Give ’Em What They Want...for the 21st Century!

Baltimore County Public Library
Strategic Plan X.2
FY 2016-2020
Mission, Vision and Values

Mission
Providing opportunities to explore, learn, create and connect.

Vision
Empowered and engaged individuals in an inclusive and connected Baltimore County community.

We Value
- Customers and communities
- Equal access and intellectual freedom
- Flexibility and collaboration
- Diversity and inclusion
- Continuous improvement

Messages from the Board of Trustees President & Director

Baltimore County Public Library was formed as a system on April 20, 1948. Since then, our library system’s 70-year celebrated history has been filled with community-responsive materials, dedicated service and educational and inspiring programs — all of which have contributed to an award-winning heritage.

Though our library system was founded primarily on the value of books and reading, our buildings are no longer just places for books. Today, our libraries’ welcoming and gracious spaces serve as community gathering places, where learning and engagement thrive. Our library system is a key component of the educational, economic and civic fabric of Baltimore County. BCPL is a trusted and venerable entity, partnering with numerous county departments and community agencies to impact the quality of life, and to provide safety net services, in our region.

Strategic Plan X.2 is BCPL’s 10th strategic plan, and its goals are ambitious and forward-looking — as they should be. The plan was developed with input from staff, trustees, the Foundation, Friends of the Library, library users and community members. Usage statistics and public survey responses also provided important feedback about the library’s future direction.

Thank you for your support and trust. Our trustees are honored to serve as stewards of our library system, where the opportunities provided are transformative for our residents and our communities.

On behalf of the Board of Library Trustees for Baltimore County,

John Holman, President

There has never been a period of greater change in public libraries than in recent decades, and the purposeful and forward-looking goals in this strategic plan reflect that transformation. The goals in SPX.2 delineate Baltimore County Public Library’s focus on customer service, innovation, education, economy and community engagement. The plan also highlights the organizational culture and capacity necessary to accomplish these goals.

The original nationally recognized Give ‘Em What They Want publication (based on Strategic Plan III, 1989-1993) by Baltimore County Public Library was released in 1992. Twenty-five years later, we named this FY16-FY20 strategic plan “Give ‘Em What They Want… For the 21st Century.” It honors a strong BCPL tradition of excellent customer service. It adds a focus on innovation and relevance for 21st century library users. It aligns the approaches in our objectives with our mission statement — inquiry-based planning (Explore), outcome-based learning (Learn), evidence-based services (Create) and impact-based partnerships (Connect).

As we explored the future of our public library system and created this planning document to guide us, an epiphany emerged. We began to understand that one of the biggest roles our libraries can play in our 21st century communities is to serve as an “instrument of democracy” by facilitating equity and engagement for all. Our values — equal access, intellectual freedom, diversity and inclusion — reinforce our commitment to this role.

Our staff are honored to provide quality library services to Baltimore County residents. We promise to remain an open and welcoming resource to help residents become empowered and engaged individuals in an inclusive and connected Baltimore County community.

On behalf of Administration and Staff,

Paula J. Miller, Director
Baltimore County Public Library serves the diverse communities surrounding the city of Baltimore with 19 branches, four bookmobiles and a virtual branch, bringing the library within easy reach for more than 800,000 county residents. A robust collection and customer-oriented programs serve all ages and interests of library visitors, while partnerships with local agencies, nonprofits and businesses extend the community reach. Storyville locations on the east and west sides of the county feature nationally recognized, interactive early literacy and learning centers for children ages birth to 5 and their caregivers. As renovations occur, unique spaces called Centers of Excellence are being created to provide specialized resources and staff for learning and collaboration. The Hive at the Hereford Branch focuses on art programming with an artist-in-residence program. The COLAB at the Randallstown Branch is a technology/maker hub featuring tools and resources for experimenting and learning the latest in programs and software.

A typical day at Baltimore County Public Library

- 13,367 Branch Visitors
- 15,724 Virtual Branch Visitors
- 30,229 Items Borrowed
- 2,127 Digital Downloads
- 1,725 Public Computer Users
- 5,529 Hours on Public Computers
- 1,554 In-Branch WiFi Users
- 862 Program Attendees

Baltimore County Public Library had 4,732,045 visitors in FY17!

Oriole Park at Camden Yards + National Aquarium in Baltimore + Maryland Science Center + Maryland Zoo in Baltimore = 4,514,925 total attendance of four attractions

*Baltimore Business Journal Book of Lists 2016-2017
Building on Baltimore County Public Library’s Strong Foundation

**Goal 1 | Give ’Em What They Want for the 21st Century**

The “Give ’Em What They Want” philosophy was pioneered in the early 1990s by Baltimore County Public Library Director Charles Robinson. The idea was simple, but revolutionary: Build the library’s collection around what people want to read, not what the librarians think they should read. This translated to an increase in availability of new and popular titles with multiple copies purchased for borrowing. The concept was quickly adopted by public libraries nationwide. As we celebrate the 25th anniversary of this philosophical turning point, Baltimore County Public Library is expanding this concept by providing the materials, resources, programs, services and gracious spaces to meet the latest demands of today’s customer while providing exceptional customer service.

**Objective 1.1 Create standout user experiences**

**Strategies**
- Emphasize exceptional customer service
- Minimize barriers to library service

**Objective 1.2 Emphasize customer-centered decision making**

**Strategies**
- Develop a multi-faceted picture of customer needs and usage
- Develop a customer-centered approach to planning and evaluating library services

“Story time for the little ones is well planned, keeps their attention and is a real learning experience.”

**Goal 2 | Serve as a pillar of education**

Libraries have always been places of learning — the first classroom for babies and toddlers, a destination for students with research and study needs and the “People’s University,” where equal access is paramount to serve as an instrument of democracy. Baltimore County Public Library has cultivated this role throughout its entire history by building relationships with local public and private schools, providing early childhood learning opportunities and supporting lifelong learners of all ages. In order to continue as a thought leader and to enhance access, learning methods and ideologies like transliteracy are being incorporated into programs and services to educate the community for participation in today’s society. Regardless of the approach, the end goal is still the same — reach more people, make more connections and provide opportunities to ensure equity in education.

**Objective 2.1 Maintain leadership role in early childhood development, learning and school readiness**

**Strategies**
- Provide world-class early childhood experiences
- Expand parent education offerings on early childhood development, learning and school readiness

**Objective 2.2 Support educational institutions of all types**

**Strategies**
- Strengthen partnership with BCPS
- Establish and further relationships with homeschools and private schools
- Establish and further relationships with institutions of higher education

**Objective 2.3 Provide informal learning and personal growth opportunities for all ages**

**Strategies**
- Engage lifelong learners of all ages

“Transliteracy is the ability to read, write and interact across a range of platforms, tools and media from signing and orality through handwriting, print, TV, radio and film, to digital social networks.”

Embracing 21st Century Library Services

Goal 3 | (Re)Define the library
Baltimore County Public Library has been an anchor in the community since 1948 and continues to grow and evolve to meet the needs of the community. While proud of its heritage, the library is also focused on new services and technologies that are critical for succeeding in the 21st century by providing the resources and opportunities for learning and education, economic and workforce development, arts and culture, and community engagement and inclusion. Today’s library is a safe zone, a civic center, a technology hub and a space for ideas and learning. As the library equalizes access, provides opportunities and encourages intellectual freedom, it continues to be a resource for lifelong learning. There is no other place where you can get the same array of services and experiences so easily and conveniently and — more importantly — for free.

Objective 3.1  Transform the public face of Baltimore County Public Library
Strategies  
- Establish a new Baltimore County Public Library brand
- Curate an engaging digital presence

Objective 3.2  Leverage marketing, advocacy and professional efforts to elevate and reshape public perception of the library
Strategies  
- Expand community awareness, usage, and support of the library and its impact
- Re-establish Baltimore County Public Library as a leader among the state and national library communities

Objective 3.3  Create unique, destination-worthy spaces
Strategies  
- Build Centers of Excellence

“...I had been unemployed for a long time. I now have a job, and the library has allowed me to job hunt and keep in touch with my friends and family since I could not afford the internet at home. I have also checked out many books since I cannot afford to buy them.”

Goal 4 | Cultivate a connected, inclusive, thriving community
A critical resource and community partner, Baltimore County Public Library is committed to nurturing a thriving and inclusive community. In addition to providing equal access and intellectual freedom, the library provides a safe and welcoming gathering space to support diversity and collaboration for all community members to connect, learn and succeed. Along with encouraging community dialogue through civic affairs programming and events, economic vitality is also at the forefront. Job seekers turn to the library for computer access, assistance with searching for jobs, creating resumes and completing applications and, increasingly, for learning new job skills. Entrepreneurs use library resources to develop business plans, research and apply for grants, and for its connectivity and work space. Simply put, the library is the village green, where all community members are welcomed and encouraged to take an active role in the community.

Objective 4.1  Be an Instrument of Democracy by empowering individuals within the community
Strategies  
- Serve as a reliable and trusted community connector to government services
- Establish the library’s role as convener, collaborator and village green

Objective 4.2  Foster community inclusion
Strategies  
- Strengthen connections with underserved populations and nontraditional users
- Ensure that the full range of library services is accessible for people with different abilities

Objective 4.3  Cultivate an environment of economic gardening
Strategies  
- Support job seekers
- Support entrepreneurs and innovators

[Passports] is a tremendous, convenient and excellent service. It is the only place in the area with hours that are possible for working people. Please continue to do this!
Embracing 21st Century Library Services

Goal 5 | Inspire a curious, creative and culturally vibrant community
Baltimore County Public Library is a trusted and notable place for people to come together to share and celebrate the love of reading. Book clubs, author visits and sharing recommendations are familiar methods that continue to play a vital role in the day-to-day activities in our branches. Programs, training, exhibits and artistic demonstrations that feature creativity, innovation and emerging technologies are becoming part of the library landscape, creating a more comprehensive view of lifelong learning. Enriching the community through arts and culture is equally important to promote the progress of knowledge.

Objective 5.1 Be a community focal point for literary and cultural activities
Strategies Connect readers to books, authors and each other
Become a hub for community arts and culture

Objective 5.2 Encourage users to try new skills and experience new tools
Strategies Enhance making and STEM offerings
Expose customers to emerging technologies
Organizational culture and capacity

Goal 6 | Foster and sustain an organizational culture that reflects and supports our mission, vision and values
Baltimore County Public Library realizes that staff is the greatest asset. In keeping with the value of continuous improvement, heritage must be built upon while creating a number of internal objectives to create a new perspective on learning and innovation. Shared values, norms, attitudes and perceptions are essential to create a collaborative environment and to absorb knowledge that can be passed along to provide exemplary customer service. Our promise is to be a vibrant and meaningful part of the community while bringing the latest resources and technologies in comfortable and welcoming spaces with friendly and proficient staff.

Objective 6.1 Create the organizational structure and capacity that allows Baltimore County Public Library to excel as a 21st century community resource

Objective 6.2 Foster a learning culture and provide training to sustain a highly skilled workforce

Objective 6.3 Foster open and effective communication at all levels of the organization

Objective 6.4 Transform facilities into gracious and secure spaces that function well for 21st century needs

Objective 6.5 Increase resource capacity to meet 21st century program and service needs

Objective 6.6 Optimize library operations through efficient and effective use of public, private and grant funds

94% of Americans say that having a public library improves the quality of life in a community, and 95% agree that the materials and resources available at public libraries play an important role in giving everyone a chance to succeed.

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Board of Trustees
John Holman, President
Aaron Slater, Vice President
Paul Schwab, Treasurer
Jane Eickhoff, Secretary
Maureen Walsh
David Henry “Chip” Hiebler Jr.
Michael N. Netzer

Over the course of the first two years of Strategic Plan X, the work of all staff, through branches, departments and teams, served to inform the updates made for this revised and extended Strategic Plan X.2.
Explore, learn, create and connect at any of our 19 branches conveniently located throughout the county.

**ALL BRANCH HOURS**
Mon-Thu: 9 a.m.-9 p.m.
Fri & Sat: 9 a.m.-5:30 p.m.
Sun: 1 p.m.-5 p.m.

**ARUBUTUS BRANCH**
410-887-1451
855 Sulphur Spring Rd.
21227

**CATONSVILLE BRANCH**
410-887-0951
1100 Frederick Rd.
21228

**COCKEYSVILLE BRANCH**
410-887-7750
9833 Greenside Dr.
21030

**ESSEX BRANCH**
410-887-0295
1110 Eastern Blvd.
21221

**HEREFORD BRANCH**
410-887-1919
16940 York Rd.
21111

**LANSDOWNE BRANCH**
410-887-5602
500 3rd Ave.
21227

**LOCH RAVEN BRANCH**
410-887-4444
1046 Taylor Ave.
21286

**MOBILE LIBRARY SERVICES**
410-887-7586
1716 Merritt Blvd.
21222

**NORTH POINT BRANCH**
410-887-7255
1716 Merritt Blvd.
21222

**OWINGS MILLS BRANCH**
410-887-2092
10302 Grand Central Ave.
21117

**PARKVILLE-CARNEY BRANCH**
410-887-5353
9509 Harford Rd.
21234

**PERRY HALL BRANCH**
410-887-5195
9685 Honeygo Blvd.
21128

**PIKESVILLE BRANCH**
410-887-1234
1301 Reisterstown Rd.
21208

**RANDALLSTOWN BRANCH**
410-887-0770
8604 Liberty Rd.
21133

**REISTERSTOWN BRANCH**
410-887-1165
21 Cokes Mill Rd.
21136

**ROSEDALE BRANCH**
410-887-0512
6105 Kenwood Ave.
21237

**SOLLERS POINT BRANCH**
410-887-2485
323 Sollers Point Rd.
21222

**TOWSON BRANCH**
410-887-6166
320 York Rd.
21204

**WHITE MARSH BRANCH**
410-887-5097
8133 Sandpiper Cir.
21236

**WOODLAWN BRANCH**
410-887-1336
1811 Woodlawn Dr.
21207