



# Strategic Plan

FY 2010 — FY 2015

## **Introduction**

In anticipation of the Kent County Public Library's Strategic Plan's FY2004-2009 expiration on June 30, 2008, the library applied for a Library Services and Technology Grant from the Maryland Department of Education, Division of Library Services to have a new strategic plan published at the beginning of fiscal year 2010. The library received a grant to hire a consultant to help facilitate the various focus groups, and assist the library in writing a new plan.

## **Process and Preparation**

The library's strategic planning team and the facilitator developed the planning process used to produce this strategic plan. It provides the framework for the library planning committee to work with the community to:

1. Define the needs of the community;
2. Determine appropriate ways in which the library can meet the needs of the community; and
3. Bring library resources to bear in a focused plan for actions that will bring the desired results.

The planning process followed a sequence that involved both the community and the staff of the library. The process can be repeated on a regular cycle so that the library is always looking to the future:

1. Gather and analyze background information;
2. Articulate community vision;
3. Select service responses;
4. Develop goals for each service response;
5. Develop objectives for each goal;
6. Determine activities to achieve each objective.

## **Community Vision**

Kent County is rich in agricultural, natural, cultural, and human resources. Quality soils, topography, climate, woodlands, the Chesapeake Bay with its tidal tributaries, wetlands, and marshes create an environment rivaled by few other areas. These natural features enrich our economy and the lives of our citizens. Kent County is also steeped in historic tradition. Towns and villages have a strong sense of identity, retaining their original design as a framework for their continuous and steady development. From these singular resources and features emerged our local culture, character, and economy.

The Eastern Shore is now facing unprecedented change. Historic growth rates and patterns are being undermined by suburban development. Improvements to U.S. Route 301 and discussions of an additional Bay crossing, place the County in a perilous position that is detrimental to its vision.

We are challenged, as we look to the future, to protect the quality of our environment and its inherent quality of life while meeting the needs of all our citizens. This special place has been purchased at a high cost, one of limited job opportunities, particularly for our young citizens. Although our economy has expanded from one which was chiefly farm-based and water-related, to one which includes industry, retail, tourism, and other service-oriented businesses, we must continue to seek innovative ways to diversify our economy and provide job opportunities for all Kent County citizens. Vigilantly safeguarding those precious and irreplaceable resources unique to Kent County and wisely planning for change, we look forward to the challenge of the future.

The following principles will serve as a guide to decision making in the future:

- A diverse, stable economy that provides economic opportunities for all of our citizens is essential to a healthy and balanced community.
- Stewardship of our lands and waters is a universal ethic.
- The County is committed to supporting agriculture and promoting working landscapes.
- Preservation of our cultural, historic and archeological resources is essential to maintaining our sense of place.
- In order to preserve the County's unique quality of life, growth is planned to occur slowly and deliberately at a manageable rate, which does not exceed the County's historic growth rate.
- Growth will occur in limited and specific locations in a way that complements and enhances each community's character. These locations will be a result of mutually agreed upon boundaries established by working with existing communities.
- Elements necessary to enrich the lives of our citizens and sustain a healthy community include a high-quality system of public and private schools, opportunities for recreation and cultural activities, effective transportation systems, a variety of housing types, and a safe and healthy environment.

### **Strengths of the County**

- The small town environment encourages a strong sense of community.
- Retirees bring their skills, experiences and interests to the community when they relocate to Kent County.
- County residents celebrate their heritage and history.

- Lifelong learning opportunities abound. Cultural opportunities exist at Washington College and the Parks and Recreation Department. The Library's collection supports self-directed lifelong learning.
- Good basic health care is available.
- The natural resources are public assets.

### **Weakness of the County**

- Lack of jobs and little success in new job creation are a major concern.
- Lack of public transportation makes it difficult for people to get work and school.
- Inadequate telecommunication bandwidth plagues homes and businesses.
- Little ethnic diversity exists and what diversity does exist is not celebrated.
- State and Local budgets.
- Size of the County.

### **Community Needs**

- Spaces and activities are needed to bring the community together.
- An increased emphasis on work skills development is needed, especially through mentoring programs and life long learning opportunities.
- Ways to better engage retirees in the life of the county are important.
- Building on the rich natural resources, developing recreational and tourism opportunities, is a way to develop jobs.

### **Library Service Responses**

In selecting the service responses, the focus group members acknowledge that these are the services the library offers today. The group recognizes the library as a valuable community asset and is not looking for radical changes in services, but rather a "fine tuning" of emphasis to address job skills development, cultural awareness and celebration of the heritage and diversity of the county, and the library as a place where people can gather, particularly to develop their information-seeking skills.

The services responses selected, in priority order, are:

#### **1. Current Topics and Titles**

A library that provides current topics and titles to its community helps to fulfill residents' appetite for information about popular cultural and social trends, their desire for satisfying recreational experiences. Celebrating the county's heritage and diversity is supported with these services.

#### **2. Commons**

A library that provides a commons environment helps address the need of people to meet and interact with others in their community and to participate in public discourse about community issues. Providing commons services supports all three of the other service responses as well as meeting community needs for gathering places and celebration of common interests.

### **3. Lifelong learning**

A library that provides lifelong learning service helps address residents' desire for self-directed personal growth and development opportunities. Job skills development is supported with lifelong learning.

### **4. Information literacy**

A library that provides information literacy service helps address the need for skills related to finding, evaluating, and using information effectively. Developing job-related skills and supporting cultural or lifelong learning interests are just a few examples of the types of information seeking behaviors that can be enhanced with information literacy services.

## **Mission Statement**

Kent County Public Library enables the people of our community to pursue life-long learning through our responsive collections, electronic resources and innovative services. The public library is the cornerstone of a community—where children and adults can experience personal enrichment and connect with one another.

## **Goals and Objectives**

In order to deliver on the expressed mission, and to do so in ways that meet community needs, library staff developed goals and objectives. These statements translate the broad directives of the Community Vision, the Mission Statement, and the Service Responses into tangible actions that will lead to success. Listed below are the Goals and Objectives for each Service Response.

### **Goals<sup>1</sup>**

#### **1. Current Topics and Title**

Goal 1: Adult residents will have the high-demand, high-interest materials they want, when they want them.

Goal 2: Children and teens in Kent County will have the high-demand, high interest materials they want, when they want them.

***Rationale for Goals 1 and 2:** This is customer driven collection development, building collections on the basis of customer interests and expected use. It includes print, audio, and video materials in sufficient quantities to meet high demand. It includes both fiction and nonfiction, and the materials that support this priority are usually new.*

#### **2. Commons**

Goal 3: Residents will have welcoming, vibrant, and dynamic places to meet and share with others.

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<sup>1</sup> Goals define the benefits the community will receive as a result of the library's services.

***Rationale:** This is a facility-specific goal that addresses availability, ease of use, and the aesthetic experience. It includes both public spaces and the meeting rooms in the library facilities.*

### **3. Lifelong Learning**

Goal 4: Residents will have the resources they need to continue to grow and learn throughout their lives.

***Rationale:** This is self-directed learning for residents. It includes print and non-print materials and programming. Collections are developed to meet specific needs and expected use is the main criteria for purchase. Some collections may not circulate and the measure is in-house use.*

### **4. Information Literacy**

Goal 5: Residents will have the skills to use the technology-based tools and the electronic resources available to meet their information needs.

***Rationale:** This addresses the demand from users for assistance in learning to use electronic tools and resources to answer their own questions and improve their work related technology skills.*

## **Objectives<sup>2</sup>**

**Goal 1: Adult residents will have the high-demand, high-interest materials they want, when they want them.**

Objective 1.1: The circulation of adult print fiction and media materials will increase by 5% annually.

Objective 1.2: By 2015, at least 80% of the people who came to the library to “find something good to read, view, or listen to” will say they found something that met their needs during their visit.

Objective 1.3: By 2015, at least 65% of the people who place a hold (reserve) on an item will receive that item within 21days.

**Goal 2: Children and teens in Kent County will have the high-demand, high interest materials they want when they want them.**

Objective 2.1: The circulation of children’s fiction and media will increase by 2% annually.

Objective 2.2: By 2015, 25% of the students in local schools will report that they used library resources at a library facility or online at least once during the preceding year for recreational purposes.

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<sup>2</sup> Objectives are the measures the library will use to judge its progress towards achieving its goals.

**Goal 3: Residents will have welcoming, vibrant, and dynamic places to meet and share with others.**

Objective 3.1: By June 30, 2011, 104,000 library visits will be recorded. This number will increase annually by 3% during the plan period.

Objective 3.2: By 2011, community groups will be able to book use of the Chestertown Library building meeting spaces for their meetings on line.

**Goal 4: Residents will have the resources they need to continue to grow and learn throughout their lives.**

Objective 4.1: The circulation of adult nonfiction materials will increase by 2% annually.

Objective 4.2: The circulation of juvenile nonfiction materials will increase by 2% annually.

Objective 4.3: By 2015, 75% of adults who use the library to pursue personal interests will indicate that they found materials in the subjects they were looking for through the library.

Objective 4.4: Each year, children will have the opportunity to participate in at least one Kent County Public Library sponsored program during August.

**Goal 5: Residents will have the skills to use the technology-based tools and the electronic resources available to meet their information needs.**

Objective 5.1: By 2011, at least 100 people will receive one-on-one training from a staff member in the use of Internet accessible electronic resources.

Objective 5.2: By 2011, residents will have access to a computer-training lab at the library to increase their technology use and information retrieval skills.