

**The Chesapeake Public Library  
Strategic Plan  
2015 – 2020**

The Chesapeake Public Library is a significant and valuable asset to the City of Chesapeake. It is more than just a building. It is an inclusive and welcoming community center that provides a safe place for all citizens to explore, discover and connect with resources – and with each other – to help the whole community grow and prosper.

**Our Vision**

Experience, connect and discover here!

**Our Mission**

The Chesapeake Public Library educates and enriches people of all ages by providing free access to information, materials, technology and cultural opportunities.

**Our Values**

Equal access  
Fair and respectful treatment  
Commitment to lifelong learning  
Inclusion  
Innovation and flexibility

## Background

Chesapeake, Virginia, was created as an independent city in 1963 through the consolidation of the City of South Norfolk and Norfolk County. A robust and diverse city, Chesapeake comprises 350 square miles and is home to an estimated (in 2014) 233,371 citizens. The median age of the population of Chesapeake is 36.7 years. Median household income is \$65,562; per capita income is \$28,373.<sup>1</sup>

The Chesapeake Public Library is a substantial asset to the City. The Library includes seven branches and a bookmobile:

- Chesapeake Central Library  
298 Cedar Road
- Dr. Clarence V. Cuffee Library  
2726 Border Road
- Greenbrier Library  
1214 Volvo Parkway
- Indian River Library  
2320 Old Greenbrier Road
- Major Hillard Library  
824 Old George Washington Highway, North
- Russell Memorial Library  
2808 Taylor Road
- South Norfolk Memorial Library  
801 Poindexter Street, Suite 111

The Chesapeake libraries serve as centers for community, reading, lifelong learning and access to information for all. The Library has 165,734 registered borrowers. There are 528,886 items available to borrow and 318 public computers. From July 2013 through June 2014, the Chesapeake libraries welcomed 1,258,089 customers, who checked out 2,352,046 items. There were 453,752 computer users.

In addition to traditional library services, the Chesapeake libraries served the community in other ways: 2,039 individuals received one-on-one job help; 1,869 items were notarized; 1,348 early literacy classes were conducted, with 24,255 participants. The Library is integral to the City's economic competitiveness and community growth.

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<sup>1</sup> City-data.com

## Planning Process

Understanding the key role that libraries play in community vitality, the Chesapeake Public Library began a strategic planning process in the summer of 2014. The Library's leadership and staff recognized the need to reach out to Chesapeake citizens, library users and non-users alike, to better understand the needs of the community and the Library's role in fulfilling those needs – now and in the future.

Over the summer, Town Hall meetings were held at the Dr. Clarence V. Cuffee and the Major Hillard Libraries. These meetings were attended by a diverse group of citizens, who spoke about their own library use, why people didn't use libraries, what they needed from their library and what the library of the future would look like. Another Town Hall, seeking input about the same questions, was held at the Central Library for teens. A total of approximately 70 people attended these three meetings. (Responses from the Town Hall meetings are in the Appendix.)

In the fall, three focus groups were conducted to solicit input and opinions from members of the Friends of the Library, the Library Foundation, the Library Board, community leaders, and staff. These groups engaged in structured discussions about community needs and the roles of libraries in meeting those needs. (Responses may be found in the Appendix.) Finally, a community survey was made available through the Library's website. (A summary of responses is included in the Appendix.) Major themes emerged from all of the community input:

- The Library provides a sense of place for a community. It is safe, secure, and inclusive. It provides something for everyone. Even as libraries of the future evolve toward more technology and fewer bricks and mortar, the role of the Library as a gathering place remains constant.
- Accessibility is critical. To be that inclusive community place, libraries must ensure accessibility – in operating hours, in supporting public transportation access, in maintaining adequate books, materials, computer time.
- “The Library has that!” The Library must promote itself effectively through the use of social media and traditional forms of communication. It is recognized that professional public relations or marketing resources might be helpful in crafting the Library's message.
- Partnerships are important and the Library's leadership, staff and customers are willing to engage in partnerships and collaborative relationships wherever those opportunities might arise.
- The Library is an integral part of the education system. As schools become more constrained in their offerings, through budget reductions or testing requirements, libraries have significant opportunities to fill the gaps – from pre-school to adult education.

A Strategic Planning Committee was established, composed of members of the Chesapeake Public Library's Management Team. The Committee began its work by conducting a SOAR analysis, assessing

the Library's Strengths, Opportunities, Aspirations and Results. From the SOAR analysis, the group articulated the Library's Vision and Mission. The Organizational Values also became evident through the discussions of the Committee. Strategic focus areas emerged from the SOAR analysis and it was noted that these areas closely aligned with the major themes that were revealed through the town hall meetings, focus groups and survey responses. The group then developed goals (What are we going to do?) in support of the strategic themes, with specific activities (How are we going to do this?) to achieve the goals. It was noted that there are a number of intersections between and among goals – appropriate to avoid goal “silos.” An Action Plan, which defines timelines, assigns leadership responsibilities, identifies needed resources and measures results was also created.

There are a couple of operating assumptions relative to the plan document:

- The term “Library” refers to the Chesapeake Public Library System. As reflected in the number of intersecting goals, it is recognized that the Library is, indeed, more than the sum of its individual branches. Library leadership and staff must remain committed to working toward the good of the entire Library, rather than the advancement of singular branches, to realize fully the Library's unique role in providing a sense of community for all.
- Although it can be challenging for plan implementation, the term “Resources” in the Action Plan encompasses all types of resources – funding, advocacy, human resource talent, good will, creativity – and should not be considered solely in terms of financial support.

It is recognized that day-to-day library operations continue and that focus on core businesses remains. Therefore, the goals and activities are intentionally limited in number to ensure strategic focus over the next five years. In this way, the Strategic Plan outlined here will become part of the Chesapeake Public Library System's language and culture. New program design, service expansion or contraction, skill set acquisition and resource development will all be guided by the goals of our plan. Progress on Plan implementation will be monitored by the Leadership Team on a regular basis. Our strategic plan serves as the dynamic tool for the Library as we embrace changes, set the direction for the future, and ensure our relevance and value to the citizens of Chesapeake.

## Goals

**Programming – To ensure the relevance and value of the Library and its responsiveness to community needs**

**Goal: Ensure consistency of curriculum.**

- Review current curricula and align across branches and departments.
- Create a team to identify needs and to apply an established set of criteria for new curriculum development.
- Support continuous process improvement through innovation and best practices to ensure program sustainability.

**Goal: Expand adult education.**

- Determine priorities.
  - Adult literacy
- Identify key components.
- Develop resources to support the priority classes/programs.

**Goal: Embed cultural components within education classes and entertainment programs.**

- Identify underserved demographics.
- Explore opportunities for cross-cultural activities with partners.
- Align events with the Library's strategic initiatives.

**Goal: Formally recognize and institutionalize the “Digital Branch.”**

- Create policies and procedures for the Digital Branch consistent with those for physical branches.

**Partnerships – To make deeper connections in the community; to leverage fiscal and human resources**

**Goal: Strengthen existing partnerships.**

- Identify current partners.
- Re-engage former partners.
- Solicit feedback from partners to define the added value of partnering and build a portfolio of partners.
- Establish MOUs with partners to formalize relationships.
- Develop a plan to engage the educational system (Chesapeake Public Schools, TCC, other institutions of higher education) for more consistent and effective partnering.
  - Identify gaps in the education system that the Library can fill, such as college preparation, scholarship research.
  - Expand adult education opportunities.

**Goal: Seek out new partnership opportunities.**

- Conduct community needs assessments to identify potential new partners (i.e. – civic leagues, Chamber of Commerce, Economic Development Authority)

**Communication – To tell the Library’s story as an education resource and an invaluable community asset; to reach and engage our citizens; to articulate and celebrate the Library’s contribution to Chesapeake’s sense of place**

**Goal: Increase visibility.**

- Identify and participate in community events, particularly non-traditional venues that offer broad exposure to the Library.
- Enable citizens to register as Library users at outreach events.
- Create and fill an Outreach Coordinator position.
- Increase efforts to connect with local media outlets and media figures for positive exposure.

**Goal: Continue branding.**

- Recognizing that Library staff are the best PR representatives, provide training and collateral materials to enable Library staff to effectively and consistently promote the Library.
- Adopt and implement a consistent look for the Library, focusing on signage, presentations and document formatting.
- Use social media to its fullest extent as a marketing tool.

**Human Resource Development – To firmly establish the Chesapeake Public Library a “great place to work;” to be the employer of choice**

**Goal: Retain excellent staff.**

- Implement across-the-board staff training program for skills enhancement and leadership development to prepare staff to excel in the future.
- Support continuous process improvement through innovation and best practices.
- Facilitate employee engagement and empowerment by keeping job descriptions and new positions current and reflective of Library needs, ensuring parity across the system.
- Use existing human resource tools, such as performance appraisal, to prepare employees for career advancement.

**Goal: Cultivate and recruit high quality staff.**

- Recognize the power and reach of good customer service, internally and externally, as a recruitment strategy.
  - Appreciate staff as the most effective recruiters.
  - Promote the Library’s standing as a quality service provider and community asset.
- Advance Library’s reputation and progress through networking, professional development and visibility at local, state and national levels.

**Goal: Leverage volunteer resources.**

- Create a system-wide Volunteer Program.
  - Assess current program
  - Identify needs
  - Establish training program about the roles and duties of volunteers for volunteers and staff
  - Create a position and hire a Volunteer Coordinator

**Sustainability – To position the Library for fiscal health; to be an engine of economic growth for Chesapeake**

**Goal: Ensure that physical space – existing and future – has flexibility to accommodate program needs.**

- Conduct thorough coordinated inventory of physical facilities.
- Create a long-term facilities plan.

**Goal: Identify capital needs.**

- Research trends/best practices in library space utilization.
- Identify individual department needs.

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City of Chesapeake City Manager's Office  
Chesapeake Public Library Administration  
Chesapeake Public Library Leadership Team  
Chesapeake Public Library Staff

And, the citizens of Chesapeake who gave of their time to attend town hall meetings, participate in focus groups or provide online input.

This input and support helped develop a robust plan that builds on the Library's history of success to shape the Library of the future that will continue to serve the citizens of Chesapeake with relevance, creativity and quality.