

Palmer Public Library



Long Range Plan

2013 — 2018

Today's Challenge ~ Tomorrow's Opportunity

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*Prepared by the Strategic Planning Committee
of the
Palmer Public Library Board of Directors*



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Mission Statement

Committed to its role as a community center, the Palmer Public Library provides a gathering space and a variety of materials to meet the personal, educational and cultural needs of its patrons in a safe and comfortable setting. In partnership with other local organizations, the library encourages and supports a love of reading and life-long learning with attention to the changing needs of the community.



Methodology

The Strategic Planning Committee, a standing committee of the Library Board of Directors, authorized a strategic planning process to address the period FY2013—FY2018, using the Public Library Association's *Planning for Results* model. The process is based in an examination of community vision and needs, and draws heavily on the thoughtful participation of library users as well as non-users, and the library staff. The board engaged a strategic planning consultant, Cheryl Bryan, to assist in planning and conducting forums and meetings. This work was accomplished from March through December 2012, as follows:

- ◇ Community Forum: March 31
- ◇ Staff Development Meeting: April 23
- ◇ Community Forum: April 28
- ◇ Staff Development Meeting: May 5
- ◇ Strategic Planning Committee Meeting: June 23
- ◇ Staff Development Meeting: November 6
- ◇ Strategic Planning Committee Meeting: December 1

Citizens, town officials, educators, and business owners were invited to attend the March 31st community forum through newspaper press releases, the library website, and invitations via USPS mail. Twenty (20) citizens attended the first forum. The library director (N. Menard) gave a brief presentation on current library trends and pertinent background information about the library. Ms. Bryan provided an outline of the *Planning for Results* process and introduced the thirteen (13) service response categories. The participants then identified the current strengths and weaknesses of the library, and the potential opportunities or threats that affect achieving the ideal future (SWOT). Finally, the group made a preliminary selection of future library service priorities, based upon their determination of the community's needs.

On April 23rd and May 5th, Ms. Bryan met with the library director (N. Menard) and staff to conduct a SWOT analysis; discuss their professional concerns and their perception of the library's needs; and to obtain their input in regard to the plan's goals and objectives.

At the April 28th community forum, the participants reviewed the preliminary service responses from

the first forum, learned how the adoption of these service responses would affect current library services and resource allocation, and then made the final selection of five (5) service responses to recommend to the Library Board of Directors:

Connect to the Online World: Public Internet Access Residents will have high-speed access to the digital world with no unnecessary restrictions or fees to ensure that everyone can take advantage of the ever-growing resources and services available through the Internet.

Satisfy Curiosity: Lifelong Learning Residents will have the resources they need to explore topics of personal interest and continue to learn throughout their lives.

Success in School: Homework Help Students will have the resources they need to succeed in school.

Create Young Readers: Early Literacy Children from birth through five will have programs and services designed to ensure that they will enter school ready to learn to read, write, and listen.

Understand How to Find, Evaluate, and Use Information: Information Fluency Residents will know when they need information to resolve an issue or answer a question and will have the skills to search for, locate, evaluate, and effectively use information to meet their needs.

Ms. Bryan met with the Strategic Planning Committee on June 23rd to discuss and finalize the plan's goals and objectives for the five (5) service response priorities, based on the information generated by the community forums.

On November 6th, Ms. Bryan facilitated a third meeting with the staff and the Library's newly appointed director (D. Miller) to discuss activities related to the goals and objectives decided upon by the Strategic Planning Committee. Break-out sessions were held to brainstorm the activities for each goal, which were then finalized in a group collaboration.

The goals, objectives, and activities component of the long range plan was presented by Ms. Bryan and the library director (D. Miller) at the Strategic Planning Committee meeting on December 1st. The Action Plan was reviewed and approved by the Strategic Planning Committee; the completed long range plan was presented to the full Library Board of Directors for approval on December 13th.

The plan document was developed from these meetings and forums, and written as a group effort by the library director (D. Miller) and staff, with review and input from Strategic Planning Committee members.

Strategic Planning Committee Members

David Droz, Chair
Charles Blanchard, Town Manager
Steve Bobowicz
John DiNuovo, Board President
Patricia Donovan
Walter Haggerty
Michael Moran

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Alphonse Murray, Jr.
Eleanor Szlachetka
Marion C. Stephenson
Deborah Thompson
Diane Warnock-Graper
Kim O'Donnell

Library Staff

Dorene Miller, Library Director
Mary Bernat, Assistant Director
Victoria Knolton, Business Manager
Sandra Burke
Gloria Byrnes
Amy Golenski
Stephanie Maher
Krista Navin
Helene O'Connor
Christine Reim
Michele Soares

Pages

Sourpouhie Varjabedian

This long range plan was approved by the Palmer Public Library Board of Directors at the December 13, 2012, meeting.



Community Profile

Located in south central Massachusetts, Palmer is bordered by Monson to the south, Wilbraham and Ludlow to the west, Belchertown and Ware on the north, and Warren and Brimfield on the east. It is situated 15 miles east of Springfield and 35 miles west of Worcester. A total area of 32.021 square miles consists of land area making up 31.531 square miles and .49 square miles of water. Being an exit on the Massachusetts Turnpike offers the town a competitive edge for both residential and commercial development.

The town is divided into four separate and distinct villages: Depot Village, Thorndike, Three Rivers, and Bondsville. Four separate water districts, three separate fire departments and four separate village centers characterize the town. Palmer's villages developed distinctive qualities in the eighteenth century, and by the nineteenth century when two rail lines, and a trolley line opened the town to population growth, newcomers generally settled in the villages according to preference. The Western Railroad, later to become the Boston & Albany, connected Palmer to Boston and New York while the New London Northern Railroad, running from New London to Vermont, connected Palmer with the water shipping ports to the south. As rail transportation grew, Palmer came to be known as the "Town of Seven Railroads" and is still a favorite spot for rail enthusiasts who come to watch trains pass by the Palmer Depot. The railroad station, designed by architect Henry Hobson Richardson, has been restored to its earlier elegance and is now the home of the Steaming Tender Restaurant. Celebrating Palmer's rich tradition, the Palmer Public Library Railroad Advisory Board, appointed by the Board of Directors in 2004, manages and acquires material for a rail history collection housed in the library's Railroad Research Room.

Palmer was incorporated as a town in 1775. A Board of Selectmen, Executive Secretary, and open town meeting shaped the town government until the adoption of a new town charter in April 2004. The new administration took effect on January 1, 2005, with a nine member Town Council and Town Manager form of government.

In 1985 the Massachusetts Department of Education developed classification of types of communities known as the "Kind of Community Classification." The seven classifications include Economically Developed Suburbs, Growth Communities, Residential Suburbs, Resort/Retirement/Artisan, Rural Economic Centers, Small Rural Communities, and Urbanized Centers. Palmer has been classified a Rural Economic Center, described as a historic manufacturing and commercial community with moderate levels of economic activity.

The Palmer Public Schools serve approximately 1,930 students at the Old Mill Pond Elementary School, Converse Middle School, and Palmer High School. In addition, approximately 650 students from eight area communities attend Pathfinder Regional Vocational Technical High School.

Additional demographic information follows:

POPULATION:

| | | | |
|-------------|---------------|--------------|-------------|
| 2010 census | 12,140 | Female 6,098 | Male: 6,042 |
| Race | 95.5% White | | |
| | 1.1% Black | | |
| | .9% Asian | | |
| | 2.4% Hispanic | | |
| Median age | 43.5 | | |

HOUSEHOLD INCOME:

| | | | |
|--|----------|-------|--|
| Median household income | \$50,864 | | |
| Percent of households with income of \$100,000 or more | | 14.9% | |
| Unemployment | 8% | | |
| Poverty rate | 11.5% | | |

EDUCATION:

| | | | |
|---|-------|-------|--|
| Percent of population age 25 and over with: | | | |
| High school diploma (including GED or higher) | | 88.5% | |
| Bachelor's degree or higher | 18.8% | | |



Library Profile

The Palmer Public Library, prominently located in downtown Palmer, has been a community center since 1977 when the A&P Supermarket was renovated to house the library. A 100-person capacity community room offered the town an adequate venue for meetings and programs, and the collection size grew to 70,000 items by the late 1990s.

In 1998 a \$350,000 challenge grant from Gladys and Robert Sullivan provided the impetus for a building expansion project which resulted in tripling the Palmer Public Library's space. A \$1,663,800 Construction Grant awarded by the Massachusetts Board of Library Commissioners, a \$2,765,200 Town Appropriation, and over 1.5 million dollars in fundraising financed the 30,000 square foot addition and renovation. On February 22, 2005, the new Palmer Public Library opened its doors to the public following five years of planning and 2-1/2 years of construction.

The new library offers a wide variety of programs and services available to all ages from birth to senior citizens. Story hours, crafts, book clubs, writing workshops, summer reading, and innumerable special programs offer entertainment and enrichment opportunities for the public.

In addition to fiction and non-fiction books, the library's collection includes videos, DVDs, music CDs, books on tape, books on CD, Playaways, and a large selection of periodicals. Books, audio books, and videos are downloadable through the public access catalog. The Youth Services Department circulates theme-related kits, and museum passes offer free or discounted admission to thirteen New England museums.

The library's four meeting rooms and Imagination Station—the children's programming room—provide meeting space for local businesses, organizations, town committees, and service providers.

Based in the library, Top Floor Learning, Inc., and River East School-to-Career, Inc., reinforce the library's commitment to lifelong learning. In addition to Adult Basic Education and English as a second language, Top Floor Learning offers a multi-faceted program of workshops and classes encompassing health, leisure, and life skills. Interests ranging from computer classes and business basics to genealogy to arts and crafts are served through this creative, unique organization. Addressing the needs of students, River East School-to-Career gives participants the academic, technical, and employability skills necessary to compete in higher education and high performance workplaces. The library benefits from the initiatives supported by these innovative organizations.

In 2004, in order to preserve and promote Palmer's rich history as the "Town of Seven Railroads," the Board of Directors established a Railroad Advisory Board whose mission is to build the rail history collection. The Railroad Research Room holds materials that attract enthusiasts from throughout New England and beyond. In addition, the Quaboag Valley Historical Room offers local history and genealogy resources.

In its commitment to school/library collaboration, the library has joined with the three local public schools to share resources through the Palmer Affiliated Library System (P.A.L.S.). Pooled funds purchase multiple online databases at considerable cost savings. The Old Mill Pond Elementary School, Converse Middle School, and Palmer High School share subscriptions to online resources which are available both in-house and by remote access. Extensive coverage includes medical, automotive, literature, history, and science resources.

In addition to 46 computers available to the public, the library offers wireless access throughout the building and in the Town Square, a café area where patrons can enjoy food and beverages. Internet access is also available in four meeting rooms and a computer projector is ceiling-mounted in the Community Room for presentation purposes.

The library's presence in the business community has been strengthened through its affiliation with the Palmer Downtown Partnership and the Quaboag Valley Chamber of Commerce. As a member of these organizations, the library has shared an active role in town-wide events and received substantial support from local businesses.

Through its membership in C/W MARS (Central Western Massachusetts Automated Resource Sharing), the library conducts its daily operations, circulating materials throughout Massachusetts. In addition to circulation provided to in-library visitors, staff prepares an average of 60—100 items per day for delivery to C/W MARS members beyond Palmer.

In 2005, changing library service and an aging bookmobile required adjustments in our outreach services. Purchased in 1972, the Palmer Public Library Bookmobile enjoyed a long history of visits to village neighborhoods, schools, and daycare centers. After traveling more than 47,000 miles in 33 years, the bookmobile was retired in March 2005, but outreach services have continued through the purchase of a Ford Econoline van, funded through private donations. The Rotary Club assisted by generously funding the customization of this new library-on-wheels, which continues to visit nursing homes, assisted living centers, and our homebound patrons.

The Library Loft used book store, located at Schoolhouse Commons, is managed by a team of dedicated volunteers and continues to generously support library programs and services and the *Seasons* newsletter through its fundraising efforts.