

ENVISIONING THE FUTURE OF THE
BROOKLYN TOWN LIBRARY

A Long Range Plan Prepared for the Brooklyn Town
Library
By Christine Bradley and Kevin McCarthy

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

Introduction	Page 1
Long Range Plan Summary	Page 2
The Planning Process	Page 4
Community Vision and Needs	Page 5
Library Service Responses	Page 7
Library Goals, Objectives and Activities	Page 9
Technology Plan	Page 12

INTRODUCTION

Public Libraries are traditional sources of free and valuable good and services to individuals and communities. Books, magazines, newspapers, music, movies and access to on-line services and resources are staples of library goods. Traditional services provided by devoted, skillful and friendly staff include story times for children, senior programs, live music, lectures and film screenings. Many towns and cities use and enjoy these goods and services in the grandeur and comfort of well designed buildings that announce the value of the library and cater to the people that use it. A successful public library fuses the qualities of good, services and facility design to provide useful, inspirational and joyful experiences.

As Brooklyn is growing and changing, the Brooklyn Library is struggling to meet the demands and expectations of the community it serves. It is no longer a “dusty repository of books” but a vibrant cultural, intellectual and social center. At the same time, the current library building is inadequate in size and condition to fulfill its prominent role and place in the community. Concerned citizens have joined together to rectify this problem. They have surveyed the Community to receive input from individuals and groups to plan for a new library for the Town of Brooklyn. The Planning Consultants and town residents are indebted to the following individuals for the considerable volunteer time, talents and expertise to develop this long range plan for an improved library for Brooklyn, Connecticut.

The Citizens Planning Committee

Beverly Burke	Chris Guari	Elijah McFolley III
Joan Burvarsky	Ann Hunter-Stever	Carolyn Otto
Loretta Daigneault	Ana Klawitter	Jeff Otto
Valerie Downs	Cassandra Leach	Virginia Sikkell
Roger Engle	Mary Beth Leonard	Jane Sipila
Denise Nault	John Lombardi	Austin Tanner
Father Ron Glaude		

The Brooklyn Town Library Association Executive Board

Kathryn Stelitano	Carolyn Otto	Anna Logee
Cassandra Leach	Beverly Spink	Denise Nault
Wendy Harrington	Joan Buvarsky	Linda Mark
Laurie Nelson	Joyce Maurice	Virginia Denslow
Frank Aleman	Melody Ingalls	Marion Langevin

Long Range Plan Summary

The Brooklyn Town Library Association has identified the following Library Service Priorities for the new century to meet its mission:

The Brooklyn Town Library Association will give the residents of Brooklyn the means to continue to learn throughout their lives: to meet their recreational reading interests: to find, use and evaluate information in a variety of formats. The library will continue to be an important part of community life in Brooklyn, and will remain a free public library.

A Comfortable, Welcoming and Spacious Library

Goal: The Brooklyn Town Library Association will improve and expand library space to accommodate a variety of community needs and interests by 2012.

Objective: The Brooklyn Library will initiate and complete planning for a new library facility that will meet community needs and guide the library's development for the next twenty-five years.

Objective: The Brooklyn Library will develop a building program for a new library that incorporates the following Library Service Responses to Community Needs:

- Current Topics and Titles – The Library will fulfill the residents' desire for satisfying recreational experiences by providing new books, magazines, music and movies for adults, teenagers and children in a variety of formats.
 - General Information – The Library will provide quality staff to give expert assistance with using a varied collection of library resources that enables people to find answers to questions and information on a broad array of topics related to work, school and personal life.
 - Community Commons – The Library will serve as a Commons environment where people can meet and interact with others to engage in public discourse about Community issues, attend a program offered by the Library or other Community Groups, or participate in diverse learning opportunities.
 - Life Long Learning – The Library will address the desire of residents for personal growth and development by providing traditional and electronic resources. A key component will be a technology training center.
- Information Literacy – The Library will continue its historic role of helping residents find, evaluate and use information effectively.

A Private/Public Partnership

The Brooklyn Town Library Association recognizes the challenge of offering quality services in a new, modern facility within the reality of limited financial

resources. Consequently, the Library will seek private support for the library capital campaign to enhance the Town's appropriation. It will seek grant funding from private foundations and public entities and investigate innovative ways to increase income. A cornerstone of these efforts will be a direct appeal to everyone who lives and works in Brooklyn.

The Planning Process

The Brooklyn Town Library Association Board determined many years ago that the time had come for a new library building. The current structure is a 2,300 square foot, 180 year old building. It does not provide access to persons with disabilities nor meet the current library space needs for the town. Private and public attempts were made to alleviate these conditions, most recently in 1997. The Library was advised to identify service needs before beginning a capital campaign to build a new library. The Library Board applied for a Long Range Planning Grant through the Connecticut State Library in 2004. The Library received a \$10,000 Long Range Planning Grant in 2005, which is provided through the Library Services and Technology Act, a federally funded program administered by the State Library. The Grant paid for the services of a Library Consultant to guide the Brooklyn Town Library Association. The Consultant is a facilitator and evaluator and skilled in using the Public Library Association's Planning For Results: A Streamlined Approach methodology.¹ The Board developed and issued a Request for Proposal from a list of Library Planning Consultants in the Spring of 2005 and selected the team of Christine Bradley and Kevin McCarthy to write the long range plan. After a series of preliminary meetings, the Board and Consultants signed a contract and the development of The Long Range Plan began in September 2005.

The Library Board appointed a Long Range Planning Committee to work with the Consultants. The Committee is composed of Library Trustees, Library staff and the residents of Brooklyn. The Planning Committee established a timeline for the project and recruited community leaders to serve as a focus group of key stakeholders. These community leaders were instrumental in developing a Community vision of the future and identifying community needs. The Planning Committee and Consultants examined the library's ability to meet these needs through a strategic process, SWOT analysis: Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats. The outcome of this analysis was identifying library service responses to community needs, establishing goals and objectives for the library services, and selecting activities to measure progress. The Library Service Responses along with the Goals and Objectives are the core of the Long Range Plan for the Brooklyn Town Library Association. The recommendations developed by the Planning Committee, the Community Leaders, and the Survey of Community Residents are detailed in the following chapters.

¹ The New Planning for Results: A Streamlined Approach. Sandra Nelson. American Library Association. Chicago and London 2001

Community Vision and Needs

A Community Vision is a shared sense of the future. It should reflect the common values of the community while simultaneously inclusive of the diverse populations that make up the community.

Brooklyn today is a rural community in Windham County, Connecticut. The town consists of 28.97 square miles and has a growing population. There were 7,173 Residents in the 2000 census, which increased to 7,361 people in 2002. The town is located in the Quinebaug Shetucket Heritage Corridor and contains a nationally recognized scenic highway, Route 169. The Brooklyn Library is located in the center of town, adjacent to a "town green" with historic properties in proximity. The town has an elementary school and middle school. High school students may choose to attend Woodstock Academy of Killingly High School. 19% of the population is 15 years of younger; 44% of the population is 16-44; 37% is age 45 and older. 93% of Brooklyn's population is white; 3.7% is African – American and 2.6% are Hispanic. The town is governed by a Board of Selectmen and Board of Finance. Board and Commission members are volunteers, along with the Fire Department, ambulance and rescue squad. Brooklyn pays for two resident Connecticut State Troopers for local law enforcement.

The Consultants asked the Planning Committee members and Community Leaders/key stakeholder Focus Group **to picture the Town of Brooklyn in 2015** And imagine that the town and its residents have been very successful. What makes the town so attractive?

- Brooklyn's excellent education system has been retained. There are new and improved elementary and middle schools and one high school for all Brooklyn students.
 - Brooklyn's small town character, open spaces and rural feel are very evident. Controlled growth has occurred along Route 6 with new businesses attracted to town, especially to an industrial park.
 - Commercial development has occurred. There is a thriving shopping district with a supermarket, family type restaurants, other retailers and a walk-in medical center.
 - Community Culture, Arts and Recreational activities are a vital part of community life. There is a community complex including a library, town hall, recreational facility, athletic fields, community center, and public meeting space. Service clubs and their charitable activities abound.
 - Local Government is responsive to and responsible for the continued success of Brooklyn. There is respect for heritage, with old town buildings renovated and reused instead of demolished. Modern telecommunications via cable, high-speed broadband Internet access and wireless service

improves communication among town residents. Local citizens are encouraged to participate fully at town meetings. Professional public management enforces local zoning ordinances controlling growth while encouraging and accommodating projected development.

- Older residents are celebrated, welcomed and cared for with assisted living services when needed.

The Community Leaders/Key Stakeholders, survey respondents and Planning Committee members are concerned that some needs are not being met in the Town of Brooklyn today:

- The town is losing its rural characteristics with uncontrolled residential growth
- There is a sense that the quality of life is diminishing. Many residents endure long commutes for work and have little time for local activities.
- The local tax base remains low with little commercial development.
- The absence of a high school forces local students to be educated in neighboring communities or private schools.
- Historic buildings, especially the library, are under stress and obsolete.
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The Brooklyn Library building is over 180 years old. Library services are provided in 2,300 square feet of space with one computer with Internet access for the public. The Library has a collection of nearly 23,000 items and is open 30 hours' per week with five employees (two full-time) equivalents). As the library has grown more crowded, use has declined. The building is in very poor physical condition with ADA and local building code compliance problems.

All of the participants in this planning process and library visitors/users agree that a new library facility for Brooklyn is a dire need.

Library Service Responses

The Community Survey and results from the Community Stakeholder Focus Group meetings have concluded that the Town of Brooklyn needs a new library. This section of the plan details the library services that will enable the library to meet its mission. "The Brooklyn Town Library Association will give the residents of Brooklyn the means to continue to learn throughout their lives; to meet their recreational reading interest; to find, use and evaluate information in a variety of formats, and the library will continue to be an important part of Community Life in Brooklyn."

The identification of specific Library Service Responses provides a mechanism to Link community needs with library services and programs. The Brooklyn Planning Committee has identified, as a priority, the following library service responses for incorporation in the new library.

- Current Topics and Titles Service

The Library will provide a current collection with sufficient copies of titles in high demand to ensure customer requests are met quickly. Materials will be offered in the formats people want and will be selected primarily on the basis of local demand for all age groups.

- Lifelong Learning

The Library will provide a collection of circulation and reference materials on a variety of topics for which the residents have a sustained interest. Print materials will be supplemented, and in some cases, substituted by electronic resources. A computer training center that doubles as a research resource center will allow of multimedia and other tools for self-paced individualized instruction and learning for all age groups.

- Information Literacy

The Library will provide expert staff assistance and training/instruction in skills related to locating, evaluating, and using information of all types. The Library will offer public Internet access and training through group classes, individual tutoring, or spontaneous one-on-one training. The library will be a technology training and information.

- General information/Community Referral/Government Information

The Library will continue its established relationships with community organizations and governmental agencies. The library will facilitate the Development and maintenance of a database of local services and government

Information that enables people to participate fully in the democratic process. The library will offer print, non-print and electronic reference resources that cover a broad variety of topics related to residents' work, school, and personal life interests.

Commons

The Library will continue its historic role as an inviting, neutral and safe place for all individuals and groups in town to meet and gather. The Library will provide large and small meeting rooms and study rooms, and open public spaces that invite conversation and discussion. The large meeting rooms may have full electronic capabilities for videoconferencing and remote radio/television broadcasts.

Library Goals, Objectives and Activities

The new Brooklyn Town Library will look quite different from today's library. It will have to balance difficult financial and technological demands to flourish and grow. The Library Board and staff can now begin the journey towards a new library by using this plan as a roadmap to achieve the improvements and changes that are important to the community. The following goals, objectives and activities will be useful in developing future library budgets and service programs, ensuring the library's responsiveness to customer needs.

Goal # 1: Meet demand for Current Materials

Objective 1.1: Anticipate and respond to public demand for greater access to current and varied library materials.

Objective 1.2:

Decrease the time it takes to deliver current material and information to library users.

Activities:

Examine buying practices and purchase or lease additional copies of bestseller books and movies for both children and adults.

Institute circulation policy to obtain quicker return of library materials.

Speed up the process used to obtain new materials such as "Automatically Yours" selection programs.

Use vendor pre-processing and cataloging when advantageous.

Goal # 2: Offer library services that make it easy for the community to use and enjoy the library.

Objective 2.1 Provide additional day, evening and weekend service hours.

Objective 2.2 Provide alternate means to access library resources.

Activities:

- Develop and advertise library programs and services through a Community Newsletter and Web Page.
- Provide an on-line catalog that enables users to request materials electronically from home, work, and school.
- Promote the Library at Community Events.

Goal #3: Offer Library Services and programs that encourage children to become lifelong library users.

Objective 3.1: Provide children with the skills and materials they need to be Successful students.

Activities:

- Schedule school visits to the Library on a regular basis.
- Work with educator to determine resources needed to support their curriculum.
- Establish a kid's homework help page on the library's website.

Objective 3.2: Increase the number of youth service programs to meet changing community needs.

Activities:

- Increase the number of programs.
- Work with local nursery schools, childcare providers and home schoolers to develop off-site library story hours and lend collections of interest.
- Establish book discussion groups for all ages.

Objective 3.3: Assist parents in providing strong reading and educational foundations for their children.

Activities:

- Increase the library's parenting collection.
- Offer family reading and storytelling programs
- Establish an advisory group to work with library staff on programs of interest to youth and parents.

Goal #4: Develop a first class library facility in Brooklyn.

Objective 4.1: Increase library use by providing space for materials, programs and services.

Activities:

- The new building will enable the library to deliver outstanding services to the residents of Brooklyn
- The new building will have sufficient space for popular materials in multiple formats for all age groups.
- The new building will have a computer center where residents can obtain instruction on using new and emerging technologies.
- The new building will have comfortable reading areas for adults, teenagers and children along with quiet study rooms.
- The new building will have meeting rooms for public assemblies, popular programs, art shows, multimedia presentations. lectures, etc.

Goal #5: Ensure Community Access to the Library and its Collections through the use of Modern Library Technology

Objective 5.1: Obtain customer focused, user-friendly technology which Encourages both remote and on-site use of the library's resources.

Activities:

- Install a modern library automation system with remote access to the catalog.
- Partner with local higher education entities to create a cadre of technology trainers on an on-going basis.
- Increase the number of public computer workstations in the library.
- Contract with an outside vendor and/or establish a full-time technology support position on the library staff.
- Join an existing library automation consortium to share resources and costs.
- Activate system features that permit users to place holds on requested materials, check their patron record, renew books and other materials, receive e-mail notification, register for a card or library program online, and search for community information and data about local businesses and organizations.

Objective 5.2: Create a library web site that connects people to the information they seek.

Activities:

- Obtain a domain name that makes it easy to find the Brooklyn Town Library on the World Wide Web.
- Work with a skilled web page designer to create an easy to navigate web page
- Integrate the library's catalog as a key feature on the website.
- Work with other Town agencies to create dynamic web links.

Objective 5.3: Create a technology-training center for community instruction in the use of technology.

Activities:

- Secure public or foundation grant funding to establish a training lab with multiple workstations.
- Provide ongoing technology instruction.

Brooklyn Town Library

Technology Plan

The vision of technology for the Brooklyn Town Library is to support the efforts of Library staff to provide the means for citizens to learn throughout their lives, help patrons find, use and evaluate information in a variety of formats and continue to Be an important part of community life in Brooklyn.

We believe technology will:

- Sustain patrons in their quest to be lifelong learners
- Provide a variety of resources for the community to use and the opportunity to evaluate those resources.
- Furnish access to resources for people who do not have the materials at home or work
- Create the opportunity for patrons to remotely access library services
- Equip the staff with the means to be more productive
- Distribute information pertaining to community life, events, opportunities, town meetings and to promote good citizenship

Professional Development Strategy:

The Brooklyn Town Library promotes computer literacy for staff. The library will provide opportunities for training in house. Staff members will be encouraged to attend outside training sessions and CT State Library workshops.

Mission Statement:

The Brooklyn Town Library will give the residents of Brooklyn the means to continue to learn throughout their lives, help patrons find, use and evaluate information in a variety of formats and continue to be an important part of community life in Brooklyn.

GOALS

Provide electronic resources for the public

Expand scope of the library's website

Address the technology training needs of the library staff

Provide training for the public on the use of electronic resources

GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

Goal 1. Provide electronic resources for the public

Objectives:

- Design and build a new library that will house the electronic resources needed by the public
- Purchase electronic resources and make them available to the public

- Provide wireless network in the library

Goal 2. Expand the scope of the library's website

Objectives:

- Create a library website
- Name of the library website address – brooklyntownlibraryct.org
- Make web page efficient, quick loading, and interesting for patrons
- Create a user friendly website
- Have a direct link on page to iconn.org and infoanytime
- Purchase and train in Verso online circulation system
- Input data into Verso circulation system
- Make available library circulation system online
- Create relationship with town hall and organizations to be able to post community information on website for the public
- Create a 2.0 presence with wiki and blogs

Goal 3. Address the technology training needs of the library staff

- Provide in house training sessions in the new computer lab
- Make available opportunities for staff to attend outside training sessions and CT State Library workshops
- Have on call a technician to restore or repair equipment and explain to staff what was done to solve the problem
- Require staff to train on any new programs or databases the library purchases or receives

Goal 4. Provide training for the public on the use of electronic resources

- Design a library with a computer lab
- Survey patrons for their training needs
- Have available a device for projecting teacher's monitor on wall
- Make sure computer lab has network with a number of programs for the public

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