

LIVING THE POSSIBILITIES

A STRATEGIC PLAN FOR MERIDEN PUBLIC LIBRARY

2024 - 2027



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STRATEGIC PLAN 2024 - 2027

Living the Possibilities

We are proud to present the updated Strategic Plan for Meriden Public Library, which will guide the Library's work through 2027. We announce this plan after several years of upheaval, including the relocation of the Library due to the renovation of the building and the COVID-19 pandemic. We have been able to maintain our focus on the future while navigating these challenges and this plan charts an exciting and ambitious path for the Library's journey forward.

The plan is comprised of four goals that will serve as a public declaration of our priorities in providing quality library services to the Meriden community. It will also serve as a declaration of the principles we stand on and the vision and mission that guide our great institution.

We are grateful to the Meriden community and the Library staff, who both contributed ideas and thoughts throughout the planning process. We also thank the Strategic Planning Committee, including our consultants, Leslie and Alan Burger of Library Development Solutions, for their hard work and dedication in contributing to and steering this plan.

Rebecca F. Starr,
Library Director

Thomas J. Welsh, President,
Meriden Library Board of Trustees

William H. Bailey II, Vice President,
Chair Strategic Planning Committee
Meriden Library Board of Trustees

Frank W. Ridley, President,
Friends of the Meriden Public Library



The Planning Process

Meriden Public Library (MPL) began updating its highly successful strategic plan in October 2023. The Library reopened in July 2023, after a major modernization project, to widespread community support. The previous strategic plan, dated June 2018, was instrumental to the successful transformation of the Library.

Library staff contributed to this planning process through participation in the following activities:

1. Staff were asked to reflect on and provide feedback to five prompts supplied by the consultant. Many wrote out their responses and shared them with the planning committee and staff, while others responded verbally in a morning meeting held on December 19, 2023. The responses were thoughtful and indispensable to the planning.
2. Nineteen (19) staff members visited 11 area libraries in task-force teams. Their mission was to get a sense of how other libraries provide services and how this might inform MPL's daily operations. Their observations were presented to the rest of the staff on February 12, 2024.



In all, staff collectively identified hundreds of data points relative to the planning process and developed a broader sense of what is possible.

We Hear You

Thank you to the Meriden community members who shared their thoughts and ideas in our focus groups and on the survey. One hundred individuals participated with in-person conversations, and 1,088 people completed an online or print survey about the Library. The community input will continue to inform future planning for the Library by staff and Trustees.

Staff and residents identified several trends influencing local library services and resources that were considered in developing the updated plan, including the following:

- ✓ Many residents are aware of the transformation of the Library and are supportive of the improvements. They appreciate the open layout, bright lighting, comfortable furniture, and clean facility. However, there are still significant numbers of residents who have not visited, and this provides an exciting opportunity for the Library to engage with them.
- ✓ With the additional meeting space and enhanced programming, the Library IS building



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community. Many individuals expressed their belief that the Library is a safe place for all, and a place where adults, teens and children can connect to each other and the larger community. The Library is providing space where the public can come together as **one** community and explore local issues of common concern.

- ✓ Respondents appreciate the technology available, and voice the need for additional instruction for users. The need to access the digital world has grown significantly over time. This feedback encourages the Library's continued focus on digital literacy and instruction.
- ✓ Multiple suggestions for improvements at the Library were shared, with most ideas revolving around additional program and learning opportunities for adults, as well as increased print materials and adding more staff who are fluent Spanish speakers. Another frequent suggestion is for the city to add parking for Library users.
- ✓ People expect MPL to continue offering a variety of adult programming, including book discussions and small group meetings. The Library provides adults and older adults with a place to interact with each other, hear authors, musicians, and lecturers and provides exposure to new ideas that they might not otherwise encounter. Moreover, the Library is a great place to relax with friends while engaging in fun activities. Increased community engagement should be encouraged through connecting residents to each other via programs and focused conversations on topics of importance to the community.
- ✓ Promote MPL every single day. Consistent and regular use of Library colors, icons, and name will help residents identify the Library and develop increased engagement and support. Building greater community awareness about the Library's technology, collections, programs, facilities, online resources, and staff expertise is essential.

Major Challenges

One of the most significant challenges facing MPL in prior years included an aged facility that was a barrier to providing modern service for residents. During the previous two decades, several studies identified the gaps in service because of the building's lack of usability due to an aged infrastructure and pieced-together furnishings. Diligent work by city leaders, Library administration, staff, Trustees and the Friends of the Meriden Public Library volunteers assisted in mitigating the infrastructure gaps for many years by improving lighting, carpeting, and technology.



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A second, significant disruption was the COVID-19 pandemic. Survey comments include praise for the Library's agility in responding to this crisis with virtual programs, downloadable and streaming content, and providing curbside pickup of library materials to minimize person-to-person contact.

As funding and a vision for a renovated facility began to materialize, Library leaders executed a plan to transform MPL to fulfill its mission of service to the community.

Achievements

Since the most recent strategic plan covering 2018-2021 was initiated and

completed, MPL has accomplished amazing results, especially considering that the COVID-19 Pandemic brought considerable disruption.

Facilities

- The renovation (completed in July 2023) expanded the number of meeting rooms and resulted in a modern, welcoming space.
- The renovated building allowed the Library to broaden public access to technology through expanded Wi-Fi coverage and advanced meeting room audio/visual capability.
- During the renovation, the Library successfully established an interim Library location at the Meriden Mall with minimal cost to the City.
- The timing of the successful renovation coincided with the COVID-19 Pandemic, making the agility and responsiveness of the Library administration and staff more impressive.

Community Engagement & Outreach

- The Library welcomed over 1,600 people for the grand reopening in July 2023.
- The Library successfully hosted several large events, after reopening, for the community, including over 460 attendees for the 3 Kings Day event and over 1,200 excited children and families during the Easter Egg Hunt.
- Within the first 6 months of the re-opening, over 1,900 schoolchildren visited the Library on field trips. Library staff visited over 1,800 students at various local schools.



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- The Library established a Teen Advisory Board for 7th- to 12th-grade students providing a forum for teens to give input on library programming and services.
- A newly redesigned library email newsletter is sent to over 8,300 members per month.
- Numerous community agencies and businesses have utilized the expanded meeting spaces and many have developed ongoing partnerships with the Library.
- Since the reopening, the number of programs has soared to an average of 90 per month, with average attendance of 2,500 people monthly and overall visits to 10,000 per month.



Services & Collections

- Developed creative ways to continue providing services to the community during the COVID-19 pandemic, including adding curbside service and online programming.
- Provided excellent service to the community while located in the mall, including expanded programming and outreach.
- In addition to establishing a new Meriden History Room, high school yearbooks from 1953 to 2020 were digitized and are now more widely available to the public.
- Created a welcoming and inclusive space for teens and enhanced services and programs.
- Launched an English/Spanish playgroup for children birth to 5 years and their parents, grandparents, and caregivers designed to teach early literacy skills and enhance school readiness and success.
- Library staff designed, built, and launched a new website, able to be read in over 100 languages.
- Facilitated year-round reading programs geared toward encouraging literacy for all ages. Initiated and continued to facilitate six book clubs, as well as Spanish and English conversation groups.
- Relocated and expanded the Holocaust/Genocide Room and collection.



Shared Values

These values guide our work every day.

Equity of Access

We are committed to supporting free, equitable, and confidential access to information for all community members.

Exceptional Service

We focus on delivering quality patron service, consistently maintain high expectations of our staff, and deliver outstanding results. We provide positive and welcoming experiences to everyone.

Connection and Collaboration

We are an integral part of the community we serve. We seek out and nurture relationships with other organizations and develop partnerships that serve our community.

Access to Knowledge

We value literacy, the joy of reading, and life-long learning for all ages.

Community Center

We value the Library as a public forum and community meeting space, encouraging open communication on a wide range of diverse ideas and information.

Innovation & Creativity

We encourage organizational and staff innovation that anticipates people's needs and interests and supports creativity.



Our Vision

To make a difference in people’s lives as the heart of an engaged, informed, and vibrant community.

Our Mission

To inspire life-long learning, create possibilities and strengthen our community through free access to resources, experiences, and opportunities for all.



Library Motto – “Heartbeat of the City”

GOALS

Living the Possibilities

The four goals that we will pursue to live our vision and mission define the role of the Library, its relationship with the community, and will guide us over the next four years.

Goals and Objectives are the “what” of the plan. They are the fundamental strategic direction, and we should expect that these will stay consistent during the plan – 2024 to 2027.

Actions are examples of “how” the goals and objectives can be achieved: in other words, the tactics. Some of the actions listed here may be things that we already do. Others are new ideas that **may or may not be** implemented but worthy of consideration. During the course of the plan there may also be new tactics added and pursued instead because they have higher potential to achieve our goals and objectives.

What if the plan needs to change?

Then we will change it! This is a flexible plan, not a static To-Do list. It should be adjusted as our needs and the environment change. The COVID-19 pandemic and the recent renovation taught us that we are more responsive when we are agile and resilient in the way we operate. The Strategic Planning Committee will regularly review the plan and the environment, including input from city leaders, the Library Board, staff, Friends and the community. The committee may propose adjustments as needed.



Goal One

Experience the Possibilities

Meriden Public Library - The Place to Be and Belong

Provide a variety of spaces and programs to attract people to the Library – to enjoy a concert or lecture, meet an author, and engage in discussions around issues of importance to the community.

Objectives:

A. Continue to rethink and repurpose Library space to meet community needs and interests.

Actions:

- Develop signage to better assist visitors in locating areas and materials in the Library.
- Develop strategies that will allow patrons to more easily navigate the front desk.
- Create an outdoor sitting/program space in the Library's courtyard.
- Request more parking and better signage for the existing parking.
- Consider a designated area for eating.
- Highlight the arts by featuring area artists' work in the Library.

B. Provide popular materials and a targeted selection of programs and services to excite and delight residents.

Actions:

- Develop targeted programming that inspires creativity and socialization for adults.
- Increase the number of books, resources, and programs in Spanish.
- Consider establishing a "Library of Things" and similar nontraditional collections.
- Explore funding opportunities for a "Makerspace," which will provide equipment residents would not have access to otherwise.
- Create a "Meriden Reads" program to engage residents in a shared reading experience to inspire meaningful conversations, elevate a wide variety of voices and perspectives, and build stronger connections in the community.
- Develop collections that respond to and anticipate community interests and needs.



- Integrate system data to assist in analyzing collection use and performance to maximize circulation and optimize budgets.



Goal Two

Create the Possibilities

Meriden Public Library – The Place to Make, Discover, Learn and to Feel Joy

Technological advances have allowed greater access for all people to other parts of the world. MPL will remain the go-to place where everyone finds useful technology, assistance, and instruction in order to help close the digital divide. The Library's resources and collections will continue to provide the public with avenues for engaging in content creation.

Objectives:

A. Provide easy access to digital and content creation resources and services that enable everyone to participate in the digital world.

Actions:

- Plan and open the new Digital Media Lab/Creativity Zone.
- Expand patron instruction on software and devices, including offering one-on-one technology instruction.
- Identify and promote technology initiatives to increase community use of library resources.
- Evaluate and, where possible, introduce emerging technology resources.

B. Continue to focus on inclusion of all members of the community.

Actions:

- Develop inclusive services and programming that meet the needs of the community.
- Acquire books, media, and resources that represent a wide range of perspectives, cultures, languages, and experiences within the community.
- Implement more methods for seeking input from community members to understand their interests and needs.



- Regularly evaluate the Library's facilities to ensure they are physically accessible to individuals with disabilities.
- Continue to provide accommodations such as assistive technologies and large print materials.
- Develop outreach programs to engage with underserved or marginalized groups.
- Expand and host library programs and events that cater to and celebrate different age groups, interests, and cultural backgrounds.
- Collaborate with local artists, performers, and educators to highlight diverse talents and perspectives.

Goal Three

Promote the Possibilities

Meriden Public Library – The Place of Purpose and Potential

Accomplish this through a renewed campaign to engage every individual, family, community organization, and group in a dialogue with the Library.

Objectives:

A. Increase awareness and engagement through Meriden Public Library's message in the community.

Actions:

- Provide expanded outreach to the community, organizations, and schools.
- Develop and launch an attractive, accessible weekly newsletter.
- Continue to grow the Library's presence on social media platforms.
- Sponsor a celebration for the opening of the Digital Media Lab and regularly offer additional open house events to reacquaint residents with the Library.
- Continually update the Library's website and promote it as the 24/7 eBranch.
- Target user and non-user audiences and pursue marketing plans and ensure digital and offline communications are relevant.
- Increase the digitization of materials available to the public in the Meriden History Collection.



B. Promote Meriden Public Library as the community's preferred destination for learning, enrichment, and entertainment.

Actions:

- Engage and address the rise in challenges facing the community by ensuring that MPL continues to be a welcoming, inspiring, and safe place.
- Partner with local organizations and experts to co-sponsor and facilitate programming of community interest.
- Collaborate with local organizations in planning and promoting additional annual cultural and civic events.
- Request funding for staffing to increase the Library's hours to include more evenings and Sundays.
- Collaborate with local colleges and universities.
- Plan to launch a new branding and marketing campaign.



Goal Four

Support and Advocate the Possibilities

Meriden Public Library – The Place to Advocate and Participate

Meriden Public Library continues to maintain a staff of intelligent, generous, compassionate people who help hundreds of patrons every day. Volunteers advocate, raise funds, and are integral to making this possible.

Objectives:

A. Continue to staff Meriden Public Library with dedicated and talented people.

Actions:

- Ensure that all staff have the skills and competencies to provide confident, high-quality service with an emphasis on developing technology/digital competencies.
- Evaluate staffing needs, re-examine positions and purposes, and realign duties and responsibilities as existing positions become vacant.



- Develop new job descriptions to reflect contemporary demands of library work.
- Advocate for appropriate and adequate staff to expand needed services and outreach.
- Consider establishing a volunteer program.

B. Our Board of Trustees, library staff, and Friends of the Library will prioritize strategies to help the Library live its mission.

Actions:

- Develop a succession plan to help guide the library for the future.
- Expand grant-writing efforts.
- Explore the use of state funds, specifically bonding for nonprofits and libraries, to support capital improvements.
- Develop strategies to solicit planned giving, as well as specific gifts for the endowment of the Library.
- Develop annual fundraising activities and support the Friends of the Library organization's growth and fundraising efforts.
- The Library Board will prioritize the establishment of a budgetary reserve to safeguard the Library's financial stability in times of budgetary constraints for the City.
- The Library Board members will recommend to the Mayor candidates for the board that are active, informed supporters who advocate for the Library and reflect the diversity of the community.



Meriden Public Library Board of Trustees

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Joan S. Edgerly	President Emeritus
William H. Bailey II	Vice President
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Fred Zierler	Treasurer
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Irene G. Masse	Trustee
Frank W. Ridley	Ex Officio
Rebecca F. Starr	Ex Officio

Strategic Planning Committee

Meriden Public Library Board of Trustees

Thomas J. Welsh, Joan S. Edgerly, William H. Bailey II

President, Friends of the Meriden Public Library

Frank W. Ridley

Director, Meriden Public Library

Rebecca F. Starr

Chair, Strategic Planning Committee

William H. Bailey II

Committee Members – Staff

Meriden Public Library: Wanda Guzman, Isabel Guzman, Angelina Hinojosa, Alyssa K. Johnson

Library Staff

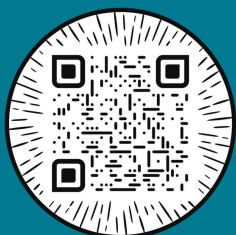
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Assisted by Library Development Solutions

Leslie Burger
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Living the possibilities with you!



Visit our website to learn about the community minded programming we offer.