



# City Council Report

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City Council Regular Meeting: December 8, 2015  
Agenda Item:

To: Mayor and City Council  
From: Maria Carpenter, Director, Library Services Department  
Subject: Approval of Santa Monica Public Library's Strategic Plan

## **Recommended Action**

Staff recommends that the City Council approve the Santa Monica Public Library Strategic Plan which will guide future development of Library services based on community input and study of current best practices.

## **Executive Summary**

Following an extensive community input process, Santa Monica Public Library staff composed a Strategic Plan to guide the future development of the Library for the next three years. There are four strategic focus areas: Vibrant Learning Center; Wellbeing Cultivator; Dynamic Third Place and Community and Cultural Connector. The Library Board approved the Plan in September 2015.

## **Background**

The Santa Monica Public Library is a beloved and valuable community resource serving the city with a landmark Main Library in downtown and four neighborhood branches. Yet sweeping changes in how information is accessed will inevitably impact the use and future of all public libraries. To ensure our system continues to be among the finest library systems in California, the Santa Monica Public Library embarked on a strategic planning process in October 2014. The objectives were to discover how best to tailor Library services to satisfy the evolving needs of Santa Monica residents and to survey the contemporary public libraries' scene to ensure that the Library would move forward in a meaningful and useful way.

Over the past 20 years, the Library Department has replaced the Main Library and updated and renovated existing branches. The opening of the new Pico Branch Library in Virginia Avenue Park in 2014 heralded a new chapter in the Library's story.

Although a community input process occurred for all these building projects, the Library has not undergone a formal strategic planning process since 1993. Clearly, a core function of the public library is to facilitate learning, and books will continue to be central to that process. At the same time, library technology and learning services have evolved significantly in the interim, along with the expectations of library customers. Learning what community members want, and exploring the latest and best practices in the public library arena seemed essential for sound planning. In light of the Council identifying lifelong learning and educational partnerships as one of its top five priority Strategic Goals in August of 2015, the new plan is a timely roadmap for pursuing continued excellence in library services to the community.

### **Discussion Process**

A strategic planning process began in October 2014 with the formation of two staff committees and a preliminary staff session at the November 2014 Library In-Service Day.

Strategic Planning consultant Maureen Sullivan Associates assisted staff and community members in conducting the Strategic Plan beginning in March 2015. Ms. Sullivan's contract did not require Council approval. It was approved by the City Manager's Office (Contract # CT2972). The information-gathering process included a series of 11 community forums, a month-long city-wide survey, a retreat and meetings with the Library Board and 14 updating sessions with Library staff. Two hundred one people attended and gave feedback at community forums held in each neighborhood library. Special community forums were held at the Boys and Girls Club, with the Library's Teen Advisory Committee, with community leaders, with youth at the Pico Library and middle school students to obtain the thoughts and opinions from students ages 11 - 18. Well over 2100 people participated in one or more of these opportunities for input.

A Library Innovation Technology Task Force consisting of entrepreneurs, innovators and educators from the community was also formed to provide insight, advice and

support regarding the role of technology and innovation in 21st century library service and on the technology and learning needs of Santa Monica residents and business. The Task Force met four times April-July to make strategic planning recommendations to the Strategic Planning Steering Committee.

The Strategic Planning Steering Committee met regularly throughout this process and utilized the findings gleaned from these activities and from a survey of current library literature. In August, a Strategic Plan was completed.

### Board Action

On September 10, 2015, the Library Board approved the Strategic Plan by a vote of 6-1.

### Next Steps

Upon City Council approval, the Library will proceed with implementation of the Strategic Plan. The core components of the Strategic Plan are that the Library serve as a “vibrant learning center,” as a “wellbeing cultivator,” as a dynamic “third place” for the community, and as a “community & cultural connector”. These concepts, which emerged through the public process, will continue to inform and shape policy in the next three years and are congruent with the Council’s Strategic Goal of promoting lifelong learning and educational partnerships.

An Implementation Team consisting of staff from all Library Divisions will take responsibility for implementing the strategic plan. As part of their duties, they will at times bring together working groups of other staff tasked with a specific element of the plan. Many implementation elements will carry no budget impacts. Those that do have budget impacts will be addressed in dedicated staff reports or may figure in the Capital Improvements Projects process. Two of the “jump start” projects funded by the Council on October 27, 2015 in support of the City’s Strategic Initiatives harmonize with the goals of the Library Strategic Plan. The two projects are the *Broadband Improvements at the Library* and the *Main Library Multipurpose Room Upgrade*. Staff will also incorporate strategic planning processes into the Library’s administrative workflow with the objective of keeping the Plan focused and relevant.

**Financial Impacts and Budget Actions**


There is no immediate financial impact or budget action necessary as a result of recommended action.

**Prepared By:** Wright Rix, Principal Librarian

**Approved**

**Forwarded to Council**

  
Maria Carpenter, Director 11/25/2015

  
Rick Cole, City Manager 11/28/2015

**Attachments:**

- A. Santa Monica Public Library Strategic Plan
- B. Innovation Technology Task Force Recommendations to Library Strategic Plan