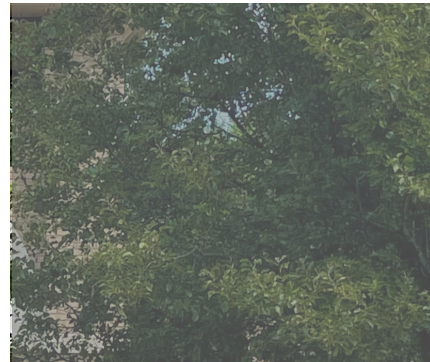
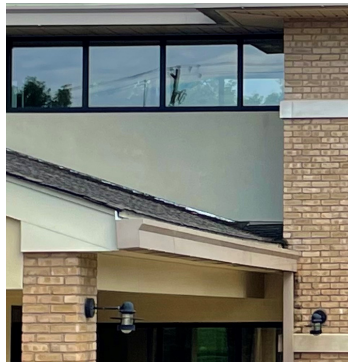
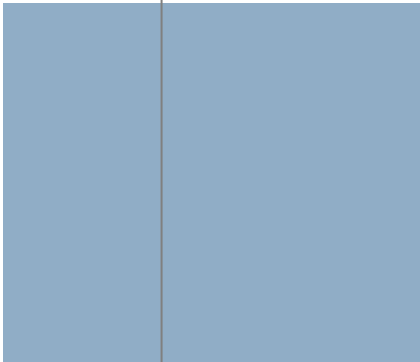
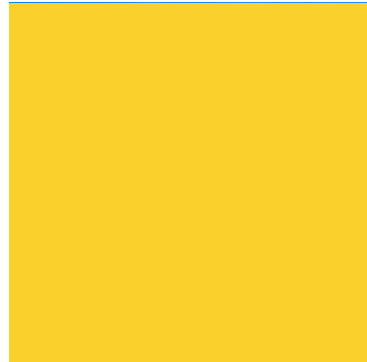
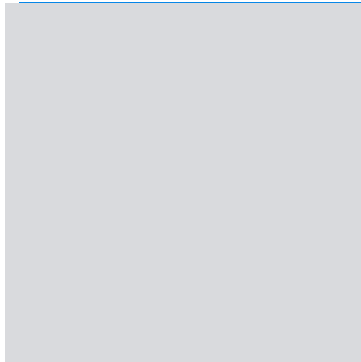




FREE LIBRARY *of* NORTHAMPTON TOWNSHIP

2023-2026

Strategic Plan



Here's where
we're headed



Introduction

When I joined Free Library of Northampton Township as Director in 2022, I was challenged to think about what our library could be “when it grows up.” The library already had a solid, experienced, and knowledgeable staff; provided great programming for children and adults; and is located in a wonderful facility that is universally enjoyed. What else can we do to raise the quality of library services as we look to the future? In planning for library services in 2024 and beyond, we sought to understand the needs of our customers and anticipate and respond to changes in the community.

Township Administration, the Library Board members, and I were excited to embark on a planning process incorporating comprehensive research and engagement with community and staff. These interactions enabled us to gather information with the purpose of developing the 2024-2026 Strategic Plan.

By April 2022, a committee was in place to begin the initial legwork of studying and discussing what we learned about how to begin the process and follow it through to an end result. We accessed the experience and knowledge of a Strategic Plan consultant who provided insights and a great deal of encouragement along the way.

In the Fall of 2022, we published a community-wide survey as well as an internal staff survey to gather information about the library and its services. We gathered more than 1,040 survey responses as well as input from library users and non-users from eight different group interviews. All of this information was then organized into categories while we looked for repeated themes.

In the Winter of 2023, I had the unique opportunity to “get away” for some focused writing time which resulted in the initial drafts of our Guiding Principles and the Strategic Plan itself.

What has resulted from these efforts is a dynamic tool that positions Free Library of Northampton Township to be a vital force in a growing and changing community.

We anticipate a strong return on investment for the community with the implementation of this plan. It continues our legacy of high-quality, high-impact programs and services. More importantly, it increases our potential for expanding access to library resources and facility spaces as well as opportunities for strategic community partnerships and engagement.

We welcome you to join us at your Library to satisfy your curiosity, create meaningful relationships, and explore your opportunities for lifelong learning and entertainment – all in a place with a welcoming staff and comfortable spaces that create an atmosphere of community.

Wayne R. Lahr

Director
Free Library of
Northampton Township



Leadership

Township of Northampton Board of Supervisors (2023)

- Adam Selisker, Chair
- Barry Moore, Vice Chair
- Paula Gasper, Secretary
- Dr. Kim Rose, Treasurer
- Robert Salzer, Member

Free Library of Northampton Township, Library Board (2023)

- Chip Heim, President
- Janet Braker, Vice President
- Michael May, Secretary
- Charlene DiSarlo, Treasurer
- Charles Beem
- Jessica Freundel
- Eleanora Rosso
- Paula Gasper, Liaison, Board of Supervisors



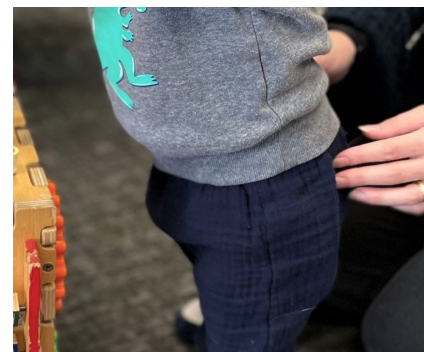
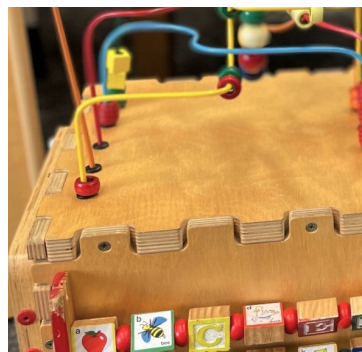
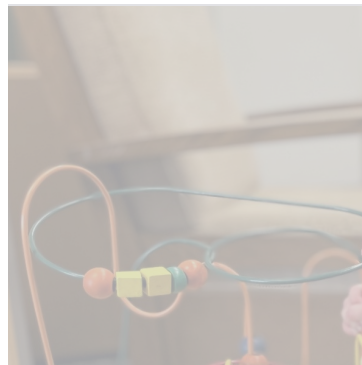
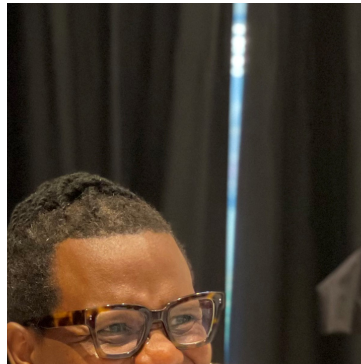
Mission & Vision

Mission Statement

The Free Library of Northampton Township fosters an educated and vibrant community by providing free and equitable access to information and services that nurture lifelong learning, cultural enrichment, and professional growth in a safe and welcoming space.

Vision Statement

The Free Library of Northampton Township will be a catalyst for blending curiosity, serendipity, and innovation by providing equal access to information and resources. We will excel in creating meaningful connections, providing opportunities for learning and entertainment, and offering locally curated collections, programs and services. The welcoming staff and comfortable spaces will foster an atmosphere of community.



Guiding Principles

Values

Respect

Everyone has value

- Honor the many cultures and life experiences of those in our community
- Foster equitable access
- Value different viewpoints
- Be attentive and provide thoughtful responses

Behaviors

Outcomes

People feel valued

Integrity

Do what's right

- Serve others honestly and with transparency
- Be true to your word
- Maintain the highest professional standards including a focus on patron confidentiality
- Accountable for the efficient and effective use of our resources – people, time, assets, and funds

We are trusted

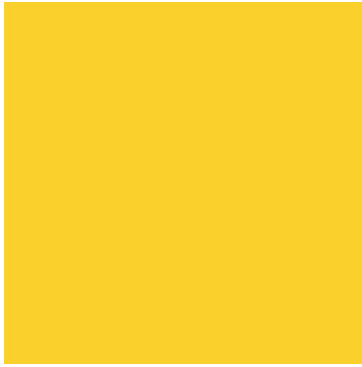
Inspiration

Always improving

- Imagine what's possible
- Encourage innovation and experimentation
- Seek, lead, and embrace change
- Strive to be exceptional for our customers and each other

The library has timeless value





Strategic Priorities

By focusing on four strategic areas of service, Free Library of Northampton Township will be in the best position to meet the growing needs of our changing community.

- Priority 1: Build a Culture of Learning
- Priority 2: Community Partnerships
- Priority 3: Effective Communications
- Priority 4: Contemporary Facilities



Priority 1.

Build a Culture of Learning

We are the local source for lifelong, informal learning and look to build upon the public library's noble tradition as a place of learning – learning that goes beyond the confines of the classroom and the walls of the library. We want to deliver fun, inspiring, and effective learning opportunities which utilize creativity while highlighting the history and culture of our area. We seek to sustain our current momentum in programming for our children and senior populations while exploring and expanding programming for our young adult and working-age audiences.

Strategic Objectives and Actions

We will intentionally acquire, maintain, and promote a collection with the breadth and depth to address the needs of our community.

1. Ordering of traditional library collection items shall continue but staff roles and responsibilities will be created and assigned to ensure complete collection coverage.
2. Weeding of all library collection materials will be scheduled for consistency and to ensure old, outdated, and damaged material is regularly removed.
3. Purchase suggestions from customers - procedures will be refreshed and revised to provide consistency in responses to our customers.
4. Consideration given to creative ideas to add non-traditional items based upon community needs and requests and staff ideas.

Measures:

- Staff roles will be assigned and monitored for both weeding and ordering materials
- New library material orders will be tracked and organized by type
- Purchase Suggestions procedures will be updated and implemented
- Ideas for inclusion of non-traditional library materials will be solicited from staff and patrons
- Annual library user survey feedback



Priority 1.

Build a Culture of Learning

-continued-

Strategic Objectives and Actions

We will help our youngest community members develop a love of books, reading, and encourage life-long learning.

1. Prepare children for preschool and kindergarten.
2. Analyze and reflect on current children's programming with a constant desire to refresh and add unique opportunities.
3. Evaluate expanding popular book clubs for school-aged children, based on demand.
4. Support initiatives to enhance STEAM programming for school-aged children.
5. Consider and review best practices of how to teach proper use of the library and its physical and digital resources.

Measures:

- Offer early childhood literacy programming
- Track type and number of programs offered
- Our school-aged children's book clubs expand to meet demand, where possible
- Offer monthly STEAM programming for three different age levels of children
- Member stories and feedback
- Solicit library program attendees' feedback



Priority 1.

Build a Culture of Learning

-continued-

Strategic Objectives and Actions

We will develop a strategic expansion of adult programming for all ages with a focus on customers achieving their literacy and learning goals while increasing their opportunities for cultural and personal connections.

1. We will strive to maintain our Gold Level Library status in the PA Forward Star Program focusing on providing programming in all five (5) literacy areas: Basic, Information, Civic & Social, Health, and Financial.
2. We will design and implement programming enabling adults to increase their digital literacy skills through one-on-one, point-of-need assistance, and scheduled classes.
3. We will identify external job readiness programs for new graduates and job seekers.

Measures:

- Track all programming in regards to meeting PA Forward standards
- Promote PA Forward programming as required
- Offer Computer Skills programming as well as one-on-one assistance for patrons
- Member stories and regular program surveys
- Promote resources geared towards job readiness and acquisition

We will connect staff members to relevant educational opportunities.

1. We will seek to establish an annual in-service day for FLNT staff.
2. We will seek to provide current and timely training opportunities to staff in relevant areas based on their job responsibilities, interests, and aspirations.
3. We will maintain standards of continuing education and lifelong learning opportunities for staff set by the Office of Commonwealth Libraries.

Measures:

- Plan and schedule annual In-Service Day for staff
- Track attendance at In-Service Day for FLNT staff and other libraries
- Document training opportunities provided to staff throughout the year
- Track staff training activities and Continuing Education credits



Priority 2. Community Partnerships

We aspire to steward the alignment of the community’s talents, abilities, and relationships to change and enrich lives by building partnerships with local organizations, businesses, nonprofits, and municipal departments. We will coordinate with these local entities to serve as a vital “connector” for people to relevant resources and services. We will create programming in collaboration with these entities and reinforce our standing as the information and resource hub of our community.



Priority 2.

Community Partnerships

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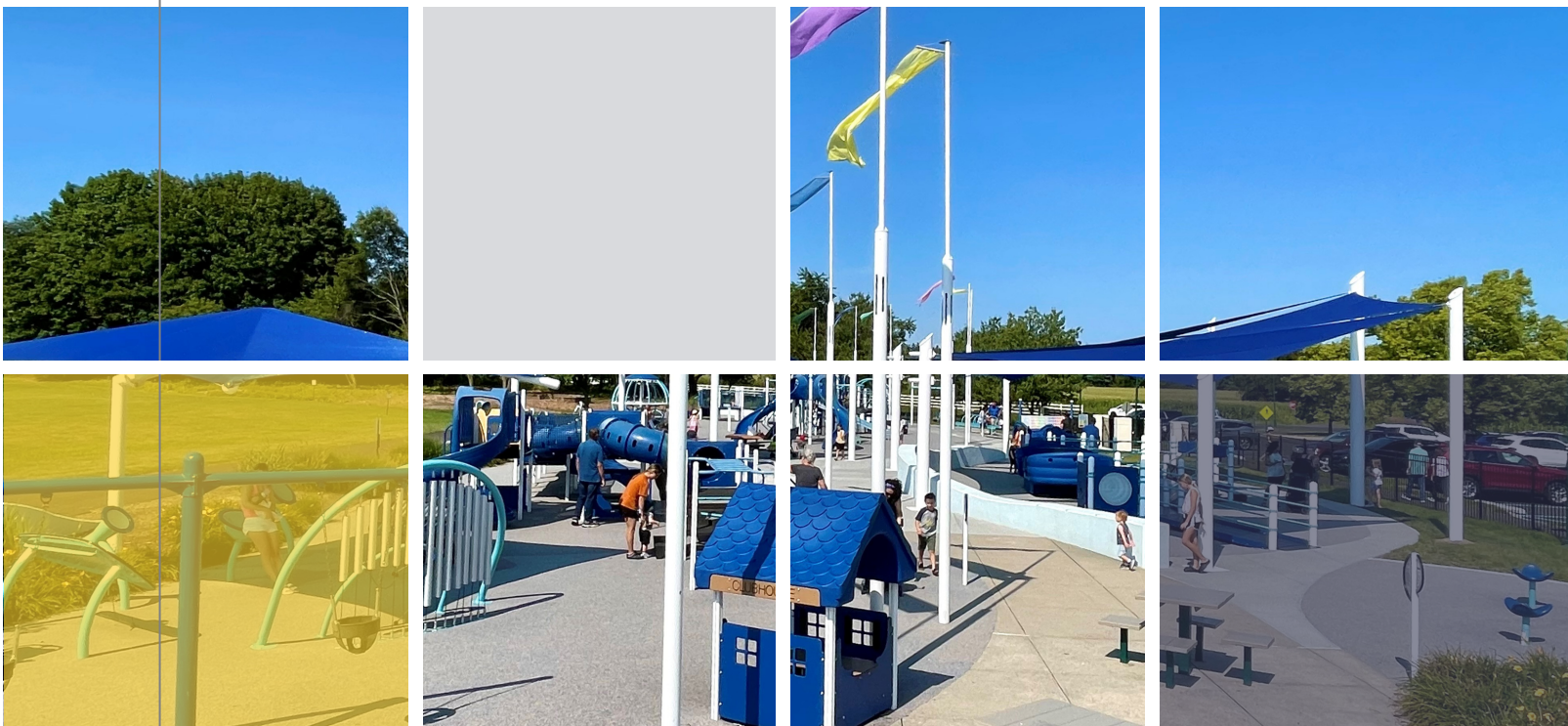
Strategic Objectives and Actions

We will build and maintain community-based relationships to enable collaboration for expanded/shared services thus increasing our visibility in the local community.

1. Identify a diverse mix of partners for collaboration.
2. Partner with county and local social service organizations to provide resources, education, and community access to services.
3. Assign staff and/or Board members to specific key relationships.
4. Develop and expand new and existing partnerships with public entities such as schools, NT Parks & Recreation Department, James E. Kinney Senior Center, etc.

Measures:

- Compile list of possible community-based partners for collaboration
- Develop list of social services resources to be shared with community members
- Receive quarterly updates from staff/Board members assigned to key relationships
- Renew key relationships with current local partners
- Regularly meet with active partners and keep record of meetings



Priority 2.

Community Partnerships

-continued-

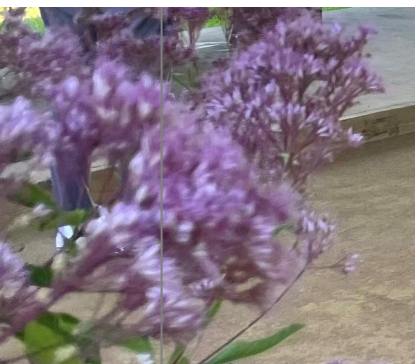
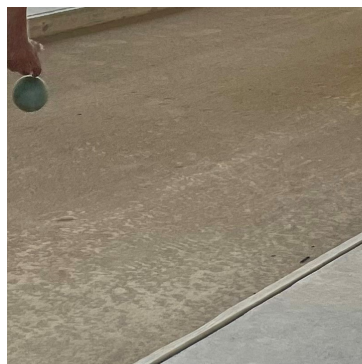
Strategic Objectives and Actions

We will develop and maintain mutually beneficial business partnerships to maximize area of alignment and foster innovation to provide services in alternative ways.

1. Identify a diverse mix of partners for collaboration.
2. Engage with local business associations.
3. Assign staff and/or Board members to specific key relationships.

Measures:

- Compile list of possible local business partners for collaboration
- Track efforts of engaging with local business associations
- Receive quarterly updates from staff/Board members assigned to key relationships
- Renew key relationships with current local partners
- Regularly meet with active partners and keep record of meetings



Priority 2.

Community Partnerships

-continued-

Strategic Objectives and Actions

We will increase visibility both within and outside the local community by building and maintaining collaborative relationships with relevant organizations to create an Adult Literacy Program.

1. Basic Literacies
2. Information Literacies
3. Civic and Social Literacies
4. Health Literacies
5. Financial Literacies

Measures:

- Compile list of possible local organizations focused on providing adult literacy services
- Develop and track programming specifically geared towards adult literacies
- Regularly meet with active partners and keep record of meetings
- Member stories and feedback
- Annual library user survey feedback



Priority 3. Effective Communications

In response to community feedback, we will devise and execute a communication plan to increase the understanding and awareness of the library's programming, services, capabilities, and contributions to our community. Our community needs additional education about our basic library features – free physical and electronic resources, our commitment to customer confidentiality, and our safe and welcoming spaces to work, play, read, and learn. Expanding our outreach activities will also be an important component of this priority.

Strategic Objectives and Actions

We will seek to invest in professional guidance to create and implement a marketing plan to elevate community awareness of the library's resources, services, programming, and spaces.

1. Identify professional subject matter experts to evaluate level of need.
2. Engage the resources to develop a marketing plan.
3. Implement the marketing plan.

Measures:

- Meet with at least one subject matter expert for thorough assessment of marketing needs by end of 2023
- Develop marketing plan with associated measures by end of 3rd quarter of 2024
- Track number and type of marketing initiatives, activities, and interactions
- Annual library user survey feedback– including “where did you hear about this [event]?” question



Priority 3. Effective Communications

-continued-

Strategic Objectives and Actions

We will seek to invest in professional guidance to create a new branding strategy.

1. Evaluate designing new website focusing on usability, consistency of information delivery, and maximizing customer experience.
2. Explore ideas for a new logo and brand extension.

Measures:

- Create a focus group to examine the current website using usage data for assessment of current needs
- Compile list of possible new website designer options
- If still a priority after professional consultation, list options for creating new logo and brand
- If still a priority after professional consultation, design and launch new website
- Member stories and feedback
- Annual library user survey feedback

We will create and implement an outreach plan to be more actively involved with community- and school-centered activities as well as exploring options for additional events held at the library to drive publicity.

1. Create an outreach plan.
2. Assign staff/Board members to build contact list and schedule.
3. Implement the outreach plan.

Measures:

- Compile list of possible local locations and events for outreach activities
- Schedule outreach activities for library participation
- Track number of completed outreach activities and interactions
- Receive quarterly updates from staff/Board members assigned to key relationships
- Annual library user survey feedback



Priority 4.

Contemporary Facilities

In response to self-recognized needs as well as community feedback, we will focus on redesigning spaces of our facility, both inside and out, which will foster a spirit of community by enhancing social connection at our first-class facility. Innovative spatial utilization will provide additional flexibility acting as a catalyst for positive, social interactions. We will strive to exceed our customers' expectations and create the "destination library" that our community so richly deserves. Our library is a trusted destination that anchors our community.

Strategic Objectives and Actions

We will redesign indoor library spaces to foster an atmosphere of community, promote strong social connections, and facilitate easy navigation while optimizing operational efficiency.

1. Create a facility plan.
2. Ensure plan supports other Strategic Priorities.
3. Align facility plan to new branding.
4. Implement the facility plan.

Measures:

- Compile list of possible library design professionals
- Engage with at least two library design professionals in consultation about FLNT needs by end of 1st quarter, 2024
- Schedule two visitations annually for Board members to see other libraries
- Define how new facility plan supports other strategic priorities
- Member stories and feedback
- Real-time library user survey feedback (e.g., airport-like tablet surveys)



Priority 4.

Contemporary Facilities

-continued-

Strategic Objectives and Actions

We will explore options for creating an outdoor space which promotes educational and interactive learning, quiet reflection, and relationship-building.

1. Create an outdoor space plan including a focus on sustainability concepts.
2. Ensure plan supports other strategic priorities.
3. Align outdoor space plan to new branding.
4. Implement the outdoor space plan.

Measures:

- Form an ad hoc committee to begin planning by November 1, 2023
- Compile list of possible landscape design professionals who also specialize in sustainability
- Engage with at least two landscape design professionals in consultation about FLNT needs
- Define how new outdoor space plan supports other strategic priorities
- Member stories and feedback
- Real-time library user survey feedback (e.g., airport-like tablet surveys)

We will investigate options for securing funding for implementation of new Facility Plan and Outdoor Space Plan.

1. Explore township/local municipal funding options.
2. Examine state/federal grant funding opportunities (Keystone Grant, etc.).
3. Build strategic partnerships with local businesses for support and grants opportunities.
4. Examine local fundraising options.

Measures:

- Compile list of funding options
- Pursue relevant funding options in accordance with municipality guidance
- Track all funding research activities and results



With Gratitude

The Free Library of Northampton Township's Strategic Plan Committee would like to extend its gratitude to the following groups and individuals for their contributions towards the creation of our first Strategic Plan.

First and foremost, we'd like to extend our sincere thanks to Janet Braker, the Library Board's current Vice President. She took on the role of Committee Chair and guided us through many meetings and discussions. Her contributions to this project were invaluable.

Special thanks to Cathi Alloway (Strategic Plan Consultant) for her vast expertise and guidance throughout the planning process. Special thanks to Emily Weber-Wood for her creative assistance making our hard work look professional and polished in the final publication. Both Cathi's and Emily's talents were made available to us by funding through the Bucks County Library District, and we are appreciative of their support as well.

We'd like to recognize the Strategic Planning Committee for the countless hours of reading and editing, meetings, and conversations for which they dedicated their time to make this project come to fruition. The Committee members were:

- Janet Braker, Chair, Library Board member
- Charles Beem, Library Board member
- Chip Heim, Library Board member
- Michael May, Library Board member
- Eleanora Rosso, Library Board member
- Susan Elko, Library Staff Representative
- William Wert, Assistant Township Manager
- Paula Gasper, Board of Supervisors
- Wayne R. Lahr, Library Director

Additionally, we'd like to thank our community, library customers, and library staff who were gracious enough to answer our community-wide survey, our staff survey, and participate in group interviews. We received more than **1,040 survey responses** from the community and library staff and met with: Northampton Township Supervisors; Wagoneers; Wednesday Afternoon Book Group; Thursday Afternoon Book Group; Senior Center Book Club; Tuesday Matinee Movie attendees; and the parents of both our Monday On My Own Storytimes.



With Gratitude

Thank you to the participants in our Strategic Plan Retreat held over five hours on a Saturday in November 2022:

- Cathi Alloway, Strategic Plan Consultant
- Wayne R. Lahr, Library Director
- Dr. Kim Rose, Township Supervisor
- Paula Gasper, Township Supervisor
- Jen Fean, Director, Parks & Recreation
- Barbra Primavera, Recreation Manager, Parks & Recreation
- Sheila Jobs, Director, Senior Center
- Michele Penecale, Program Coordinator, Senior Center
- Janet Braker, Committee Chair
- Charles Beem, Committee
- Susan Elko, Committee, Staff Representative
- Chip Heim, Committee
- Michael May, Committee
- Eleanora Rosso, Committee
- Charlene DiSarlo, Library Board member
- Megan Geist, Library Staff
- Michelle Kiker, Library Staff
- Amy Wardle, Library Staff
- Florence Egan, Friends of the Free Library of Northampton Township Representative
- Jessica Freundel, Patron/Resident Representative

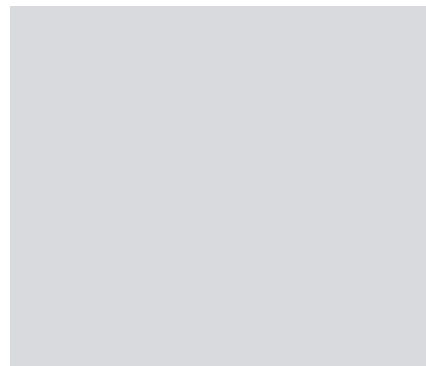
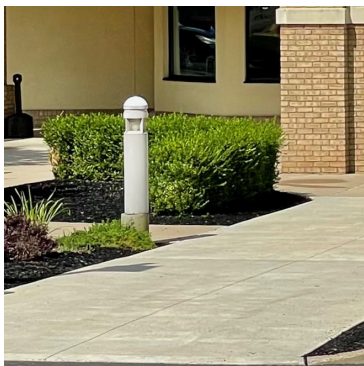
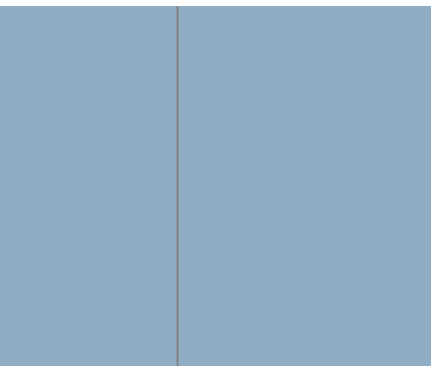
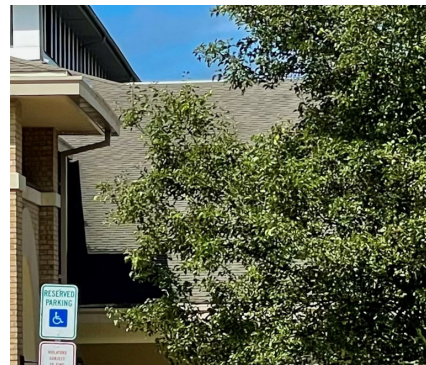
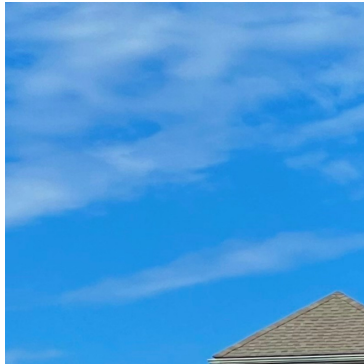
Resources

- Pennsylvania Office of Commonwealth Libraries – for the many free resources and training webinars and resources they offer through a variety of different platforms
- Multiple Individual Libraries from both Pennsylvania and Colorado – for the great examples of current strategic planning models, language, organization, and design

Other Important Resources

- Walker, Trina. *Strategic Plan Framework*. TLW Strategy.
- Fuller, Joy L. *Strategic Planning for Public Libraries*. Public Library Association, 2021.
- Garmer, A.K. *Rising to the Challenge: Re-Envisioning Public Libraries*. Aspen Institute, 2014.
- *Action guide, Version 2.0 for Re-Envisioning Your Public Library*. Aspen Institute, 2017.






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