SPRINGFIELD CITY LIBRARY

WELCOMING, TRUSTED, CONNECTED, INNOVATIVE.

Strategic Priorities, 2019-2024

MISSION

The Springfield City Library actively connects with its diverse community and provides effective resources and a safe space for all. Our Library is a hub for free access to information and technology, social and civic engagement, and support of personal enrichment, well-being, and lifelong learning.

VISION

The Springfield City Library is the center of city life and culture. The Library is vital to a safe, healthy, educated, and thriving community. We embrace our diversity and celebrate learning, creativity, and innovation.

VALUES

WE ARE WELCOMING. We honor the diverse cultures and life experiences of all. We are committed to breaking down barriers to access and ensuring equity of access in an environment of respect, courtesy, and inclusion.

WE ARE TRUSTED. We are a safe, nonjudgmental space. We deliver responsive and effective experiences, services, and collections for all, provided by valued, caring, and professional staff.

WE ARE CONNECTED. We are a leader in the community, partnering with agencies to provide and promote services and programs that genuinely impact the community. We are the city's hub: the place to collaborate, learn, and inspire.

WE ARE INNOVATIVE. We approach all that we do with passion and a learning mindset. We are adaptable and forward-thinking as we embrace change and strive for continuous improvement.

USER NEEDS ASSESSMENT

For over 150 years, the Springfield City Library has provided public library service to area residents.

Starting with a single central library in 1857, the Springfield City Library now maintains nine neighborhood locations throughout our city of over 153,000 residents. A snapshot of usage statistics reveals that 705,700 visitors came into our libraries; 61,000 adults, teens, and children participated in 6,300 programs; and 712,705 items circulated to our 78,622 registered borrowers, 29.3% of those cardholders are under the age of 18. Statistics are a five-year average.

Today, Springfield City Library receives nearly 1 million visitors in person and online each year who take advantage of the many resources and programs available. Families with young children attend story times and educational programs designed to improve early childhood literacy and to promote reading success by 4th grade. Teens and tweens avail themselves of after school programs and activities including help with homework, leadership development boards, and the library's exciting plans for a digital media creation lab. Adult visitors received assistance with job seeking, career advancement, and computer skills. The Library also contributes to a sense of community through fun family programming and as a place for neighbors to gather and explore new ideas, perspectives, and worlds. Much of our programmatic work, services, and community engagement focuses on the priorities identified in the re:think Springfield City Library report of 2013. Key areas are: Adult Literacy and Lifelong Learning, After School (teens), Civic and Community Engagement, Customer Experience, Early Literacy, Elementary Age, and Workforce Development.

The Steering Committee reviewed results from many federal, city, and local surveys and studies to understand the demographic make-up of Springfield.

These included library usage statistics, as well as reports prepared locally by the Pioneer Valley Planning Commission, rethink: Springfield City Library, the Public Health Institute of Western Massachusetts, the City of Springfield's strategic plan, the Urban Library Council's Edge technology assessment, and a fundraising feasibility report. Nationally prepared reports consulted included the Aspen Report and strategic plans from libraries in New Haven, Hartford, and New Britain, CT; Worcester, MA; Sno-Isle, WA; and Salt Lake City, UT. Relevant statistics and notable trends include a high number (roughly 30%) of Springfield residents speaking Spanish at home; a fairly low percentage (18%) of college degree attainment; and poverty rate of nearly 30% of residents. These statistics suggest the need for the Library to consider social and wellbeing needs of residents when planning programs, collecting materials, hiring staff, and enacting policy. The trends point to the need for enhanced and visible community collaborations and partnerships; the need for the fostering of learning, creation, makerspaces, and related opportunities; a tapering down of circulation of library materials; steady program attendance numbers; public recognition of the library as a safe space; the vitality of the teen population and their interest in making a difference in their community; and a demand for more marketing of library offerings.

The Steering Committee created a public survey to gather input from library users and non-users. See Appendix for a copy. The survey was available in the library and promoted heavily on our website and social media accounts and announced through a news release. It was emailed to multiple contacts and networks. It was available in English, Spanish, Vietnamese, Russian, and Arabic. 863 surveys were returned; respondents answered 10 questions plus an open-ended question. Most people answered all questions. All quantifiable survey results were entered on a spreadsheet for analysis; open-ended responses were examined for recurring and trending themes.

KEY FINDINGS INCLUDE:

- An **enduring** role for the library as a source of books and other reading materials, with demand for new types of circulating items such as laptops, cookware, and tools

- A desire for an **increased schedule** of open hours, especially Fridays at the Central Library, **expanded hours** at Library Express at Pine Point, evening hours citywide, and Sunday hours in more locations

- A **legacy** of library use; grandparents and parents who grew up in libraries bring their children to the library, and **cross-generational** usages should be expanded

- A recognition that **community connections** are vital; reintroducing a bookmobile, partnering with schools, running a library card campaign, and targeting services for **vulnerable populations** are key strategies to fulfill this need

- A need to **update and maintain facilities** is critical; comfortable seating, improved phone systems, **expanded** parking, and better **accessibility** are needed

- A belief that libraries are **key gathering spaces** in the community; **free, neutral** community rooms are highly valued and more should be provided

- A core activity is programming and the demand for greater **frequency** and **variety** is high

- A recognition that **great things are happening** in the library and that better marketing, use of social media, and being out of the library and in the community are needed to bring this knowledge to the community

- A greater emphasis on **welcoming, friendly** customer service is needed, as well as high standards of training for all staff

STRATEGIC PRIORITY
BUILDING EQUITY THROUGH ACCESS

The Springfield City Library empowers residents through equitable, accessible, welcoming services.

OBJECTIVES:

- Offer high-quality, in-demand collections reflecting the interests and diversity of Springfield residents.
- Provide free access to technology and information.
- Increase accommodations and expand access.
- Create a safe and comfortable environment with inclusive programming, services, and space.
- Deliver high-quality, user-centered customer service.
- Embrace and recognize people from all walks of life, backgrounds, and circumstances.

STRATEGIC PRIORITY
INNOVATIONS AND INSPIRATION

The Springfield City Library encourages curiosity and personal growth by providing innovative programs, services, and resources to enrich lives.

OBJECTIVES:

- Cultivate learning and advance knowledge.
- Spark opportunities for personal enrichment.
- Embrace emerging technologies.
- Encourage creativity and support the arts.
- Transform the way people engage with their community and society.
- Help to navigate a rapidly changing information environment.

STRATEGIC PRIORITY
GROWING CONNECTIONS

The Springfield City Library strengthens community connections. We are a trusted and respected public resource.

OBJECTIVES:

- Experience, express, and celebrate diversity.
- Expand outreach services to networks and neighborhoods.
- Align library services with goals, aspirations, and needs of the community.
- Nurture social enrichment and foster new connections.
- Partner with community organizations and leaders to advance our shared work.
- Strengthen Springfield pride and build civic identity.
- Provide gathering space to connect people with shared interests.

STRATEGIC PRIORITY
FOSTERING SUCCESS

The Springfield City Library helps lay the groundwork for an informed and invested community. We contribute to a high quality of life for all Springfield residents.

OBJECTIVES:

- Create pathways to education, literacy, and lifelong learning.
- Maintain curated, quality collections tailored to the needs and interests of Springfield residents.
- Promote personal wellness and healthy neighborhoods.
- Empower people with real world skills.
- Support workforce readiness and economic vitality.

PLANNING METHODOLOGY

The purpose of this project was to develop a new strategic plan for the Library through a results-oriented process that focuses on achieving the critical goals for the library in the next few years. Maureen Sullivan served as the consultant to the project. This project built upon the work the Library had been doing with the Edge Assessment, the Fundraising Feasibility Study, the re:think Springfield City Library sustainability study, and other work undertaken to understand the Springfield community.

Library Director Molly Fogarty formed a small steering committee that worked under the direction of the Library's Assistant Director for Public Services, Jean Canosa Albano, to develop the plan. The steering committee began its work in February 2019. Among the components of the process were: Open staff forums to inform and engage library staff; creation of a community engagement plan that included meetings across the city to engage community members and leaders in conversations about their hopes and aspirations for the future of the City of Springfield and to hear their ideas about how the Library can contribute to the fulfillment of these aspirations; sessions with the Library Commission; and administration of a community survey. A significant amount of information and ideas about the future of the Library were gathered in these meetings and work sessions.

In May and June, the steering committee met under the direction of consultant Maureen Sullivan to draft the new plan for the Library. The draft plan was presented to the Library Commission for discussion at its meeting on June 5. Their substantive comments have been incorporated into the final document, which received their approval on September 4, 2019.

GOVERNING BOARD APPROVAL

The Springfield Library Commission unanimously approved the Mission, Vision, Values, and Strategic Priorities and Objectives presented herein at their meeting on Wednesday, September 4, 2019.

SPRINGFIELD CITY LIBRARY SURVEY

Whether you are a current user or have never used the Library, Springfield City Library is very interested in your input to plan for future services and to prioritize resources. Your anonymous input will help shape the Library's Strategic Plan.

1. What is your age?
   - ☐ Under 12
   - ☐ 12-17
   - ☐ 18-24
   - ☐ 25-44
   - ☐ 45-59
   - ☐ 60+

2. Are you a Springfield Resident?
   - ☐ Yes
   - ☐ No

3. Which language(s) do you speak at home? (Check all that apply)
   - ☐ English
   - ☐ Spanish
   - ☐ Arabic
   - ☐ Russian
   - ☐ Vietnamese
   - ☐ Other_____

4. On average, how often do you visit a Springfield City Library location?
   - ☐ Daily
   - ☐ Weekly
   - ☐ Monthly
   - ☐ Less than once a month
   - ☐ Never

5. Which libraries do you use? (Check all that apply)
   - ☐ Central Library
   - ☐ Mason Square
   - ☐ Brightwood
   - ☐ Indian Orchard
   - ☐ Library Express at Pine Point
   - ☐ East Springfield
   - ☐ East Forest Park
   - ☐ Forest Park
   - ☐ Sixteen Acres

6. In your opinion, how important are each of the following library services?

	Very Important	Important	Somewhat Important	Not Important	Don't Know/Not Applicable
Borrowing materials (books, DVDs, music, etc.)					
eBooks and eMagazines, downloadable audiobooks, streaming video and music					
Programs and events for children					
Programs and events for teens					
Programs and events for adults					
Help from librarians in using computers, finding books and information, getting suggestions					
Computers and printers					
Photocopier, fax and scanner					
Internet access/WiFi					
Online services (website, catalog, databases and online resources such as Learning Express)					
Social space for residents to gather					
Study rooms/reading areas					
Community meeting rooms					
Circulating digital services (WiFi hotspots, tablets, etc.) – not currently offered					
Circulating libraries of "things" (tools, musical instruments, baking pans, etc.) – currently limited					
Being able to browse through books DVDs, music, etc., independently					

7.

	Very Important	Important	Somewhat Important	Not Important	Don't Know / Not Applicable
Overall, how important is the library to you and your family?					

8. If you never use the Library, why not? (Please check all that apply)

- ☐ I'm too busy
- ☐ I'm not interested in library materials and services
- ☐ The library does not have what I want
- ☐ I buy the books and media that I want
- ☐ The Library's hours are not convenient
- ☐ I do not feel welcome at the Library
- ☐ I can't get to the library easily
- ☐ Other (please specify) _____

9. What do you use the library for?

10. What do you value *most* about the Library?

11. How could the library better serve the community?

Thank You!
www.springfieldlibrary.org