

Report to the Board of Trustees:

QUEENS LIBRARY STRATEGIC PLAN
2018 – 2023

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OUR STRATEGIC PLANNING PROCESS

The Strategic Plan is the culmination of a yearlong, broad and inclusive process to create a vision for Queens Library and the role it will play over the next five years. A guiding principle during this process was the engagement of staff, elected officials, the Board of Trustees, customers, and the community in the development of a transformative plan that best positions Queens Library to meet the needs of the most diverse population in the nation.

The plan reflects information gathered through an analysis of current programs and services, demographic data and trends, and feedback and insights obtained from surveys, community conversations, a dedicated webpage, and in-depth focus groups and strategy sessions held with staff and other stakeholders.

A Strategic Plan Management Committee met regularly to provide direction throughout the project. The process resulted in the following Strategic Plan, including a revised mission statement that defines our purpose, a vision statement that is bold and inspirational, a set of core values, five overarching goals focused on achieving our vision, and the strategies that will guide the work to meet these goals over the next five years.

A BROAD AND INCLUSIVE PROCESS

- All-staff kick-off meeting
- Stakeholder surveys:
 - Staff
 - Community (in 10 languages)
 - Friends of Queens Library
 - Elected Officials
 - Board of Trustees
 - Queens Library Foundation Board of Directors
- Dedicated webpage and social media outreach
- Community Conversations: Central, Elmhurst, Flushing, Glen Oaks, Peninsula, Sunnyside
- Staff Focus Groups: Customer Service, Children’s Services, Safety and Security, Facilities, Teen Services, Technology, Queens Library Foundation
- External Focus Groups: Serving New Immigrants; Serving Older Adults; Friends of Queens Library
- Board of Trustees Focus Groups
- Staff Strategy Sessions
- Regular Strategic Plan Management Committee Meetings

MISSION, VISION, AND VALUES

MISSION STATEMENT

Queens Library transforms lives by cultivating personal and intellectual growth and by building strong communities.

VISION STATEMENT

Our vision is a vibrant, informed, cohesive, and empowered society.

VALUES

Inclusion: Queens Library welcomes and serves everyone.

Access: We provide free information, programs, and services that are open to all.

Intellectual Freedom: We uphold the right to privacy and the right to seek, access, and express diverse points of view.

Customer Service: We care about the people we serve and strive to deliver exceptional experiences.

Innovation: We encourage organizational and staff innovation that adapts to emerging needs.

Integrity: We are committed to transparency and accountability.

Respect: We treat our customers, staff, and diverse communities with respect and courtesy.

Excellence: We hold ourselves to the highest standards in everything we do.

STRATEGIC GOALS

1. Advance literacy and lifelong learning through outstanding collections, programs, and services
2. Deliver exceptional customer experience with world-class staff
3. Strengthen Queens Library's role as the center of community life
4. Expand and facilitate access to enhanced digital content and technology
5. Provide inspiring, safe, and functional spaces for the public and staff

GOAL 1: Advance literacy and lifelong learning through outstanding collections, programs, and services

What We Heard

- Customers surveyed rate providing materials as the most important service offered by Queens Library and the top area that should receive additional investment.
- The lack of sufficient collection material was cited more by 43% of customer survey respondents as one of the biggest challenges when visiting the Library.
- 15% of customers surveyed are extremely satisfied with the programs and services that the library provides, 43% are very satisfied, and 36% are somewhat satisfied.
- Customers who are immigrants rate adult education and job skills and training as the most important services.

“Teens are the invisible customers in most locations. A cultural change is needed. Our message has to be that teens matter.” – *Staff Focus Group*

“Although schools offer support, the library is a true extension of what it means to be a lifelong learner.” – *Sunnyside Community Conversation*

“The Library's role in providing access to information and teaching information literacy in all its forms is paramount.” – *Community Survey*

“We need more large print books and materials focused on issues for older adults.”
– *Serving Older Adults Focus Group*

“We need to be innovative and creative to develop new programs to meet underserved and unserved populations including teens and tweens and new immigrants and to draw them into the library.” – *Board of Trustees Focus Group*

Strategic Initiatives

- Build a vibrant collection that supports diverse community needs and the joy of discovery
 - Provide user-friendly access to enhanced digital content and e-books
 - Ensure that collections reflect the cultural and language needs of a diverse population
 - Invest resources into building additional and varied collections
- Align programs and services with customer interests and needs
 - Develop community-based needs assessments and demographic data to help guide service delivery
 - Deepen our ability to evaluate program and service outcomes
 - Provide a system-wide “language line” to facilitate interaction with non-English-speaking customers
- Provide learning opportunities that advance personal growth and educational and professional development
 - Strengthen collaboration with educational, cultural, and community-based institutions and programs to expand Queens Library’s programmatic footprint
 - Establish the Library as a key resource for college preparation, readiness and career counseling
 - Facilitate access to e-learning and interactive distance learning tools
 - Ensure programs and services to engage immigrants and address their unique needs
 - Emphasize family literacy programs in which parents and caregivers and their children experience shared learning
 - Create welcoming and relevant programming to attract and retain teens
 - Enhance connections to information and service resources for a growing older adult population

GOAL 2: Deliver exceptional customer experience with world-class staff

What We Heard

- Customers surveyed rate library staff and assistance among the top three most important services offered by Queens Library.
- 35% of customers surveyed rated the quality and helpfulness of Queens Library staff as excellent, and 36% rated it as very good.
- Customers surveyed valued research assistance, information about programs and services, and computer assistance as the most important help offered by staff.
- The majority of Queens Library staff want more training and tools to better serve customers.
 - 82% want more technology training
 - 73% want more customer service training

“The staff is extremely courteous. If I look lost, someone always comes to help me. The moment I approach the desk someone comes from behind it to address me.” – *Flushing Community Conversation*

I have never come here without someone offering to help me. If I ask for a book by a particular author they get it for me even if they don't have it here.” – *Sunnyside Community Conversation*

“I love working here. Customer service is our way of making the world a better place – at least for the moment.” – *Staff Focus Group*

“We should treat staff as customers as well. It's all about relationships and meeting the needs and interests of people.” – *Staff Focus Group*

“Everything we do should be through the eyes of customer service.” – *Board of Trustees Focus Group*

Strategic Initiatives

- Implement customer service standards and best practices
 - Develop system-wide customer service standards, policies, and procedures to ensure optimum service levels at every location
 - Ensure staff duties and responsibilities reflect current service needs
- Build opportunities for staff engagement and recognition
 - Develop an ongoing system to acknowledge excellence
 - Identify opportunities to increase staff engagement and utilization
 - Enhance internal communications to provide robust information sharing and interdepartmental collaboration
- Expand staff training and development opportunities
 - Provide training modules that enhance core competencies and support career advancement
 - Measure and support successful completion of enhanced training to foster excellence in customer service
- Actively recruit the best qualified candidates to join the Queens Library team
 - Expand national and international search opportunities

GOAL 3: Strengthen Queens Library's role as the center of community life

What We Heard

- Residents depend on Queens Library not only for educational and personal growth, but also to connect to government and community resources, socialization opportunities, and cultural offerings.
- Customers, staff, and elected officials view the role of Queens Library as a vital center of community life that goes beyond the traditional library to include supplemental education, technology, and culture.
- Concerts and performances were the programs most attended by surveyed customers and were the most valued programs along with library events such as book talks.
- 98% of customers surveyed think the library plays an important role in the community.

"The Library is the community's treasured resource." – *Community Survey*

"Nothing can replace the library. It is one of the first contact points for people in the community, from young children to new immigrant to older people and teens."

– *Community Survey*

"After retirement I didn't know what to do. But I walk here for exercise, and now I am a volunteer." – *Glen Oaks Community Conversation*

"The library is a resource for our lives and a conduit for who we will become." – *Peninsula Community Conversation*

"I am from Nigeria, and this has become my second home and where I come for help and to get information." – *Central Library Community Conversation*

"I came for a Zumba class and made new friends." – *Sunnyside Community Conversation*

“Technology isolates people. That’s why the library is so important. It’s a lifeline for a lot of people.” – *Sunnyside Community Conversation*

“Every branch is local and relevant to the community.” – *Queens Library Foundation Board Survey*

“There is a greater reluctance now within the immigrant community to seek services. We need to do more outreach to educate the immigrant community about library programs and services.” – *Serving New Immigrants Focus Group*

Strategic Initiatives

- Ensure that Queens Library is a welcoming place of opportunity and inspiration in every community for everyone
 - Expand outreach to draw and welcome new customers
 - Serve immigrants through multilingual and relevant materials, programs, and services
 - Build strong relationships with external organizations, including schools, community-based organization business groups, faith-based institutions, cultural and arts organizations, ethnic and civic organizations, and government partners
 - Serve as the key information source for all segments of the community
- Create opportunities for civic engagement
 - Advance the Library’s role as an open forum for the exchange of ideas
 - Convene thought leaders and experts in engaging and informative discussions that appeal to current customers and draw new audiences
 - Partner with local organizations to connect with new customers and to expand access to information and resources
- Foster cross-cultural connections and celebrate ethnic and cultural diversity
 - Provide opportunities for people of diverse backgrounds to exchange ideas and share traditions through arts and cultural programming

GOAL 4: Expand and facilitate access to digital content and technology

What We Heard

- Staff surveyed identified internet access and computers, laptops, and tablets as the Library's most popular services.
- Elected officials surveyed listed technology and internet access as being most important to them and their constituents.
- 67% of customers surveyed rated technology and internet access as areas in which they would like to see the library invest more resources.
- 83% of customers surveyed visited the Library website to reserve or renew books.
- 15% of customers surveyed are extremely satisfied with the Library website, 41% are very satisfied, and 34% are somewhat satisfied.

"We should have more time for computer use and more technology assistance from staff."

– *Elmhurst Community Conversation*

"Online children books are not user-friendly. It takes too much time and effort. I get frustrated and jump off." – *Glen Oaks Community Conversation*

"Our job is to connect people with resources, but technology is constantly changing, requiring continuous training." – *Staff Focus Group*

Strategic Initiatives

- Offer user-friendly access to enhanced digital resources
 - Expand the reach of Queens Library through digital platforms
 - Continuously improve the Queens Library website to provide streamlined access to digital content and information about library programs and services

- Provide customized recommendations for collections, programs, and services
- Expand the availability of new technology and e-content
 - Provide enhanced and ongoing technology training to staff and customers
 - Offer sandbox sessions where staff and customers can gain hands-on experience with new technologies and e-content
 - Expand opportunities for special needs and immigrant populations to access technology, audio books, and non-English language content

GOAL 5: Provide inspiring, safe, and functional spaces for the public and staff

What We Heard

- 65% of Queens Library staff surveyed said our current spaces do not meet the needs of our customers.
- 58% said program spaces need the most investment.
- Physical space was the top Queens Library weakness cited by elected officials surveyed.
- Customers surveyed rate the need for improved seating areas, increased library size, and additional quiet room spaces as needing the most improvement or investment.
- 21% of customers surveyed are extremely satisfied with the Queens Library facilities visited, while 40% are very satisfied, and 31% are somewhat satisfied.

“Queens Library is a safe place to explore and expand your imagination.” – *Peninsula Community Conversation*

“The library layout with an open floor plan creates pressure on the staff since there are no boundaries for the different types of activities”. – *Glen Oaks Community Conversation*

“The library is not quiet anymore.” – *Elmhurst Community Conversation*

“Staff needs more input into design of spaces to reflect our experience and needs.” – *Staff Focus Group*

Strategic Initiatives

- Work with partners and stakeholders to support clean, inviting, and safe facilities
 - Continue strong alliances with our public and private partners to help renovate existing facilities and to create new spaces that meet growing community needs

- Enhance stakeholder and community communications to invite input and advocacy with respect to renovated and new spaces
- Evaluate current space allocations to help create multi-use spaces through flexible design
- Provide timely and high-quality maintenance and custodial services to optimize customer and staff experience
- Develop design standards for library spaces
 - Ensure optimum functionality of planned renovations and new spaces
 - Standardize a cross-sectional team approach to space allocation reviews, renovations, and construction of new facilities

APPENDIX

A Year at Queens Library

- 12.8 million items borrowed
- 11.2 million visits
- 1.4 million program attendees
- 625,000 e-books and e-magazines accessed
- 319,000 digital music and movies circulated
- 7.3 million visits to Queens Library website
- 3 million computer sessions
- 470,000 Wi-Fi sessions
- 2.8 million reference inquiries answered
- 8.4 million items in the Queens Library collection
- 81,000 public program sessions offered

Queens Demographics

Dubbed the "World's Borough," Queens is the most ethnically diverse county in the nation.

- If Queens were a city, it would be the fourth largest in the nation.
- Almost 48% of its 2.3 million residents are foreign-born.
- 57% speak a language other than English at home.
- 29% have Limited English Proficiency.
- 20% have less than a high school education.
- The top three countries of foreign birth are China, Guyana, and Ecuador.
- Top languages spoken by Limited English Proficient population are Spanish and Chinese.
- As a percentage, the share of Queens residents with a college degree is less than the city-wide average.
- The borough is growing older, with its elderly population projected to increase by more than 30% by 2040.
- 22% of Queens households have incomes less than \$25,000.

Current Library Mission, Vision, and Values

Mission Statement

The mission of the Queens Library is to provide quality services, resources, and lifelong learning opportunities through books and a variety of other formats to meet the informational, educational, cultural, and recreational needs and interests of its diverse and changing population.

The Library is a forum for all points of view and adheres to the principles of intellectual freedom as expressed in the Library Bill of Rights formulated by the American Library Association.

Vision Statement

The Queens Library represents a fundamental public good in our democracy. It assures the right, the privilege and the ability of individuals to choose and pursue any direction of thought, study or action they wish.

The Library provides the capital necessary for us to understand the past and grow for the future. It is also our collective memory, since history and human experience are best preserved in writing.

As Queens Library enters its second century, it will be universally recognized as the most dynamic public library in the nation. This recognition will arise from: the Library's dedication to the needs of its diverse communities; its advocacy and support of appropriate technology; the excellence of its programs and services; the commitment of its staff to its customers and the very highest ideals of library service.

We at Queens Library believe deeply in equity and that libraries are fundamental in empowering people to take charge of their lives, their governments and their communities. In this way, Queens Library has an essential role to play in the new economy. The programs and services we provide and the technologies we embrace will carry the people of Queens into a productive and creative future.

Values

Service: We believe that library and information service is essential to a learning society because information and knowledge are indispensable to the development of human potential, the advancement of civilization, and the continuance of enlightened self-government.

Customers: We believe that meeting the needs of our diverse customer base is first and foremost.

Quality: We value the importance of providing rapid and comprehensive access to knowledge and information and strive to constantly improve the services we provide to our customers.

Technology: We believe the Queens Library must be an active partner in the development and implementation of technology to ensure that access to knowledge and information will be equitably available to all.

Individuality: We respect the individuality and integrity of each customer and each employee, and foster an environment in which creativity, productivity and individual responsibility are encouraged, recognized and rewarded.

Teamwork: We believe that each individual is a member of the team, working together to serve our customers.