



# WASHINGTON COUNTY FREE LIBRARY

*Where People & Possibilities Meet*

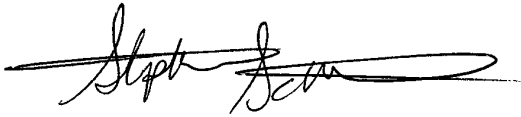
## Strategic Plan 2021-2024

## Strategic Plan Update 2021 – 2024

It is difficult to imagine a more unusual time for strategic planning. In the past year the library experienced major disruptions due to the worldwide covid-19 pandemic. Much of the organization's energy and resources has been focused on maintaining as much stability as possible for patrons, library staff and the larger community. Yet even in the midst of constant repositioning, as an organization we find ourselves gleaning valuable lessons and seeing new opportunities.

Thus it is with considerable optimism that we present this Strategic Plan Update, which will guide our post-pandemic operations as we continue to work towards fulfilling our strategic focus on educational infrastructure and self-directed learning; workforce development and economic well-being; and civic resources for all. This Plan Update identifies a new strategic focus on stewardship which will ensure that all WCFL resources – buildings, materials, employees, infrastructure – are used effectively to benefit our community.

A recurrent theme in this Plan, and indeed in preceding plans, is the importance of partnerships within the community. We believe that the WCFL has a responsibility to bring partners together in a spirit of inclusivity and that, with our breadth of services across Washington County, we are uniquely positioned to do so.



Stephen Schutte  
President Board of Trustees



Jenny Bakos  
Library Director

Our thanks to the following members of the strategic planning committee:

Jenny Bakos, Judy Chambers, Kim Halsey, Kathleen O'Connell, Stephen Schutte, and Janlee Viands

# **Strategic Focus 1: Washington County Free Library is an integral component of the educational infrastructure of our community and a leading provider of self-directed learning.**

Washington County Free Library is committed to supporting learning at all stages of life and all levels of literacy. The Library encourages student success in school and enhances self-directed and incremental learning for children, teens and adults outside of formal education. Early learning is a primary focus in our community and our library.

## **Priority 1: The Library will be an Early Literacy Champion.**

- Focus on early learning activities. In response to the low number of students entering kindergarten ready to learn, the children's services staff will concentrate on designing age-appropriate programs to enhance Birth to Five Literacy levels and develop kindergarten readiness skills.
- Utilize the Every Child Ready to Read curriculum to provide resources and programs that train parents and caregivers in the use of talking, singing, reading, writing and playing as tools for teaching early literacy skills.
- Train children's public service staff in developing and delivering developmentally appropriate programming for children.
- Focus resources on activities both in the library and at home that foster parent engagement and support childcare providers in early childhood learning.
- Continuously develop and implement programs and services that foster a love of books, reading and learning.

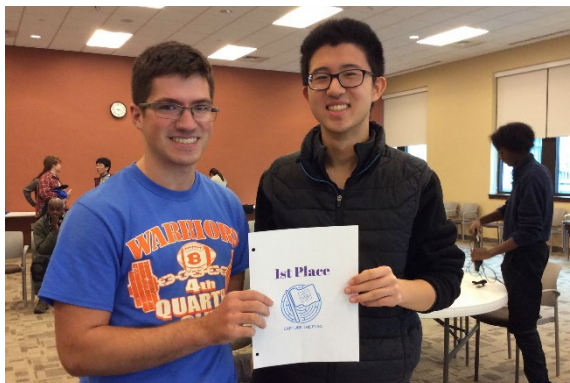
## **Priority 2: The Library will advocate for K-12 learning and success.**

- Strengthen relationships with the Washington County Public Schools and update the CLASS Partnership agreement to foster and enhance student achievement.
- Continue to offer library privileges to all students enrolled in public schools, which they will automatically receive by using their student ID as their library card. Students can access public library databases and use computers.
- The Fletcher Branch will continue as the school library of the Barbara Ingram School for the Arts.
- Partner with schools on special programs such as National History Day and One Maryland One Book.
- Work with the schools and other organizations to support afterschool and out-of-school learning activities
- Provide a rigorous summer reading program with online and in-library resources, classes and school involvement to address the "summer slide", support grade level reading and promote reading for pleasure.
- Offer school-aged and teen STEAM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts and Math) programs.
- Provide and promote resources for online homework and other educational resources.
- Participate in community-wide educational support efforts such as OnTrack and the Early Childhood Advisory Council.



### Priority 3: The Library will promote reading and self-directed learning for all.

- Promote reading for pleasure through book clubs, both in-person and online, author visits, special displays and events and partnerships with other organizations.
- Expand and augment opportunities for creative experimentation using new and old technologies with all library users. Begin to incorporate maker experiences into adult courses as they have been included in teen and children's activities. Explore the concept of a maker space for learners of all ages.
- Enhance life skills with classes: for example, financial literacy and basic computer skills to help address knowledge gaps that may exist in adult learners across a wide breadth of subject areas, using staff from the library and in partnership with other agencies.
- Provide opportunities for self-directed instructional opportunities for lifelong learners using online resources, lectures and partnerships exploring the creation of alternative pathways to learning. This could include offering credentialing and certification that recognize sources outside schools and formal educational institutions.
- Build and maintain a balance of relevant, current and accessible digital and print collections that offer access to information and support reading for pleasure in a variety of formats and environments.
- Improve online access to WCFL. Commission a website usability study in 2021 and allocate funding for website redevelopment in future budgets.
- Provide alternative delivery methods from books and other non-digital library materials.





## **Strategic Focus 2: The Washington County Free Library will support workforce development and the economic well-being of all Washington County citizens.**

The Washington County Free Library is committed to the economic development and growth of our community. The library is an integral part of the local workforce infrastructure providing resources and participating in community-wide economic development activities.

### **Priority 1: The Library will provide educational opportunities for workforce literacy and skills.**

- Offer classes in financial, computer, and digital literacy to community members.
- Provide one-on-one job search and resume coaching activities.
- Ensure that staff are trained in job search skills, resume writing and computer competencies to assist people looking for jobs.
- Explore opportunities for community members to develop business and entrepreneurial skills.
- Continue to work with external organizations to provide free or low-cost space for adult education.

### **Priority 2: The Library will collaborate with community organizations, both public and private, to promote jobs and economic development in our county.**

- Partner with the Washington County One Stop Job Center and the Western Maryland Consortium to offer workforce training, job search and resume coaching and special events targeted at job seekers.
- Continue to partner with organizations such as Greater Hagerstown, the Chamber of Commerce and the Homeless Coalition to grow the community's capacity for training, resource development, outreach and programming to support the economic well-being of all our citizens.
- Explore new partnership opportunities with organizations that promote jobs and economic development in Washington County.



## **Strategic Focus 3: The Washington County Free Library is a vital and strategic civic resource for all our citizens**

The library is a collaborator in building a strong, interconnected, diverse community. It is a place for the community to gather, engage and explore public and civic issues. Serving all residents from infants to seniors and providing technology, education, information, research and cultural enrichment; the library is uniquely situated as a public laboratory for our citizens to learn about each other and their world and work together to forge a robust, thriving society.

### **Priority 1: The Library will provide spaces, services, classes and resources for all with emphasis on the needs of each library community.**

- Provide library services for a culturally diverse population.
- Develop classes that incorporate the multicultural and diverse perspectives of each of our communities.
- Continue to develop and enhance multi-generational and family programming, classes and activities.
- Provide ongoing humanities programming that encourages creativity, critical thinking, the ability to reason, cultural understanding and acceptance.
- Maintain the high quality of research assistance through continual staff training and education.

### **Priority 2: The Library will anticipate and be responsive to community aspirations and needs, both current and future.**

- Conduct community conversations to discover the aspirations and needs of our communities. The library's responses to these needs will be varied and focused outward on the needs of the community. Communicate the findings from these conversations to the community and its leaders.
- Ask for customer and staff feedback to measure customer satisfaction and experience.
- Continue outreach efforts to underserved communities and individuals.
- Develop enhanced communication methods, both for the purpose of disseminating information out from the library and also for the purpose of facilitating connections within the community.

### **Priority 3: The Library will form and/or strengthen partnerships and alliances with other organizations and institutions.**

- Collaborate with other public libraries in the state to increase the quality of resources, classes, programs and services.
- Continue to partner with organizations who support the library's mission and goals such as the Bester Community of Hope, the Washington County Mediation Center, the Maryland Humanities Council, Maryland Public Libraries and the Maryland Division of Library Development & Services.
- Use outcome-based measurement to track progress.



## **Strategic Focus 4: The Library will be dedicated to the stewardship of resources for the staff and community members.**

### **Priority 1: The Library will provide a safe and productive environment for all.**

- Develop a strong Security Team for Washington County Free Library to monitor and maintain a safe working environment.
- Assess the need for facility and/or staffing improvements to improve safety at all branches.
- Provide staff training, tools and strategies for interacting with patrons who exhibit mental and/or behavioral health issues.
- Provide wellness resources for staff, to include an Employee Assistance Program, to encourage and promote good health in all of its aspects.
- Provide a safe space for those who use library facilities for nontraditional purposes, in balance with the needs of other patrons.
- Demonstrate sensitivity to the undeserved, traditionally marginalized and special populations through programming and other activities.

### **Priority 2: The Library will model ethical behavior.**

- Require adherence to a code of ethics for all library staff and trustees.

### **Priority 3: The library will maintain highly competent and professional personnel.**

- Assess the appropriate scope of marketing needs for the Library.
- Ensure compliance with state mandated continuing education credits for staff.
- Encourage all new permanent library staff members to participate in the annual state library conference (MLA).
- Begin creating departmental development and succession plans.

