

**Cranford Public Library Strategic Plan
Board of Trustees
January 2022 to December 2024**

- I) Introduction
- II) Committee Membership
- III) The Cranford Community
- IV) The Cranford Public Library
 - i) Mission Statement
 - ii) Vision Statement
 - iii) Projected Children's Room Expansion
 - iv) Basic Information
 - v) A Brief History of the Cranford Free Public Library
- V) The Strategic Plan
 - i) Strategic Planning Goals
 - ii) Strategic Planning Objectives
 - iii) Monitoring Progress
- VI) Acknowledgments

I. Introduction

The Board of Trustees of the Cranford Public Library established a committee to create a strategic plan for the Library's service to the community. The plan will guide everyday decision making and project planning so that a few well-chosen objectives can direct the organization for the next three years.

A committee comprised of representatives from the Board of Trustees, Library administration, school district, and Friends group worked in 2021 and 2022 to draft a strategic plan focused on a series of service responses. The committee held three public meetings to gather input from the community, and developed and implemented a survey to obtain community feedback on the library's collections, services, environment and technology. The committee also reviewed circulation statistics, annual reports, and census data for the community of Cranford.

Over the next three years, the Library will continue to meet the challenges of balancing patron needs, emerging technology changes, infrastructure maintenance and improvements, and budgetary constraints. The plan is not intended to be an exhaustive treatise, but rather a strategic look at key aspects of the direction the library plans to take over the next three years. Progress is made daily on many fronts by many different people and groups, all of which help the library realize these and many other goals. New ideas and opinions are always welcome, and the Director and the Board of Trustees will continue to evaluate new suggestions that will enhance the services and mission of the Library.

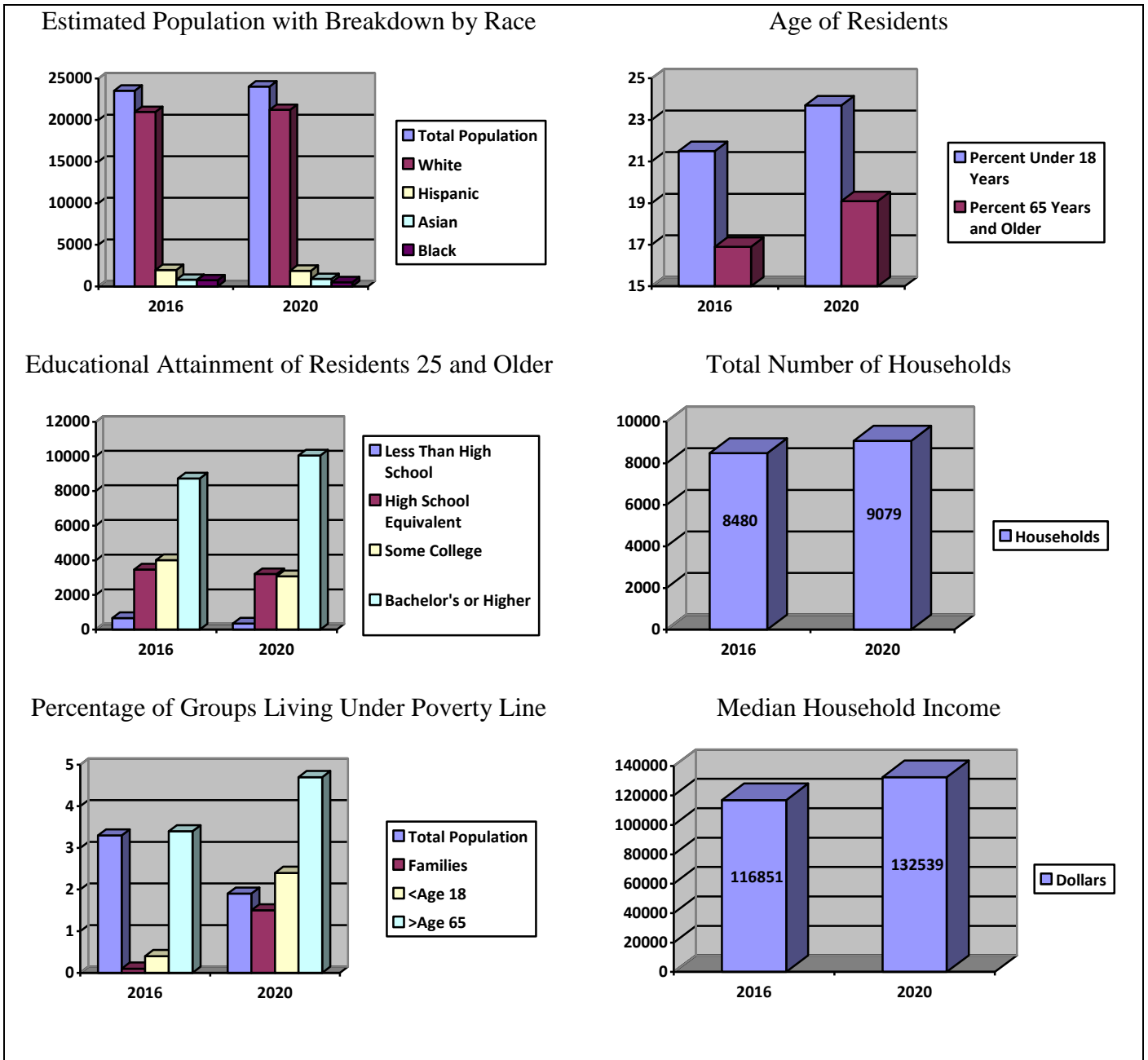
II. Committee Membership

- Patricia Pavlak
President, Cranford Public Library Board of Trustees
- Susan Burke, Chair
Trustee, Cranford Public Library Board of Trustees
- Wayne Hayes, Past Chair
Trustee, Cranford Public Library Board of Trustees
- Al Ramey
Liaison to the Friends of the Cranford Public Library
- Brian Heineman
Liaison to the Cranford Public School District Board of Education
- John Malar
Former Director, Cranford Public Library
- Michael Maziekien
Director, Cranford Public Library

III. The Cranford Community

Source of data: Profile of General Demographic Characteristics: US Census Bureau, 2016-2020 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates

Cranford has a total estimated population of 24,036. The breakdown by gender is 49.2 % male and 50.8% female. The racial composition is as follows: 88.3% White, 7.8% Hispanic, 2.2% Black, and 4.8% Asian. The median age of residents is 43.1 years. With regard to education, 59.2% of residents 25 years or older hold a Bachelor’s degree or higher. There are 9,079 occupied households. The median household income in dollars is \$132,539. Approximately 1.5% of families and 2.7% of the population are below the poverty line, including 2.4% of those under age 18 and 4.7% of those age 65 or over.



IV. The Cranford Public Library

i. Mission Statement

The mission of the Cranford Public Library is to provide cultural, recreational, educational and informational services to all residents of the community as well as to all other eligible for its services. To accomplish this goal, the library:

1. maintains a current collection reflecting the needs and interests of the public;
2. provides prompt, efficient and courteous service;
3. makes facilities available for community interest programs;
4. provides convenient access;
5. cooperates with other community and professional agencies to expand and to strengthen its services for the benefit of the community.

ii. Vision Statement

The Cranford Public Library aspires to be:

- the center of a diverse community where people gather to learn, discuss, and engage;
- the leader in meeting Cranford's information needs;
- a place where people of all backgrounds feel welcome and accepted;
- a physical space that inspires learning and is user-centric;
- a partner to our township and schools;
- a constantly evolving entity that changes with the needs of the community and users;
- an organization that meets or exceeds standards for sustainability.

iii. Projected Children's Room Expansion

In 2015, the Library commissioned an architectural study, funded by a grant provided by the Union County Commissioners, to explore the feasibility of expanding the children's room. The study was commissioned in response to the inadequacy of the current space to meet the needs of the public. Problems include inaccessibility of the collection, lack of sightlines, lack of available outlets, lack of shelf space, insufficient office and storage space, and cramped high-traffic areas. The study, performed by a firm with a long history of public library projects in New Jersey, includes a plan to expand the children's area from 2,445 square feet to 4,995 square feet.

The results of this study were presented to the Cranford Township Committee in a series of meetings in early 2018. After discussion, Committee members voted to include 50% of the projected cost of the expansion in the 2018 capital budget, dependent on availability of the other 50% from an alternate source. In 2017, a statewide referendum was approved by New Jersey voters, authorizing issuance of \$125 million in municipal bonds to support library construction projects. The Library attempted to apply for a grant to cover the remaining costs, pursuing funds made available through the New Jersey Library Construction Bond Act, but applications submitted in 2020 and 2021 were not forwarded to the state legislature. In 2022, after responses from a public survey indicated high demand for an expanded, more versatile children's space, a second request was made to the Cranford Township Committee to provide additional funds towards the project. The Cranford Public Library continues to evaluate our existing space to improve the experience of all visitors to the Children's Room.

Cranford Public Library Long Range Plan: 2022-2024

iv. Basic Information

Collections Purchased	2019	2021
Print Books	5,368	6,249
E-Books	1,181	1,406
Audio	167	12
Video	161	39
Serial Subscriptions	197	205
Databases Purchased	19	16
Total Items	7,093	7,973

Collections Owned	2019	2021
Print Books	138,013	130,268
E-Books	13,748	14,443
Audio (Music)	6,175	5,025
Audio (Spoken)	6,918	2,971
Video	6,490	6,129
Online Resources	28	16
Total Items	171,864	165,189

Circulation	2019	2021
Adult Circulation	93,794	63,171
Children's Circulation	109,864	56,757
Electronic Circulation	11,424	22,082
Total	215,082	117,218
Reciprocal Circulation	15,038	4,690
Museum Pass Circ	462	65

Requests	2019	2021
InterLibrary Loans Sent	921	639
ILLs Received	1,037	473
Holdings Placed	4,563	16,439

Library Services	2019	2021
Attendance	159,477	46,426
Reference Transactions	5,923	3,246
Computers for Public Use	21	12
Public Computer Sessions	9,291	3,810
Wireless Sessions	32,223	15,588

Active Borrowers	2019	2021
Residents	4,125	2,742
Non-Residents	512	260

Summer Reading Club	2019	2021
Participants	401	228
Total Books Read	32,640	270

Library Programs	2019	2021
Children's Programs	228	301
YA Programs	63	69
Adult Programs	192	83
Total Programs	483	453
Children's Attendance	5,834	3,960
YA Attendance	255	300
Adult Attendance	2,750	3,068
Total Attendance	8,839	7,328

Prof. Development	2019	2021
Staff Training Hours	178	174
Trustee Training Hours	16	16

Figures from New Jersey Public Library Data and Analyses and Polaris ILS.

2021 statistics were severely impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic.

v. A Brief History of the Cranford Free Public Library

The origin of the Cranford Free Public Library goes back to the Cranford Library Organization, a subscription library founded in 1880. In 1895 the Library Organization, short of funds, gave its 1,061 volume collection to the Wednesday Morning Club, which then formed the Cranford Circulating and Subscription Library. In 1907 the Cranford Free Public Library Association was founded by three women's clubs, the Wednesday Morning Club, the Village Improvement Association, and the Progress Club. The Association's sole mission was the establishment of a free, non-subscription library. Thanks to the efforts of the Association, a referendum to establish a tax-supported public library was passed by Cranford voters. On December 2, 1908, the Township Committee appointed the Trustees under whose direction the library would be operated. In 1910, a library building, financed in part by the Carnegie Fund, was erected on Miln Street. A white-columned structure, it resembled a Southern mansion more than a typical Carnegie library. Cranford's population at the time was 3,641.

In 1924, a 20 by 40 foot addition was constructed in order to accommodate the town's growing population and the library's growing collection. In 1930, the library's first telephone was installed. During World War II the library served as a Defense Council Information Center. In the spring of 1942, a victory book drive yielded 2,199 books for soldiers. The 1940s and 1950s represented a period of frustration for the library, as it struggled to cope with an expanding population, heavier reference demands, and an undersized, antiquated building. A survey conducted in 1955 by the State Bureau of Public and School Library Services pointed to the inadequacy of the library with respect to its staff size, its facilities, and its book stock. This survey formed the basis for the library board's recommendations to the Township Committee in ensuing years.

In 1962, thanks to support from the township committee and the library board, a new library building was erected on Walnut Avenue, the library's present site. At the time the library's collection numbered 33,933 volumes. By the end of 1975 the collection had reached 81,509 volumes in a building designed for 75,000. At the end of 2017, the collection numbered 146,236 items.

Another significant date in the library's history is 1979, the year the Friends of the Cranford Public Library was formed. The Friends, who support the library through funding and volunteer efforts, have had a major positive influence on the library ever since.

With the support of the township committee and the library board, the library underwent a major renovation in 2000. A two-phase project, phase one was the building of a new community center adjoining the library building's north side, and phase two was the renovation and expansion of the library. The community center, which opened in the summer of 2000, was erected on the library parking lot. (A new parking lot for both the community center and the library was built on the south side of the library.) Once the community center was completed, the library moved its operations to rooms on the first floor of the community center so that work could proceed on the library building. Beginning in July 2000, the library was completely renovated and partially reconfigured, and an elevator and new 5,400 square foot second floor were added.

The library re-opened in its refurbished space on June 2, 2002. The project was financed in part by a \$400,000 grant administered by the New Jersey State Library, while the Friends of the Library raised more than \$50,000 toward the purchase of new public furniture.

The library acquired its first computer for public use in 1982. In November 1991 the library's main operations--cataloging, circulation and the public access catalogue--were all automated. Today the library

Cranford Public Library Long Range Plan: 2022-2024

has twenty-one computers available to the public, including twelve providing access to the internet, six providing access to the online public library catalog, two word processing stations, and one early literacy station. The library also provides wireless internet service to our patrons. In addition, library patrons have access to over 600,000 digital items including ebooks, audiobooks, music, and video through downloadable and streaming services. The library's website allows patrons to use a wide array of library services and proprietary databases remotely and makes the library accessible from anywhere.

In March 2020, the COVID-19 pandemic caused a complete shutdown in library services from March to June 2020. The following two years saw the gradual restoration of library services, as we maintained an active public presence while navigating public health guidelines, adaptive township policies, and state-mandated executive orders. Despite drastically reduced physical circulation and limited access to the library building, the library's circulation of digital materials doubled, and a newly-instituted Grab-and-Go pickup service for library materials proved extremely popular. Library staff created thousands of take-home craft kits, held an ongoing series of all-ages virtual events with the support of the Friends of the Cranford Public Library, and participated in remote professional development opportunities. The Library Board of Trustees held monthly virtual meetings to ensure the continuation of library operations, the Township of Cranford operated a COVID-19 testing center in the library's parking lot, and the Library expanded its outreach services through online library card registration and lendable mobile hotspots and tablets to provide internet access at home.

Throughout more than a century of service to the citizens of Cranford, the Cranford Public Library has grown and evolved to meet the needs of a changing society, and to provide our patrons with the services and materials they need. With planning and flexibility, the Cranford Public Library will continue to serve the community for the next century and beyond.

V. The Strategic Plan

i. Strategic Planning Goals

The Strategic Plan is structured around six key areas targeted for improvement, enhancement, and review. Planning objectives in each area follow in the next section.

1. Collection Development

A set of procedures and policies shaping the library's collection of print and non-print materials, electronic resources, and unique collections.

2. Information Technology

The library's use of computers, software, peripheral devices, and other related technologies to ensure access, transmission, communication, manipulation, and protection of data.

3. User Engagement

The creation of programs, events, and exhibits to promote lifelong learning for the public and enhance each patron's experience, along with the development of metrics to assess response to library services.

4. Outreach

The promotion and provision of services to populations who may not otherwise have access to or knowledge of those services, and the development of new initiatives to reach these populations.

5. Environment and Ambience

The improvement of the library's physical space, with special regard to expansion, comfort, utility, safety, and the expansion of the children's room.

6. Professional Development

Assurance of high quality service to the community through formal and informal learning opportunities for library staff.

ii. Strategic Planning Objectives

The following objectives have been established to support the Strategic Planning Goals.

1. Collection Development
 - a. Evaluate and rewrite purchasing and lending policies to incorporate shared services and technology.
 - b. Explore and expand digital services and databases.
 - c. Grow and enhance digital collections.
2. Information Technology
 - a. Expand on library technology to improve user experiences.
 - b. Redesign the library's website.
 - c. Pursue membership in a shared ILS library cooperative.
3. User Engagement
 - a. Create a marketing plan to increase the number of registered borrowers.
 - b. Develop a comprehensive in-person/virtual program series as a core element of library service.
 - c. Schedule regular surveys and alternative avenues for feedback to gauge patron needs.
4. Outreach
 - a. Position the library as a welcoming organization for newcomers.
 - b. Promote library services in innovative in-person and virtual formats.
 - c. Test changes to library hours.
5. Environment and Ambience
 - a. Address the limited space available for children's services and collections including open spaces for library users.
 - b. Develop an updated capital plan incorporating repairs and or improvements to the library's roof, carpets, paint, masonry, landscaping, signage, and/or furniture.
 - c. Develop and implement policies necessary for safety, disaster preparedness, and ADA compliance.
6. Professional Development
 - a. Encourage staff to expand participation in local and national chapters of professional organizations.
 - b. Schedule regular professional development days for staff training on service, safety and policy.
 - c. Initiate full-staff core competency training for ILS, communication and public service.

iii. Sustaining and Monitoring Progress

As the plan is formally set into motion in 2022, the Director will report to the Library Board of Trustees and the Board will review results on a quarterly basis. The board will add additional objectives within the Strategic Planning Goals as they become necessary and establish priorities to ensure a prudent balance between these goals and objectives and the day to day operating issues that will arise.

VI. Acknowledgments

The Board of Trustees wishes to acknowledge the efforts of all who contributed to this planning effort and look forward to the continued partnership in realizing all of the goals set forth in the 2022 - 2024 Strategic Plan. The Board extends their thanks to individuals who attended our Strategic Planning Meetings or otherwise provided feedback and input into this process. The Board also appreciates the cooperation of the Township of Cranford, the Cranford School District, and the Friends of the Cranford Public Library in their continuing efforts to support the Library.

Approved by the Cranford Public Library Board of Trustees _____.