

Burlington Public Library

2020-2024 Strategic Plan



DEVELOPED BY PRIMARY SOURCE

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MISSION, VISION, VALUES

Mission

Burlington Public Library inspires, empowers, and connects our community.

Vision

Burlington Public Library is a hub for the community, where all are welcome and learning thrives.

Values

- Access – We create access to opportunity. We provide all members of our community open access to diverse resources, collections, and services.
- Community Engagement – We are a hub for building community. We engage in collaborations, share resources widely, and provide community space. We bring people together to inspire empathy, optimism, and fun.
- Intellectual Freedom – We ensure access to information for all. We foster a spirit of curiosity and support an informed society by championing an individual's right to read, learn, and explore.
- Lifelong Learning & Discovery – We support learning and encourage discovery at every age. We believe that education and space for reflection should be equitably available to all people.
- Welcoming & Inclusive – We strive to make all members of our community feel safe and included, in our building and outside our walls. We value Burlington's diversity and provide experiences that recognize, engage, and respond to all people.

STRATEGIC INITIATIVES

Small-Town Feel



Celebrate Burlington's small-town feel.

BPL will build on the close-knit, small town feel that residents already value. We will celebrate our local heritage and the natural environment. We will collaborate with other organizations to solve problems and achieve aspirations that matter to our community.

Build Bridges



Build bridges to create a shared sense of belonging and community.

BPL will build bridges to create a shared sense of community and belonging. We will warmly welcome everyone who sees Burlington as their home. We will bring different groups within our community together to celebrate both our diversity and what we all share.

Accessible & Inclusive



Make library resources more accessible and inclusive for all.

BPL will warmly welcome everyone in the greater Burlington community. We will actively pursue ways to include people who cannot easily access BPL due to transportation, schedule, location, and other factors.

Economic Opportunity



Promote a thriving community by building economic opportunity.

BPL will contribute to a vibrant local economy where businesses can thrive and every person can pursue their career and financial goals..

SMALL-TOWN FEEL

BPL will build on the close-knit, small town feel that residents highly value. We will celebrate our local heritage and the natural environment. We will collaborate with other organizations to solve problems and achieve aspirations that matter to our community.



In order to implement this strategy, BPL will:

- Continue celebrations of local history and culture and participation in related community events. Partner with the school district to create resources related to local history.
- Join with other organizations to address issues related to the homeless crisis in the community.
- Increase the number of programs that celebrate or protect the natural environment.
- Conduct ongoing dialogue with patrons and program participants to gauge their sense of belonging to the community and community engagement.

Supportive Evidence

Our survey and focus group process asked respondents to consider what they loved most about Burlington. By far, the most common answers were the feeling of small-town community and the area's natural beauty.

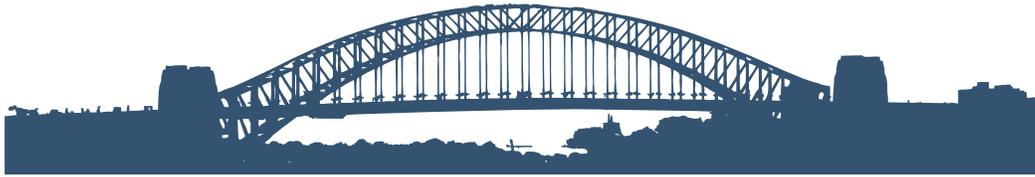


"The close community feel is what I love the most about living and working here."

"Warm, welcoming people and the natural beauty of the landscape."

BUILD BRIDGES

BPL will build bridges to create a shared sense of community and belonging. We will warmly welcome everyone who sees Burlington as their home. We will bring different groups within our community together to celebrate our diversity and shared values.



In order to implement this strategy, BPL will:

- Engage partners in planning and implementing quarterly programs that bring together different segments of the community.
- Partner with Latinx organizations in the community to increase resources and programs in Spanish.
- Develop partnerships with community organizations to provide increased programming for teens and seniors.

Supportive Evidence

When asked what programs and services the library should provide, people requested more resources to meet underserved populations, and increased Spanish-language programming.



“Stronger connections and cultural understanding [are] currently a work in progress.”

“[Continue] to provide safe, fun events that bring our community together, even as we grow.”

ACCESSIBLE & INCLUSIVE

BPL will warmly welcome everyone in the greater Burlington community. We will actively pursue ways to include people who cannot easily access BPL due to transportation, schedule, location, and other factors.



In order to implement this strategy, BPL will:

- Actively promote library resources and programs to all members of the Burlington community.
- Explore partnerships with community organizations to provide cardholder privileges to people who are part of the Burlington community but live outside the city limits.
- Increase access to library resources with additional online and streaming services.
- Explore options for additional open hours.

Supportive Evidence

People identified transportation as a barrier, especially for youth, seniors, and low-income residents. When asked about how to reach more people, respondents envisioned partnering with other library systems, providing off-site services, and improving digital access. 55% of survey respondents requested Sunday hours.



"[We need to work on] Increasing access for all members of our community."

"I would love to see free library access for everyone in the county."

ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITY

BPL will contribute to a vibrant local economy where businesses can thrive and every person can pursue their career and financial goals.



In order to implement this strategy, BPL will:

- Partner with businesses and commerce organizations to celebrate and support the contributions of local enterprises. Participate in the ongoing efforts of the Fairhaven revitalization project.
- Increase resources and programming on financial education, career advancement, and entrepreneurial development.
- Support academic success and college/career readiness for Burlington youth through library resources and programs. Strengthen partnerships with schools and youth organizations.

Supportive Evidence

When asked how they'd like Burlington to improve in the next five years, revitalization and economic opportunity were among the top themes.

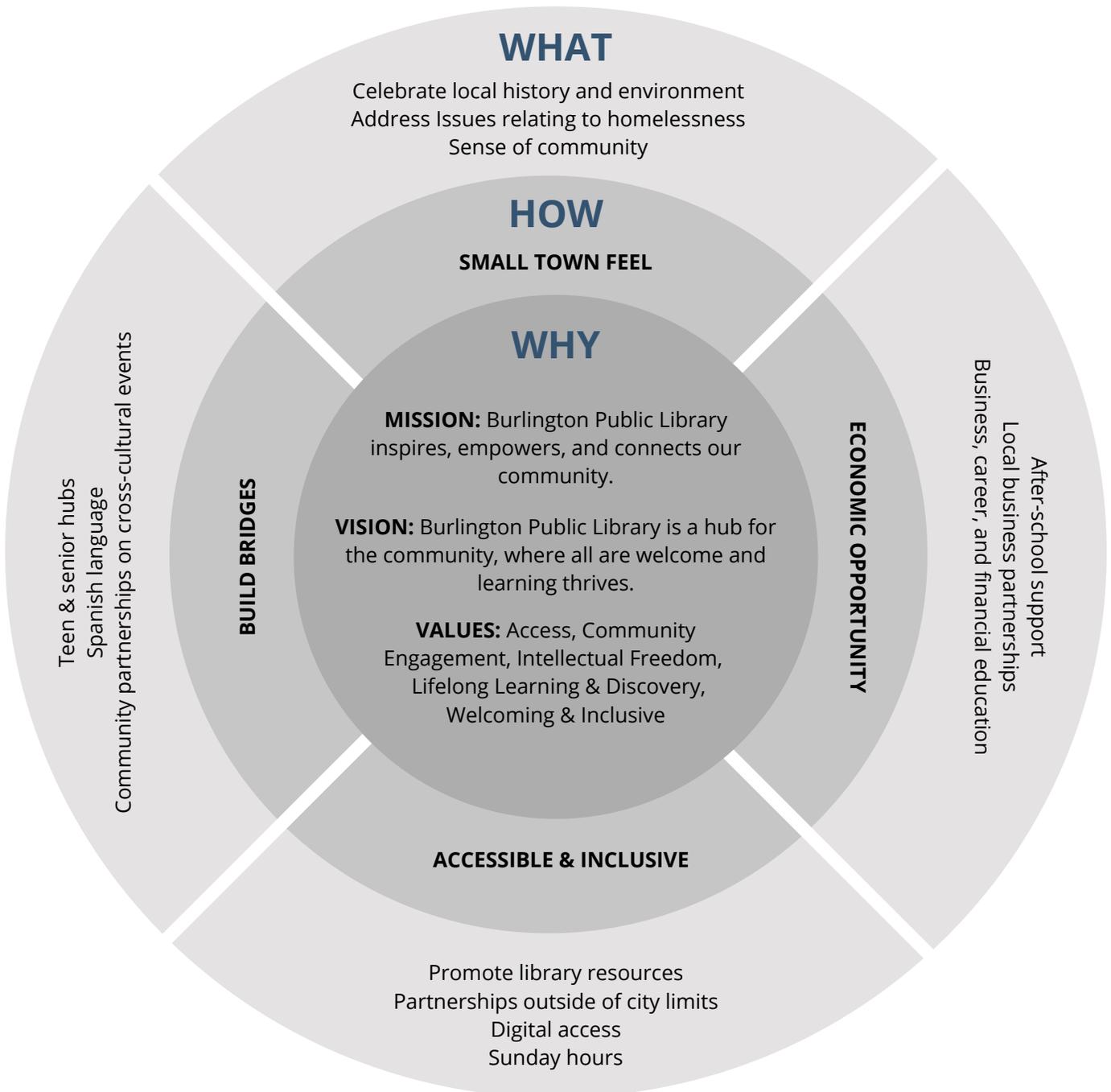


"[We need] more jobs and career opportunities so that our children can stay here and work here, instead of moving away."

"Continuing economic revitalization of downtown."

AT-A-GLANCE STRATEGIC PLAN

This one-page overview of the BPL strategic plan uses Simon Sinek's "golden circle" model. It starts with WHY, or the purpose, at the core. It proceeds to the HOW (strategic initiatives), and then to the specific activities of the WHAT.



STRATEGIC PLAN PROCESS

In August 2018, Burlington Public Library (BPL) released a request for proposals to assist in developing our strategic plan covering the next five years. After selecting the agency Primary Source to partner with us in this process, BPL Director



**PRIMARY
SOURCE**
INNOVATIVE SOLUTIONS FOR LIBRARIES

Sarah Ward began working closely with the agency's Executive Director and Strategic Specialist, Kate Laughlin and Audrey Barbakoff, to build the library's road map through 2023.

The heart of this strategic plan is the Burlington community. By reaching out to and involving the local schools, city government, business owners, and other key stakeholders in the process, our visioning gained greater perspective and relevancy. By soliciting input from all community members and listening to what they want out of Burlington, BPL has strengthened our vision and plan for how to better serve the greater Burlington community today and in the years to come.

The findings in this document, used to inform the greater strategic plan of BPL, were compiled from:

- Initial meetings with Director Ward and library staff
- Full day spent with BPL staff in focused discussion of the Burlington community and planning future services
- 171 responses to community surveys in English and Spanish
- Focus group meetings with members of key community partners, such as schools, government, business, and industry
- Process with BPL staff to develop library's new mission and vision statements
- Final drafting process with Director Ward and library staff

KEY THEMES



Key themes that emerged from the focus group discussions were:

People want a Burlington that is vibrant and welcoming, a place that fosters a sense of belonging and deep investment in the community. There should be easily accessible ways for everyone, of all backgrounds, ages, and abilities, to engage and feel like part of one shared community.

Group participants expressed concern that different parts of town can feel divided, as can different cultures within the town: newcomers and long-time residents; English and Spanish speakers; youth and elders. Additional concerns include that there aren't enough public gathering spaces that feel welcoming to all, and that transportation and Internet connectivity issues make it a challenge for people to find out about and access the ones that do exist.

They say we need to focus on bringing more intentionality to activating public spaces, emphasizing the shared culture and history of Burlington, welcoming newcomers, providing a central place for youth to gather, and ensuring that not only do sufficient services and activities exist, but that people have ways to find out about and get transportation to them.

Further, they felt that if a diverse group of community members representing a variety of gender, race, ability, and preferred languages came together with city government, business and nonprofits, faith groups, schools, and other key partners, folks would be more likely to trust the effort and step forward.

FAVORITE THINGS ABOUT BURLINGTON

In the community survey put forth by BPL, the first section asked about what people loved about their community. The answers inform us about what makes Burlington special to those living here, and the value and qualities the library can help uphold and foster in the future.



Small-Town Character

Again and again, survey respondents noted that the small town feel, close-knit community feel, friendly people, and diversity of the Burlington community were what make their home so special.

The library can uphold this value by:

- Providing space for the community to gather
- Hosting programs and events for community members to meet and learn from one another
- Making the library more inclusive and accessible for all community members

Good Location

Respondents also noted that Burlington's central location places them between two major cities and close to amenities and activities of all kinds, while still maintaining a small town feel and providing beautiful landscapes to enjoy.

The library can uphold this value by:

- Providing community programs at the library
- Working to protect the community environment
- Partnering with local businesses and organizations to offer support and thrive together

POSITIVE CHANGES FOR BURLINGTON

Our survey also asked respondents to consider the ways they'd like Burlington to improve in the next five years. These answers clue BPL in to the needs of the community as identified by community members and open the door for new ways the library can address the issues Burlington faces.

Revitalization



Economic Opportunity



Community Feel



Transportation



Respondents noted that they'd like to see an increase of businesses and community resources, ways to address crime and homelessness, a more eco-friendly city, affordable housing and increase in job/education opportunities, more reliable transportation options and bike paths, and a better sense of belonging.

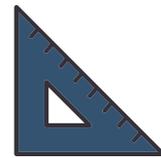
BPL PROGRAMS & SERVICES

The survey invited community members to dream big by asking, "What programs and/or services do you wish BPL offered?" The answers will more explicitly guide what BPL continues to offer and think creatively about how to better serve the community through programs and services.



Adult Programming

Survey respondents advocated for more programs and services for adults in the community. Community members were interested in talks and lecture series, book clubs and book-related programs, technology classes and services, financial classes and services, and career assistance.



Youth Programming

Respondents also expressed interest in more programming for children and teens. Suggested programs and services for youth included toy exchange programs, school and library partnerships, tutoring programs after school, and homeschooling events.



Outreach



The final theme that was expressed in this question was about providing more outreach to members of the community. Ways respondents envisioned this include partnering with other library systems to expand services and collections, provide more programs and services to meet underserved populations, and provide programming in Spanish.

INTO THE FUTURE

An effective strategic plan is a living document. Staff at all levels should revisit it regularly to help guide decision making in matters large and small.

Strategies for keeping this an active document among your team include:

- In monthly meetings, make time to discuss how staff and leadership are applying the strategic plan in their work. What has the team done in the past 30 days to help accomplish the strategic initiatives, and what did you learn? What do you plan to do in the next 30 days to make progress?
- Encourage individual reflection on the strategy. Ask staff to consider how the strategic plan applies to their own personal work. Give people opportunities to talk about what the plan means to them. Tie individual goals and workplans to the strategic plan.
- Refer back to the strategic plan when planning or evaluating any initiative. How well does it align with the strategy? How could it align better? Use the strategy to decide what projects to pursue and what to set aside.
- Post the one-page strategic plan graphic in places visible to staff, such as back-room desks or breakrooms.
- Allow the plan to change if circumstances do. Has a particular initiative stopped being relevant? Is a target number or deadline no longer realistic? Has a new, extremely important consideration arisen? Revisit the plan at least annually to see if it needs to be updated.
- Enjoy it! While this plan gives BPL a lot to accomplish, it should also be an inspiring reminder of the important impact you have on the community.