

# Westfield Memorial Library

## Collaboration and Connection: Engaging the Community

Strategic Plan 2011-14

Prepared by the  
Westfield Memorial Library Planning Committee

With assistance from  
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## Letter from the President of the Board of Trustees and the Library Director

 Engaging the community from 2011 to 2014 is a new, strategic plan for the Westfield Memorial Library. It is the result of work on the part of community members, library staff, and library board members who worked together to refine a shared vision and mission for our library for the future.

Our community has changed in recent years. People of all ages require electronic technology, new digital and media formats, and other nontraditional library services, as well as content delivered through traditional methods, like books.

Our library is a unique institution in Westfield. It serves as the place for residents to meet and share ideas, to be entertained, and to become educated and informed. It is the connection that unites our entire community in all seasons of the year.

The new, strategic plan provides guidance for the Board of Trustees to build upon and enhance the existing level of service to the community. The plan focuses on the resources and services the library provides so that we can fully realize the potential value of the library to our community. Given the economic realities that face all municipal agencies today, though, the plan should not be viewed as a checklist of projects and tasks. Instead, the plan will help guide the Board of Trustees in setting priorities within the available financial resources. Those priorities will change over time.

As the library works toward implementing the plan, it will continue focusing on cultural and intellectual activity and lifelong learning for people of all ages. We invite the community to visit the library as we renew our commitment to delivering high-quality library services to all residents.

Please join us in planning for a bright new future for all residents as they participate in our journey of *Collaboration and Connection: Engaging the Community*.

*Douglas Stokes*

President, Board of Trustees

*Phil Israel*

Library Director

# Introduction

A series of focus group sessions were held at the library in 2009. The sessions were attended by a total of 111 people. Each group was asked a set of open-ended questions designed to stimulate discussion about the Westfield Memorial Library, its future, and its importance to the community's quality of life. The data obtained from the groups yielded important information about Westfield residents' perceptions about the library as well as specific suggestions for service and facility changes and improvements.<sup>1</sup>

In addition to the focus groups, an online survey was conducted that was completed by over 200 respondents. The information from the survey about library use and needs will also be helpful to library planners. There were many similarities with regard to library usage among the groups. The consultants spoke with many of the frequent users of the library as well as with infrequent users.

Participants were recruited through:

- Requests from library board members
- Library staff members' asking users, non-users, readers, and nonreaders to participate
- Information in the local press
- Sign-up sheets in the library

The information from the focus groups was a valuable tool for the library director and members of the library board as they considered the future library needs of Westfield residents and other library users. Participants made a strong case for the essential role of the Westfield Memorial Library, especially during the current challenging and difficult economic environment. Rather than retrench, participants said, the library needs to continue its positive plan of service to residents and figure out how to meet changing and additional needs with creative staffing and funding ideas.

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<sup>1</sup>The Westfield Memorial Library Board of Trustees hired Library Development Solutions, a library-consulting firm based in Princeton, New Jersey, to conduct a series of focus groups, a town meeting, and a survey with community residents that would elicit suggestions for improved current and future library services and the facility. The purpose of the focus group sessions was to listen to community concerns about the library, to provide participants with an opportunity to offer to the library board their ideas about the community's library needs, and to discuss options for supporting changed or improved library services. The library board believes that information from the focus groups and the survey will assist in the director and board's abilities to make important decisions about library resources and help develop the library's new, strategic plan.

# Westfield Memorial Library— Vision, Mission, and Values

## The Dream

### Vision of the Westfield Memorial Library

The Westfield Memorial Library will be the intellectual and cultural hub of the community, providing resources, programs, and services that inspire and delight all residents.

## The Promise

### Mission of the Westfield Memorial Library

The Westfield Memorial Library—the community’s destination for discovery and ideas—engages minds, entertains spirits, and facilitates lifelong learning for people of all ages.

## Shared Values

### of the Westfield Memorial Library

The library serves all of its users with generosity and without judgment.

The library provides a safe and welcoming, modern facility that nourishes creativity and curiosity and empowers people to participate in intellectual and social engagement.

The library respects the privacy and confidentiality of its patrons and pledges the integrity and accountability of its staff.

The library maintains desirable and responsive print, audiovisual, and digital collections by continuously assessing the changing requirements of the community and responding with approaches supported by up-to-date technology, practices, and policies.

The library applies sound principles of stewardship by its administration and the library Board of Trustees.

The library creates an environment in which all residents can participate in and contribute to the civic life of our democracy.

# Goals, Objectives, and Action Steps

## Goal One:

The Westfield Memorial Library will engage the community with modern, responsive services, diverse collections, and patron-friendly policies.

## Goal Two:

The Westfield Memorial Library will deliver up-to-date information and resources to increase awareness and use of the library and to secure the library's role as an essential part of Westfield life.

## Goal Three:

The Westfield Memorial Library will connect with the community in an easy-to-use facility and with current technology.

## Goal One:

The Westfield Memorial Library will engage the community with modern, responsive services, diverse collections, and patron-friendly policies.

## Objectives:

- 1.1 Engage the community with programs and materials that respond to changing needs of all Westfielders
- 1.2 Keep library users and especially adults up to speed on current technology and uses
- 1.3 Expand or extend policies to ensure a customer-friendly environment and easy-to-use library
- 1.4 Create a dynamic service program that attracts preteens and teens to the library

## Goal Two:

The Westfield Memorial Library will deliver up-to-date information and resources to increase awareness and use of the library and to secure the library's role as an essential part of Westfield life.

## Objectives:

- 2.1 Develop a new community relations and marketing plan to keep residents aware of library programs and services
- 2.2 Strengthen relationships that foster advocacy and support for the library
- 2.3 Collaborate with other Westfield institutions to share resources and outcomes



## Goal Three:

The Westfield Memorial Library will connect with the community in an easy-to-use facility and with current technology.

### Objectives:

#### Address infrastructure and technology needs

- 3.1 Perform a technology infrastructure upgrade
- 3.2 Continue to develop a modern and convenient library facility that works for patrons and staff and makes the Westfield Memorial Library experience more rewarding
- 3.3 Review the existing Web site, its design, and its content management process to achieve easier access and increased use  
Action Steps:
- 3.4 Consider staff development an everyday need, and develop an annual calendar of activities and classes  
Action Steps:

# Metrics: Measuring Success

Each year, library administration and trustees will conduct a planning session or retreat to assess their progress in meeting the plan's goals and objectives. Goals and objectives will be modified, added, or eliminated depending on changing needs and circumstances during the planning cycle.

In evaluating its success, the Westfield Memorial Library will:

## Measure levels of community satisfaction 2011-14:

- Develop annual online surveys to administer to segments of the population for finding out the population's levels of satisfaction with library services

## Monitor and measure levels of support 2011-14:

- Record and report levels of public and private support
- Encourage and help guide growth in numbers and activity levels of members of Friends of the Library
- Assist Friends of the Library and the Westfield Memorial Library Foundation in reporting to the Board of Trustees on progress toward meeting new funding goals, such as by means of an annual appeal, planned giving, or other fund-raising methods

## Measure and analyze customer use 2011-14:

- Record, report, and compare the statistics and goals set in this plan
- Monitor and record program attendance
- Record frequency of computer use
- Monitor and record library Web site visit frequencies and page uses
- Monitor the percentage of the population using the library
- Develop new measurements of use to reflect all types of library activities

## Increase the level of awareness 2011-14:

- Analyze the number of people who receive the e-newsletter and open it
- Measure the number of new partnerships with organizations and area businesses each year of the plan
- Measure the number of presentations to community groups