

# **BRADLEY BEACH FREE PUBLIC LIBRARY Strategic Plan 2013-2016**

"Celebrate Our Great Little Library and Make it Even Better"

Approved by the Bradley Beach Public Library Board of Trustees December 16, 2013

# BRADLEY BEACH FREE PUBLIC LIBRARY Strategic Plan 2013-2016

# **Celebrate Our Great Little Library and Make it Even Better**

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# I. Philosophy, Vision and Mission

# **Our Philosophy**

During 2012, we developed a simple philosophy: Make it easy for people to find what they want. This philosophy has guided all our work – from cataloguing to space management and card applications to programs – and resulted in more, better satisfied members of our Library.

# **Our Vision**

The Bradley Beach Library is a vibrant community center that promotes reading at all ages, levels and media; is accessible and welcoming to everyone; provides a wide variety of materials – including books, movies, music, audiotapes, magazines, newspapers, eBooks – for education and entertainment; and creates programs that bring people together to learn, play and share.

#### **Our Mission**

The mission of the Bradley Beach Library is to provide outstanding, friendly, personal customer service and equal resources to all members, from preschool children through senior adults. We are committed to enhancing the quality of life in our community by meeting the evolving information, educational, recreational and cultural needs of Bradley Beach's citizens.

#### II. Letter from the Board of Trustees

#### Dear Friends:

On behalf of the Board of Trustees of the Bradley Beach Free Public Library, I am proud to present our 2013-2016 Strategic Plan.

We have experienced tremendous growth in the last two years: our traffic has doubled, program participation increased more than 70 percent and membership and circulation grew steadily. We made e-books available to our members and created a broad range of policies, programs and initiatives to provide outstanding services to our members and community.

I am especially proud that our "Great Little Library" has been named to the New Jersey and National Register as an example of a library founded by a woman's club. I know all the women and men on the board, and in our town, are proud to honor the inspirational determination of the women who worked from 1913, when they founded the library in their clubhouse, to 1927 when the Library opened in a brand new building at its present location.

At the same time, a persistent challenge – the lack of accessibility into and around our library – remains. We made progress in 2012 when the Borough of Bradley Beach commissioned an accessibility study by Mills & Schnoering Architects. They examined our space, identified the problems and proposed a solution: a small addition in the back of our building — that would include an elevator, fire stair, accessible bathroom and flexible space — along with a ramp from the curb to the new entrance. We are very enthusiastic about this approach because it maintains the historic beauty of our library while ensuring that everyone has access. Making that plan a reality will be an important part of the next three years, as will raising awareness and funds to support the renovation.

We also want to become an even greater part of the community and provide superb library services. Those initiatives will include supporting – and partnering with – local groups and organizations. An important part of our outreach will be promoting equal access to technology and literacy. We will ensure that our programs promote that access along with education, lifelong learning and fun! We will also continue to celebrate the history of our town and library.

Finally, we will undertake some important internal initiatives: we will continue to work on collection development, prepare a disaster response plan and clarify our policies, procedures and bylaws.

I have been an enthusiastic member of our library since I moved here in 2001. We are on the threshold of real greatness as we consolidate our strengths and assure – once and for all – that everyone can use our Library and participate fully in our programs.

Sincerely,

Jeanne Beaudette President Library Board of Trustees

# III. Acknowledgements

We are very proud and grateful for the support of the Bradley Beach Library Board of Trustees in all our endeavors. We especially appreciate Marcella Rosenberg and Jeanne Beaudette's help formulating this strategic plan.

We salute the Friends of the Bradley Beach Library, who support us with fundraising, ideas and their indomitable spirit. Our collaborations with the Bradley Beach Elementary School, the Borough of Bradley Beach, the Bradley Beach Historical Society and the Bradley Beach Chamber of Commerce have been both frequent and profound.

We also want to recognize our Library members, who inspire us every day, and our staff, who work so hard and so well to make the Library welcoming to everyone. Special thanks to Sharlene Edwards for her help with priorities and goal-setting.

Finally, we are extremely grateful to all the people who took surveys, participated in focus groups and attended meetings to help us understand what aspects of the Library are working well and where we can make improvements.

# IV. Methodology

In June 2012, we conducted a survey about Library services. We reached out widely to users and non-users through the websites of the Library, Chamber of Commerce and Borough, newsletters, email and flyers. We also reached out to individuals and community leaders.

The survey helped us identify what people like best about the library (the staff and ambience) and the most important changes (access to and within the building and improving the collection and technology). We were pleased that every single respondent ranked having a library in their community as "very important."

We compared that data to data from a 2008 survey and accompanying focus groups. The results – particularly in terms of identifying strengths and challenges -- were essentially the same. People were concerned about accessibility issues into and within the building. They identified additional space for programs, especially for children, and quiet study and reading.

Finally, as part of an accessibility study sponsored by the Borough of Bradley Beach, Mills and Schnoering Architects conducted a site visit and two public sessions about the Library. They identified these assets:

- "The building itself is charming and well-maintained. Its location within a residential neighborhood is a plus. The grounds are well maintained and the rear yard is very useful.
- The staff is friendly, knowledgeable, welcoming, helpful and organized.
- Service is extraordinary.
- Collection is generally adequate in size...
- Programs are imaginative and frequent."

# They also identified several challenges:

- "...There is no accessible path to the building, no accessible route into the building, and no elevator to the basement level...
- The building systems, including especially electrical, IT wiring and HVAC are not satisfactory...
- There is a lack of space for expansion of programs or collections...
- Additional hours for library use or programs would be desirable.
- Circulation desk area and configuration."

All these studies reinforced the Library's pride in our programs, services and building along with our commitment to ensuring that the Library is fully accessible to everyone.

# V. Executive Summary

Since it was founded in 1913, the Bradley Beach Public Library has been an important part of life in this coastal community. In the last two years, the Library has seen tremendous growth in visits, program participation and website use. Over the next three years, the Library plans to consolidate that growth and address critical issues, especially making the Library accessible to all.

The Bradley Beach Public Library's priorities for 2013 through 2016 are to:

- Continue excellent progress as quality library and center of the community
- Become more accessible and welcoming
- Celebrate the history of Bradley Beach and our library
- Support borough, school and community groups
- Promote equal access to resources, particularly technology and literacy
- Support education and lifelong learning
- Prepare disaster response plan
- Clarify policies, procedures and bylaws

In 2013, we will pursue these priorities while refining specific objectives and activities along with measurements to track our progress. The next two years will be focused on further implementation of the priorities. During 2016, we will also begin to work on our 2017-2020 Strategic Plan.

# VI. Profile of the Borough of Bradley Beach

Bradley Beach was founded in 1893 when it separated from adjacent Neptune Township. With an area of less than one square mile, it has a year-round population of about 5,000 people and over 25,000 summer visitors and residents. It is located south of Ocean Grove and north of Avon, and is separated from both towns by lakes.

The 2010 Census determined that 4,298 people, 2,098 households, and 979.8 families lived in Bradley Beach. The racial makeup of the borough was 85% White, and 20% Hispanic or Latino. In the borough, 14.8% of the population were under the age of 18, 7.2% from 18 to 24, 32.8% from 25 to 44, 31.3% from 45 to 64, and 14.0% who were 65 years of age or older.

The Census Bureau's 2006-2010 American Community Survey found median household income was \$59,792 and the median family income was \$75,575. Nearly 3% of families were below the poverty line.

The Bradley Beach School District serves about 300 students from pre-kindergarten through eighth grade. Public school students in ninth through twelfth grades, go to Asbury Park High School. They can also apply to Neptune High School, Red Bank Regional High School or other schools in the Monmouth County Vocational School District.

# VII. The Bradley Beach Free Public Library

#### History

The Bradley Beach Free Public Library was established in 1913 by the Woman's Improvement League of Bradley Beach. They worked tirelessly to promote and build a municipal library until 1927, when the Library was opened at the location where it still operates, on the corner of Hammond and Fourth: two blocks from the Elementary School and walking distance from anywhere in town.

Throughout its history this "great little library" has been an important center of the community. The Library was recently added to the New Jersey Register of Historic Places as an example of a well-preserved early twentieth century library instigated by a women's club.

The Library is dedicated to providing outstanding, friendly, personal customer service and equal access to resources for all patrons. The collection contains nearly 30,000 volumes along with movies, magazines and newspapers. The Library has 6,600 members who make more than 45,000 visits and request over 29,000 transactions each year.

The Library runs many programs for all patrons including children, teens, adults and seniors. Programs range from ancestor research to mahjong, story time to writer's workshops.

#### **Recent Improvements**

In the last two years the Library has made major and minor improvements which have improved the services we offer members, the programs we provide the community and the building itself. We are very proud of the resulting growth in visits, circulation, program participation and website hits.

# Use of Space

We installed new carpet to replace the faded and unsafe rugs and made former book room/director's office into a meeting space. The children's room became much more welcoming with new carpeting and paint.

# **Finances**

The painful return of funds that had been saved for ADA improvements brought the Board's attention to the need for more rigorous control of funds. The Library hired a bookkeeper to help the Director with finances, and an independent auditor to conduct annual audits. The Library took control of funds from the Borough gradually; now handles our own finances (with the exception of payroll).

#### Personnel

There had been difficulty with several positions at the Library, but, by the end of 2011, a new director had been hired and the Library team was working better than ever before.

#### Outreach

Our efforts resulted in excellent relations with School, Borough, Chamber of Commerce and Historic Society.

#### *Innovative Programs*

Responding to member interests and using community and individual resources dramatically improved our programs and participation. Making the Program Director a full-time position significantly improved programs and our outreach to volunteers.

# Member Friendly

We became very focused on cultivating the interests of our members. We added e-books, a leasing program for best sellers and improved interlibrary loan and book orders systems. We clarified our policies and procedures so everyone is treated the same. We eliminated the summer renter category, which was expensive and hard to manage, and treated Bradley Beach residents who live here part of the year the same as year-round residents.

#### Media Relations

The Library cultivated excellent relations with local media, particularly *The Coaster* and *The Coast Star*. There is a story about and/or pictures of a library program in most issues of these closely read weekly papers.

# **Technology**

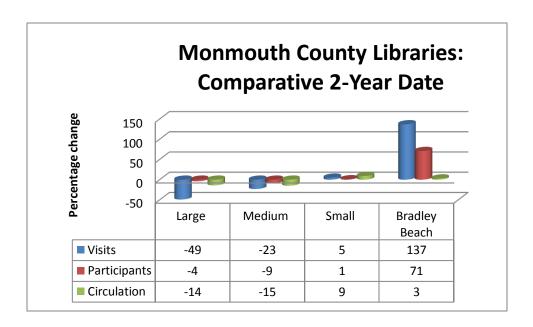
We made major progress stabilizing our system and making computers available to the public. We got a new server and reconfigured the network so everything was simplified, reliable and consistent. Persistent server crashes are a thing of the past. We also completely redid our website to make it as clear and simple as possible. Finally, the Envisionware PC Reservation system has ensured that everyone has equal access to the public computers. We also improved our data collection so we could track our progress.

While we are very proud of all these improvements, we are also concerned about things that limit Library participation, especially the inaccessibility of our building to the old, young, sick and infirm.

# **Library Usage**

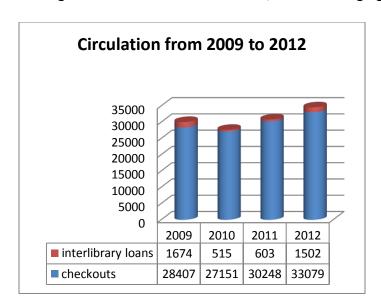
The Bradley Beach Library experienced explosive growth in 2012: Traffic was up a remarkable 137% (45,167 in 2012, 19,000 in 2011); program participation increased 71% (3,075 in 2012 versus 1,798 in 2011)

This is especially remarkable when statistics are compared with a small, medium and large library nearby: only the medium library had positive growth in these areas and that was minimal.



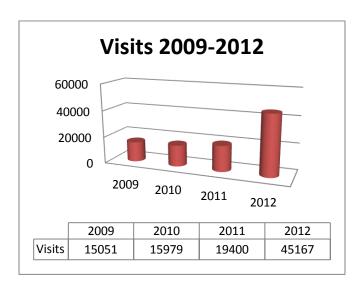
#### Circulation

Circulation climbed steadily, particularly in 2012. We attributed that rise to extensive weeding, moving the collection for easier access, and encouraging members to be involved in selection.



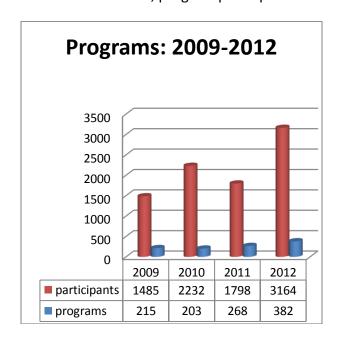
#### Visits

The more and different kinds of programs we offered – and the more welcoming we were – the more people came to the Library. The growth between 2011 and 2012 was exceptional (and accurate as we invested in a people counter to calculate traffic).



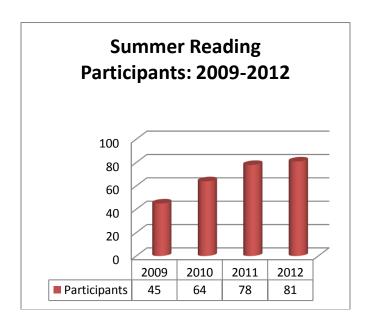
# Program attendance

As we worked to make the Library welcoming to members, we also reached out through innovative programming, with an emphasis on using local expertise and responding to member interests. As a result, program participation increased dramatically.



# Children in summer reading

Our Summer Reading program grew steadily during their period. In 2013, we revised the program dramatically and had doubled the participants of 2012.



# Challenges

We have identified eight major challenges during this Strategic Plan:

- accessibility for all,
- celebrating and preserving our history,
- reaching out to the community,
- improving technology,
- raising funds to support the library,
- providing excellent customer service,
- support for education and lifelong learning, and
- disaster preparedness.

Identifying these needs has informed the priorities that we will undertake during the next three years.

#### VII. Priorities for the Next Three Years

In order to make our Great Little Library even better, we are focusing on four critical goals during the strategic planning period:

- Continue excellent progress as a quality library and a center of the community,
- Promote equal access to resources while supporting education and lifelong learning,
- Improve organizational excellence, and
- Become more accessible and welcoming.

# Some of our key objectives include:

- Raise awareness and funds to support the library,
- Celebrate the history of Bradley Beach and our library,
- Support borough, school and community groups,
- Prepare disaster response plan,
- Clarify policies, procedures and bylaws,
- Collection development,

Our goals and objectives are described in greater detail below. During the first year of our Strategic Plan period, we will carefully track activities and develop measurements to assess our progress.

#### **GOAL 1: BECOME MORE ACCESSIBLE AND WELCOMING**

The biggest issue facing our library is the lack of accessibility into and around our building. The Borough sponsored an accessibility study in 2012 that detailed the challenges and solutions. The Board of Trustees endorsed a plan calling for a small expansion that would include a ramp to a new back entrance along with an elevator and fire-proof staircase. The new addition would also include additional program/meeting space, storage and an accessible bathroom. Working with the Borough to secure financing and overseeing the building of the addition will be major activities during the strategic planning period.

There are several accessibility initiatives -- such as changing doorknobs and table heights -- that we could do within the existing building. In addition to those changes, we are working with Library Interiors on a master plan for our space. Once the plan is complete, we will address annual space improvements.

We will work closely with the Friends of the Bradley Beach Library to raise funds, especially for the new addition. An important aspect of that will be raising awareness about the Library, in general, and the ADA renovation, in particular. In addition, the Library will continue to reach out to new users through the media, community groups and other collaborations.

#### Objective 1.1: Undertake accessibility initiatives

- Begin to make changes such as replacing doorknobs with levers, changing computer table height – that will improve accessibility
- Work with the Borough to secure financing for an accessibility
- Oversee the building of the addition

# Objective 1.2: Oversee annual space improvements

• Work with Library Interiors on a master plan for our space

#### **Objective 1.3:** Raise awareness and funds to support the library

- Work closely with the Friends of the Bradley Beach Library to raise funds, especially for the new addition
- Raise awareness about the Library and the ADA renovation
- Continue to reach out to new users through the media, community groups, and other collaborations

#### GOAL 2: CONTINUE EXCELLENT PROGRESS AS A QUALITY LIBRARY AND A CENTER OF THE COMMUNITY

We are very proud of the progress we have made as an acknowledged center of the community. We will continue to reach out to groups and individuals to introduce them to the Library. We will also reinforce our strong partnerships with the Borough, School, Chamber of Commerce and other institutions. Our programs will continue to both serve and challenge our members.

We were honored to be listed on the New Jersey Register of Historic Places in 2013. We plan to put together a program and materials to tell the story of the women who worked so tirelessly to create and grow the Bradley Beach Library. We will also reach out to other libraries founded by women's clubs to see if we can be part of a driving tour for women's clubs or the New Jersey Women's Heritage Trail. We will also continue our work with the Historical Society and Museum to help people learn more about the history of our town.

**Objective 2.1:** Foster community connections by supporting the Bradley Beach Borough, the Bradley Beach Elementary School, and other community groups

- Develop resources that support the school's curriculum through collaborative relationships with educators
- Activitely seek opportunities to support the work of city agencies and cultural groups

**Objective 2.2:** Continue to reach out to groups and individuals to introduce them to the library and its services

- Offer resources and programs tailored to meet the unique needs of seniors, native Spanish speakers, teens, and other groups who are underrepresented
- Heighten public awareness of the library's vast resources by redesigning our website to be more
  user-friendly; maintaining an active presence on social media; and by continuing to cultivate our
  relationships with traditional media outlets

# Objective 2.3: Celebrate the history of Bradley Beach and our library

- Create a program and produce materials to tell the story of the women who worked to create and grow the Bradley Beach Library
- Reach out to other libraries founded by women's clubs to explore the possibility of planning a driving tour for NJ women's clubs or the New Jersey Women's Heritage Trail
- Continue to work with the Historical Society & Museum to help people learn more about the history of our town

#### GOAL 3: PROMOTE EQUAL ACCESS TO RESOURCES WHILE SUPPORTING EDUCATION AND LIFELONG LEARNING

The Library is well-established as a reliable partner to borough departments, the Bradley Beach Elementary School and local community groups. We will solidify those relations and reach out to businesses and other groups to establish partnerships.

In some case, the public computers, wifi and even fax machine are the only access users have to technology and the Internet. We will ensure that the equipment is adequate, up-to-date and in good shape. We will also promote reading and learning at every opportunity and do all we can to assure that people have access to the materials they want to read.

In addition to our close partnership with the Bradley Beach Elementary School, we will continue to support education and learning through book clubs, programs, entertainment and all kinds of learning. We will also continue to reach out to seniors, native Spanish speakers, teens and other groups.

# **Objective 3.1:** Continue to support reading and education through services and programming

- Expand and enhance the library's summer reading program
- Strengthen relationships with Bradley Beach Elementary School faculty to foster and support student achievement

- Collaborate with community partners to offer a wide range of learning opportunities for all ages while maximizing community resources
- Provide new ways for individuals to join conversations about books and the community
- Connect people with volunteer opportunities at the library and experiment with new ways to harness volunteer energy
- Provide early learning experiences for the children of Bradley Beach through programming

#### **Objective 3.2:** Ensure that technological equipment is adequate and up-to-date

Objective 3.3: Ensure that people have access to the materials that they want

- Explore emerging technologies to improve access to materials
- Continue to develop relevant collections that meet the community's current needs
- Find new and better ways to learn what the public wants in the collection
- Explore new ways to showcase the library's materials

#### **GOAL 4: IMPROVE ORGANIZATIONAL EXCELLENCE**

Working with the Board of Trustees and the Borough, we will ensure that the Library has clear and complete bylaws, policies and procedures

The Library was an effective "second responder" in the aftermath of Hurricane Sandy. We will enhance our ability to prepare for and respond to natural and other disasters by preparing a detailed plan to protect the library and establish a disaster recovery center.

# Objective 3.1: Clarify Policies, procedures, and bylaws

• Work with the Board of Trustees and the Borough to ensure that the Library has complete bylaws, policies, and procedures

Objective 3.2: Enhance our ability to prepare for and respond to natural and other disasters

- Prepare a detailed plan to protect the library
- Establish a disaster recovery center

# IX. Relevant Local, Regional and Statewide Initiatives

The Bradley Beach Public Library stays informed about relevant planning and initiatives. We are especially aware of:

- Revitalizing Bradley Beach's Main Street <a href="http://njplanning.org/news/revitalizing-main-street-in-bradley-beach-new-jersey/">http://njplanning.org/news/revitalizing-main-street-in-bradley-beach-new-jersey/</a> and its emphasis on the walkability of our town
- Coastal Monmouth Regional Plan <a href="http://co.monmouth.nj.us/page.aspx?ID=2970">http://co.monmouth.nj.us/page.aspx?ID=2970</a> which encourages collaboration among nearby communities
- The Monmouth County Strategic Plan
   http://visitmonmouth.com/documents/145/Monmouth%20County Strategic%20Plan%
   202009.pdf which outlines overall objectives for the County (although does not account for the impact of Hurricane Sandy.

We also keep track of historic preservation initiatives, particularly the NJ Women's Heritage Trail http://www.state.nj.us/dep/hpo/lidentify/whttrail2.htm

We will continue to assess and incorporate these -- and other relevant initiatives -- into our activities and planning.