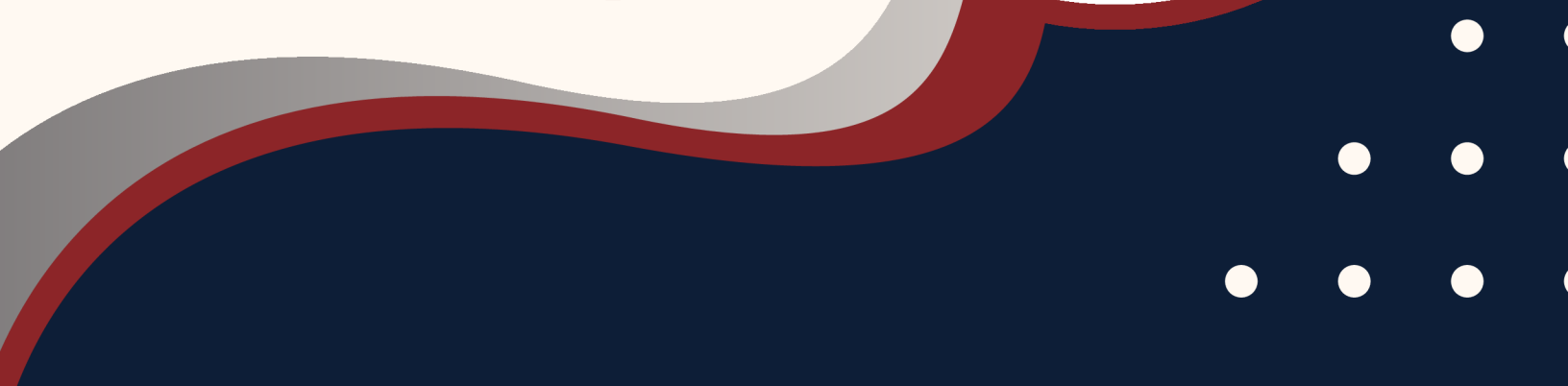


# Strategic Plan 2026-2029

*Where curiosity  
meets creativity*



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“—

The library makes the community better. It is remarkable to see new and old brains together, enhancing our mental well-being and community.

**BERGENFIELD RESIDENT**

# Message From the Board

The Board of Trustees of the Bergenfield Public Library is proud of the efforts made over the last 5 years towards addressing and achieving many of the identified needs and goals of our library in our previous strategic plan.

The Board also recognizes that our community's needs and priorities have evolved since our last strategic plan was developed and implemented. For this iteration, we enlisted the assistance of Library Crossroads Consulting to help us develop a new 3 year strategic plan that will allow the library to better serve our community.

As we look ahead, the Board remains committed to ensuring that the Bergenfield Public Library continues to be a responsive, welcoming, and essential resource for all residents. This strategic plan reflects the voices of our community, builds upon our past successes, and provides a roadmap for the next three years of growth, innovation, and service. We look forward to working together to strengthen the library's role as a center for learning, connection, and opportunity in Bergenfield.

**Thomas Neats**  
**President, Board of Trustees**  
**Bergenfield Public Library**

# Acknowledgments

## **STRATEGIC PLANNING COMMITTEE**

Lois Alexander, Friends of the Bergenfield Library  
Allison Ballo, Library Director  
Denise Lester, Head of Youth Services Department  
Thomas Neats, Board President  
Jamie Orlando, Board Treasurer  
Sorah Shaffren, Board Secretary

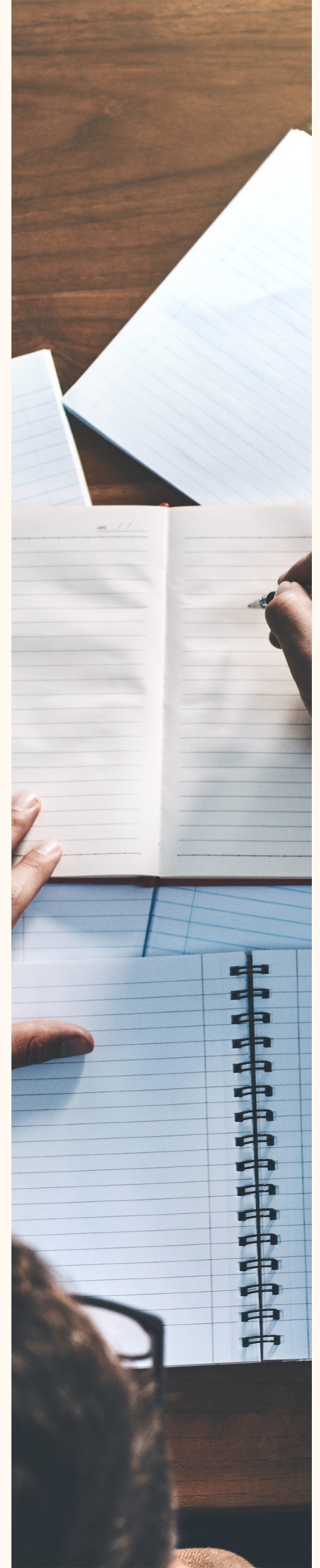
## **LIBRARY BOARD OF TRUSTEES**

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# Our Process

Developing a thoughtful strategic plan is a dynamic and comprehensive process, involving in-depth analysis and broad collaboration. The result is an overarching plan that is meaningful to the community. We started with an information-gathering phase, then worked together to develop specifics that can guide the library's decision-making in the future. You will see the results of each step of our process in this plan.

## **COMMUNITY ANALYSIS**

To create this plan, we thoroughly analyzed the Bergenfield community. Using sources such as the U.S. Census and the NJ School Performance Report, we determined trends and unique features of the local area. This data also highlighted potential opportunities and strengths that emerged in later conversations with community members.

## **SURVEYS**

A community-wide survey was designed to capture concerns, attitudes, opinions, challenges, experiences, and the needs of Bergenfield residents. The survey contained closed- and open-ended questions to elicit a wide range of responses.

## **FOCUS GROUPS**

As a final part of the information-gathering phase, we held a series of four focus groups. The groups consisted of members of key demographics, including: general library users, teens, parents, and working adults. Conversations were designed to explore themes that emerged in the previously collected data, and obtain more detailed, personalized feedback.

## **VISION, MISSION, GOALS, AND OBJECTIVES**

Having gathered a comprehensive amount of information about the Bergenfield community, we began to refine an overarching vision for the library. Consultants met with the library's Strategic Planning Committee to develop an informed set of values and goals. Over the course of many in-depth discussions, and shaped by the wealth of data previously collected, the Strategic Planning Committee created and refined the vision, mission, goals, and objectives that you will find in this plan. This strategic plan is a result of a joint effort between the entire Bergenfield Library community, and Library Crossroads Consulting, LLC.

# Community Analysis

## INTRODUCTION

This analysis includes data from sources such as the U.S. Census Bureau and the NJ School Performance Report, as well as insight gained from surveys and focus groups. Measurable statistics provide a better understanding of the Bergenfield community and help clarify emerging trends reflected in feedback from library staff and Borough residents.

## OVERVIEW

**Population and Demographics**<sup>1</sup> – Bergenfield is a diverse borough with about 29,000 residents. While the majority of residents identify as White, many identify as Hispanic or Latino, Asian, Two or More Races, or Black or African American. Half of the residents speak a language other than English at home, and many were also born outside of the United States.

**Computer and Internet Use**<sup>1</sup> – Nearly everyone has home access to a computer and broadband internet. This presents an opportunity for the library to serve as a primary resource for education on information literacy and technological advances.

**Education and Income**<sup>1,2</sup> – Bergenfield is part of a diverse school district with graduation rates that are above state averages. Nearly half of residents have obtained a bachelor's degree or higher. While almost one-third of school students are economically disadvantaged, the median household income in Bergenfield is above average when compared to the rest of the state.

**Location and Transportation**<sup>1</sup> – Located in Bergen County, in the northeast corner of New Jersey, Bergenfield enjoys easy access to major roads and public transportation options. Commuting time for residents in the township is similar to the average for the state.

**Economy and Business**<sup>1,3</sup> – Bergenfield is home to over 900 businesses. The largest employer is the Bergenfield Borough School District, but the borough also has several home-based businesses, medical professionals, restaurants, churches, contractors, and retail stores.

## ANALYSIS

### **Population and Demographics**<sup>1</sup>

With about 28,921 residents, Bergenfield is a moderately-sized borough whose population has increased by around 8% since 2010. The community's population largely identifies as

White (42.9%), Hispanic or Latino (30.2%), and Asian (26.6%). About 9.2% of residents identify as Black or African American, and 11.4% identify as Two or More Races.

There have been some major demographic shifts in Bergenfield since the 2010 Census. The number of residents identifying as White has declined by about 15%, while all other demographic groups have increased their numbers. The largest demographic shifts were among the Hispanic or Latino community (with an increase of 9.5%), and those identifying as Two or More Races (with an increase of 8.5%). The Black or African American population increased by 3.3%, while the Asian population increased by 1.7%.

About half of Bergenfield residents speak a language other than English at home. This number is about 17.6% higher than the New Jersey average. At home, 24% of Bergenfield residents speak Spanish, about 19% speak Asian and Pacific Islander languages, about 4% speak other Indo-European languages, and about 3.2% speak other languages. About 38.5% of residents were born outside of the United States, compared to the New Jersey average of 23.5%.

The median age of residents in Bergenfield (40.7 years) is similar to that of the rest of the state (40.1 years).

### **Voices from the Community**

*When asked to describe the type of community they wanted Bergenfield to be, many survey respondents and focus group participants described a community that is inclusive and diverse. About 48% of survey participants chose “diversity, equity, and inclusion” as an important community issue, making it the third top choice after “safety” and “affordability.”*

### **Computer and Internet Use** <sup>1</sup>

Bergenfield residents have a high level of access to home computers (97.4%) and broadband internet (94.7%), exceeding average levels of access for the state. Information literacy is difficult to gauge in communities, but it is an important element to consider when looking at computer and internet use. Libraries often find themselves to be the primary community resource for computer and internet assistance and training.

### **Voices from the Community**

*When asked to choose statements that reflect their personal values for the library, 33% of survey respondents chose “provide access to current technology.” Focus group participants viewed digital media and technology as an important offering of the library, and also viewed the library as a critical support system for people without home access to technology. When discussing opportunities for improvement, they valued increased technology training and digital content support.*

## **Education and Income**<sup>1,2</sup>

Students in Bergenfield attend the Bergenfield Borough School District. The school district has a total enrollment of 3,757 students who attend grades pre-K through 12 in seven different schools. There are five elementary schools, one middle school, and one high school.

Bergenfield Borough students represent a diverse population. About 31.8% of students in the district are economically disadvantaged. About 18.3% have disabilities, and about 8.2% are multilingual learners. While about 52% of students speak English at home, students also speak Spanish (34.1%), Tagalog (4%), Filipino (2%), Malayalam (1.6%), and other languages (6.3%). A range of ethnic and racial groups are represented as well. Most students are Hispanic (57.2%), but some students identify as Asian (22.3%), White (9.8%), Black or African American (7.2%), and of two or more races (2.9%). Less than 1% of the students identify as Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander, or American Indian or Alaska Native.

Students in the district perform well on standardized tests, and the graduation rate is above the state average by about 6%. Over 94% of 10th and 11th graders participated in the PSATs, and recent scores on these tests for reading, writing, and math were close to state averages. Over 88% of 12th graders took the SATs. Recent scores show that over 60% of test-takers met or exceeded college readiness benchmarks for reading and writing, and 32% met or exceeded benchmarks for math. Nearly 48% of Bergenfield residents have a bachelor's degree or higher, which is about 4.8% above the average for the state. Pre-K through 12th-grade students in the Bergenfield Borough School District are served by three media specialists, with a 1,252:1 ratio of students to school librarians/media specialists.

In addition to its positive educational climate, Bergenfield is a community with a higher-than-average median household income and a relatively low poverty rate. According to the U.S. Census, Bergenfield residents report a median household income of \$124,083, which is about 23% above the median for the state. The poverty rate is 6.1%, compared to the New Jersey average of 9.7%.

More residents in Bergenfield own their homes (70.6%) than rent (29.4%). The homeownership rate for the township is about 6.9% above the average for the state, while the number of renters is about 6.9% below the state average. The median value of owner-occupied units in the township, from 2019 to 2023, was nearly 10% above the median for New Jersey (about \$469,200 and \$427,600, respectively). Rental fees in the township were above the state average as well (\$1,744 and \$1,653, respectively). Nearly half (48.6%) of householders in occupied units have moved into their unit since 2010.

### **Voices from the Community**

*When asked about the most important issues facing Bergenfield as a community, about 47% of survey respondents chose education. Continuing lifetime learning and personal growth was selected by 33% of survey respondents as a challenge they have faced in the past few years. Cost of living (about 43%) and affordability (about 54%) were top choices when people were asked about recent challenges or important issues in the community. Focus group participants valued the library as a provider of cost-saving resources.*

### **Location and Transportation**<sup>1</sup>

Located in the northeast corner of New Jersey, Bergenfield is a suburban community that enjoys convenient proximity to New York City. The land area of the borough is about 2.9 square miles. Situated in the eastern portion of Bergen County, Bergenfield is bordered by Englewood City, Teaneck Township, and the boroughs of New Milford, Dumont, Cresskill, and Tenafly.

While Bergenfield consists of a loose grid of main streets and local roads, the borough is conveniently located near several major highways. Bisecting the town vertically, Washington Avenue is central to much of the industry and commerce of the town. Major highways are also nearby: the Garden State Parkway and Rt. 17 to the west; Rt. 4, I-80, and I-95 to the south; and Rt. 9 and the Palisades Interstate Parkway to the east.

Bergenfield is also easily accessible by public transportation. NJ Transit's Pascack Valley Line is a train service that runs from Spring Valley, NY, to Hoboken, NJ, with connections to New York Penn Station and other NJ Transit train lines. While not located in Bergenfield, it passes close to the borough and can be accessed through nearby River Edge, Oradell, or New Bridge Landing stations. New Jersey Transit also operates bus routes that service centrally located stops along Washington Ave. and Main St.

Easy access to major roads and public transportation options makes Bergenfield a convenient place to live. Residents' mean travel time to work is 32.8 minutes, which is similar to the average for the state (30.9 minutes). Over 70% of residents drive themselves to work, while 11.2% take public transportation. Another 7.2% of residents carpool to work, and about 2.8% walk or have other means of commuting to work.

### **Voices from the Community**

*Survey participants wrote about the convenience and accessibility of the library but were also frustrated by insufficient parking. 26% chose "parking" as an important issue in the community. Some noted concerns about overdevelopment and the decline of a downtown area, with 20% of respondents choosing "development" as an important issue. "Traffic" (27%) and "public transportation" (14%) were also cited as community concerns.*

## **Economy and Business** <sup>1,3</sup>

Bergenfield has a thriving economic culture. The employment rate in the township is around 67.4%, which is similar to the state average of 66.2%. About 16.4% of employed residents work locally, while about 83.6% work outside of the borough. About 7.8% work from their homes.

There are 904 businesses located in the township, and about 107 of them are home-based. Most of Bergenfield's largest employers are centrally located near Washington Ave. Bergenfield's largest employer is the Bergenfield Board of Education, located on W. Clinton Ave., about a 15 minute walk from Washington Ave (past the Bergenfield Public Library). The supermarket chain, Lidl, is also a large local employer with a high sales volume. These employers are complemented by several medical professionals, restaurants, churches, contractors, and other businesses. The borough is also home to many retail stores, including several fast food chains like Wendy's, McDonald's, and Dunkin'; and two Walgreens drug stores located on North and South Washington Ave.

### **Voices from the Community**

*Survey participants value the library as a safe, welcoming space for remote/hybrid workers, and 8% of respondents found "running a small business" to be a recent personal challenge. When asked about opportunities for library improvement, focus group participants discussed expanding professional development programs (promoting job skills and entrepreneurship).*

## **FACTS AND FIGURES**

### **Population and Demographics**<sup>1</sup>

**Total Population (estimate for 2023):** 28,921

**Total Population (estimate for 2010):** 26,764

<b>Racial and Ethnic Groups</b>	<b>Estimates for 2010</b>	<b>Estimates for 2023</b>
White	58%	43%
Asian	25%	27%
Hispanic or Latino	21%	30%
Black or African American	6%	9%
Two or More Races	3%	11%

<b>Foreign Born Persons</b>	<b>Bergenfield</b>	<b>New Jersey</b>
2019-2023	39%	24%

<b>Language Other Than English Spoken at Home</b>	<b>Bergenfield</b>	<b>New Jersey</b>
percent of persons age 5+ years (2019–2023)	50%	33%

<b>Types of Languages Spoken at Home</b>	<b>Bergenfield</b>
English Only	48%
Spanish	24%
Asian and Pacific Islander Languages	19%
Other Indo–European Languages	4%
Other Languages	3%

<b>Median Age</b>	<b>Bergenfield</b>	<b>New Jersey</b>
(2019–2023)	40.7 years	40.1 years

### **Computer and Internet Use**<sup>1</sup>

<b>Households with a Computer</b>	<b>Bergenfield</b>	<b>New Jersey</b>
(2019–2023)	97%	95%

<b>Households with a Broadband Internet Subscription</b>	<b>Bergenfield</b>	<b>New Jersey</b>
(2019–2023)	95%	92%

### **Education and Income**<sup>1,2</sup>

School District Enrollment (2023–2024): 3,757 students

<b>Schools in District</b>	<b>Grades</b>
Franklin Elementary School	PK–5
Hoover Elementary School	PK–5
Jefferson Elementary School	KG–5
Lincoln Elementary School	PK–5
Washington Elementary School	KG–5
Roy W. Brown Middle School	6–8
Bergenfield High School	9–12

<b>Enrollment Trends by Student Groups (2023–2024)</b>	<b>Bergenfield</b>
Economically Disadvantaged Students	32%
Students with Disabilities	18%
Multilingual Learners	8%

<b>Enrollment by Racial and Ethnic Groups (2023–2024)</b>	<b>Bergenfield</b>
Hispanic	57%
Asian	22%
White	10%
Black or African American	7%
Two or More Races	3%
Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander	Less than 1%
American Indian or Alaska Native	Less than 1%

<b>Enrollment by Home Language (2023–2024)</b>	<b>Bergenfield</b>
English	52%
Spanish	34%
Other	6%
Tagalog / Filipino	6%
Malayalam	2%

<b>Standardized Testing Participation Rates (2023–2024)</b>	<b>Bergenfield</b>	<b>New Jersey</b>
10 <sup>th</sup> and 11 <sup>th</sup> graders taking PSAT 10/NMSQT	95%	81%
12 <sup>th</sup> graders taking SAT	89%	63%

<b>Standardized Testing Score (2023–2024)</b>	<b>Bergenfield</b>	<b>New Jersey</b>
PSAT 10/NMSQT – Reading and Writing	447	459
PSAT 10/NMSQT – Math	441	454
SAT – Reading and Writing	509	530
SAT – Math	488	519

<b>Graduation Rates</b>	<b>Bergenfield</b>	<b>New Jersey</b>
Cohort 2024, 4-Year Rate	97%	91%

School Librarians/Media Specialists (2023–2024): 3  
Ratio of Students to School Librarians/Media Specialists: 1,252:1

<b>Residents with a Bachelor’s Degree or Higher</b>	<b>Bergenfield</b>	<b>New Jersey</b>
2019–2023	48%	43%

<b>Median Household Income</b>	<b>Bergenfield</b>	<b>New Jersey</b>
2019–2023	\$124,083	\$101,050

<b>Persons in Poverty</b>	<b>Bergenfield</b>	<b>New Jersey</b>
2019–2023	6%	10%

<b>Home Ownership Rate</b>	<b>Bergenfield</b>	<b>New Jersey</b>
2019–2023	71%	64%

<b>Renter–Occupied Rate</b>	<b>Bergenfield</b>	<b>New Jersey</b>
2019–2023	29%	36%

Householders who moved into their units in 2010 or later: 49%  
Householders who moved into their units in 2009 or earlier: 51%

<b>Median Value of Owner–Occupied Housing Units</b>	<b>Bergenfield</b>	<b>New Jersey</b>
2019–2023	\$469,200	\$427,600

<b>Median Gross Rent</b>	<b>Bergenfield</b>	<b>New Jersey</b>
2019–2023	\$1,744	\$1,653

### **Location and Transportation<sup>1</sup>**

<b>Land Area in Square Miles</b>	<b>Bergenfield</b>
2020	2.9

<b>Mean Travel Time to Work</b>	<b>Bergenfield</b>	<b>New Jersey</b>
2019–2023	33 minutes	31 minutes

<b>Commuting to Work (2019–2023)</b>	<b>Bergenfield</b>
Car, Truck, or Van (drove alone)	71%
Car, Truck, or Van (carpooled)	7%
Public Transportation	11%
Walked	2%
Taxicab, Motorcycle, or Other Means	1%

## Economy and Business<sup>1,3</sup>

Estimated Number of Business in Bergenfield, NJ	Total	Home-Based
2026	904	107

Employment Rate	Bergenfield	New Jersey
2019-2023	67%	66%

Employment Trends	Bergenfield
Worked From Home (2018-2022)	32%
Worked in Minor Civil Division (town) of Residence (2019-2023)	18%
Worked Outside Minor Civil Division (town) of Residence (2019-2023)	8%

## REFERENCES\*

1. U.S. Census Bureau (search for Bergenfield Borough):
  - a. Quick Facts <https://www.census.gov/quickfacts/>
  - b. Tables <https://data.census.gov/table>
2. NJ School Performance Report (search for Bergenfield Borough School District): <https://rc.doe.state.nj.us>
3. Data Axle Reference Solutions: <https://www.referenceusa.com>

*\*References were accessed for this analysis in January 2026.*



# Survey Responses

## SUMMARY

We conducted a community survey to help inform the strategic planning process. A total of 379 community members responded, providing feedback across 21 questions covering library usage, programs, priorities, satisfaction, and broader community concerns.

Key demographics at a glance:

- 92% of respondents live in the Borough of Bergenfield; 8% live in neighboring communities, including Hackensack, Teaneck, Dumont, Palisades Park, and others.
- 89% have an active Bergenfield Public Library card.
- The respondent base skews older. 21% are ages 75 and older, 19% are ages 65–74, 19% are ages 45–54, and 20% are ages 35–44. People under 35 make up only 8% of total respondents.

## PATRON SATISFACTION AND NET PROMOTER SCORE

Overall satisfaction is strong, reflecting a well-regarded institution with broad community support.

Satisfaction Level	% of Respondents	# of Respondents
Very Happy	74%	244
Slightly Happy	18%	60
No Opinion	3%	10
Slightly Unhappy	3%	10
Very Unhappy	2%	6

**Net Promoter Score\*** (Question 14): 73% of respondents are Promoters, 18% are Passives, and 9% are Detractors, yielding an NPS of 65. This is a strong score that reflects high patron loyalty and word-of-mouth potential.

*\*A Net Promoter Score (NPS) is a customer loyalty and satisfaction metric ranging from -100 to +100, calculated by asking customers how likely they are to recommend a business on a scale of 0 to 10.*

## LIBRARY USAGE AND BARRIERS TO ACCESS

When asked what limits their use of the library (Question 6) 365 respondents reported:

Barrier	% Citing This Factor
Too busy / no time	25%
Not enough parking	25%
Hours not convenient	9%
I buy my own books	7%
Staff not welcoming / helpful	6%
Unpleasant past experience	5%
Other (various)	10%
None of the above	39%

**Impact:** *Parking and hours are the two most actionable barriers. Nearly 4 in 10 patrons report none of the above, signaling a generally satisfied core user base. A small but notable 6% cite unwelcoming and/or unhelpful staff as a detriment to library services.*

## MOST VALUED IN-LIBRARY SERVICES

Respondents selected up to five services they consider most important during library visits (Question 7, 365 respondents):

Service	% Selected	# Selected
Borrowing Books	84%	306
Programs and Events	38%	139
Notary and/or Passport Services	28%	103
Children's and/or Young Adult Area	26%	96
Borrowing Non-Book Items (games, equipment)	21%	76
Copy/Print/Scan/Fax Services	16%	57
Information/Technology Help	15%	55
WiFi (Wireless Internet)	15%	53
Quiet Study Rooms	12%	42
Internet and Public Computers	10%	35
Meeting Rooms	9%	32
ESL Program	4%	15
Social Work Intern Services	3%	10

**Impact:** Borrowing books is overwhelmingly the top priority. Programs and events, notary/passport services, and the children's/YA area are the next tier of importance. Technology access (WiFi, computers, printing) remains meaningful for a significant minority.

## PROGRAM AND EVENT PRIORITIES

Respondents identified the types of programs most important to them and their families (Question 8, 355 respondents):

Program Category	% Selected	# Selected
Arts, Culture, and Creativity	47%	165
Health and Wellness	46%	164
Adult Learning and Lifelong Education	43%	151
Special Events and Seasonal Programs	39%	139
Children and Family	30%	108
Accessibility and Inclusion	27%	97
Civic and Community Engagement	25%	87
Technology and Innovation	22%	79
Teen Programs	17%	61
None of the Above	15%	52

**Impact:** Arts/culture, health and wellness, and adult learning top the program wish list. Given the older demographic skew of respondents, this is consistent. Children and family, and teen programming still represent substantial demand. Accessibility and inclusion programming is important to more than a quarter of respondents.

## COMMUNITY CHALLENGES PATRONS ARE FACING

Respondents identified personal and family challenges they have faced in recent years (Question 5, 379 respondents). These findings reveal areas where the library can serve as a meaningful resource:

Challenge	% Selected
Cost of Living	43%
Aging (Self)	38%
Continuing lifetime learning / personal growth	33%
Financial Planning	25%

Learning New Technologies	22%
Grief	18%
Obtaining Affordable Healthcare	16%
Physical Mobility	16%
Ensuring Opportunities for Children	15%
Unemployment or Underemployment	15%
Economic Hardship	15%
Social Isolation	13%
Online Security / Identity Theft	12%
Racism or Other Prejudice	11%

**Impact:** Cost of living, aging, and lifelong learning are the most frequently cited challenges faced by respondents. These findings validate programming directions around financial literacy, senior services, health and wellness, technology training, and social connection. Social isolation (13%) and racism/prejudice (11%) signal demand for community-building and inclusive programming. These topics may also present opportunities for the library to partner with corresponding social service agencies and other community organizations.

## COMMUNITY VALUES AND LIBRARY PRIORITIES

### Values

Respondents were asked to pick (up to three) value statements that best reflect what they believe the library's priority should be (321 respondents):

Value Statement	% Selected	# Selected
Provide a safe, comfortable, and welcoming environment	84%	270
Promote literacy, learning, and civic engagement	60%	192
Provide exceptional customer service	41%	130
Provide access to current technology	33%	107
Create partnerships with community organizations	29%	94
Be careful stewards of public resources	23%	73

### Priorities

When asked to name (up to three) top priorities for the library (321 respondents) they reported:

Priority	% Selected	# Selected
Expansive book and digital collections (incl. Libby, Kanopy)	60%	193
Convenient operating hours	53%	169
Safe and clean building	47%	151
Diverse assortment of programs and events	41%	133
Well-trained, engaged staff / excellent customer service	35%	111
Ample, attractive interior physical space	22%	69
Access to technology (computers, WiFi, printers)	19%	61
Strong partnerships with community organizations	14%	45

**Impact:** The community's top values center on a welcoming environment, literacy, and learning. Their top operational priorities are collections, hours, and a clean facility. Staff quality and program variety round out the top five priorities.

## BROADER COMMUNITY ISSUES

Respondents identified the most important issues facing Bergenfield as a community (307 respondents):

Community Issue	% Selected
Safety	55%
Affordability	54%
Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion	48%
Education	47%
Cleanliness	38%
Traffic	27%
Parking	26%
Housing	20%
Development	20%
Environmental Sustainability	18%
Public Transportation	14%
Employment	8%

**Impact:** Safety, affordability, DEI, and education are the community's top concerns. These macro issues should inform the library's strategic positioning as a safe and equitable space, a resource for economic mobility, and a hub of educational programming for all ages.

## **OPEN-ENDED FEEDBACK THEMES**

### **What patrons like most (330 respondents):**

- Warm, friendly, and helpful staff: repeatedly cited as the library's greatest strength.
- Wide variety of books, including large print and digital collections.
- A welcoming, quiet, and comfortable physical environment.
- Programs and events, particularly for children and seniors.
- Convenience and accessibility as a community hub.

### **What patrons like least (163 respondents):**

- Parking: the single most frequently mentioned complaint, consistently cited as insufficient or impossible at peak times.
- Hours: patrons want extended evening or weekend hours, including later closings.
- Staff inconsistency: while most experiences are positive, some patrons report unhelpful or unwelcoming interactions.
- Children's programming: some parents feel events are not engaging or stimulating enough, or are offered at inconvenient times.

### **How the library makes life better (179 respondents):**

- Access to books, learning, and enrichment without cost.
- A safe, welcoming space for children and hybrid workers.
- Social connection and sense of community.
- Health and wellness programs (chair yoga, exercise classes) within walking distance.
- Notary, passport, and other civic services.

### **Vision for Bergenfield as a community (309 respondents)**

The most common words and themes across all responses were:

- Inclusive and welcoming: by far the dominant theme, reflecting desire for a community that embraces diversity.
- Safe and family-oriented: consistently paired in responses across all demographics.
- Diverse: appreciation of cultural diversity paired with desire for better cross-cultural connection.
- Affordable: concern about housing costs and economic pressures.
- Some respondents noted concern about overdevelopment and the decline of downtown Washington Avenue as a commercial and social hub.

## CONCLUSION

Based on survey findings, the following themes should anchor the library's strategic plan:

Strategic Theme	
<b>Welcoming Environment</b>	84% of respondents say providing a safe, comfortable, welcoming environment should be the library's top priority. Invest in physical space, staff training, and inclusive practices.
<b>Expanded Hours</b>	53% cite convenient hours as a top operational priority. Explore extended evening or weekend hours, particularly for working families.
<b>Parking Solutions</b>	Parking is the number one dislike and a top barrier. Pursue partnerships or agreements to improve parking options near the library.
<b>Senior &amp; Adult Programming</b>	Given older respondent demographics and challenges around aging, health, and lifelong learning, increase focus on adult/senior programs (health & wellness, technology, financial literacy).
<b>Staff Excellence</b>	35% cite staff quality as a top priority; some patrons report inconsistent experiences. Invest in professional development and service culture.
<b>Children &amp; Teen Programming</b>	Demand exists, but timing and quality need improvement. Offer more diverse, engaging programming on days/times that are convenient for working families.
<b>Community Hub</b>	Safety, affordability, and DEI are the community's top concerns. The library can serve as an anchor institution that promotes equity, digital access, and civic engagement.
<b>Partnerships</b>	29% value community partnerships. Explore collaborations with schools, social services, nonprofits, and local businesses to extend reach and expand programming.

# Focus Groups

## INTRODUCTION

In March and April 2026, consultants from Library Crossroads facilitated focus groups with Bergenfield community members to gather input on residents' needs, priorities, and perceptions of the library. Participants described their ideal community as safe, inclusive, and tightly connected, while identifying key challenges including downtown economic decline, overdevelopment, infrastructure strain, and a need for stronger communication. These concerns provide important context for understanding the environment in which the library operates and the role it can play in the community's future.

The library emerged from these conversations as a deeply valued institution, described by residents as the "heart," "anchor," and "catalyst" of the community. Participants praised it as a place of equity and access, offering free resources, technology support, cultural programming, and essential services for seniors, ESL residents, and new Americans. Residents expressed a clear willingness to support the library through taxes, reflecting strong confidence in its return on investment.

At the same time, focus group participants identified meaningful growth opportunities. These include expanded programming for middle schoolers, seniors, and teens; enhanced professional development and digital literacy offerings; improved outreach and marketing to modernize the library's image; and physical improvements such as more comfortable seating, better lighting, and private meeting spaces. Taken together, the feedback points to a community that wants the library to evolve beyond just a place for books, to a dynamic hub for learning, connection, and civic life.

## SUMMARY OF RESPONSES

### Desired Community Characteristics

Residents consistently want a community that is:

- Safe, clean, and welcoming
- Inclusive, diverse, and stigma-free
- Friendly and tight-knit, where people know each other
- Engaged and active, with volunteering and community participation
- Focused on quality of life and respect for each other

## Key Community Challenges

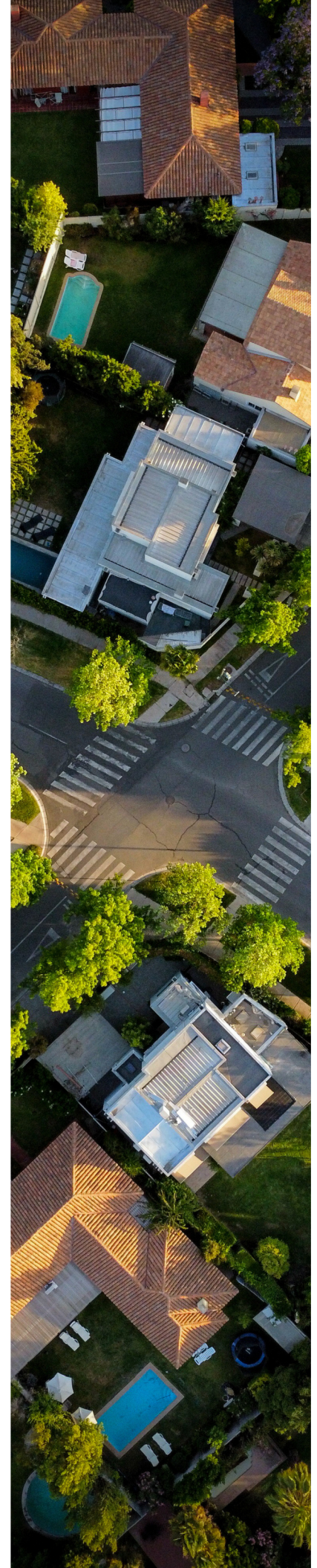
Several recurring concerns emerged:

- Economic decline in downtown areas
  - Vacant storefronts and reduced local business activity
  - Competition from online shopping and malls
- Overdevelopment and overcrowding
  - Increase in multi-family housing
  - Strain on schools and infrastructure
- Loss of community character
  - Disappearance of historic buildings and greenspace
- Infrastructure issues
  - Traffic, parking shortages, and inconsistent parking enforcement
  - Community would benefit from being more walkable
- Population-related concerns
  - Aging residents struggling with technology
  - Need to attract and engage younger residents
- General quality-of-life issues
  - Too many cars/dogs, safety perceptions, and cleanliness
  - Need more activities and opportunities for children after school beyond aftercare
- Communication challenges
  - Community could be better informed by township about issues and plans for the future
  - Services, including those provided by the library, can be challenging to learn more about

## Importance of the Public Library

The library is widely viewed as:

- A central community hub (“heart”, “anchor”, “catalyst” or “brain” of the community)
- A place for access and equity, providing free resources to all
- A safe, inclusive space for studying, learning, and gathering
- An information and cultural center, offering:
  - Books, digital media, and technology
  - Language learning and educational programs
  - Events and multicultural activities
  - Engagement and connection without technology



- A critical support system for:
  - Seniors, homebound individuals, and those without technology
  - ESL residents and new Americans
- A provider of cost-saving resources (e.g. Library of Things, media access, BCCLS)
- Residents don't mind paying taxes to support the library. Strong return on investment of tax dollars

## **Opportunities for Library Improvement**

### Programs and Services

- More senior-focused programming (health lectures, tech help)
- More programming for middle school students (chess club, reading buddies, tech help for seniors). Concerns about teen depression and loneliness
- Expanded professional development (job skills, entrepreneurship, Microsoft Office)
- Additional passive programming (coloring, games and crafts)
- Increased technology training and digital content support
- More youth engagement and volunteer opportunities, especially for teens and high school students
- Additional dual programming (Programs for adults and children at same time)
- Community services like:
  - Tax help
  - Health fairs/testing
  - Small business support
- Revival of programs like the jobs program "Neighbors Helping Neighbors"

### Collections & Resources

- More current fiction and visible new books
- Expanded Library of Things, including family games and puzzles
- Continued investment in e-books and audiobooks

### Outreach & Marketing

- Improve promotion of events (especially online, including newsletter)
- Strengthen branding (modernize perception beyond "books")
  - Consider names like "Library & Community Center" or "Technology Center"
- Increase community partnerships (schools, realtors, post office)
- Proactively welcome new residents
- Address safety perceptions through clear communication

## **Building, Website, and Resources Feedback**

### Building

- Strengths: location, clean, well-maintained, good natural light, helpful staff
- Challenges: limited parking; need for more comfortable seating and relaxing spaces; lighting issues (harsh fluorescent lights); limited space for expansion; lacking sufficient places for residents to conduct interviews or business meetings with privacy; possibly add meeting room pods; schedule, including opening time and weekend hours

### Website

- Generally easy to use, but:
  - Underutilized by some residents
  - Accessibility concerns (e.g., color contrast)
  - Event information could be clearer and more visible

### Resources

- Highly valued:
  - Museum passes, movies, tech help, cultural programs
  - Digital platforms (Libby, Kanopy, Mango)
  - Strong collections via BCCLS
- Concerns:
  - Need for more visibility of new materials
  - Long-term funding for digital resources

## **Strategic Concerns and Suggestions**

- Financial sustainability
  - Budget growth may not keep pace with rising costs (staff, utilities, digital licensing)
- Demographic planning
  - Need data-driven understanding of evolving community needs
- Youth engagement gap
  - Strong middle school presence, weaker high school connection
- Community perception
  - Address outdated image of libraries
  - Reinforce safety and relevance

## **Overall Insight**

The Bergenfield Public Library is deeply valued as a vital, trusted community institution, but residents see opportunities to:

- Modernize its image
- Expand programming across age groups
- Strengthen outreach and partnerships
- Plan strategically for financial and demographic changes

# Vision

The Bergenfield Public Library is the town's friendly meeting place. We provide a variety of collections, resources, and safe spaces that foster community and personal growth for residents of all ages.

# Mission

The Bergenfield Public Library creates an enjoyable environment for the intellectually curious to explore, learn, and grow together. We deliver diverse collections, innovative programs, and expert support through welcoming physical and digital spaces.



# Goals and Objectives

## GOAL 1

**Improve communication and community engagement through expanded partnerships and enhanced outreach.**

*Objectives:*

- *Review existing marketing efforts and develop a library-wide marketing plan. During this review, explore additional budgeting to support marketing efforts as well as whether the Library needs a dedicated full time marketing position to achieve its goals.*
- *Design and implement campaigns to bring new users into the Library. For example, identify ways to reach out to new residents.*
- *Review existing Board and staff internal communications and identify ways to improve.*
- *Strengthen relationships with community organizations, such as schools, businesses, civic and religious groups to expand access to library services, programs, and resources.*
- *Establish and maintain strategic partnerships that support shared community goals related to literacy, education, workforce development, health, and civic engagement.*



## **GOAL 2**

**Create vibrant and adaptive spaces, and print and digital collections that reflect modern needs and community aspirations.**

*Objectives:*

- *Reach out to the community to better understand their digital needs and implement a plan to improve digital circulation.*
- *Explore options to address lack of parking.*
- *Introduce emerging technology opportunities such as innovation/DIY studio, media labs, AI literacy programming, or immersive learning tools aligned with community interests and workforce needs.*
- *Create a long-term vision for library spaces based on community needs and feedback.*

## **GOAL 3**

**Ensure the Library's funding is both sustainable and sufficient to meet current and future needs.**

*Objectives:*

- *Continue our careful stewardship of public funds.*
- *Identify and pursue appropriate grant opportunities.*
- *Explore appropriate sources of additional private funding.*
- *Explore opportunities and advocacy efforts to increase public funding support for the Library, including the feasibility of a public referendum.*

## **GOAL 4**

**Foster community connections through dialog and collaboration.**

*Objectives:*

- *Collaborate with local partners to offer inclusive programming opportunities that increase community participation and broaden the Library's reach to all segments of our diverse community.*
- *Develop and strengthen partnerships with educational institutions, community organizations, and local experts to expand lifelong learning opportunities for residents of all ages.*

# How to Use This Plan

This strategic plan is the result of input from the community and library staff. It has been shaped by data about where the library has been, and feedback about how the library can best serve the community and your stakeholders. As a result, it contains information and recommendations that can be used to strengthen and guide library management in a number of ways.

## SHARING

This plan should be shared with anyone who benefits from understanding where the library has been, and where it will go. Communication about this plan can be shared with:

- Staff
- Township Officials
- The Township
- Friends of the Library
- Community Partners
- Potential Funders
- Surrounding Libraries
- Job Applicants



## PLANNING

Does an existing service or program help the library meet your stated goals, or would those resources be better applied to a new service? How do you meet the seemingly unlimited needs of the community with a limited amount of resources, time, funding, and staff effort? The library's Vision and Mission statement and Goals and Objectives can help guide the library's annual planning, and inform difficult decisions around the expenditure of limited assets.

## EVALUATING

This plan serves as a rubric for measuring your success. Oftentimes, the assessments made by members of library administration differ from considerations of those outside of library management. For this reason, we encourage libraries to provide opportunities for feedback – for your entire community, and all areas of library staff – to evaluate your library's success in meeting the stated goals and objectives.

## **BUDGETING**

When developing your next budget, ensure that your library's goals and objectives are reflected in your budget. This strategic plan should also be a regular part of any budget presentation or request for funds.

## **REVIEWING POLICIES**

Are your current policies reflective of the Vision and Mission statement and the Goals and Objectives in this plan? For example: if you want a "welcoming and comfortable space," is the policy under consideration welcoming to everyone? Who does it include? And who is being left out?

## **RECRUITING**

Are you recruiting the staff you need to meet your Goals and Objectives? We encourage you to use this strategic plan as a rubric for developing employment postings and hiring practices. Through job listings and an easy-to-find location on your website, all applicants should be able to review the strategic plan to see what your library values.

## **WORKING WITH PARTNERS**

Sharing the strategic plan with potential partners, including other libraries, may create new opportunities to work together for collective impact.

## **HOLDING STAFF MEETINGS**

We recommend actively engaging with this plan – share and discuss the strategic plan with all staff and volunteers. Simply making the plan available does not ensure the plan has been read and understood. Reviewing and discussing will help library staff and volunteers become involved with the stated goals, and see how their own feedback is reflected in the plan.

