

Rockaway Township Free Public Library Strategic Plan 2019-2021: A Road Map to the Future

September 2019

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Appendix I: Survey Questions and Responses

Strategic Plan Overview

The Rockaway Township Free Public Library's (RT Library's) new strategic plan establishes a road map to guide investment in and development of the library for the next three years. This brief overview provides the essence of the library's plan, in which library service programs will be strengthened and transformed in response to changing community demographics and needs.

Our Vision

The RT Library plans to provide everyone in our community with a modern library environment that supports personal growth and community experiences important to 21st-century library users.

Our Mission

The RT Library, the heart of our community, offers an innovative and engaging public environment, as well as resources to support the cultural, intellectual, and lifelong learning needs of the Rockaway Township community.

To achieve that vision and that mission, the library will:

1. Position itself as the heart of the community, a welcoming and safe place where people of all ages gather.
2. Offer a warm, engaging environment that creates opportunities for quiet study, conversation, browsing, and reading.
3. Provide an intellectual and cultural focus for the community.
4. Offer materials, programs, and staff to support lifelong learning.

Our Values

Our values ensure that we remain focused on a set of commonly held principles in pursuit of our vision and mission.

The RT Library:

1. Supports the community's personal and intellectual growth.
2. Collaborates with individuals and community organizations to meet residents' library needs.
3. Seeks to provide open accessibility to all library facilities and its website.

4. Offers high quality and diverse collections and programs that respond to the changing community.
5. Improves the library experience by providing modern facilities and engaging new technologies.
6. Embraces innovation and change.
7. Builds community support for the library by demonstrating sound stewardship.

Strategic Focus

Library planners identified three strategic areas of focus to guide their thinking about the future in preparation for obtaining information from community focus groups, an online survey, and an analysis of library usage and demographic trends:

1. Services
2. Spaces
3. Programming

The Planning Process

The Library Trustees felt the best way to develop a comprehensive strategic plan was to involve Library Board members, the Library Director, members of the staff, and members of the community to create a 9 person Strategic Planning Committee.

This committee contributed much of their personal time and energy to the strategic planning process and to the development of the plan.

Involve the Community

Before launching the planning effort, RT Library trustees determined that to be successful, the plan should reflect the needs and interests of the community served by the RT Library. Through the use of focus groups and an online survey, the Planning Committee reached out to the residents of Rockaway Township to solicit ideas and suggestions about ways the library could become a more essential part of their lives. Library planners listened carefully to this community input, identified the most frequently mentioned suggestions, and devised a plan to improve the library.

Focus Groups

Library staff, trustees, residents, and others met in one or more of 10 focus groups or a town meeting facilitated by members of the committee. At those sessions, participants discussed their ideas for improving library service; they communicated what they liked best about the library; and they identified areas in need of improvement.

Online Survey

Over two hundred fifty residents and library users responded to an online survey about the library. Their comments and suggestions assisted with development of the plan. The survey results are available in the library.

Results in Brief

Through the library's outreach efforts, many offered ideas for library improvements. Although many were satisfied with current library offerings, they wanted to see services and facilities enhanced and expanded to meet changing needs and to provide even better service.

Suggestions from the survey included:

- New furnishings throughout the building
- More online content like downloadable/streaming audiobooks
- More programming with a wider range of offerings, times and target demographics
- Updated bathrooms and improved maintenance to the library and grounds
- Adjusted/increased hours at Hibernia

Thinking about the Future

A planning committee of trustees, staff, and community members met to review the outcomes of the focus groups and survey, review staff and board recommendations for the plan, and finalize recommendations for future library direction.

A number of key assumptions helped establish the groundwork for the plan.

Planners agreed that:

1. The Library needs to update and renovate its physical spaces.

2. Increase purchasing of digital materials and streaming services to meet the growing needs of our patrons.
3. Expand the scope and subject matter of programming to all ages.
4. Investigate new avenues of marketing Library services.
5. Reimage the Hibernia Branch and it's roll in providing Library services to the northern end of town.

Measuring Success

The RT Library's trustees and staff will annually track progress toward achieving the plan's goals and objectives and thereby determine how well the library is responding to the community. Such measurements include (1) a commitment to review and update the plan annually, (2) ongoing assessment of customer satisfaction, and (3) review of library-use metrics.

Assess Current Library Environment

Population Changes

According to the U.S. Census Bureau's Census 2010, Rockaway Township's population was 24,156. Current projections estimate the population at 24,758. The forecast 2030 population is approximately 29,960. The median age of township residents is 44 while residents 50-59 year olds make up the largest demographic in town.

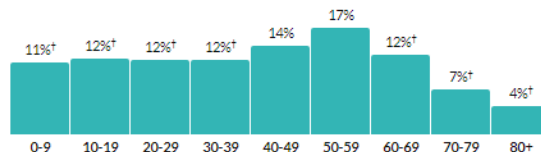
Age

44

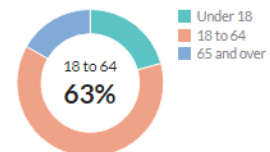
Median age

a little higher than the figure in Morris County: 42.3
about 10 percent higher than the figure in New Jersey: 39.6

Population by age range

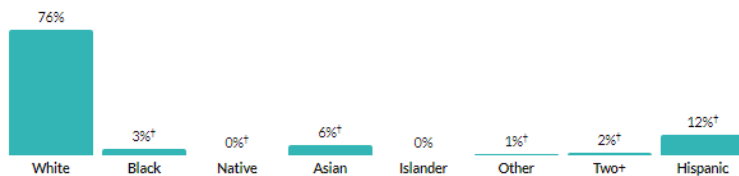
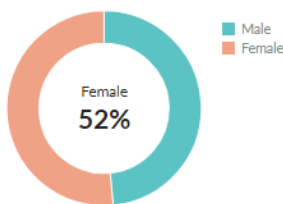


Population by age category

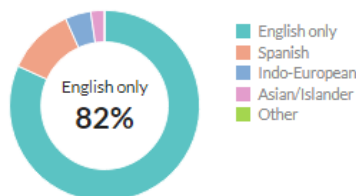


Ethnicity and Language

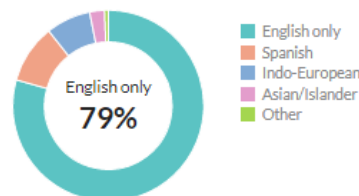
Rockaway Township is becoming slightly more ethnically diverse. According to recent statistics and studies, residents of Asian background make up 6%, and residents of Hispanic background have grown to 12% of the population. Asian languages and Spanish are spoken by more residents of Rockaway Township today than in the past. African Americans represent 3% of the population.



Language at home, children 5-17



Language at home, adults 18+



Educational Attainment

In Rockaway Township, educational attainment is above the New Jersey average of the population age 25 and older: 47.3% have a bachelor's degree or higher; the New Jersey average is 36.4%.

Educational attainment

95.4%

High school grad or higher

about the same as the rate in Morris County: 94%

about 10 percent higher than the rate in New Jersey: 89.2%

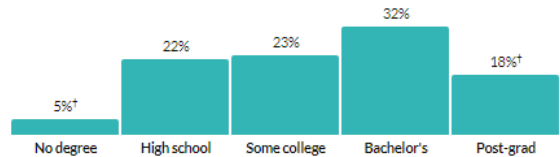
49.7%

Bachelor's degree or higher

a little less than the rate in Morris County: 52.6%

about 1.3 times the rate in New Jersey: 38.1%

Population by minimum level of education

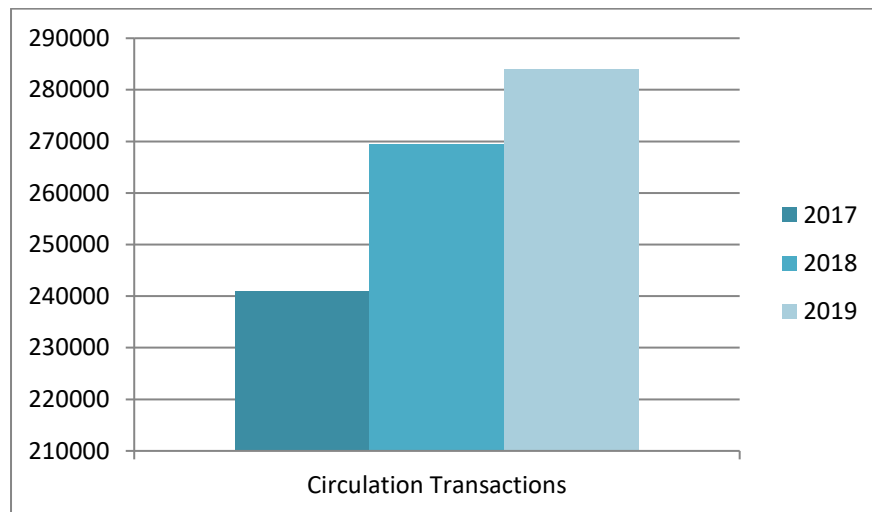


* Universe: Population 25 years and over

[Show data / Embed](#)

Library Usage Circulation

Overall library use has been steadily increasing in the past few years, according to statistics provided by the library. Although the number of adults' and children's books had been in decline in the past, they are rebounding very quickly as the staff add new collections and provide library customers with easy access to materials.

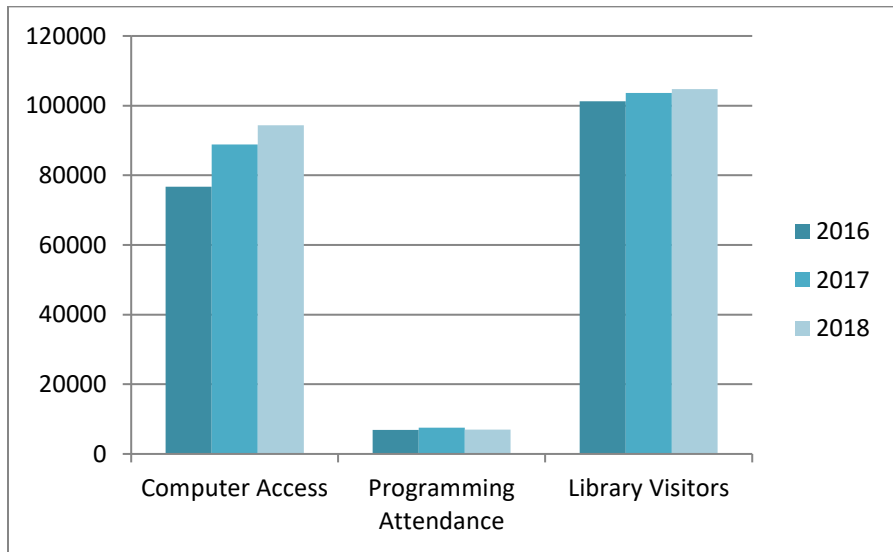


Information and Reference

Use of public libraries for reference and extensive research has changed because of easy access to information on the Web. That trend is reflected in reference statistics for both the main library and the Hibernia branch.

But a new trend has emerged. The number of computer and Internet users at the RT Library has increased significantly the past few years, bringing more people than ever to the library. Use of the library has increased, with much of that increased use driven by the demand for access to public computers.

The number of programs and participation in those programs has likewise increased among adults. Additionally, participation in children’s programming has surged, especially during the Summer Reading Club, despite seeing a reduction in the number of reading logs turned in. It is believed that with a more convenient method of logging participants’ read books, we’ll see an uptake in reading statistics.



Library Achievements

The 2019-2021 Strategic Plan will continue to build on recent library successes during the past few years.

Technology

1. A new, centralized print system that makes it easier for customers to print their work
2. A new staff network server that provides better security and the ability for staff to share information more easily
3. Addition of WiFi printing
4. Increased bandwidth that makes information available more quickly to library PC users
5. Redesign of the library's website to more closely follow current design trend and create a more streamlined site allowing for ease of navigation

Collection Development

1. Increased budget for materials purchasing
2. Introduction of new and additional electronic services such as Kanopy, RB Digital, and Tumble Books
3. Improved options for meeting reader demand such as Reader's Choice; leased books; hardcover fiction; and more just-in-time purchasing
4. A commitment to systematic and regular weeding to ensure that the collection remains fresh and that old and worn materials are replaced regularly

Building Improvements

1. Rearranged adult stacks to create new, inviting, and open space in the adult area
2. Redesigned the Children's Room to incorporate long separated non-fiction collection
3. Created new Quiet Study Space
4. Repurposed unused staff office into usable conference room
5. Added exterior storage shed
6. Enhanced community room by installing media upgrades
7. Had book drop shelter built to help keep residents, staff and most importantly, materials dry during inclement weather

Programming

1. Bi-monthly Movie Matinees
2. Information programs on topics such as gardening, space, nature, furniture appraisal, Gustav Stickley, foreign cultures, and more
3. Developed Documentary & Discussion Group
4. Topical children's programming such as STEAM classes and MineCraft sessions
5. Basic Computer classes and one on one technology instruction sessions
6. Initiated book clubs for both adults and teens

Community Outreach

1. Partnered with Vision Federal Credit Union and the Morris County Council of Education Associations, Inc. (MCCEA) to produce the Library's Annual Spring Festival attracting nearly 2,000 visitors annually
2. Increased community involvement with the library by involving the community in the strategic planning process
3. Improved communication with Rockaway Township residents such as via an electronic newsletter, Facebook, and Twitter
4. Collaborated with local historical society, the Lion's Club, and the Women's Club
5. Improved library's visibility by marching in the White Meadow Lake Day Parade, conducting story times at the Parks Lake Gazebo, hosting information booth at the Mayor's Senior Picnic, etc.

Strategic Issues

Focusing on the Future

The focus groups, surveys, community analysis, and planning committee discussions surfaced a number of critical issues that the RT Library needs to consider as it plans for the future. Many of the issues are specific to Rockaway Township; others reflect the current public library environment.

Customer-Targeted Services

Successful libraries provide a wide array of services that are convenient and easy for customers of all ages to use and enjoy. The plan will help focus the RT Library on how it can work more efficiently to provide customer-targeted services. Both self-checkout and return of library materials, one-on-one and group technology instruction classes, drop-in story hour programs, and after-school homework help are among the services that will be considered.

Library Space That Works

Creating flexible and inviting library space is essential to the library's long-term success in attracting new customers and retaining current customers. Renewed focus on library layout and design will improve library functionality and enhance its aesthetic appeal. This will enable the RT Library to provide the widest variety of community activities, from quiet reading and research spaces to group study space as well as space for programs and socializing.

Changing Technology

The impact of information technology is transforming the way libraries deliver service. Many people rely on the library as their only source of technology, and as more people find their way to the library to use its public-access computers, library staff is increasingly being asked to provide instruction and coach customers in the use of new technologies. Investing in modern, easy-to-use technology will enable the RT Library to accomplish its technology objectives more effectively.

Community Connections

The RT Library plans to work with other local organizations to extend library service. By collaborating with cultural and educational organizations, the community will benefit from expanded and dynamic programming.

Building Awareness

Rockaway Township's population is continuing to grow, with more retirees moving to the area and older adults choosing to age in place. At the same time, new families are finding their way to town. It is imperative that the library redouble its efforts to (1) inform the community about all the library has to offer and (2) respond to population and lifestyle changes. Current and potential users should know what the library has, where to find it, and how to use it.

Services to Preteens and Teens

Teens and preteens are valued library users. Consistent programming, staff dedicated to these age-groups, library resources that support preteens' and teens' educational and leisure-time reading interests and a wide variety of programs are essential to get teens and preteens thoroughly engaged in the library.

Staff Development

Great staff is vital for producing great library service. The RT Library intends to provide highly knowledgeable staff in sufficient numbers to support the level of service expected by the community. The library will invest resources to ensure that staff receives ongoing training and the skill development needed to provide excellent service.

Resource Development

The RT Library depends primarily on tax support from Rockaway Township to deliver library services. Increasing needs for additional private and public funding will require that the library explore other avenues for generating support.

The aforementioned strategic issues were used in the development of broad goals for achievement during the course of this plan along with specific suggestions for steps to assist in implementation.

Goals: 2019-2021

Spaces:

2019 Opportunities

Identify areas of high foot traffic in the library and place information/ flyers accordingly. Work to ensure that important flyers are kept prominently on display at all service desks.

Complete Quiet Study Room and host Grand Opening event in the fall.

Relocate Reference and Local History Collections to Quiet Study Room to create more open space on the Library's Main Floor.

Review priority of Capital Improvements list with Library Board.

Paint Community Room.

Improve labeling of the Juvenile Non-fiction collection making it easier for patrons to find and browse. Highlight popular sections for easy identification and access.

Redesign the Library's website.

2020 Opportunities

Initiate a furniture replacement program.

Begin fundraising via Library Foundation for Capital Projects such as renovating the bathrooms.

2021 Opportunities

Advertise library as a cooling / heating center - work with town to get grant to purchase generator.

Implement Capital Improvement such as bathroom renovation as identified by Library Board with financial assistance from the Library Foundation.

Update Children's room: new furniture, paint and display space.

Services:

2019 Opportunities

Increase newsletter publication from every other month to monthly.
Re-brand Seasonal Program Flyers as Newsletter. Investigate costs of printing newsletter.

Increase awareness of digital services by inquiring if patrons are familiar with our CloudLibrary e-book service and offered a brochure when needed.

Create Marketing Procedure to improve and unify library communications, announcements, and advertisements.

Increase Youth Services community outreach and cooperation with the schools. Have the Children's Librarian visit the schools on regular basis to host a book club and/or mobile library program. Improve library visibility to parents of students by going to the back to school nights to give out library information and program schedules.

Create a welcome pamphlet for the Youth Services Department to be given out when kids or people with children register for a library card.

Increase Children's Librarian visibility by increase desk time in order to offer more personalized Library Services to Children.

2020 Opportunities

Begin purchasing/investing in e-audio on CloudLibrary.

Increase budget for video streaming service and investigate, and recommend additional services for implementation.

Review 2019 increase to eBook purchasing to meet and assess patron's needs.

Purchase board games for in-house use at library and host gaming nights for young adults and seniors.

Identify and acquire learnable tech for the Children's Department.

Add staffing hours in the Children's Department for the sole purpose of running programs.

Add additional technologies in the Children's Room.

2021 Opportunities

Continue and expand e-book and e-audio purchases on CloudLibrary.

Continue transitioning to more tech forward materials such as streaming services, eBooks, e-audiobooks, etc.

Programming:
2019 Opportunities

Utilize Kanopy to deliver additional higher level educational programs such as Great Courses.

Continue to expand adult computer workshops and information literacy classes.

Increase 1-on-1 Technology classes from weekly to twice weekly.

Re-categorize age groups for children’s programming.

Increase programming for elementary school aged patrons.

Collaborate with local school district to disseminate information on library services and programs.

2020 Opportunities

Train all librarians working the reference desk on how to market and use all available electronic database services.

Distribute newsletters and flyers to WML, Town Hall, and other areas within the community.

Host at least one food centered adult program per season.

Host at least one multi-cultural program a year.

Launch the 1,000 Books Before Kindergarten program.

Review and update Youth Services Book Lists.

Partner with local organization(s) to provide ELL services.

Create a venue for politics to be discussed in a welcoming and polite manner.

2021 Opportunities

Create a pop-up library kit (rain canopy, folding table, sign, tablet, cart with free books) for Director and/or Staff member to set up at park, WML, community event, etc.

Contact Morris County Clerk's office to see if they will sponsor a Passport Day/Week at the Library.

Increase STEAM programming in both the Adult and Youth Services Department.

Host programs in the Arts in both the Adult and Youth Services Department quarterly.

Hibernia Branch Library

2019 Opportunities

Host Grand Reopening of Hibernia Branch

Communicate with Township to repair leak in bell tower and repair the back exit door.

Move 2 study booths from RTL to Hibernia.

2020 Opportunities

Purchase separate, browseable collection of new materials for Hibernia Branch.

Implement furniture replacement program.

Identify and prioritize physical improvements for repair.

Review hours of operation to meet patrons' needs.

Design and implement story hours and other Children's Programming.

Design and implement adult programming.

Feature the Hibernia Branch on Library's Social Media.

2021 Opportunities

Investigate cost of replacing carpet.

Design and implement teen programming.

Investigate improving handicap accessibility.

Implement improvements identified in 2020.

Measuring Success

Each year, library staff and trustees will conduct a planning session or retreat to assess their progress in meeting the plan's goals and objectives. Goals and objectives will be modified, added, or eliminated depending on changing needs and circumstances during the planning cycle. The results of such an annual assessment will be shared with all library stakeholders.

