

THE JOINT FREE PUBLIC LIBRARY OF THE CHATHAMS

Serving Chatham Borough and Chatham Township, New Jersey



STRATEGIC PLAN

2013-2015



Developed in cooperation with

PRO LIBRA ASSOCIATES, INC.
SUMMIT, NEW JERSEY

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A Message from the President of The Joint Free Public Library of The Chathams

In an effort to maximize our resources and effectively service the needs of our community, the Board of Trustees of The Joint Free Public Library of The Chathams advanced the preparation of a strategic plan to continue the successful development and growth of the Library.

The Board extends its thanks to the Library staff, members of the community, and the participating members of the Library Board of Trustees for their efforts to create this document that will provide direction for the future growth of the Library. The Board of Trustees and the Staff will use this document as a dynamic tool in making public policy and strategic decisions to maintain The Joint Free Public Library of The Chathams as a relevant resource for the community.

By gathering community input we learned what was most important to our residents. Among the themes we heard most often repeated included the need to:

- Develop the library as a community center for the residents
- Create more private areas for people to enjoy quiet study and relaxation
- Improve accessibility by providing additional parking for library visitors
- Offer more programs for all ages
- Improve the library website
- Continue to share resources with regional libraries
- Publicize the resources and programs of the library
- Enhance the collection in all formats to appeal to varied interests in the community

The challenge for the Board was to create a meaningful plan of service reflecting community values and needs during a time when available funding is shrinking. The Board of Trustees believes that this plan captures the essence of the community's needs and balances those needs with the strengths of our library and current fiscal constraints.

As residents of the Chathams, it has been an honor for us all to play a pivotal role in something as significant, meaningful, and community-defining as The Library of The Chathams' Strategic Plan. It is an exciting and challenging time for public libraries, and to be involved in the creation of a roadmap that The Library of The Chathams will follow into the future is a privilege. The roadmap founded on our new vision and mission statement is presented herein. Again we would like to express our deepest appreciation to all those who dedicated their time and talent to the creation of this Plan, particularly the Community Leaders who met for interviews with our Library Director; our Library Staff; the members of the Strategic Planning Committee; the consulting team of Anne Roman and James Hecht of Pro Libra Associates, Inc., and most of all, our neighbors who participated in the development of the Plan.

*Fredric J. Pocci,
President, Board of Trustees
The Joint Free Public Library of The Chathams*

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The Library of The Chathams wishes to acknowledge the members of the Strategic Planning Committee and the Library Board of Trustees for embracing the strategic planning process, their ability to envision the future of libraries, and their work in developing this plan to help guide the library through the next three years. We also wish to thank all the members of the community that contributed to the process by completing surveys, participating in focus groups, and speaking with the library director. The opportunities and initiatives identified and detailed in this Strategic Plan 2013-2015 will form the backbone of the annual work plans to be developed and implemented by the library trustees and staff.

Library Planning Committee

Andrew Hollander, Board of Trustees
Bernadette Jusinski, Board of Trustees
Bridget Polanin, Board of Trustees
Mary Quigley, Board of Trustees
Fran Fauver, Member at Large
Jean McFadden, Friends of the Library
Diane O'Brien, Director
Mary Kennedy, Head, Technical Services Dept.
Janet Skakum, Circulation Dept.
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OUR VISION FOR THE FUTURE

2013-2015

CREATING OUR PLAN - THE STRATEGIC PLANNING PROCESS

In the spring of 2012 The Library of The Chathams' Board of Trustees sought to contract with a consulting firm to provide a strategic plan developed through community research and a thorough analysis of the two municipalities that contribute to the vibrant public library. The current economic climate has impacted public library funding throughout New Jersey and the rest of the country. That combined with rapidly changing technology and significant changes in how people access both information and recreational materials led the Board of Trustees to recognize that the development of a strategic plan was of the utmost importance to continue the successful development and growth of the library.

The Library contracted with PRO LiBRA Associates, Inc. to embark upon the library's first strategic planning process led by James Hecht and Anne Roman. The six month process that followed guidelines developed by the Public Library Association and the New Jersey State Library began in May 2012. The Strategic Planning Committee met monthly and all meetings were facilitated by the consultants. During the first phase of the project, library staff and participating members of the Library Board of Trustees reviewed the library's strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats in the current environment. The community profile was reviewed by studying recent 2010 census information, the library's expenditures and revenues for the year ending in December 2011, and library usage statistics for the last four years. Library output measures were benchmarked by comparing the Library of the Chathams' to other public libraries of similar size deemed "star libraries" by Library Journal for 2011. In addition, Chatham was compared to other New Jersey libraries that serve communities with a population of 15,000 to 19,999 and annual budgets of \$1,000,000 to \$1,999,999.

Under the direction of Diane O'Brien, Library Director, trustees and staff identified eight community leaders for interviews, organized six focus group sessions conducted by James Hecht and Anne Roman, and surveyed library users via the library website and visitors within the library.

The library director met one-on-one with eight community leaders from both Chatham Borough and Chatham Township to explore their opinions of the library and to

assess what was most important to each of them and the organization that they represent. The consultants conducted focus groups with residents of various ages and interests. These groups included Teens, Middle School Students held at the Middle School, Parents and Caregivers of Young Children, Adults Ages 25-54, Adults Ages 55+, and a one-on-one session with a Non-User. In addition, a survey of library users was conducted during the summer of 2012. In all, 374 responses were received; 263 in print and 111 online.

Upon the completion of all the community research, the strategic planning committee reviewed the eighteen Library Service Responses outlined by the Public Library Association in *Strategic Planning for Results 2008 edition*. This process involved identifying and prioritizing “service responses” or typical library services that could be provided in response to a community’s needs and expectations. The committee carefully evaluated the critical resources required for the successful provision of each response against the Library of the Chathams’ current and anticipated financial resources, building facilities, technology, existing collection and staff expertise. After much deliberation, the committee developed service priorities that would become the organization’s focus for the next three years. In some cases the service priority developed by the committee was refined from several Public Library Association service responses into a priority that was more appropriate for Chatham. Objectives were created for each of these five key service priorities and action steps for year 1 of the plan (2013) were identified. In order to determine the success and effectiveness of the various action steps, success measurements were constructed to measure the progress of the plan.

Finally the committee validated the existing mission statement deeming that it was still relevant based on the selection of the new service responses and a new vision statement was composed.

A PROFILE OF CHATHAM BOROUGH AND CHATHAM TOWNSHIP

Chatham Borough and Chatham Township share a common heritage and are sometimes jointly referred to as The Chathams. Although the two are actually separate municipalities, they do share a library, school district, volunteer ambulance corps, zip code and post office. Residents have been known to say the Township and Borough are really just like one town that happens to have two different governments.

Noteworthy for the fine examples of Colonial and Victorian architecture along its tree-lined streets, the borough’s historic district on the east end of Main Street is filled with charming homes. Proud of its Early American roots, the township was a resting spot for George Washington during the Revolutionary War.

Cultural opportunities in Chatham include historical, art, garden and musical groups and organizations, as well as the facilities and programs at neighboring Drew and Fairleigh Dickinson Universities.

The *2010 US Census of Population* indicates that the combined population of Chatham Borough and Chatham Township is 19,414, a modest increase of 4.7% over 2000. The New Jersey Transportation Planning Authority forecasts the combined population to increase only about 1% in the next 25 years.

Over the last decade, the racial make-up of the 2 towns has become more racially diverse. While predominantly Caucasian, the influx of Asians, African Americans and Hispanics have led to the creation of a culturally rich community with much to offer to its residents. Females slightly outnumber men 52% to 48%. The median age is 40.6, which is a slight increase over 2000 (38.5).

Adults over the age of 18 represent 68.9% of the population, with children under the age of 18 representing 17.7%. Older adults 65 years of age or over make up 12.8% of the population.

In 2010, there were 6,886 total households in the 2 towns. Of that number, 5,048 were family households with 2,913 households having children under the age of 18 and 1,704 comprised of individuals 65 or older.

The educational achievement level of borough residents over the age of 25 is extremely high with 75% of the residents having a bachelor's degree or higher.

Chatham Borough is governed under the borough form of New Jersey municipal government. The government consists of a mayor and a borough council comprised of six council members, with all positions elected at large. A mayor is elected directly by the voters to a four-year term of office.

Chatham Township is governed under the Township form of government with a five-member Township Committee. The Township Committee is elected directly by the voters in partisan elections to serve three-year terms of office on a staggered basis, with one or two seats coming up for election each year. At an annual reorganization meeting, the Township Committee selects one of its members to serve as Mayor.

Towns with libraries bordering or near Chatham Borough and Chatham Township that local residents also frequent are Madison, New Providence and Florham Park. Many residents also use the Morris County Library in Whippany.

WHAT WE HEARD FROM OUR COMMUNITY

In order to define the community's specific library needs, the needs assessment process involved broad community participation that included surveys and focus groups, as well as one-on-one community leader interviews that were conducted by the library director. These activities were undertaken in order to ascertain the perceptions of residents of both Chatham Borough and Chatham Township about their library and explore positive and negative comments about the many programs and services provided. Residents who attended the focus groups were highly engaged and provided relevant information and observations that played a key role in the development of the library's major service priorities.

Focus Groups

The consultants conducted 5 focus groups with residents of various ages and interests. These groups included Teens, Middle School Students held at the Middle School, Parents and Caregivers of Young Children, Adults Ages 25-54, Adults Ages 55+, and a one-on-one session with a Non-User. The following topics were discussed:

- Importance of a public library in the community
- The library as a "community center"
- Communications and marketing
- The library facility and issues regarding parking
- Programming for adults, teens and children
- The library's collections
- Reference and readers' advisory services
- The library's website and access to research databases
- Customer service

Participants also shared their thoughts on what the library's major priorities should be and what (if any) barriers prevent them or members of their family from using the library or making the most of its resources.

Library Surveys

A survey of library users was conducted during the summer of 2012. In all, 374 responses were received; 263 in print and 111 online. More than half of those responding to the user survey were in the 26-54 age bracket and nearly one third were completed by residents 55 or older.

Most respondents (75%) used the library once a week and most for less than 30 minutes each visit. The time period 12 PM to 5 PM was the most popular time to use the library.

Findings – Focus Groups

The library is viewed by its patrons as an invaluable resource for information and entertainment. Most focus group participants recognize that the library is an essential community service that is effectively competing with other libraries in neighboring towns, many with good libraries and similar programs and services. Many view it as a community gathering place; a place to connect with others in town. Residents appreciate the importance of having free, nonjudgmental resources and give the library's collections high marks for currency and relevance. The library's programs for children are cited as a valuable community resource that plays a vital role in the library's success. Access to library materials from other Morris County libraries through the Morris Area Information Network (MAIN) is a well-used and appreciated service.

Focus group participants identified the following priorities for the next 3 years:

- Parking
- Interlibrary loan/reciprocal borrowing
- Programming (for all ages)
- Website development
- Downloadable digital books
- Friendly staff
- Internet access

Although the participants were overwhelmingly positive and satisfied with the facility as well as the programs and services offered at the library, they also discussed improvements that would better meet the needs of the community. Comments included:

- Improve parking options at the library
- Expand public relations in order to promote library programs and services
- Reduce noise levels so as to not disrupt the concentration of others
- Create more private areas for people to enjoy quiet study and relaxation
- Redesign the library's website to make it more user friendly
- Offer more programs, particularly for teens and adult

Findings – Surveys

Some of the significant findings of the 374 surveys included:

- 91% borrowed books in the past year and 62% indicated that borrowing adult books was an important service
- 55% took advantage of interlibrary loan
- 62% borrowed DVDs and half of those who responded felt that having these materials at the library was an important service

- One in four seniors completing the survey felt that the library should improve its offering of library programs for adults and 46% of the respondents between the ages of 25 and 54 felt children's programs were important
- In comments written by respondents, library staff received excellent ratings for knowledge of library resources, helpfulness and availability when needed
- Among the services that respondents would like to see developed or enhanced, 46% said more convenient parking, 44% said a better collection of books, DVDs and CDs, and nearly 25% wanted more downloadable books/music.
- 27% were interested in self-checkout of library materials

Written comments about the library and its services were very positive:

"Best community resource available."

"I love the calming charm of the atmosphere, architecture and environment."

"I love all of the children's programs..."

Findings - Interviews with Community Leaders

The library director conducted eight interviews with community leaders. All interviewees have personally visited the library and rated it very high as a welcoming place to visit and a necessary service in the community. Most recognized that there were parking constraints that need to be addressed. Not everyone had visited the library's website but a few that did indicated that it was not easy to find the information that they were researching. All interviewees felt that the library should take a leading role in technology training and it was important to be "on the cutting edge."

Other comments included:

- Public Relations for programs and services was not adequate
- Technology should be one of the library's highest priorities in the next 3 years
- Community partnerships were important and should be continued
- Many residents do not understand how the library is funded but funding seems to be adequate
- The library represents good value for the tax support

One interviewee said that the library *"has become the community center."*

OUR LIBRARY PROFILE

The Chatham Borough Library was founded in 1908 in downtown Chatham. A referendum was placed on the November 1974 ballot to create a joint library that would serve the residents of Chatham Township as well. The measure passed and the Library was renamed **The Library of The Chathams**. The Library is administered by six trustees, who are appointed jointly through the two governments via the mayors of Chatham Borough and Chatham Township or their representatives, as well as a representative from the joint School District of the Chathams.

As the population of the community has grown and technology has broadened, so have the services that the library provides. The Library of The Chathams is one of the busiest libraries in Morris County and offers a wide array of programs and services to its residents. The Friends of the Library play an important role in the success of the library by providing supplemental funding to the library as well as its members volunteering their time and talents to promote and carry out many important services.

The following is an overview of the library and its current operations.

Organizational Profile

- One stand-alone, 35,396 square ft. facility
- Total hours open to the public per week - 65
- Percentage of funding from the township and borough - 91.8%
- Number of employees - 21.13 FTE
- Number of professional librarians - 6.6 FTE
- Number of volunteers - 15 (3 hrs/week average per volunteer)
- Service population - 19,144
- Friends of the Library - 500+ members

Service Statistics - 2011

Function	2011
Items Circulated	221,814
Computer Sessions	37,026
Reference Questions Answered	42,611
Library Visitors	276,577
Hours of Operation (weekly)	65
Children in Summer Reading Club	548
Registered Cardholders	13,044

Library Materials and Resources Inventory (as of December 31, 2011)

- 102,920 print books
- 1,431 e-books
- 1,091 audio books
- 3,687 music CDs
- 6,940 DVDs/Videos
- 171 subscriptions to newspapers, periodicals
- 50 databases purchased by library
- 12 State Library provided databases
- Fishawack Papers, a 26 volume local history collection

Programming in 2011

- Number of library sponsored adult programs - 162
- Attendance at adult programs - 2,177
- Number of library sponsored programs for children - 331
- Attendance at children's programs - 7,872
- Number of library sponsored programs for young adults - 9
- Attendance at young adult programs - 116
- Number of community sponsored programs - 210
- Attendance at community sponsored programs - 3,034

Programs at the Library

The library offers a variety of programs for adults in the library's meeting rooms each month. They include technology classes, art shows, craft demonstrations, musical performers, films, book discussion and slide/lectures on health and finance. Children's programs include story hours for all ages, music and dance, movies as well as a wide variety of special programs throughout the year.

Technology

The Library belongs to the 37 member Morris Automated Information Network consortium and offers a wide variety of technology to its library patrons. The consortium-shared ILS is hosted by Polaris. Through the library's website www.chatham.library.org library patrons can:

- Access the searchable online catalog, view their account as well as renew titles and place holds.
- Access downloadable audio and e-book titles, through a shared database.

- Access research databases from the library or from home, on topics as diverse as history, genealogy, literature, full-text newspaper/magazine indexes and career and job assistance.
- Access an online newsletter (BookEnds) with information about library programs and events as well as a list books purchased with donated funds.
- Online events calendar and reservation for programs.
- Links to local information.
- Librarian selected websites for various topics.

The library currently has:

- 35 public PCs for public use
- 21 computers with Internet access and Microsoft Office 2007 software
- Wi-Fi.

OUR LEVEL OF USE – A 4 YEAR PERSPECTIVE

Over the last 4 years, usage of the Library of The Chathams has grown and the demand for a variety of programs and services has escalated. Circulation has increased almost 10%, while the number of reference questions answered, program attendance and the number of library visitors have all increased substantially since 2008.

Function	2008	2009	2010	2011
Circulation	201,262	218,860	220,265	221,814
Computer Sessions	36,937	42,584	35,226	37,026
Reference Questions Answered	14,808	16,288	33,767	42,611
Program Attendance (Adult, YA, and Children) **	9,069	9,099	10,049	16,079
Library Visitors	222,264	242,000	242,000	276,577
Children in Summer Reading Club	629	573	549	548
Registered Cardholders	11,981	12,211	13,429	13,044

** Library sponsored programs

OUR SIGNIFICANT ACCOMPLISHMENTS

2008-2011

Interior and Exterior Improvements

- New shelving in the Reference Area for display of library materials
- New lighting in the stacks
- New lighting added to the Reference and Audio-Visual area

- Volunteer community garden surrounding the library, financed by the Friends of the Library

Technology

- Migration with other M.A.I.N. libraries to Polaris, a new integrated library system to provide a more user-friendly online catalog and customized reports
- Classes for patrons on new technology to introduce eBooks and eReaders
- Three Nooks acquired for loan to library patrons, so they could experience new technology

Collections

- Seven new periodicals in the Reference Section including the *Financial Times*
- Increased eBook collection available through the statewide ListenNJ project for downloadable media. (show increase in circ)

Marketing/Communications

- Frequent postings of library events and announcements by using alternative press such as *The Patch*, resulting in improved media coverage
- Increased promotion of library programs and services through Face Book and the library website
- Participation in the PassPort program with other M.A.I.N. libraries celebrating Library Card Sign-up Month during September 2012 and encouraging reciprocal use of other Morris County libraries.

Programming and Outreach to the Community

- Monthly art shows throughout the year except for July and August
- Continued blood pressure readings for the public each month
- Job training workshops offered and sponsored by the NJ Department of Labor
- Tutor.com workshops
- Annual book sale sponsored by the Friends of the Library

Staffing

- Superior staff that works well together and with the public
- Commitment to superior customer service

OUR NEW PLAN

The history of the Library of The Chathams goes back to 1869 when a planning meeting was held to consider the establishment of a “free reading room and library in the village.” Dramatic changes have take place in the provision of library service worldwide and in the establishment and use of the Library of The Chatham as libraries have evolved into community centers that go far beyond the scope of a “free reading room.” This is the

first time that the Joint Free Public Library of The Chathams' has embarked upon a strategic planning process.

As public libraries throughout the United States continue to transform lives by providing critical services and new ways to access information more Americans than ever are turning to their local libraries for Internet access, technology training, assistance with job seeking, cultural enrichment, and helping to teach their children early learning skills. As public library funding remains either flat or is decreasing, library use continues to increase. The Library Board of Trustees is facing the challenge of financial restraints due to the current economy combined with rapidly changing technology and residents' requests for 21st century library services. To identify priorities for the future and use its resources most effectively, the Library embarked upon a planning process to review all aspects of current library operations. The rapid pace of today's world has shortened the recommended library planning cycle to three years. This plan will fulfill our commitment to providing quality library service for Chatham Borough and Chatham Township. It will serve as a road map for the next three years by exploring new opportunities to expand services that the residents have recognized as priorities and carefully analyzing existing services to determine their continued benefit and value to the community.

To guide our work from 2013 to 2015, the Strategic Planning Committee interviewed eight community leaders, conducted six focus groups, conducted surveys both in the library and online, examined community analysis reports, reviewed library statistics benchmarked against comparable libraries nationwide and within the New Jersey, and studied library revenues and expenditures.

To meet our commitment to provide the best possible library for our community and strive for continued excellence in customer service Library of the Chathams' must focus on the following five service responses:

- **Connect To The Online World**

Through their public library, residents of Chatham Borough and Chatham Township will have free high-speed access to the digital world and opportunities to explore new technologies through the Internet.

The importance of keeping up with the latest technologies was a recurring theme in both the survey results and the focus group comments. While the majority of respondents indicated that they would like to see the library's collections of books, DVDs, and CDs grow, 25% of respondents also said that they would like wider availability of e-books and downloadable audiobooks. Nearly 20% felt that accessing the research databases was an important service.

Over 38% of respondents indicated that the library's website was an important service and nearly 50% of the survey respondents would prefer to get information about the library through the library's website. There were, however, several comments about the need to make the website more user-friendly.

Wi-Fi was important to 23% of those who responded to the surveys. Almost 28% wanted the library to further develop technology classes or provide assistance with learning to use new technology and mobile computing devices. Every stakeholder interviewed said that it was important (even “vital” and “critical”) that the library play a significant role in providing technology training and introducing residents to new technologies.

- **Create Young Readers: Literacy From Birth to Age 18**

Children and Young Adults will have materials, services, and programs designed for their age group that stimulate their imagination, encourage learning, and engage them in the world of reading, starting as infants and continuing through high school.

There have been many studies that illustrate the importance for young children to have early literacy skills. Without these skills, they are much more likely to struggle in school not only through the early years, but throughout all of their educational pursuits. In developing a leadership role within the community to support this service initiative, it is also important that the Library offers a range of services and programs to parents, caregivers, and organizations serving the needs of children and pre-teens.

In Chatham Borough and Chatham Township, nearly half of the households have children under the age of 18 and 50% of the survey respondents between the ages of 26 and 55 indicated that they attended a children’s program in the last year. In 2011, the library held 331 programs for children with a total attendance of 7,278. Focus group participants attended by older adults viewed the provision of services for children and teens, and establishing foundations of early literacy skills as one of the primary functions of a community library. Some teens, however, felt that the teen collections at the library were outdated and that there should be multiple copies of popular items.

Also, there was a strong indication from the community leader interviews that the Library can and does play an important role in helping children and teens succeed in school. Children’s programs and the staff’s provision of service in this area are strengths the library needs to continue to develop and enhance.

- **Making Informed Decisions and Getting Facts Fast**

Adults and teens will have the resources they need to identify and analyze risks, benefits, and alternatives as they make important life decisions that best suit their individual strengths and interests. Additionally, library staff will assist residents in answering their ready reference questions on a wide array of topics.

The educational levels of the residents of Chatham Township and Chatham Borough are very high. Of the 75% of the residents over the age of 25 having achieved a bachelor’s degree or higher, over 32% of those residents have attained a graduate

degree as compared to the state average of only 12%. Responses to questions about the library's collections on the surveys and in the focus groups indicate that there is a high expectation for the library to provide a wide variety of accurate resources in many different formats. Focus group attendees in the 26-54 age group agreed that programs and resources for job seekers similar to a successful webinar program previously held at the library would be of interest to many.

Residents seem to be reliant on the library's reference services as 40% of the survey respondents sought research help from a librarian during the past year. Additionally, many residents have long commutes to and from work, so visits to the library are often difficult to fit into busy schedules. It is important that the library provide responses to reference queries quickly and accurately.

Comments made in several of the focus groups and by community stakeholders indicated a strong reliance on the library to provide the framework for instructing the public in the use of current print and electronic resources as well as a forum for assisting residents to adapt to new technologies.

- **Stimulate Imagination and Satisfy Curiosity: Providing Library Materials and Programs for Entertainment and Lifelong Learning**

Residents who want to enhance their leisure time, to explore topics of personal interest and to continue learning throughout their lives will find the resources and programs they want in a wide range of traditional and emerging formats.

Today's bookstores provide materials people can enjoy in their leisure time, but libraries are uniquely suited to fulfill this capacity at no cost to the residents. At The Library of The Chathams, this contribution to the quality of life in the Chathams promotes a sense of community. Because most library services are free, patrons of all ages can try new things and move out of their comfort zones to explore new ideas and interests.

With respect to use of the library, over 93% of all survey respondents indicated that they had borrowed books during the past year. Nearly 63% feel that adult books are important to them and 46% feel that children's books are important. Of equal reported importance was the availability of various non-print media such as DVDs (51%) and books on CD (27%). Sixteen (16%) percent of the respondents indicated that they had downloaded a book in the last year.

The library's interlibrary loan service was extremely popular with 204 respondents (55%) having used the service in the past year.

Programs too are highly regarded. Nearly 21% of the survey respondents over the age of 25 indicated that adult programming was a service they would like to see Chatham improve. Comments during focus group sessions with this age demographic, particularly older residents, also were extremely supportive of more diverse programming. Many attend programs at nearby Madison and there was a strong indication that similar programs in Chatham would be well attended. Examples of programs that would draw interest were music programs, author lectures and book signings.

- **Visit a Comfortable Space: Physical and Virtual Spaces**

The Library of The Chathams' patrons will encounter a welcoming, inviting, and accessible library building and virtual space supported by a customer-focused staff where they can meet and interact with others or sit quietly and read.

Chatham residents are proud of their library and strongly support it as one of the best values for tax dollars. Library staff gets high marks for helpfulness and customer service, and while many survey respondents and focus group attendees feel that the library facility needs very little improvement, there were some comments made by various groups requesting changes that would improve their library experience.

Many feel that parking is a problem. Nearly half of all survey respondents indicated that they would like to have more convenient parking available at the library and many said that they use other Morris County Libraries, in particular Madison, because of parking difficulties at Chatham.

Several teens indicated that while they use the library often, they would like to have a larger, more inviting space dedicated to them.

Library computers are in constant use. During the past year, 50% of survey respondents used a library computer to access the Internet and Wi-Fi is a very important service to many users.

Also, the survey revealed that 20% of library users stay longer than one hour, including one in four of the survey respondents under the age of 17. During a focus group with both teens and with parents and caregivers, several commented that they are in the library for several hours at a time. Both of these groups indicated that they would like to have an area in the library where one could eat and drink.

The five service priorities identified were selected from a total of eighteen possible service responses outlined by the Public Library Association in their 2008 edition of "Strategic Planning for Results" by Sandra Nelson. The library staff developed objectives for three years and action steps for year one keeping in mind three major constants that define public libraries: a quality collection, a strong customer service ethic and a welcoming space. These priorities will be our guide for providing services and programs over the next few years and in addition we will work towards achieving improvements to the building to create the physical environment and meet the need for improved parking requested by the community. Finally, measurements were determined to gauge the success and effectiveness of various initiatives.

Not all library services are included explicitly in these priorities; however this does not mean that we will discontinue them. For instance, we will continue to meet the

information needs of our customers by answering reference questions, a traditional library service. We will continue to provide a high quality collection reflective of the needs and interests of the community, though the collection formats and how we provide information may change as technology and trends in how people access information continue to be transformed.

The foundation for selecting these service priorities was through the gathering of community input. We learned a great deal from our residents about what was most important to them and we were delighted to hear many positive comments from satisfied customers about existing library services. Consistently the library staff received praise for high quality customer service. Even in an affluent community like Chatham we heard comments such as “my family could never afford all the books, music, and movies we borrow!” The goal of the strategic planning process is to not only retain our loyal customers but also to reach out to those residents who use the library less frequently and to nonusers and develop services that will attract new regular visitors to the Library of The Chathams. We received many good ideas from our interviews, focus groups and surveys and several needs emerged that became important themes as we heard them often repeated. Among them were:

- Reduce noise levels so as to not disrupt the concentration of others
- Create more private areas for people to enjoy quiet study and relaxation
- Improve accessibility by providing additional parking for library visitors
- Offer more programs for all ages
- Continue to support membership in a library consortium and the ability to share resources with other libraries
- Increase technology training, advice and instruction
- Improve the library website to increase community awareness about the library and allow for easier access to online information
- Expand publicity about the library so more people are informed about its resources and programs
- Increase and enhance the collection in all formats so that materials are current and appeal to a wide array of interests in the community
- Increase availability of downloadable media such as eBooks and audio books
- Ensure that WiFi access is available throughout the building
- Continue to provide free and plentiful public Internet computers
- Develop the library as a community center for the residents

LIBRARY RESOURCES NEEDED TO IMPLEMENT OUR PLAN

Funding

The challenge for 2013-2015 is to create a meaningful plan of service reflecting community values and desires in an era of increasingly leaner local finances. More than 90% of the Library's budget comes from the two municipalities and is derived from a New Jersey library funding formula based on community property values. As property values plunged in the last four years due to the recession, revenue from the municipality has begun to decline and it is expected that funding will be at best flat if not continuing to decrease during the next three years until real estate values once again begin to appreciate. Because financial resources are reduced, it becomes imperative that the Library identifies as service priorities not just what they can do efficiently, but what is truly desired by the community and thus provide the most effective service by reallocating resources to the priorities deemed the highest in community feedback and analysis. Part of the planning process includes identification of measurement tools to properly determine the success of various objectives in the plan. The library currently meets all of the Library Per Capita State Aid requirements and while the budget has decreased, there does not appear to be any jeopardy of falling below these standards.

Staffing

Currently, 69% of the 2011 budget is allocated to salaries and wages and staff benefits. The library is open 65 hours a week including Sundays from September through June. Library focus groups and surveys consistently revealed high marks for staff in their customer service ethic and staff and trustees believe that the welcoming atmosphere provided by library staff is one of the library's strengths. The library has been automated for over twenty years and the survey revealed that 27% of the respondents would like to see self-checkout at the library, yet respondents and focus group participants expressed a desire for more programming, technology training, job search assistance, and readers' advisory all services that require extensive interaction between the staff and the public. More and more people are turning to their public library for digital literacy skills so they can operate new handheld devices and access services that increasingly are only available online. Continuing education opportunities for staff are of vital importance so that they are knowledgeable about current technology trends and devices, software and social media and able to effectively respond to patrons' questions and technology needs.

Facilities

Even with current budget challenges and heavy competition from retailers such as Amazon and Barnes and Noble, plus the ever-present Internet offering downloadable materials, information and endless apps, The Library of The Chathams has more visitors than ever before and circulation statistics continue to rise. In fact the number of reference questions answered has almost tripled over the last four years. The building is being used more than ever and the demand for free parking spaces often cannot be met. Survey

respondents replied that a major reason they visit other local libraries is that there is more plentiful parking available.

A reoccurring theme during focus groups for all ages was a need for more quiet space and a means to help contain the noise from more active portions of the building. There is also a need for additional small conference room space to accommodate students working together on projects, small group meetings and tutoring sessions. We learned from our community analysis that Teens would like more programming, a larger selection of books and other materials for their age group, and an area that was more Teen friendly rather than an extension of the Children's Room. As libraries and bookstores both emulate each other more, library customers expect amenities such as a café or at least a designated space for food and drink within the library.

Collections

During our survey period, we discovered that 91% of the respondents borrowed books in the past year and 62% indicated that borrowing adult books was an important service. Also revealed was that 62% borrowed DVDs and half of those who responded felt that having these materials at the library was an important service. Even though the collection is heavily utilized 44% of those surveyed indicated that they would like to see the collection of books, DVDs and CDs improved. Nearly 25% wanted more downloadable books and music. Opinion was divided on the quality of the collections with comments stating that they would like to see collections in all formats increased and the printed book collection be more up-to-date, especially the New Book section and others giving the library's collections high marks for currency and relevance. Satisfying the diverse interests of a highly educated community is a challenge as library revenue decreases or remains flat during the current recession. This challenge is compounded by the need to supply residents with multiple formats for a single title such as hardcover book, large print book, and audio book as well as finding the financial means to create a proper balance in the library collection between these standard formats and the emerging demand for materials in electronic format.

Technology

The library's computers continue to be well utilized by the public with over 37,000 computer sessions logged in 2011. Even in an upper middle class community such as The Chathams in Morris County, the recession has impacted library use in many areas, most noticeably in the use of computers and the use of the library by job seekers. Residents also expressed a need for more technology training and demonstration of new devices such as eReaders, iPads and tablets. They also wished to learn more about social media, improving online reference skills by learning more about database searching, and software training to improve their workforce skills. To meet these needs the library will need to ensure that its broadband access is sufficient, public computers are plentiful and up-to-date, explore the possibility of a technology lab or mobile lab with laptop computers, and have dependable WiFi access throughout the building.

The library's website needs to be improved so that those who wish to access the library's resources online find the website more user friendly and the information they are looking for easy to find. Getting word out about library programs and services through traditional media is difficult and in recent years the staff has been more successful using online newspapers such as "The Chatham Patch." Overwhelmingly survey respondents replied that they would like to get their information about the library via the library website. Receiving an e-mail library newsletter was a favored option and finding information on Facebook and Twitter were additional options that require at least some library staff to be well-versed in social media skills.

OUR CORE VALUES

Our core values are the foundation upon which we perform our work and interact with each other and the residents of our communities. We believe in:

Free access and services

All residents of Chatham Township and Chatham Borough have a right to free, equitable and convenient access to library resources. The library facility is a place of intellectual discovery, and is inviting, comfortable, and safe.

Intellectual freedom

The Library supports freedom of speech and the right of residents to receive uncensored information. The Library is a forum for information and ideas in the community.

A climate of respect and trust

Mutual respect and trust are honored both internally and externally at the library. Patrons and staff are valued, supported, and respected.

A strong focus on customer service

The Library strives for excellent customer service. It creates and makes available information, materials and programs that anticipate the needs of the community, are convenient and responsive and are provided by a courteous and professional staff.

Strength in diversity

The Library reflects, supports, and celebrates the diversity of the community in its services, collections and staff.

The formation of strong partnerships

The Library's resources, involvement, and leadership in the community are extended through partnerships with community members, other township and borough departments, businesses, institutions, organizations and agencies.

MISSION AND VISION

MISSION

The mission of The Library of The Chathams is to offer free access to ideas and services through a diverse and abundant selection of resources that will promote a broader understanding of the world and enrich lives by serving as the community's learning and entertainment destination.

VISION

The Library of The Chathams will be the intellectual and social center of the community and continually adapt its collections, services and facility to respond to the changes in the cultural, educational and entertainment needs of our patrons.

To support our vision, the Library will provide the leadership in order to:

- Become a portal to the world of information to patrons of all ages and cultural backgrounds by offering library collections in a variety of formats and educational levels that will satisfy broad informational needs;
- Strike a balance between print and electronic resources in order to meet the needs of all library patrons;
- Provide library patrons with a welcoming and comfortable facility;
- Provide a vibrant and dynamic website for use of library resources;
- Provide the physical and virtual space that will enable the library to serve as a community center for the exchange of ideas by offering a diverse selection of programs and services for children, teens, and adults;
- Provide training opportunities to patrons who wish to learn new and emerging technologies;
- Respond promptly to the changing nature of library services through its knowledgeable staff, dedicated volunteers, and active community partnerships.

OUR SERVICE PRIORITIES 2013-2015

Service Priority: Connect To The Online World

Through their public library, residents of Chatham Borough and Chatham Township will have free high-speed access to the digital world and opportunities to explore new technologies through the Internet.

Objective 1:

Meet the technology needs of library visitors by providing robust Internet service throughout the building, and well maintained public computers and printers that are accessible to all.

Action Steps:

1. Check the strength of the wireless signal once a month.
2. Clean and sanitize library computers once a week.
3. Continue to update and monitor our software and equipment where possible through our consortium.

Objective 2:

Provide training classes and materials for the residents of Chatham on current technologies and the latest trends so they can effectively use online databases, social media, computer software, and other Internet tools to meet their informational and recreational needs.

Action Steps:

1. Through a series of planning meetings, library staff will determine which programs are in most demand by residents.
2. Set up a schedule for training classes in 2013.

Objective 3:

Develop an engaging, interactive web presence to communicate with the public, increase the visibility of the library, and provide library services remotely to those who are unable to visit in person.

Action Steps:

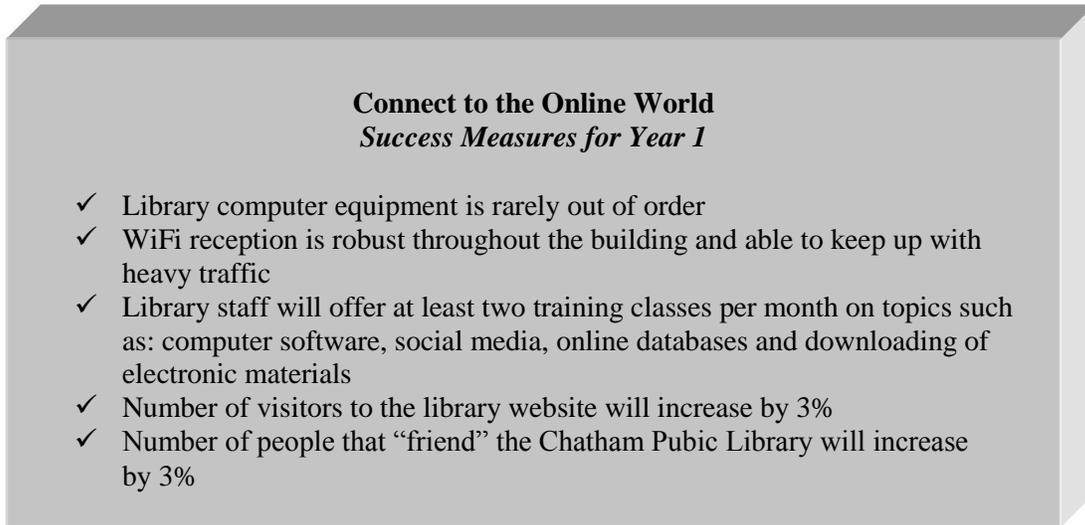
1. Browse the websites of other libraries and make note of best practices that can be incorporated in the redesign of the library's website
2. Within the first six months of 2013, completely redesign the library's website.
3. Develop a mobile app for the library website.
4. Continue to maintain Facebook on a daily basis, promote its use and link with other local groups and organizations.

Objective 4:

Provide ongoing educational opportunities and support for staff so that they are knowledgeable about current technology trends and devices, and are able to respond effectively to patrons' questions and technology needs.

Action Steps:

1. Continue to inform staff about webinars.
2. Require library staff to practice using at least one database per week.



Connect to the Online World
Success Measures for Year 1

- ✓ Library computer equipment is rarely out of order
- ✓ WiFi reception is robust throughout the building and able to keep up with heavy traffic
- ✓ Library staff will offer at least two training classes per month on topics such as: computer software, social media, online databases and downloading of electronic materials
- ✓ Number of visitors to the library website will increase by 3%
- ✓ Number of people that “friend” the Chatham Public Library will increase by 3%

Priority Service: Create Young Readers: Literacy from Birth to Age 18

Children and Young Adults will have materials, services, and programs designed for their age group that stimulate their imagination, encourage learning, and engage them in the world of reading, starting as infants and continuing through high school.

Objective 1:

Provide an ongoing schedule of programs especially designed for preschool children and their families and caregivers to develop early literacy skills.

Action Steps:

1. Train and maintain a roster of Story Readers to provide weekly Story Times to small groups of preschool children and caregivers.
2. Seek out and engage enriching large group programs for preschool children on a weekly basis.

3. Prepare and deliver small and large group Story Times and other enriching programs as the calendar and budget permits.

Objective 2:

Offer programs for school aged children that encourage a lifelong love of reading and stimulate young imaginations and creativity.

Action Steps (Children's Services):

1. Offer a Summer Reading Program which stimulates and rewards reading among school aged children during the summer break from school.
2. Seek out and engage enriching large and small group programs for school aged children after school hours on a monthly basis.
3. Prepare and deliver small and large group programs for school aged children as the calendar and budget permits.

Action Steps (Teen Services):

1. Schedule to speak about their books for teens.
2. Continue sponsoring a workshop that was presented by a high school teacher/author to help teen writers improve their skills and learn about the process of having a work published.
3. Consider presenting other programs of this nature to inspire the youth in our community.

Objective 3:

Ensure that teens will have programs and interactive experiences that focus on their interests and provide satisfying recreational experiences.

Action Steps:

1. Continue to sponsor programs such as teen film nights, Wii game nights, jewelry making workshops, author talks, writing workshops, book reviewing contests, and digital camera workshops to promote programs of interest to teens.

Objective 4:

Develop and expand partnerships with local schools and organizations that provide services to pre-school and school age children and teens.

Action Steps (Children's Services):

1. Partner with local schools to offer programs such as the Planetarium Show and Washington Avenue School Family Night in 2013.
2. Offer the Brownie Sleepover through the Girl Scouts of Chatham.
3. Conduct group tours with Scouts, schools and other community organizations.

4. Contact local pre-schools and offer story time for classes either on the school premises or at the library.

Action Steps (Teen Services):

1. Continue to borrow paperback fiction from the Chatham Middle School to add extra titles to our collection for summer reading.
2. Continue to sponsor special events for community groups such as the Girl Scouts and Boy Scouts using the Library's meeting rooms.
3. Offer volunteer programs as part of the curriculum requirement for Chatham High School and Middle School students to include helping to organize the Library's book, periodical, and audio collections, assisting with the children's summer reading program and activities, and helping with the Library's annual book sale.

Objective 5

Strengthen children and teen collections in a variety of formats that support educational and entertainment needs.

Action Steps (Children's Services):

1. Read reviews of recently published materials to gain knowledge of available resources.
2. Contact school library staff for descriptions of upcoming assignments.
3. Study circulation patterns through data available on Polaris including:
 - Low circulation items to be withdrawn
 - High circulation areas where the collection should be increased
 - Usage patterns of downloadable/electronic items to determine a portion of the budget for these items
4. Utilize available budget to purchase materials suited to the needs and demands of the Chatham youth population.

Action Steps (Teen Services):

1. Make certain that the teen non-fiction collection continues to represent the requirements of the Chatham school curriculum as well as information teens may require on a more personal level.
2. Expand the teen fiction collection to represent the changing reading interests of teens.
3. Continue to purchase book titles on compact disc and film tie-ins as well as music compact disc titles popular with teens.
4. Purchase E-Book titles, as they become available.

Objective 6

Expand awareness within the community about library programs for youth from birth to age 18 and their parents and caregivers.

Action Steps (Children's Services):

1. Prepare a quarterly flyer of events for distribution to elementary schools (electronic), preschools (print) and in-library (electronic and print.)
2. Maintain an e-mail address list of patrons interested in children's programs and announce all programs through e-mailings at repeated intervals (i.e. one season in advance, one week in advance, one day in advance)
3. Visit all elementary schools in the spring to promote participation in the summer Reading Program.

Action Steps (Teen Services):

1. Continue to advertise teen programs through the local newspapers, the Library's Book End's Bulletin, the Library's calendar on our web page, the Library's Facebook page, posters throughout the building including the circulation desk, the reference desk, the teen area, and the children's room.
2. Continue to send information to the schools when major events take place in the Library.
3. Improve our web page to make it more attractive and easier to find activities that will encourage teens to participate.

Create Young Readers – Literacy from Birth to Age 18
Success Measures for Year 1

- ✓ Attendance at children's programs will increase by 3% or reach maximum capacity
- ✓ Attendance at teen programs will increase by 5%
- ✓ Children's circulation will increase by 3%
- ✓ Teen circulation will increase by 5%
- ✓ Number of patrons receiving emails from the library about programs for youth will increase by 20%
- ✓ Participants in the Summer Reading Clubs for Children and Teens will increase by 2.5%

Service Priority: Making Informed Decisions and Getting Facts Fast

Adults and teens will have the resources they need to identify and analyze risks, benefits, and alternatives as they make important life decisions that best suit their individual strengths and interests. Additionally, library staff will assist residents in answering their ready reference questions on a wide array of topics.

Objective 1:

Partner with local businesses and organizations to provide presentations to the community that will educate them about making successful life choices on topics such as health, education, finance and careers.

Action Steps:

1. Continue to hold programs such as financial seminars offering investment options and estate planning; personal health and elder care; college planning including information on testing, early admission, etc.; and workshops using professionals to help those who need employment advice.
2. Partner with St. Barnabas Hospital, Overlook Hospital, Morristown Memorial Hospital, law and financial firms in the area, RSVP of Morris County, SAGE, and the Literacy Volunteers of Morristown to assist with providing and expanding library programs.

Objective 2:

Create displays that highlight library resources and lead patrons to make informed decisions.

Action Steps:

1. The Library will continue to exhibit displays featuring new fiction and non-fiction titles; books for teens' recreational reading; feature film showings, and events such as author talks, travel documentaries, art shows with local artists; and health, education, and financial seminars sponsored by professionals.

Objective 3:

Provide online resources that will guide website visitors to the knowledge they need 24/7.

Action Steps:

1. Continue to research databases for our patrons.
2. Install a computer with a large screen at the reference desk to help publicize databases available through the library.

Objective 4:

Schedule programs that will benefit patrons, including job seekers, and provide them with up-to-date resources and the skills to access that information.

Action Steps:

1. Continue scheduling workshops for patrons depending on their needs.
2. Staff members will dedicate one hour a week to using 1 or 2 databases so that they become more knowledgeable about the databases that we offer our patrons.

3. Continue to provide online resources and programs such as resume writing and interviewing to help the public with their employment searches.
4. Continue to support space in the library for a career coach who meets quarterly with first time job seekers and those re-entering the workforce.

Objective 5:

Design training materials and provide instructional classes allowing patrons to more easily locate information through a variety of online and print sources.

Action Steps:

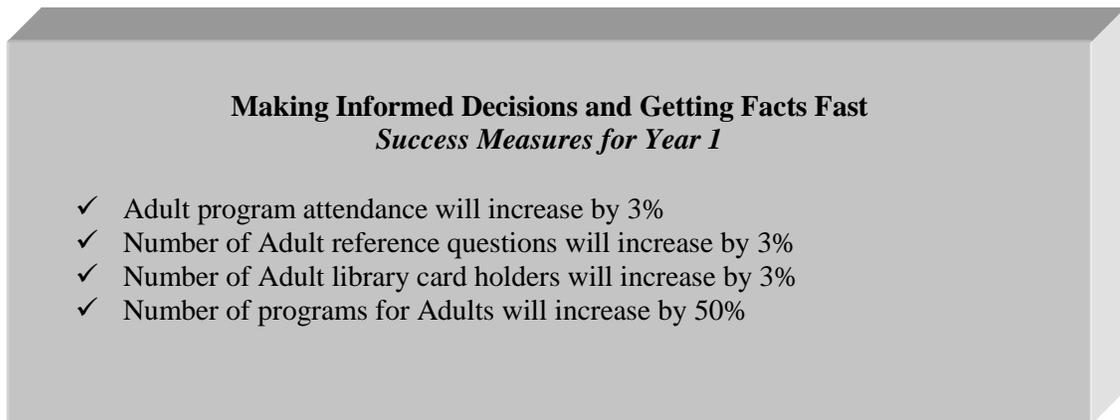
1. Staff will tell patrons about our online resources.

Objective 6:

Educate patrons to assess the accuracy and value of information they discover.

Action Steps:

1. Continue to provide a printed sheet at the Reference Desk on how to evaluate information.



Making Informed Decisions and Getting Facts Fast
Success Measures for Year 1

- ✓ Adult program attendance will increase by 3%
- ✓ Number of Adult reference questions will increase by 3%
- ✓ Number of Adult library card holders will increase by 3%
- ✓ Number of programs for Adults will increase by 50%

**Service Priority: Stimulate Imagination and Satisfy Curiosity:
Providing Library Materials and Programs for Entertainment and
Lifelong Learning**

Residents who want to enhance their leisure time, to explore topics of personal interest and to continue learning throughout their lives will find the resources and programs they want in a wide range of traditional and emerging formats.

Objective 1:

Continually evaluate and enhance library collections by subject and format to meet the needs of patrons.

Action Steps:

1. Continually evaluate the library's collections by utilizing professional reviews, analysis of the school's curriculum, and educational and recreational requests from the community.
2. Continue to read a wide variety of journals, newspapers and magazines so that we can make informed decisions about the kinds of material the library should offer.
3. Take advantage of the reports available through Polaris to ensure that our collection accurately represents the needs of our communities.
4. Improve upon our current system of weeding library material by extending it to other staff members who have a broader understanding or interest in specific areas.
5. In an informal way, we will communicate with library patrons about what they would like to see in the library.

Objective 2:

Expand the library's role in introducing readers to books, music, and other entertainment in both new and traditional formats.

Action Steps:

1. Continue to purchase reading materials in book, audio, and E-Reader format to meet a variety of needs of its readers.
2. Expand the library's offering of musical programs and entertainment to complement the library's extensive compact disc music collection that is purchased for varied musical tastes within the community.
3. Establish a budget line for programming that will supplement the funding received from the Friends of the Library.

Objective 3:

Enable people to connect in conversations about books and culture.

Action Steps:

1. Continue to offer a monthly book discussion group, in two sessions, during which members of the community can express opinions on a particular title of their choice.
2. Continue to invite local authors to speak about their books and relate their experiences to a range of age groups within the community.
3. Continue to offer programs featuring travel and/or personal cultural experiences.

Objective 4:

Establish the library as a community cultural center by presenting programs, displays, and classes that appeal to different interests, tastes, and backgrounds.

Action Steps:

1. Continue and expand programs such as art shows with local artists and art groups, art demonstrations, blood pressure screening, income tax assistance, literacy assistance, Madison, Chatham, & Florham Park Adult School classes, yoga and exercise classes, travel and author talks, and computer classes.
2. Continue to have ongoing exhibits and displays that feature current and historical events, and cultural and personal interests of the community.

Stimulate Imagination and Satisfy Curiosity: Providing Library Materials and Programs for Entertainment and Lifelong Learning
Success Measures for Year 1

- ✓ Adult circulation will increase by 3%
- ✓ Adult program attendance will increase by 3%
- ✓ Book Discussion Groups will average at least 15 people at each session
- ✓ E-book circulation will increase by 10%
- ✓ Number of Adult library card holders will increase by 3%

Service Priority: Visit a Comfortable Space: Physical and Virtual Spaces

The Library of The Chathams' patrons will encounter a welcoming, inviting, and accessible library building and virtual space supported by a customer-focused staff where they can meet and interact with others or sit quietly and read.

Objective 1:

Welcome visitors to a library that is inviting, attractive, comfortable, and accessible with ample parking.

Action Steps:

1. Within the coming months we will form a committee of interested staff members to survey how our current space is utilized to determine where improvements could be made in adding comfortable space especially for our teen population.

2. Explore the possibility of creating a designated Café space to make time spent at the library more pleasurable.
3. If necessary, move or shift areas of the collection to implement proposed changes.
4. The Library Board of Trustees and the Library Director will initiate meetings and draft a plan with Chatham Borough to address the parking concerns of library users.

Objective 2:

Provide ergonomic workstations with appropriate lighting, electrical outlets, and good wire management.

Action Steps:

1. During 2013, determine the costs of making these improvements.
2. If the funding is available, budget for the changes to occur in 2014.

Objective 3:

Ensure that there is ample meeting room space of various sizes to satisfy a variety of programming and community needs such as performance space, group meetings, library programs, and places to collaborate on projects.

Action Steps:

1. Investigate using library meeting spaces (two downstairs meeting room spaces, three small quiet study rooms, and an upstairs quiet study room) as an area that teens can use to talk and work on homework projects.
2. Although material storage and staff supervision may be an issue, consider using the Lundt meeting room a few hours a week for use by teens.

Objective 4:

Furnish visitors with adequate space for quiet study and reading that is separated from the more active areas of the library.

Action Steps:

1. In 2013, explore various options, manufacturers, and costs of enclosed quiet study rooms that can be installed within the library's existing footprint.
2. Determine how many rooms the library budget can support and develop a financial plan for financing the project.
3. If the project moves forward, begin making the necessary changes necessary to reconfigure the adult services department to provide the space required for installation of the quiet study rooms.

Objective 5:

Explore the cost and space requirements for providing patrons with a self-checkout station.

Action Steps:

1. During 2013, explore the cost and space requirements for a self-checkout station.
2. If the project is deemed feasible, develop a budget plan for implementation.

Objective 7:

Encourage visits to the library by providing customer service that is responsive, efficient, knowledgeable, courteous, and friendly.

Action Steps:

1. Continue to greet visitors and patrons with a smile and/or friendly greeting to initiate what we hope will be a positive experience while visiting The Library of The Chathams.
2. Remind staff to think about what extra information they can offer a patron, or to the staff person that can best fulfill the patron's needs.
3. Continue to train all Circulation staff in the new techniques and changes that develop with each new computer system upgrade.

Visit a Comfortable Space: Physical and Virtual Spaces
Success Measures for Year 1

- ✓ A plan to improve parking for library users will be developed in conjunction with Chatham Borough
- ✓ Group project space(s) for Teens will be identified and implemented by fall 2013
- ✓ Identify costs and establish a funding plan for creating additional Quiet Study space(s)
- ✓ Library visitors will increase by 5%