

**Inform★Enrich★Empower**

**RICHMOND PUBLIC LIBRARY**

**STRATEGIC  
PLAN:  
RICHMOND  
PUBLIC  
LIBRARY  
2016-2021**

*Libraries helping to build a better Richmond*



**RICHMOND PUBLIC LIBRARY  
BOARD OF TRUSTEES**

## **RICHMOND PUBLIC LIBRARY BOARD OF TRUSTEES**

Ms. Brenda Drew, Ed.D, *Chair*

Ms. Kirsta Millar, *Vice-Chair*

Mr. Peter Blake

Ms. Danita Green

Mr. David J. Lydiard

Mr. Larry Olanrewaju

Ms. Daisy Weaver

Ms. Gail F. Zwirner

*With thanks to the Richmond Public Library Foundation, the Friends of the Richmond Public Library, and the advisory groups organized at each branch library.*

January 2016



*The mission of the Richmond Public Library is to **inform, enrich and empower** Richmond's residents: to enrich lives and expand opportunities for all citizens by promoting reading and the active use of cultural, intellectual, and information resources through a dedication to excellence and professional service.*

## INTRODUCTION

The Mission of the Richmond Public Library (RPL) is to Inform, Enrich, and Empower. The RPL Board of Trustees has established five overarching goals to guide the work of the Library to achieve this mission:

- 1) Children will enter school ready to learn, and will have resources to help them succeed academically.**
- 2) Residents will have access to technology needed for school, work, and life.**
- 3) Residents will have access in their communities to resources and information for lifelong learning and development.**
- 4) Richmond Public Library's structure and operations will be improved to increase efficiency and effectiveness.**
- 5) Library buildings will be designed and constructed to provide inviting and appropriate spaces to meet the future needs of Richmond's residents.**

RPL Board's vision for the next five years is to enhance the Library's role as a destination of choice for citizens, a partner of choice for community groups and other organizations seeking greater impact, and a more active and engaging learning institution for all city residents.

In 2014, the Library completed several assessments to determine current status and possible improvements. These assessments included a review of internal data to evaluate the use of library collections, collection of demographic data for each library's neighborhood, surveys of general library users, and surveys of library computer/technology users. The Library of Virginia conducted community conversations at each library. The Library Board contracted with Floricane, a Richmond planning and consulting group, to assist with final analysis and recommendations of all of the data collected. (See Appendices A and B for overview and timeline of the strategic planning process and survey and data reports).



## FOCUS AREAS

Six key areas were developed for focus for Richmond Public Library:

- **Staff** – cultivate and train a diverse, highly engaged and future-focused team who are committed to providing consistently great service to library customers
- **Public Relations and Marketing** – develop strategies to make Richmond Public Library a destination of choice for Richmonders interested in learning, deepening their connection to their community, or accessing information about activities and services
- **Partnerships** – cultivate significant relationships with community organizations and institutions that add tangible value to the services provided
- **Technology** – ensure that technology is current, functional, and supported by trained staff
- **Board Structure and Governance** – align the Library Board and the library’s support groups with clear governance structures and clear succession plans
- **Stakeholder Advocacy** – establish meaningful relationships with key decision makers in Richmond government and the community at large



## GOALS AND STRATEGIES

The Library Board's strategic plan will guide the Library Board, staff, and the Library's support groups with clear strategies, action steps, and assessment tools to move Richmond Public Library toward a solid and positive future.



**1 Goal 1: Children will enter school ready to learn, and will have resources to help them succeed academically.**

RPL must fully embrace its role as a key learning institution in Richmond. The Library already offers many outstanding programs that target early learning and provide academic support for school-aged children. But RPL can become a more active and powerful partner, with both formal and informal learning institutions alike, to help all children succeed in school.

**Strategy 1:** Strengthen partnership with Richmond Public Schools.

- a. Branch libraries will develop relationships and collaborations with neighborhood schools' principals and media specialists
- b. Collaborate with Communities in Schools to establish a link to each elementary school in Richmond Public Schools.
- c. Develop a targeted program for all second grade students to get library cards as they transition to third grade (when learning to read transitions to reading to learn).
- d. Revive School Board member attendance at Richmond Public Library Board meetings.

**Strategy 2:** Capitalize on the success of existing programs for children offered by Richmond Public Library.

- a. Early literacy story times - Continue to build research-based content and assess the outcomes of these programs.
- b. Deepen opportunities for expanded programs for children of all ages to include STEAM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Art, Math), parent workshops, and other targeted learning opportunities.
- c. Summer Challenge – Evaluate and enhance the Summer Challenge, a component of the Library's role in reducing summer learning loss.

**Strategy 3:** Strengthen partnership with the City's Office of Community Wealth Building.

- a. The Richmond Public Library Director will serve on the City's Early Childhood Cabinet, the new policy and planning Cabinet under the Office of Community Wealth Building. The Early Childhood Cabinet will determine specific outcomes and services to be provided by the Library related to Early Childhood outcomes for Richmond City.



- b. Expand RVA Reads to reach the majority of children ages four-five the years old in Richmond City. RVA Reads will reach all classes in Richmond Public Schools preschool centers by developing strategies to reach all classes that are housed in individual schools.
- c. Provide parenting education and early literacy skill classes in partnership with the Office of Community Wealth Building's Kellogg Foundation grant.
- d. Assess the results of summer interventions and determine the feasibility of continuing these programs in cooperation with the Office of Community Wealth Building.

## **2 Goal 2: Residents will have access to technology needed for school, work, and life.**

RPL is an essential provider of free public access to computers and the Internet. In FY2015 alone, over 280,000 computer sessions were logged across Richmond libraries. Patrons use library computers to look for and apply for employment, take online classes and do research or complete homework. To keep up with demand and stay abreast of technology trends, RPL needs to invest resources in hardware and software upgrades, and also in staff and patron training.

**Strategy 1:** Establish a staff position focused on technology coordination including management of library computers, staff training, and social media outreach.

**Strategy 2:** Review and enhance computer training and technology skills for both staff and patrons.

- a. Develop standard technology expectation for library staff and provide training to improve internal knowledge base.
- b. Determine priorities for improvements in equipment and services.

**Strategy 3:** Update the Integrated Library System to meet customer expectations for a user-friendly interface with the library's catalogue.

**Strategy 4:** Redesign the library's website to provide easy access to information about the library and library services, usable on multiple devices.

**Strategy 5:** Collaborate with community partners to expand classes for the public in technology skills.



### **3 Goal 3: Residents will have access in their communities to resources and information for lifelong learning in our community.**

RPL's nine branches serve as neighborhood hubs for enriching educational programs and community connections. However, many citizens are not aware of all that is offered. Communicating more effectively what RPL offers and developing strong partnerships with other community organizations is essential to improving the Library's impact.

**Strategy 1:** Consider establishment of a staff position dedicated to developing and managing partnerships to better serve customers and engage the community.

**Strategy 2:** Each branch library will develop a neighborhood-specific community action plan to address unique needs/interests of their customers.

**Strategy 3:** Communicate effectively what the library offers as a center of learning.

- a. Develop a communications plan including resources needed and timeline for implementation.
- b. Develop new ways to connect to families and students (social media; presence at local events) to ensure opportunities for community input and engagement.

**Strategy 4:** Evaluate methods to provide workforce development support to meet community needs.

**Strategy 5:** Continue and expand Sunday afternoon library access.





## **4 Goal 4: Richmond Public Library’s structure and operations will be improved to increase efficiency and effectiveness.**

The groups established to support RPL include The Board of Trustees, The Richmond Public Library Foundation, the Friends of the Richmond Public Library, and branch-level Advisory Councils. These entities should be better aligned in their work to maximize their ability to guide RPL in achieving its mission. In addition, cultivating and supporting staff to provide consistently great service to patrons is an essential component of improving overall operations. A diverse, highly engaged and focused team of employees is vital for operational efficiency.

### ***Governance:***

**Strategy 1:** Ensure the Library Board members, Library Foundation, Friends, and other support groups are trained in the full scope of their responsibilities and duties and how they interconnect.

- a. The Library Board will review its own policies and procedures, to ensure clear understanding of expectations for the Library Director and Board accountability.
- b. The Library Board will review the alignment of responsibilities of the Foundation, Friends, and other related support groups.
- c. Create talking points about library activities for Board members to provide a consistent RPL message.
- d. Each body should ensure that orientation is provided to new members.
- e. Research and evaluate the best structure for branch-specific advisory councils that reflect neighborhood leadership (civic organizations, schools, business associations), and establish these at each library.
- f. Develop a succession plan for membership for the Library Board, Library Foundation, and Friends of the Library.



**Staff:**

**Strategy 1:** Complete development of the Library’s READ (Respect, Engage, Anticipate, Deliver) Customer Service model (See Appendix C).

- a. Assess current practice and develop steps to incorporate READ expectations for good customer service into regular performance evaluations.
- b. Plan continual training and reinforcement through annual Staff Development Day, New Employee Orientation, and related training opportunities.

**Strategy 2:** Develop an improved new employee orientation for all staff, and implement a regular schedule for this orientation.

**Strategy 3:** Prioritize staff training to improve communications; customer service; technology and digital literacy; early literacy; and unified team approach to library operations.

**Strategy 4:** Develop program-specific positions and structure to improve overall services and system-wide planning and supervision, to include children's services; adult services; technology; marketing and communications.



**5 Goal 5: Library buildings will be designed and constructed to provide inviting and appropriate spaces to meet the future needs of Richmond's residents.**

Richmond Public Library branches are some of the most used public buildings in the city. With the City's investment in the Library's capital improvements, all of the branches have either been fully renovated or have renovation planning in process and moving toward completion. The Library will continue to maintain and enhance its physical spaces so that all branches remain comfortable, welcoming places for patrons to read, study, convene, create, and learn.

**Strategy 1:** Complete the renovation of all existing library buildings.

**Strategy 2:** Develop and fund exterior repairs for the Main Library and for proposed changes to the Main Library to include teen space, training space, "makerspace" options,<sup>1</sup> and any other future space needs.

**Strategy 3:** Participate in the City of Richmond Master Plan revision to incorporate library improvements into the City's Master Plan and obtain data relevant to determining priorities for Phase Two of the RPL Facility Master Plan for building expansion.

**Strategy 4:** Evaluate the need for a complete master plan for the Main Library.



<sup>1</sup> "Makerspace" refers to a workspace that is collaborative, creative, and do-it-yourself in its orientation. In other words a place to create and learn. 3D printers have been a component of many of these kinds of spaces, but they include other types of technology and electronics, as well as craft and art materials.