Dear Fellow Simsbury Residents,

I am pleased to share with you the Simsbury Public Library Strategic Plan for 2017 through 2021. Since its establishment, the Library has played an integral part in enhancing life in Simsbury. The goal of developing the Strategic Plan was to identify ways in which the Library can enable Simsbury to meet the needs and desires of its residents, especially as to the type of community in which its residents want to live.

The Plan is the framework for moving the Library into the future. It is designed to be able to address short term needs and be flexible enough to adjust and meet future demands. The Plan was developed based on input from you, the residents, the Friends of the Simsbury Public Library, the Library staff, town departments, civic organizations and town officials. At its core were questionnaires available to all Simsbury residents and Library patrons and the 2015 Simsbury Town survey. Its focus is not on the Library as a standalone entity, but on how the Library can help meet the changing needs of Simsbury residents.

Books have traditionally been the heart of a library’s collection, but over the years sources of information have gone far beyond the printed page. Resources and content have expanded to include visual, audio and digital formats. Perhaps most importantly, knowledge and information are gained by person-to-person interactions. These interactions may take many forms including formal presentations, interactive programs, shared technology, hands-on experimentation and innovation and sharing ideas with others. The plan embraces all these opportunities for enrichment.

The Board of Trustees for the Simsbury Public Library hopes this Plan will help Simsbury residents understand the direction in which the Library is heading and how it expects to meet its objectives. We remain committed to providing excellent customer service and being the Community Gathering Place. We will continue to make the Library a safe and welcoming environment for all our patrons, where their lives can be enhanced, their horizons expanded and their quest for lifelong learning satisfied.

Marianne B. O’Neil
Chair, Simsbury Public Library Board of Trustees

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Our Vision
The Simsbury Public Library inspires our community to discover and connect, enriching lives while approaching the future together.

Our Mission
The Simsbury Public Library educates and enriches the community by providing free and equal access to information, resources and experiences.

Expanding the Library into the Community
- 375,500 visits - up 19%
- Program attendance: 52,000 - up 86%
- Electronic Materials circulated - up 19%
- Business Resource assistance - up 20%
- Community Satisfaction - 99.5%

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Simsbury, CT is a suburb of Hartford located in the beautiful Farmington Valley, with a population of approximately 24,000 people. It is comprised of four distinct areas, Simsbury, West Simsbury, Weatogue, and Tariffville, each with its own heritage and flavor. In 2015 Simsbury was named the ninth Best Place to Live in America by Money Magazine. The town retains its small-town feel with an economy supported by small businesses.

Simsbury is a well-educated community which values educational excellence and lifelong learning opportunities. Simsbury High School’s graduation rate is 94% and schools have consistently ranked near the top in state-wide mastery tests. Simsbury is also home to numerous private schools.

Residents of all ages are active and enjoy many types of outdoor recreation. The Town boasts beautiful green spaces, hiking and biking trails, as well as access to the Farmington River. Simsbury was the first community in Connecticut to receive a silver bike friendly designation.
Simsbury Public Library is a picturesque 42,600 square foot building located in the center of downtown Simsbury and is in walking distance to many businesses, shops and restaurants, as well as Simsbury High School. Visits to the Library have increased 19% over the past 3 years to over 375,500 annually. In FY2016 the Library presented 1,631 programs with an attendance of over 52,000.

The Library has also expanded beyond its regular hours and walls. Digital content, such as eBooks and downloadable audiobooks have been available on demand for a number of years, and digital magazines, streaming video and music have been added in the past two years, resulting in a 20% increase in digital use. Library programs now take place throughout the community including Storytime at the Town Public Works garage, Police Department and Fire Stations, baking classes at Simsbury High School, and book clubs at local pubs.

Simsbury Public Library has historically been forward-thinking. Its nationally recognized Business Resource Center which supports local entrepreneurs, small businesses and job seekers, has been in existence since 2005. Following a series of community focus groups in 2013, the Library jumped into the Maker Movement launching Innovators’ Workshop with a 3D printing lab funded by memorial donations and support from community businesses and organizations. STEAM programming began and additional equipment such as sewing machines has been added to the Innovators’ Workshop.

The majority of Library funding comes from the Town of Simsbury in the form of tax appropriation. The Library also seeks grants, receives bequests and memorial gifts as well as substantial financial and programming support from the Friends of the Simsbury Public Library. The Town has invested $1.23 per week per capita for the past three years. The return on that investment is currently $5.47 for every $1 spent.

In 2015 Simsbury Public Library had the highest per capita number of visits, material circulation, program attendance and reference transactions in the Hartford metropolitan region. Library Journal Index of Public Library Service ranked Simsbury Library second in its budget category in 2015. In a recent town wide survey, residents rated their satisfaction with the Library and its services at 99.5%, the highest of all town departments.

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Goals for the Next Five Years

GOAL 1 – Celebrate Diversity: Cultural and Intergenerational Awareness
GOAL 2 – Provide a Comfortable, Safe Place for Patrons to Visit, both Physical and Virtual
GOAL 3 – Satisfy Curiosity through Lifelong Learning
GOAL 4 – Know Your Community: Community Resources and Services
GOAL 5 – Build Successful Enterprises: Commercial and Nonprofit
GOAL 6 – Be an Informed Citizen of the Local, National and World Communities

The Library Board has identified the above goals as critical components of this Strategic Plan. However, the ambitious plans outlined for the next five years will not be possible on the current operating budget for the Library even with the generous subsidy from the Friends of the Simsbury Public Library. Identifying and implementing ways to increase funding to ensure the Library’s essential role in the community will be a priority for the Library Board of Trustees in the coming years.
Goal 1 - Celebrate Diversity: Cultural and Intergenerational Awareness

The Library celebrates and promotes appreciation and understanding of different cultures and generations. The goal is to bring awareness and deepen understanding of various backgrounds within the Simsbury community.

- Cultivate an environment in which adults and children can achieve understanding of people from diverse cultures.
  - Exhibit diversity year-round with collections, displays and programming.
- Expand sponsorship of events, highlighting various heritages and backgrounds.
  - Showcase various cultures with art and craft exhibits.
  - Explore options to reach all segments of the population.
- Enhance programming, events and collections to deepen the community's awareness of different heritages.
- Explore options for providing services by meeting with community leaders and organizations.
- Expand foreign language collections.
- Connect the various intergenerational and geographic populations of Simsbury.
  - Explore and integrate events to introduce new residents to each other and to the community.
  - Expand programs and events that encourage different age groups to interact in a community setting.

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Goal 2 - Provide a Comfortable, Safe Place for Patrons to Visit, both Physical and Virtual

The Library provides the community with a central, safe and welcoming physical location to meet and interact with others and to explore various learning opportunities. Residents have virtual and open access to many of the Library’s resources 24/7 through available technologies.

- Maintain the Library facility and grounds to ensure it continues to be a welcoming presence.
- Regularly evaluate the need for refreshing and improving the Library.
- Review the layout of the upper level to identify any reconfiguration that would maximize efficiencies and effectiveness.
- Ensure technology offerings meet the needs of the community.
  - Continually upgrade or replace hardware and software to ensure maximum usability.
  - Increase digital content as it becomes available in order to expand offerings to our residents.
  - Continue to assess the security of the library technology to ensure adequate protection.
  - Expand the use of technology to offer additional virtual services and programs.
- Increase meeting room and programming space to meet the ever-growing demands of the community.
  - Identify possible areas of expansion or reconfiguration within the Library to achieve greater meeting and programming space.
  - Consider ways to increase flexibility and overall use of Library space.
- Explore and implement ways to increase the Library presence outside the physical building.
  - Increase programming in various locations throughout the community.
  - Identify areas and ways to increase access to Library services throughout the community.
  - Identify and pursue partnerships with external organizations to provide expanded services.

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Goal 3 - Satisfy Curiosity through Lifelong Learning

The Library promotes learning for all ages and stages of life. In addition to the Library’s extensive collection of print materials and digital resources that provide unlimited information, the Library offers a wide variety of programs. The programming enhances both an individual’s and the community’s growth and understanding of social, cultural and political issues.

Expand programs to include:

- Community-wide offerings to bring different ages and geographic groups together.
- Actively engaging participants with more hands-on offerings.
- Increasing services to underserved segments of the Library population, such as Teens, Millennials and Seniors.
- Increasing collaboration and partnership with local organizations and businesses and partner regionally with other libraries to expand offerings.
- Serving as an incubator for innovation and ideas.

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Goal 4 - Know Your Community: Community Resources and Services

Residents have a central source for information about the wide variety of programs, services and activities provided by local agencies, churches and community groups.

- Increase strategic partnerships and engage with civic organizations, enabling the Library to have a seat at the table as policies and initiatives are developed.
- Collaborate with state and local government agencies and schools to drive learning and educational opportunities for the public.
- Engage the residents in planning, decision making and problem solving of community issues.
- Develop partnerships and collaborations with other libraries and knowledge networks to efficiently use resources.
- Foster a community culture of innovation, creativity and entrepreneurship by providing tools and space.

RETURN ON INVESTMENT

For every $1 invested in the Simsbury Public Library, residents receive $5.47 returned in services, programs and materials.

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Goal 5 - Build Successful Enterprises: Commercial and Nonprofit

The Library offers programs for new and existing businesses, including how to launch new enterprises. The Library partners with local businesses and trade organizations to help them achieve their goals and offers programs and hands-on technical training for those seeking job opportunities.

- Continue to grow a robust and relevant Business Resource Center (BRC) with a dedicated BRC Coordinator.
- Build on and expand partnerships with businesses and organizations to identify timely programs and initiatives.
- Strengthen the entrepreneurial resources to encourage business incubation.
- Expand the Innovators’ Workshop to include technologies that are relevant in the marketplace.
- Hold programs at business and nonprofit locations highlighting and publicizing the capabilities of the organizations to the public.
- Utilize local expertise to create and present programs.
- Work toward becoming the clearing house for open job positions and residents seeking employment.
- Offer programs on various occupations and careers.

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Goal 6 - Be an Informed Citizen of the Local, National and World Communities

Residents have the information they need to support and promote democracy, to fulfill their civic responsibilities at the local, state and national levels, and to fully participate in community decision making.

- Develop methods to keep citizens informed of issues.
- Expand programming to include forums for discussion of local civic and political issues.
How the Strategic Plan was Developed

The Simsbury Public Library has a long history of strategic planning for the future. The current (2011-2016) Strategic Plan has aided the Library Board of Trustees and staff in setting direction.

At this time, we find the Library at a critical juncture. The Library is faced with continuing to provide superior customer service in traditional library services while transitioning to an increasingly digital world in challenging economic times. How information is accessed and used is continually evolving. The ways in which people interact with each other and the tools and resources needed to operate effectively require that the Library find new approaches for offering its services and resources. The Library must change to keep pace with the demands of the community.

This Strategic Plan is the result of community surveys and conversations, Library staff input and a dedicated committee. The committee was comprised of some members of the Library Board of Trustees, Library staff and representatives from the greater Simsbury community.

In early 2016, the Library turned outward by holding conversations throughout the town to understand residents’ individual aspirations for the community. Using these results and the town’s 2015 Resident Opinion Study, the Committee identified and prioritized ways the Library can help the community meet its aspirations. This Plan is intended to provide vision and direction and to be updated as the community changes.

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THANK YOU!

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