



REIMAGINE, PROMOTE, CREATE and IMPLEMENT

A Strategic Plan for
Suffern Free Library
2016–2019





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Planning for the FUTURE

on a Strong Foundation

Suffern Free Library is committed to planning in order to guide its organizational growth, allocate its resources effectively and shape its thinking about the future.



Every few years, given the rapid pace of change, the library begins comprehensive planning to assess our effectiveness and recognize our achievements. As we assess our goals from the previous plan, we get feedback from residents through a survey and focus groups intended to identify trends in our community that we need to address. Our new plan to reimagine, promote and implement reflects our best thinking about the world today and the role our organization, facility, staff and supporters play in it.

This plan incorporates many needs identified by local residents as well as library service ideas that are modeled elsewhere in Rockland County or beyond. Some of these ideas have guided our thinking about service delivery, more active customer engagement, new technology uses, facility uses and new staffing models to accommodate these needs.

Suffern and local residents along with library staff and trustees participated in the conversations that shaped this plan. More than 1400 people participated in our survey or in a focus group to share their ideas for the library's future, providing us with valuable feedback about our facility, programs and policies.



A Changing WORLD

The many changes that have occurred following the last plan directly influence this plan's strategic priorities. Among the most significant trends are the following:

- People are using Suffern Free Library in different ways today than they did in years past. They are less reliant on information obtained from authoritative reference and research sources and more reliant on digital tools and resources.
- Digital literacy skills are as essential today as is reading literacy. Suffern Free Library is at the heart of the community, helping people of all ages navigate the world of information, communication and entertainment.
- Communication and search devices have become untethered from desktops, allowing us to connect anytime, anywhere.
- Suffern Free Library engages residents in the exploration of lifelong learning.
- Entrepreneurship, self-employment and telecommuting lifestyles are growing faster than other careers creating needs that differ from traditional jobseeker resources and services.
- Suffern Free Library is increasingly seen as a place of work, study, enjoyment and refuge illustrating the role of the library as a center of community life and the chief place for civic entertainment.
- Residents seeking places in Suffern Free Library for quiet study, small group conversation or tutoring have difficulty finding enough seating that is both comfortable and suitable for these purposes.
- The library will continue to balance its print collection with digital content so that residents are able to obtain the reading and information resources they need.



We Heard YOU¹

**I completed
most of my
MBA work in
Suffern Library.**

– Survey participant

**More cooking
programs and
more copies of
digital books.**

– Survey participant

**Since the move
from the old
building, Suffern
Free Library has
truly become an
integral part of
our community. I
often run into my
neighbors here—
it's got something
for everyone!**

– Survey participant



We continue to learn new things from local residents every time we ask for suggestions and ideas for the future. This time we heard from over 1400 residents through our online survey about the library and from fifty-five people who met in small group conversations. We heard praise as well as critiques about what we do and many suggestions for library services and improvements in the next few years, including:

- Renew and refresh our space so it better meets current and future community needs.
- Offer refreshed collections with more new print, media and digital content.
- Respond more actively to the needs of teens and others who may not now use the library or use it infrequently, with an expanded Teen Room, current collections, and mobile computing devices, including gaming resources.
- Increase access to small and group meeting rooms and quiet study spaces.
- Respond to changes in our community, such as increased numbers of younger, dual-income families, more non-English speaking residents and more diverse demographics.
- Play a leading role in connecting residents with each other as well as with other local organizations by promoting its place as the cultural, social and intellectual center of the community.
- Offer a variety of STEAM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts and Math) resources and programs.

¹ See the report *Suffern Speaks* detailing the community involvement through a survey and focus groups. It is available in the library at the reference desk and on our website.



- Provide a quick response to topical issues with programs, lectures and discussions to help resident's understand and contribute to the discussion.
- Increase awareness of the Library's mission, collections, programs, and facilities.
- Deliver reliable Wi-Fi and wireless printing throughout the library, with no drop zones.
- Upgrade the computers and software.
- Consider adding Sunday hours in the summer.

Add a new community room with graduated seating for performances.

– Survey participant

Fix the drive-up window so we don't have to get out of the car to use it.

– Survey participant



Our

MISSION

***Suffern Free Library, at
the heart of our community,
shall provide resources,
services and programs to
support learning and
enhance discovery so that
all succeed.***



Strategic OUTCOME

This plan will accomplish four goals:

GOAL ONE

Reimagine Suffern Free Library to meet evolving community needs and improve its ability to identify and respond to changes in the world.

GOAL TWO

Develop and **Promote** new service models that reach and excite people about the library.

GOAL THREE

Create a secure financial future for Suffern Free Library.

GOAL FOUR

Implement a renewed program of convenient, responsive, customer-focused library service.



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GOAL ONE

Reimagine Suffern Free Library to meet evolving community needs and improve its ability to identify and respond to changes in the world.

OBJECTIVE 1:

Plan for facility changes and improvements.

Actions:

- a. Accommodate individual and community needs for space to meet, collaborate, talk or telecommute.
- b. Renew conversations about use of the café area.
- c. Consider creating a separate help area for assisting patrons with the use of the library's digital resources and computer and social networking instruction.
- d. Create new tutoring, quiet study and small group meeting space in the library by removing outdated material.
- e. Start planning for larger, contemporary teen space to meet demand and need.
- f. Install charging stations for electronic devices.
- g. Incorporate the use of the outdoor area with library functions and programs.





OBJECTIVE 2:

Deliver convenient library services.

Actions:

- a. Improve the website.
- b. Offer programs to address services and resources for children and adults with a variety of learning styles.
- c. Review hours and consider Sunday hours year-round.

OBJECTIVE 3:

Deliver a wide range of digital library resources.

Actions:

- a. Develop and implement a new technology plan to replace aging devices and outdated software.
- b. Ensure reliable Wi-Fi access from all areas of the library.
- c. Provide easy payment by credit card.
- d. Develop a digital media and technology lab.
- e. Increase self check out use.



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GOAL TWO

*Develop and promote
new service models that reach and
excite people about the library.*

OBJECTIVE 1:

Make Suffern Free Library the main local forum for community engagement, topical discussion and an incubator of new ideas.

Actions:

- a. Respond to local issues and global events with relevant programs and facilitated discussions.
- b. Partner with non profit and for profit organizations in planning and promoting cultural and community events.
- c. Use webcasts, webinars and local broadcasts to extend library programs to additional audiences.
- d. Continue to create opportunities for gathering and learning in non-traditional spaces within the library.



OBJECTIVE 2:

Promote Suffern Free Library as the place for learning and personal growth for people of all ages.

Actions:

- a. Review and expand early literacy and early learning efforts to provide the most appealing and effective programs for children.
- b. Experiment with new learning experiences for all ages.
- c. Expand jobseeker services to include entrepreneurial resources, as well as SCORE collaboration.
- d. Review and expand learning experiences for older adults with consistent and routine programming, including the film series, discussion groups and other engaging formats.

OBJECTIVE 3:

Implement new methods for delivering content, collections and resources.

Actions:

- a. Offer more digital content.
- b. Assess the library's print collection, replace and refresh content, and continue to reduce collection size in specific subject areas where digital content provides better information.
- c. Develop new ways to display the collection for easy browsing and use.
- d. Provide game systems and gaming opportunities in the library for pre-teens and teens.

OBJECTIVE 4:

Provide a dynamic and interactive library experience for all.

Actions:

- a. Investigate noise-dampening ceiling, floor and wall treatments and structures for the café area.
- b. Promote the new space appropriately and market it to residents.
- c. Continue to upgrade the library's facilities.



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GOAL THREE

Create a secure financial future for Suffern Free Library.

Actions:

- a. Review annual support from library advocates.
- b. Explore local corporate/business support for special programs and projects.
- c. Explore or expand new library revenue streams.
- d. Identify potential donors for gifts related to new projects.



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Implement a renewed program of convenient, responsive, customer-focused library service.

GOAL FOUR

OBJECTIVE 1:

Create and model a new staffing plan, service standards, position expectations and skills training needed to operate Suffern Free Library of the future.

Actions:

- a. Incorporate Marketing/Community Relations into a new staffing plan.
- b. Ensure that all staff have the skills needed to provide exceptional customer service.
- c. Provide training to staff and library trustees to reinforce Suffern Free Library brand and what it means.
- d. Plan for maintenance staff to be on site during all library operating hours.

OBJECTIVE 2:

Provide meaningful and continuous communication with the community.

Actions:

- a. Use new methods for routinely “checking in” with the community.
- b. Plan, create and launch a new weekly email newsletter.
- c. Participate in and contribute to community planning efforts for downtown Suffern and related areas in the library’s service area.



SUCCESS

Indicators

- 1) Local residents rank the library as one of the top community assets in an annual survey.
- 2) All community groups are engaged in the library.
- 3) The library receives positive, consistent feedback from its patrons and the community.
- 4) Library use continues to grow according to traditional and new metrics.
- 5) The community provides the political and financial support needed for the strategic changes in the library to occur.

