

BRIDGEPORT LIBRARY

Bridgeport Public Library

Building Community

Helping People

Changing Lives

**A Strategic Plan
For Bridgeport Public Library
2010-2012**

Developed by
Bridgeport Public Library Planning Committee
With Assistance from Library Development Solutions, Princeton, NJ
www.librarydevelopment.com

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Kenya Osborne-Gant
Sylvester Salcedo
Zane Yost

Directors Emeriti

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Edward L. Kelley*
Helen Liskov
John Phelan

Library Director

Scott Hughes

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Introduction



In 1999, the Bridgeport Public Library embarked on a year of self-study intended to set directions for improving the library and the services it provides for the Bridgeport, Connecticut, community. What should library service in Bridgeport look like in the future? What roles will the library play in the constantly changing environment of information delivery and technological advances? What can and must be done to provide access to knowledge, information, and entertainment for the residents of an older industrial city? Is there a digital divide that when added to other urban realities, creates new opportunities for library service?

In 2007, the Bridgeport Public Library Board of Directors, administration, and staff confronted those same and similar questions in the need to revisit and revise their plan of service. Like many of its urban library counterparts, the Bridgeport Public Library needed to focus its attention on creating a long-term plan of service that would make the library an essential part of the city's life. Library Development Solutions, a Princeton, New Jersey, library consulting firm, was selected to help the Bridgeport Public Library develop service models that would enable city residents to obtain library service through the existing structure of a main library and neighborhood branches that reinforce the best that each has to offer.

At the beginning of the planning process—just days after the planning effort began—the city suddenly reduced the library's budget by \$1 million. Though some of those funds have been restored temporarily, the Bridgeport Public Library has undergone significant changes in the past year to its budget, staff, expertise, hours, and facilities as well as to all facets of its business. By the end of the planning process, Bridgeport residents voted on and passed a sweeping referendum to fund the Bridgeport Public Library at a rate of 1 mill per year. Now may be the best time to take a strategic look at the library and its relationship to the city and the city's residents.

Library staff met with the consultants in three focus groups at the beginning of the process to discuss their concerns and ideas for the future. A small group of library constituents made up of both some who use and some who don't use the library provided input for the plan through their participation in a series of focus group sessions in each branch.

Planning



The Bridgeport Public Library Board of Directors and staff developed this plan as part of their responsibility to plan for the development, growth, and operation of the city's public library. The plan identifies the priorities and goals to be considered by all who are involved in the funding and providing of public library service in Bridgeport: the mayor, city council, library staff, and library administrators. By embracing the priorities and goals outlined in this document, the parties can take the actions that are necessary for the public library to survive and maintain relevance during the next few years. We hope that all of those who care about the library take the time to read the plan and work with the Board of Directors and staff to make these recommendations become library reality for Bridgeport.

Staff Interviews and Program Assessment

The planning process began with the consultants' holding meetings with library administrators, department heads, and staff in small groups to learn more about the services provided and to gain an understanding of current issues of service. The meetings were followed up with a series of resident focus groups to determine the issues and challenges associated with delivering library service in Bridgeport. Current satisfaction and dissatisfaction with library service and facilities were among important topics discussed by community residents in a series of focus groups held in locations throughout the city. Library users and nonusers discussed both what they liked best about the Bridgeport Public Library and the areas where the library needed to improve to become more effective and relevant to residents' needs.

Community Advisory Group and Board Planning Committee

A Community Advisory Group composed of the library director, board members, and community residents met with the consultants to deliberate about the library's future. The Planning Committee of the board also met on three occasions to discuss the future library service for residents. During the course of their discussions, the group:

- **Identified trends**

The Community Advisory Group and Board Planning Committee assessed the community and technological trends that will affect service in the next

few years, discussed the library's ability to meet the needs indicated by the trends, and identified the strategies required to accomplish the goals.

- **Crafted a vision, a mission, and shared values**

The Board Planning Committee agreed on a revised vision for the future and a revised mission statement describing the library's renewed purpose. Shared values that would guide the delivery of library service and ensure a quality experience for those using library services were also reviewed and updated by the group.

- **Developed strategic directions**

The library board identified six goals for achievement during the three-year period covered in the plan and identified the objectives to put in place in order to achieve the goals.

Bridgeport Public Library



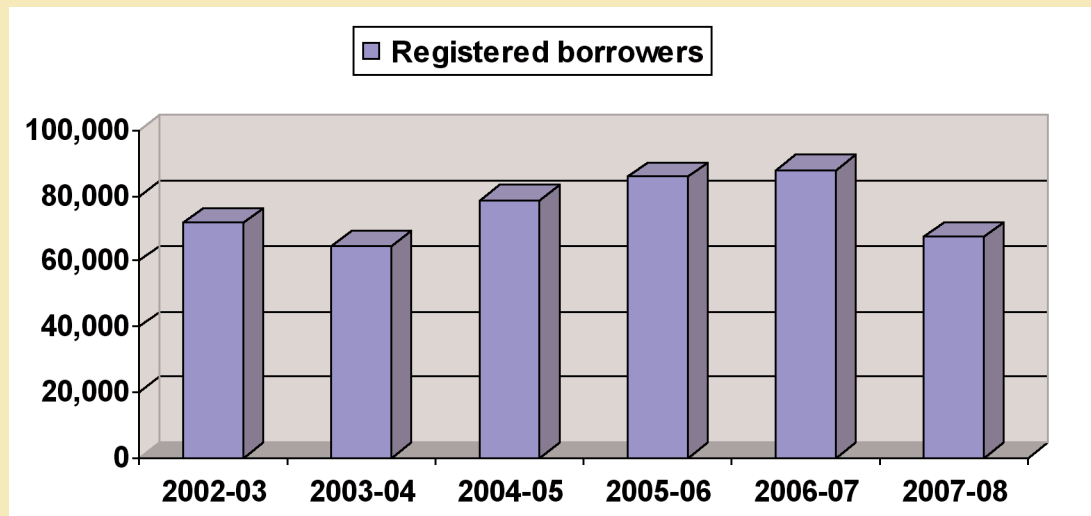
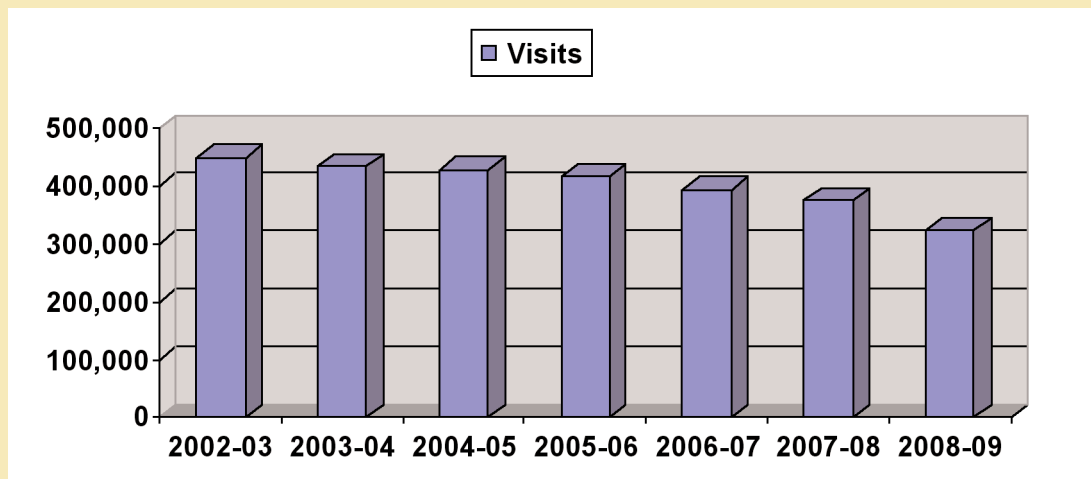
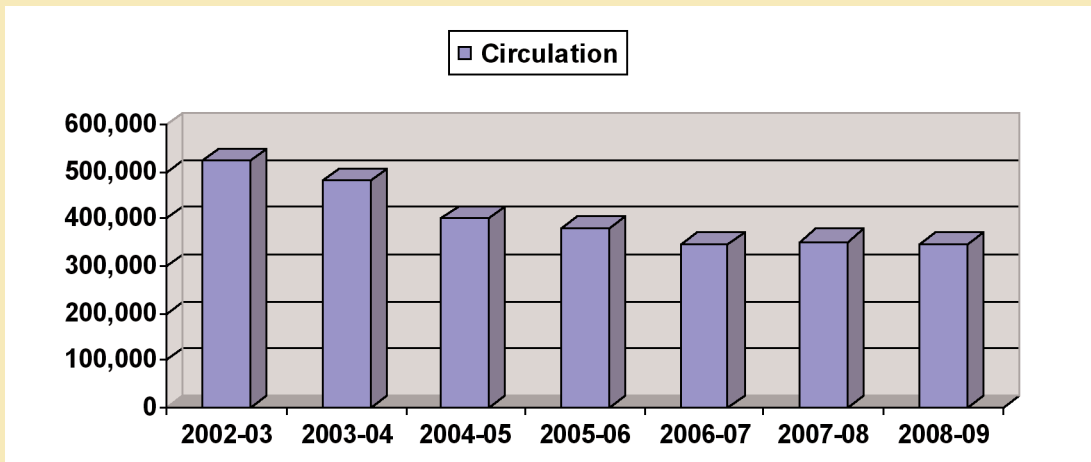
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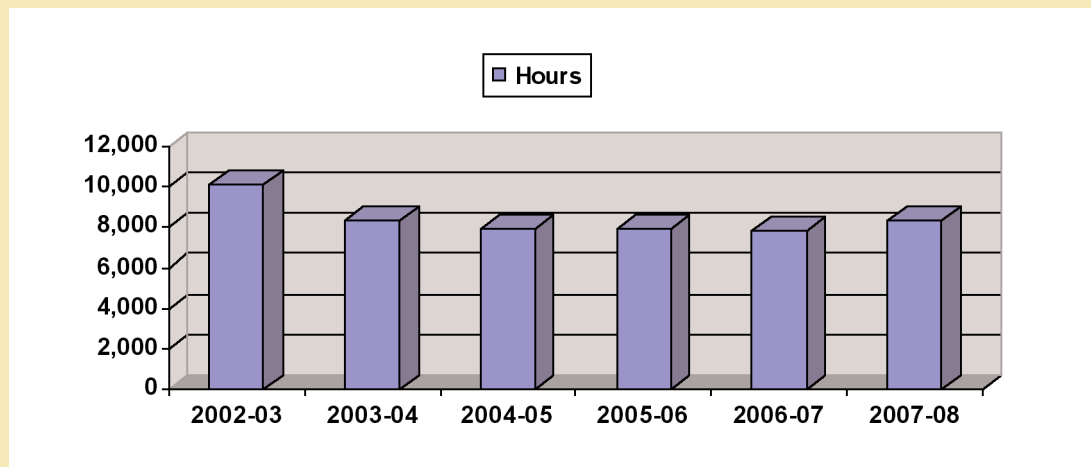
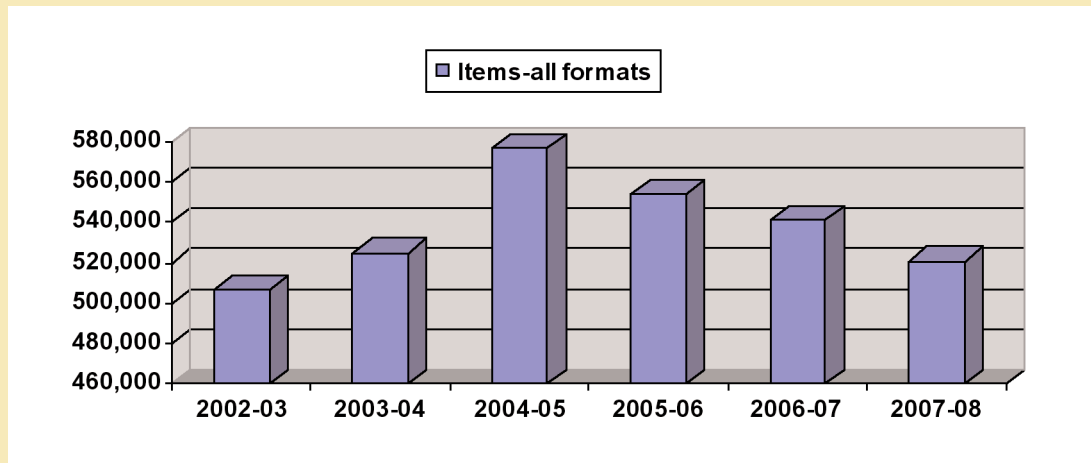
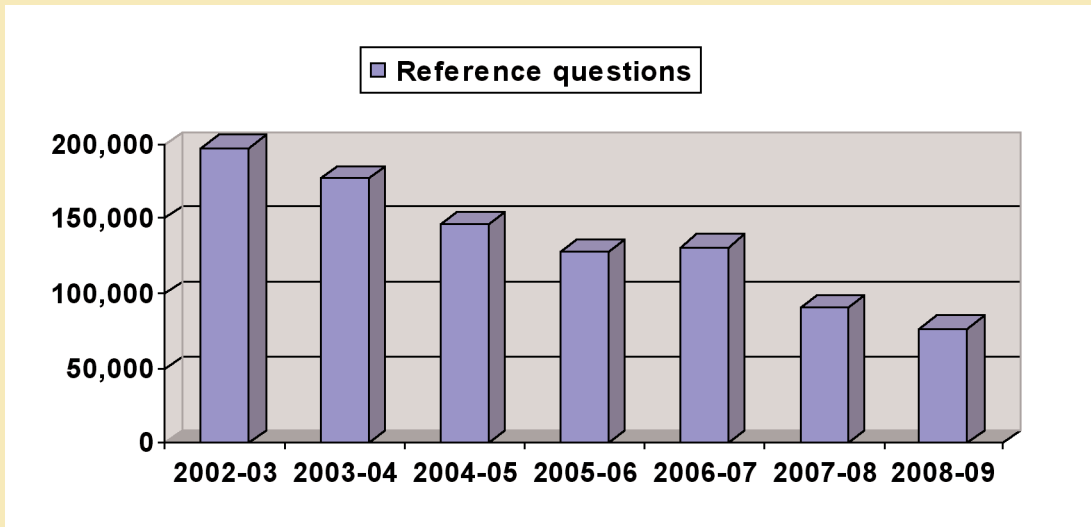
In 1850, the Bridgeport Public Library Association was formed by establishing a subscription library of 5,000 books. With the passage of the Connecticut Library Act in 1881, the subscription library was turned over to the city. The Bridgeport Public Library was established with a generous gift from Catherine Burroughs Pettingill, which enabled the city to construct its first library at the corner of Main and John streets. The Burroughs Library, which today serves as the main library, was built in 1927 at its current location at State and Broad streets. Branch library service in Bridgeport began with a \$50,000 donation from the Carnegie Corporation in 1914. Funds were used to build the North and East branches. The Newfield, Sanborn, and South branches opened in 1922. The Black Rock Library opened in 1932. Today, the Bridgeport Public Library consists of the Burroughs building and four branches located in the city's primary residential neighborhoods: the North End, the East End, the East Side, and Black Rock.

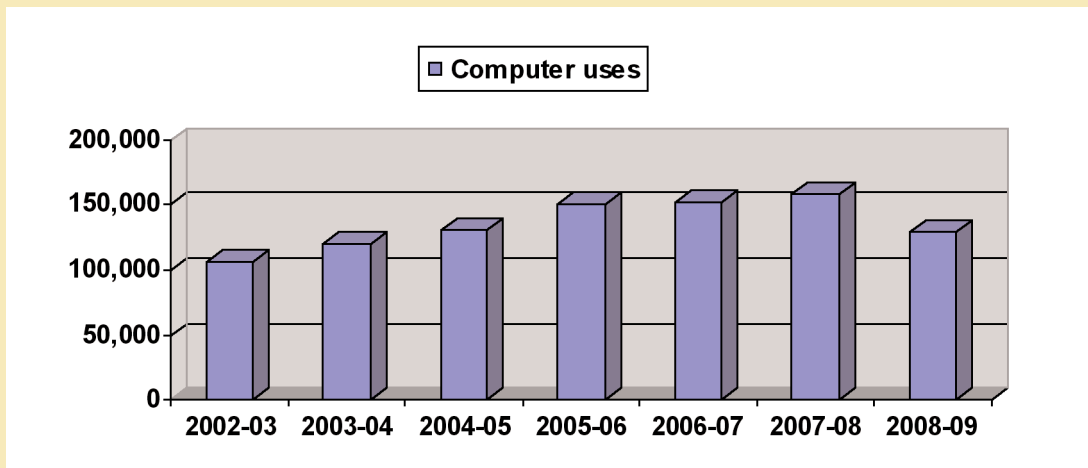
Library Use

For years, particularly before the development of surrounding suburban communities, the Bridgeport Public Library served as a regional library. With the most comprehensive collections, the largest staff, and the lengthiest service hours, people throughout Fairfield County would travel to Bridgeport to take advantage of the library's collections.

That changed with the expansion of area libraries in Fairfield, Trumbull, Easton, and Stratford; and as a result, library use began to decline. Bridgeport's severe economic problems in the late 1980s, early 1990s, and recently, beginning in 2007, have resulted in a significant reduction in library hours, staff, and services. The result: dramatic changes in library statistical usage as indicated in the following graphs.







Today, the Bridgeport Public Library is a vital library that serves an essential role in striving to meet the information and technology needs of city residents. Without the Bridgeport Public Library, many people would be unable to take advantage of the Internet and computer use necessary for everyday needs and would be unable to compete for educational success, employment opportunities, and potential citizenship.

Vision, Mission, and Shared Values



The Board Planning Committee considered the information obtained from library staff, community focus groups, and the Community Advisory Group and looked to create a renewed vision of the future. That vision not only builds on the history and strength of the library but also focuses on new opportunities to position the library for the future.

The Vision

The Bridgeport Public Library: Changing People's Lives

Bridgeport Public Library Builds Community

We want the people of Bridgeport to encounter a library system that works to meet their expectations in every way. People in our community will consider the library essential to achieving their personal goals. When they have an information need, they will think first of the library, and the library will be readily available to them either physically or virtually, around the clock. The library staff will deliver services based on community needs and desires and provide knowledge that helps people make informed decisions that can improve their day-to-day lives.

Bridgeport Public Library Helps People

Reliable and sustainable funding will support frequent and consistent programming to attract people of all ages. The library atmosphere will demonstrate that we trust our users and do everything we can to make sure they have the resources they need. Library staff, which has up to date skills and training, will be proud of being part of the Bridgeport Public Library. Every person walking through our doors will receive our best possible service to ensure a positive library experience.

Bridgeport Public Library Changes Lives

Serving as a center for community information and culture, the library will provide service in convenient community locations and in facilities that are clean, safe, comfortable, and user-friendly.

Mission

The following mission statement summarizes the library's role in the community and its purpose.

We believe that libraries change people's lives. They are cornerstones of democracy. The Bridgeport Public Library provides opportunities for residents to learn, enjoy, and achieve. To accomplish that mission, the Bridgeport Public Library offers free and open access to a relevant collection, staff knowledge, and modern facilities.

Shared Values

The following shared values will help guide the Bridgeport Public Library's staff as they deliver library service.

- We treat each other and our patrons respectfully, courteously, and nonjudgmentally.
- We do everything we can to help our patrons address their information needs.
- We support free and open access to information and library resources.
- We value the diversity of our community.
- We hold that staff is integral to delivery of the best possible service, and for that reason continuously invest in staff development.

Plan Goals and Objectives



The goals selected for emphasis in the plan respond to issues raised during the focus groups and conversations and reinforce the Bridgeport Public Library's primary roles and mission. The goals state a long-term desirable condition to be achieved over the next few years. The objectives define each goal that will help move the library closer to the accomplishment of its vision and mission. The recommended strategies under each objective suggest specific actions that will help achieve the plan's goals.

The Bridgeport Public Library will address the following six goals over the next three years.

- Goal 1: Bridgeport residents of all ages will find easy access to the computers, computer support/instruction, and electronic information they need for everyday life.
- Goal 2: All Bridgeport children and students will benefit from a new emphasis as well as commitment to them in all Bridgeport Public Library facilities, programs, and collections.
- Goal 3: Bridgeport Public Library will become a valued destination for literacy in Bridgeport.
- Goal 4: The Bridgeport Public Library will develop strategic partnerships and alliances throughout the city to benefit more residents.
- Goal 5: Residents will become more aware of Bridgeport's libraries and consider them to be vital community resources center.
- Goal 6: Bridgeport Public Library facilities, collections, programs, and staff will be repositioned to help focus on building community, helping people, and changing lives.

Goal 1:
Bridgeport residents of all ages will find easy access to the computers, computer support/instruction, and electronic information they need for everyday life.

Objectives:

1.1 Provide increased public access to technology resources throughout the library infrastructure

Strategies

- Add as many as 100 additional computers throughout the main library and branches to accommodate growing demand for use
- Consider using thin-client servers to facilitate the addition of the new computers
- Discuss with Bibliomation, Inc. its ability to assist in all aspects of adding the additional computers
- Investigate full membership with Bibliomation, Inc. since the library's Integrated Library System is nearing the end of its contract

1.2 Develop a public campaign around the theme of easy access to computers at the library

Strategies

- Launch a public relations/fund-raising campaign to support the addition of the computers
- Promote use of the new computers for homework help, employment searches, résumé building, job application, GED study, and tutoring help
- Develop a job and career information center
- Develop a GED center as part of a new American literacy resource center
- Develop a consumer health and consumer product information center
- Develop and redeploy resources into new programs that focus on homework help and after-school assistance, résumé building and job applications, GED preparation, and tutoring help

1.3 Create computer access centers or hubs in the community

Strategies

- Consider transitioning the Newfield branch and Old Mill Green branch into computer access hubs with many more new computers and a more focused and cleaner collection
- Identify other sites in Bridgeport that can be developed as library computer access centers

Goal 2:

All Bridgeport children and students will benefit from a new emphasis as well as commitment to them in all Bridgeport Public Library facilities, programs, and collections.

Objectives:

2.1 Provide increased access and programs for all children in Bridgeport

Strategies

- Develop a new, formal, after-school project to provide student-related activities in all library locations
- Develop a formal parent-child reading program for each location
- Review collections for special needs children, and outline a plan to improve and promote the collections
- Review parenting collections at all locations, and plan immediate improvement to them as well as adding Spanish-language copies

2.2 Develop a Bridgeport One Student, One Card campaign to provide a library card for every student in Bridgeport

Strategies

- Identify partners to ally with and begin the project
- Identify funds and possible funders to assist in the project
- Identify spokespersons and well-known people to act as public volunteers and voices for the project, such as elected officials, school principals, and professional authors, actors, and athletes
- Develop a marketing campaign that includes posters, media, events, and a three-year horizon
- Promote the project through local and regional media
- Investigate with the Board of Education and the Greater Bridgeport Transit Authority the mechanism of putting a Bridgeport Public Library bar code sticker on the back of every student ID card, which students could activate when they come to the library

Goal 3:
Bridgeport Public Library will become a valued destination for literacy in Bridgeport.

Objectives:

3.1 Analyze the current offering, and develop renewed or new formats to address literacy learning in Bridgeport

Strategies

- Identify and evaluate existing literacy projects in the libraries
- Review the major language groups in Bridgeport and the need to address each with literacy training
- Develop English conversation for beginner speakers of English
- Review and respond to the need for GED assistance and new American resources
- Review the Bridgeport Public Library's relationship with area literacy organizations, with a focus on collaboration
- Review ESL (English as a second language) and ESOL (English for speakers of other languages) activities in the library, and provide resources to address the need

3.2 Review the promotion of all of the literacy projects, and develop a unified message in English and Spanish

Strategies

- Incorporate the literacy message in all that the library does
- Make literacy a key topic of discussion with all library staff, supporters, and the board

Goal 4:

The Bridgeport Public Library will develop strategic partnerships and alliances throughout the city to benefit more residents.

Objectives

4.1 Aim to make the Bridgeport Public Library become a center for solutions to people's life needs

Strategies

- Identify organizations that already provide solutions for residents on issues discussed in the plan, especially on youth services, literacy, and technology
- Meet with identified organizations to present the library plan and discuss support and partnerships
- Identify statewide and other library organizations that can serve as important resources for the library, such as Bibliomation, the Connecticut Library Association, the Connecticut Library Consortium, and the Connecticut State Library
- Review relationships with all area educational organizations-such as Fairfield University, Housatonic Community College, Sacred Heart University, Southern Connecticut State University, and the University of Bridgeport-for resources in the form of interns, tutors, and speakers, as well as other resources
- Review all new and all old library programs and projects, and determine a partnership or alliance for each one for the future
- Create a program committee of staff, Friends and residents to help develop ideas for exciting new events, cultural and intellectual programs and activities
- Communicate with all existing and potential partners so they understand the library's mission and plan of service

Goal 5:

Residents will become more aware of Bridgeport's libraries and consider them to be vital community resource centers.

Objectives:

5.1 The BPL will execute this plan and build awareness, support, and constituencies for the library

Strategies

- Immediately launch a new, high-quality monthly e-mail newsletter-using Constant Contact or some other easy-to-use software product-to send to users and supporters
- Assign a staff member or volunteer the responsibility to produce the e-mail newsletter
- Develop a separate and new e-mail database of library users and supporters to receive the e-mail newsletter
- Review the existing Bridgeport Public Library identity and marketing campaign, and revise as needed to meet new challenges in this plan
- Review use of the library logo and icons
- Appoint a Community Relations person to staff to communicate and develop the marketing, public relations and outreach programs in this plan
- Install signs with new logo and colors outside each library branch to create a unified identity
- Install an LED sign outside the Burroughs Library to announce library events
- Install a sandwich board or protected sign outside each branch library

5.2 Create formats for residents' testimonials about the library

Strategies

- Buy additional domain names for an awareness campaign, such as ilovebridgeportlibrary.org
- Provide Flip video camcorders for seniors and/or teens who would then interview library users about how the Bridgeport Public Library changes people's lives, and post the videos on YouTube, Facebook, and the library Web site
- Consider billboard and bus advertising

5.3 Develop new formats to build additional funding streams for the library's service program

Strategies

- Create a 501(c)(3) Bridgeport Public Library Foundation
- Staff an independent board of volunteers for the foundation
- Develop a cultivation program to identify and cultivate potential large donors
- Monitor the 1 mil referendum result to guarantee compliance

Goal 6:
Bridgeport Public Library facilities, collections, programs, and staff will be repositioned to help focus on *building community, helping people, and changing lives.*

Objectives:

6.1 Review facility needs and make initial facility decisions for the next generation of Bridgeport residents

Strategies

- Develop a Master Facility Plan
- Begin work to identify and negotiate replacements for the Newfield and Old Mill Green branches with larger, more modern, permanent libraries
- Determine the future of the Burroughs building, and consider replacement sites for a new Main Library
- Begin using the bookmobile to test neighborhood interest in targeted parts of the city
- Increase the frequency of library use by also targeting high-activity and high-density areas of the city, such as shopping centers, grocery stores, schools, and parks for the bookmobile schedule

6.2 Create a board task force to determine the long-term future of the Bridgeport Public Library's local history collection

Strategies

- Review/audit the use, archiving, storage, handling, cataloging, and value of the library's local history collection
- Consider hiring a library consultant to help facilitate the project and analyze the collections
- Identify a realistic synergy between the value, budget, organizational investment, and cost of the collection with actual use
- Create a new mission to guide the future of the collection and its use and marketing
- Determine the asset value of the collection and the need to add or deaccession items to better match the new mission
- Consider deaccessioning parts of the collection to create a better fit and realize new assets

6.3 Provide knowledgeable, courteous, and timely service by library staff

Strategies

- Hold regular staff meetings with the director to define the mission and review the progress of the plan and everyday work
- Develop a comprehensive plan for staff development and a method to measure staff skills and competencies
- Develop a standard form to guide the annual performance review process
- Schedule an annual staff and team leaders meeting to discuss goals and objectives for the upcoming year
- Establish a cross-training program that enables staff to work in a variety of library locations