

**A Strategic Plan for Ringwood Public
Library: Connecting People, Connecting
with the World
2019-2023**

INTRODUCTION

A strategic plan is more than a wishlist or a map to the future. It is a statement about Ringwood's history, who we are and who we want to become. As longtime library volunteers, working on this strategic plan reminded us that *volunteering and teamwork* lie at the heart of community life in Ringwood.

The Board, Director, Friends, Staff and over 44 members of the public worked together for a year to create this vision for the Ringwood Public Library (RPL). The library's first strategic plan was created by input from the education, business and non-profit sectors as well as elected and volunteer community leaders. The Strategic Planning Committee listened to the community and proposed ideas through workshops, town halls, online surveys and insight from professional consultants. Much thought was given to how libraries need to evolve by embracing new technologies while continuing to offer a welcoming, familiar environment.

The plan prioritizes what works and imagines what needs to be changed:

- ★ A physical space to work and gather
- ★ A point of access to explore new technology
- ★ A hub for community and civic engagement
- ★ A place and organization that needs our financial and volunteer support

As you review this plan envisioning the library's future, we hope you will continue to see the library as central to your life. We will need community support through time, effort and financial resources to undertake this new direction. Think about what the Library offers to our community and how you can become a part of making this plan a reality. We invite you to join us in any or many roles: patron, volunteer, leader, program participant, ambassador, donor.

Amy Boyle Geisel, Board President
Karen Marcus, Strategic Planning Co-facilitator
Susan Rakosi Rosenbloom, Strategic Planning Co-facilitator

Strategic Plan Mission and Vision

Mission Statement:

The Ringwood Public Library offers a welcoming community culture where technology and print resources facilitate lifelong learning, in an evolving space.

Vision Statement:

The Ringwood Public Library will provide unlimited opportunities for discovery and engagement with innovative approaches to its collection and information.

Our New Plan (Goals and Objectives)

Focusing on Layout and Design

As we researched how to re-envision the library, a number of assumptions guided the work of the committee. We assumed that decreases in physical collections could create opportunities to use existing space in new and efficient ways. We also assumed that changes in the workplace, such as working remotely, should inform how we design physical space in the years ahead.

The library design and structure should serve as a conduit to learning and community gathering that accommodates all ages, abilities and backgrounds. The decor and atmosphere should reflect the natural beauty of Ringwood's cherished asset, its woods, lakes and mountains that make it unique.

Objectives:

- **Free up more space for community engagement.** By reducing the physical collection, we will create additional meeting spaces, lounge seating and the potential for an outdoor space with a deck or patio.
- **Prioritize a space for our community's teenagers.** This is an opportunity to design a dedicated teenage space where young adults feel welcome to participate in community life.
- **Ensure access to quiet work spaces.** There is a need for more comfortable seating and quiet work spaces as patrons bring digital devices to the library.

Expanding Technology and Education

We assume that access to technology and information will be an increasing priority and derive from digital rather than physical collections. In response to these trends, the library will continue to help its patrons navigate the e-world.

The library has made great strides in technology including enhanced internet access, the installation of tablets and the acquisition of web-based applications. With its new and user friendly website, individual tech tutoring and technology classes, STEAM programs, expanded use of social media and a state-of-the art audio visual system, the library will continue its digital transformation. Through technology, the library will provide a space appealing to younger generations while continuing to offer educational, cultural and social programming for all age groups.

Objectives:

- **Increase investment in new technologies and related equipment.** Allocate funds for WiFi and 3-D printing capabilities, automated checkout, copying capacity, virtual reality equipment and software for special needs patrons.
- **Expand the digital collection including access to online subscriptions and licenses.** Introduce patrons to more web-based databases, virtual collections of books, videos, music and periodicals.
- **Improve online connectivity throughout the building.** Regular WiFi maintenance and upgrades will continue to be a priority.

Emphasizing Community Engagement

The Library currently serves as the meeting place for over 15 community organizations that range from gardening and art clubs to scouts and political groups. Recently, the library established a Health Department information bulletin board located in the lobby. The library continues to serve as a donation center for local food banks and other organizations.

Community research shows that there are many opportunities to create deeper connections with volunteer organizations, including social services. The library will intentionally support the volunteer networks that provide invaluable services through mutually beneficial projects for the public good. Services such as providing meeting space, technology training and support and co-writing grants are currently available, but in the future we hope to expand the range of possible collaborative projects.

Objectives:

- **Deepen our connection with community groups.** Develop and maintain online and physical bulletin boards to improve public access to information.
- **Enhance communication with schools.** We will make curriculum and classroom materials available and develop programming to encourage library use for research. Other ideas include: author talks connected to curriculum, writing and book groups, integrated summer reading/writing programs and access to interlibrary loan for classroom materials.
- **Improve teen programming.** In addition to a dedicated teen space, we plan programs that could include game night, STEAM programs, art programs, music or poetry slams. A teen-specific bulletin board for volunteer and paid work will be created.
- **Create programming and scheduling to attract new audiences.** Some ideas include: informational programs on immigration rights and laws, educational lectures and career services. For children: programming during evening hours for working parents, more STEAM projects, more author visits and Boy/Girl Scout badge workshops.

Fundraising and Friendraising on Behalf of the Library

The Library has enjoyed strong financial commitment from the Borough, with a majority of our funding coming from that source. To pursue our growth strategies, we will need to raise additional funding to ensure the library's future so we can invest in new designs, technology and programs. However, the growth of the library must not be constrained by the limitations of government funds. Instead, the Board and the staff will collaborate to prioritize and expand our charitable funding and philanthropic dollars.

Objectives:

Expand the library's base of volunteers. Increase operational capacity by developing a robust volunteer program that engages adults and teens.

Increase the capacity of the Board and staff to raise additional funds for the library. Strategies will include establishing a formal development committee and investing in staff and volunteer training. To communicate our fundraising priorities, we will develop a standard case for support as well as outreach systems to identify donors, volunteers, grants, bonds, etc.

Diversify the library's funding base to execute this strategic plan. We plan to establish a campaign with short and long-term financial goals that will target individual, foundation and corporate donors. To establish new sources of income we need a comprehensive and widely supported plan to develop profitable and annual events, direct mail drives and other fundraising sources.

Library Profile

Ringwood is located in the Ramapo Mountains, surrounded by lakes, parks and forest trails. Geographically, it is about 40 miles northwest of New York City and a few miles due west of Suffern, New York. Ringwood is located in the area known as the "Highlands." It is the home of Ringwood State Park which contains the New Jersey Botanical Garden and Skylands Manor, the Shepherd Lake Recreation Area and the historic Ringwood Manor. Ringwood's population is 12,220 within an area of 27.4 square miles near Bear Mountain State Park, Route 17 and Route 287 (2010 Census).

Nestled in the forest off Skyline Drive, the Ringwood Public Library is a 15,700 square foot facility owned by the Borough of Ringwood and administered by the Library Association of the Ringwood, a non-profit entity. With a 2017 total municipal budget of \$720,499.00,

Hours open per week	57
Yearly community sponsored programs	161
Yearly attendance at library programs	2,835
Total number of items in Library collection	66,627
Items circulated in a year	75,390
Yearly library visitors	74,981
Number of employees	18
Library cardholders	4,998
Total fundraised in 2017	\$6391.00
Total Population of Ringwood, NJ	12,220
Square footage of Library building	15,770

Creating Our Plan: The Strategic Planning Process

In December 2017, Ringwood Public Library and Support Center began development of this strategic plan. As part of our process, we formed a strategic planning committee and worked together to address the following priorities in the planning process:

1. Understand information to date on the library's programs, partnerships and infrastructure.
2. Assess the program/service portfolio and summarize the desired future structure of programs and services.
3. Confirm the top three to five core future strategies that will serve as the primary focus of the organization's resources for the next three years.
4. Agree upon and document governance, human resource, financial and fundraising priorities; and
5. Submit a written plan for full commitment from the Board and staff.

A year later this process is coming to a close. Support Center, a nonprofit capacity building organization that has worked with the library for the past year, believes that strategic planning helps to foster a sense of community and engagement and brings the Board and staff together for a common purpose. It should rekindle our collective commitment and motivate us to make the plan a reality. After nearly a dozen committee meetings, interviews with key stakeholders and two community meetings, the sense of renewed focus and commitment is clear. This strategic plan is an expression of that commitment, community engagement and a new direction.



A view from the June 29th library strategic planning forum.

History

The Ringwood Library Association was established in 1959 by a group of dedicated people who had originally formed the *Ringwood Library Club*. The members of the group campaigned to create a library for several years. The offer of two small rooms in Borough Hall gave the Library its first home. By March 1960, incorporation papers were filed in the name of the *Library Association of Ringwood*. The residents responded to a borough-wide book drive and donated over 1,500 books. Volunteer and local craftsmen converted the space and the Library was dedicated on November 19, 1960. The Library Association filed for additional certification, gaining status as a non-profit organization in 1965, making it eligible for state aid.

The Library rapidly grew in size, number of books, services, and patrons. Eventually it expanded to occupy the entire third floor of Borough Hall. The Library outgrew its facility by 1968. Threatened with the loss of state aid and no room to expand, the Library was in need of a new site. The Library Trustees reached out to the community to raise public and municipal awareness. The Mayor and Council passed a bond issue to buy and renovate the Gerlack Building on Skylands Road, formerly a real estate office situated in a model home. This was to be the Ringwood Public Library's second home. On November 21, 1971, the Library Association of Ringwood proudly presented "to the people of Ringwood for their enrichment, the Ringwood Public Library."

After two close but unsuccessful referenda to bond for a new library building in 1986 and 1987, the third attempt in 1997 proved highly successful. A major public campaign by the Friends of Ringwood Library, its "Action Committee," and the Library Association of Ringwood, Inc. was responsible for creating an atmosphere of community-wide support. Gathering the necessary signatures for the Ringwood voters to place the issue on the ballot was the first step. Fundraising events, presentations to town organizations, information packets and flyers made the campaign for the new Library the main focus of Ringwood. On the night of November 4, 1997, Library supporters joined Board members and the Friends in a vacant storefront to await election results of the referendum. Over 69% of Ringwood's voters approved the bond issue!

A sign went up on Skyline Drive at the entrance to Cannici Drive—"Future Home of Ringwood's New Public Library." Groundbreaking took place in September 1998. After years of planning, the architectural firm of The Hessberger Partnership finalized the design, and construction began in January 1999. Eagerly anticipated by the people of Ringwood, the grand opening of the Ringwood Public Library was held on May 7, 2000.

As the population of Ringwood has grown and technology has broadened, so have the diverse programs and services that the library provides. Fast-paced changes in technology have made for exciting new improvements to the inner workings of our Library. While Ringwood Public Library embraces innovation and change, its dedication to serving the community's informational, recreational, cultural, and social needs, conveniently and free of charge, remains a constant blueprint for our future.

Acknowledgements

The Board of Trustees of the Ringwood Public Library thank the Strategic Planning Committee for their dedication in envisioning our future goals and objectives. Their engagement of key stakeholders and community members at the Strategic Planning Forum in June 2018, and Booking Forward: A Ringwood Public Library Town Hall in October 2018, was necessary to evaluate and anticipate the changing needs and demands of our community. Through civic engagement and discussion, survey and organization of ideas, the committee and staff will pursue higher standards in technology and services in a welcoming, purposeful building layout.

With new initiatives in place and the continued support of our entire community, Strategic Plan 2019-2023 will allow Ringwood Public Library to become a well defined public space. This requires cooperative efforts from Board, Staff, Friends and Volunteers. Input from government and educational officials will help to determine our means of success. Hopefully, with continued outreach and involvement, our endeavors will come to fruition.

Strategic Planning Committee

Elise Bedder, MLS, Library Director

Keith Timko, Executive Director of The Support Center

Amy Boyle Geisel, J.D., President of the Board of Trustees

Karen Marcus, Trustee

Susan Rakosi Rosenbloom, PhD., Trustee

Heather Manley Caldwell, Technical Services Supervisor

Wendy Sandford, MLS, Supervising Reference Librarian

Helen Hill, Friend of the Library

Amy Jolin, Friend of the Library

Eileen Manley, Co-President, Friends of the Library

Maria Menico, Community member

Carole Baligh, Treasurer, Friends of the Library

Laura Henderson, former Technical Services Supervisor

With additional contributions made by the Staff at Ringwood Public Library

