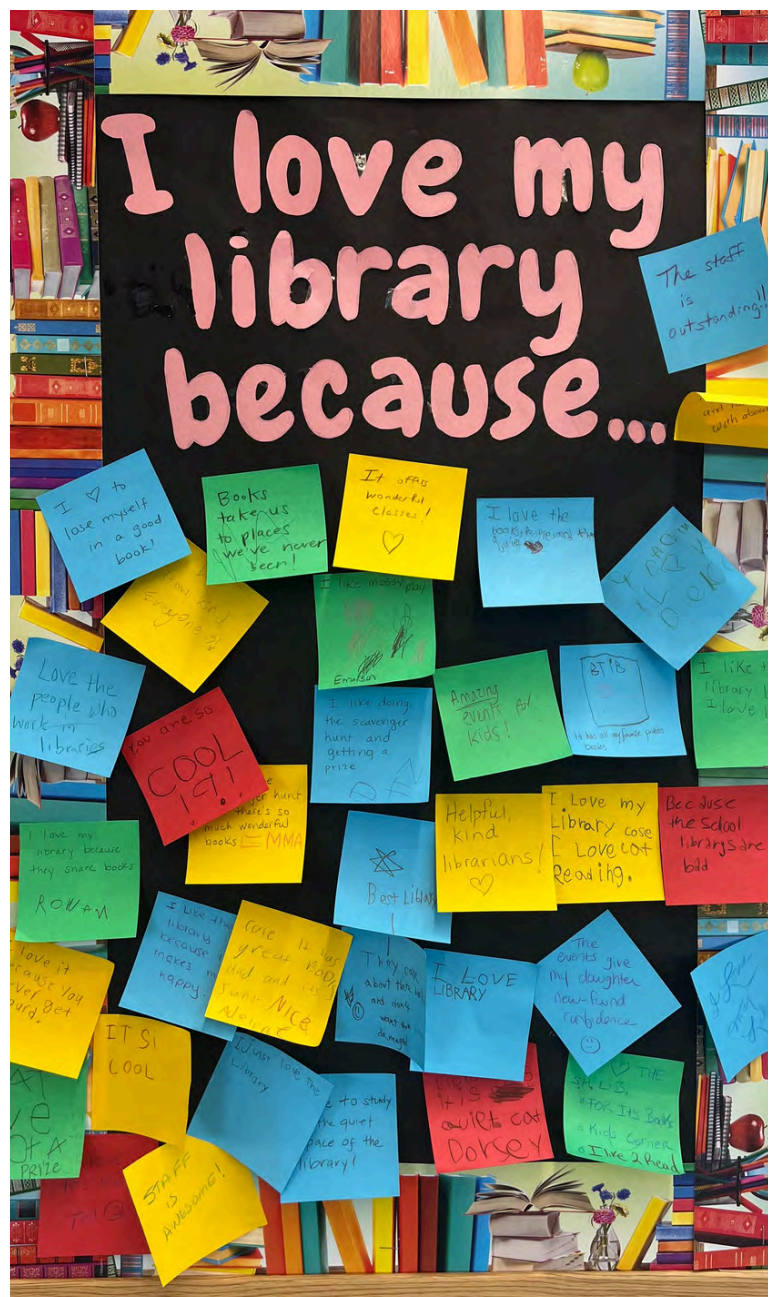
Measuring Our Impact

“For most institutions, understanding and documenting their contribution to social well-being is more important than isolating the effects of individual programs or supports. Narrative structures that include multiple forms of evidence (quantitative and qualitative)—such as observed changes in program participants and their accounts of what participation meant for them—can provide supporting evidence of social value.”

Understanding the Social Wellbeing Impacts of the Nation’s Libraries and Museums, Institute of Museum and Library Services, 2021

The library captures a wide range of statistics that help to quantify annual usage and reach. By investing in our strategic priorities, we expect increases in many key categories, including active cardholders, website usage, outreach connections, and participation in events.

At the same time, we are mindful that quantity is not the only measure of success, because engaging with high-priority new audiences will require different types of focused effort. Numbers as well as narrative are both critical to monitoring and reporting on the successful implementation of the strategic plan.





553,755
physical and digital materials circulated



62,295
overall event participants



100,492
computer and internet users



4,307
newly registered cardholders



206,146
visits to CMCL website pages



274
Museum Pass participants



376,573
library visits to all locations



1,238
total staff training hours

Future Opportunities

- **Amount and reach of annual earned media coverage in local outlets (print and online)**
- Public engagement with social media hashtags and campaigns
- **Partner connections and participation in networking events**
- Number of outreach events by neighborhood
- **Quantifying annual professional development options and participation**
- First time library cardholders as a result of outreach
- **Event exit surveys to gauge learning takeaways and overall satisfaction**
- Number of co-created programs with community members
- **Engagement and advocacy efforts for new and/or enhanced facilities**
- Quantity and quality of interdepartmental collaboration
- **Staff polls**

Looking Forward

Consistent with our core value of adaptability, our five-year plan outlines clear steps we will take today while allowing our work to build year after year. Annually, we will reflect on our progress and lessons learned to recalibrate our approach so we continually meet our community where they are.

2024

Share out the plan with staff and stakeholders for maximum visibility. Perform audits and inventories to set projects up for success. Debut a new logo.

2025

Test, experiment, and evaluate a number of trial programs. Enjoy the fruits of the second year of partner meetups and breakfasts to see where joint work can scale up. Talk to several new audiences.

2026

Fully implement the consistent brand across all formats and channels, both physical and digital. Invest in the next wave of staff collaboration and development opportunities to formalize key programs.

2027

Celebrate the ways in which co-created opportunities are becoming a normal approach to service across locations. Assess internal efficiencies and improvements made to date and plan for the next wave.

2028

Engage a cross-section of staff and stakeholders to reflect and look forward. Consider the strategic priorities and objectives. What has stood the test of time? Where do we envision new possibilities and deeper alignments?

Acknowledgements

Thank you to our Cape May County Library Strategic Planning Committee for your dedication and commitment in bringing the strategic plan to life, our consulting partners at Advancing with Purpose, and to the Cape May County Library Commission for your enduring support!

Library Commission

Will Morey, *County Commissioner*

Jacqueline Henderson, *Chair*

Barry Mastrangelo, *Vice Chair*

Pattiann Ponichtera, *Secretary*

Michael Ludgate

Stephanie Thomas

Strategic Planning Committee

Andrea Orsini, *Library Director*

Vicki Wright, *Assistant Director*

Anastasia Vito, *Committee Chair*

Carissa Conley

Aaron Day

Michaela Hamaid

Caitlin Kelly

Christine Lev

David McMahon

Laura Spencer

Jeff Trout



Come and visit one of our nine locations!



Cape May Court House



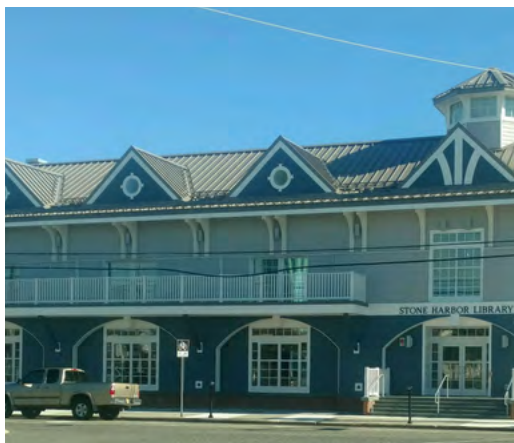
Cape May City



Lower Cape



Sea Isle City



Stone Harbor



Upper Cape



Wildwood Crest



Woodbine



Bookmobile



Visit us online at
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