

# A New Chapter

Charleston County Public Library



## A Transformational Strategic Plan: FY 2013–FY 2017

Adopted November 22, 2011 by the  
Charleston County Public Library Board of Trustees



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Sullivan’s Island

## Friends of the Library, Board of Directors

## Residents of Charleston County

## All CCPL Staff

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## Executive Summary

In May 2010, the Charleston County Library Board of Trustees hired a new executive director, Douglas Henderson. The Board and director held open meetings at all library locations to ask residents how Charleston County Public Library (CCPL) can better meet their needs and expectations. Henderson also met with staff at all locations to identify what they felt is needed to better serve library customers and more effectively and efficiently perform their jobs. Hence, began a new chapter in the history of the Charleston County Public Library.

In September 2010, the Library Board issued a Request for Proposal for Consulting Services to develop a five-year Strategic Plan for CCPL. Following a review of proposals, the Library Board contracted with Providence Associates, LLC to facilitate the planning process and develop a five-year plan to address the mission, vision, core values, services, technology, facilities, organizational structure, operations, staffing and funding.

The investigative and assessment process was collaborative involving the Library Board, administration, a Strategic Planning Committee with members from staff and the Board, branch managers, department heads and staff from all library facilities. The planning process included focus groups and open community meetings at the Main Library and all regional libraries, interviews with key stakeholders in the county and a random telephone survey of county residents by MarketSearch, a public opinion research firm from Columbia, S.C. In addition, the consultants compared CCPL with six peer library systems in the state and the southeast. The selection of libraries was made in consultation with library administration and included libraries located in communities with similar-sized population, a military presence and a similar number of colleges and universities in the area. The peer libraries used include:

- Greenville County Public Library, SC;
- Richland County Public Library, SC;
- Spartanburg County Library, SC;
- Chesterfield County Library, VA;
- Cumberland County Library NC; and
- Forsyth County Library, NC.

Rounding out the assessment process was the consultant's familiarity and experience with 21<sup>st</sup> century best practices and trends for public libraries.

The result of the planning process is the development of this document: *A New Chapter: Charleston County Public Library, A Transformational Strategic Plan FY 2013-2017*. The plan provides a roadmap that restates the library's Mission and establishes a Vision, Core Values and Strategic Goals that can be used to sustain, enhance and grow library services that are essential, relevant and vital to the residents of Charleston County, S.C.

This New Chapter focuses on the future. Each of the seven Strategic Goals responds directly to community needs and expectations, addressing the critical areas where CCPL may have fallen behind when compared to peer libraries, existing best practices and trends. These areas include:

- establishing a new organizational culture that values, recognizes, encourages and respects staff creativity in thinking and making suggestions;
- supporting teamwork among all levels of staff, including personal accountability to provide outstanding customer service;
- updating, upgrading and expanding all public-use technologies (hardware and software) and ensuring ease of access, use and assistance from knowledgeable staff;
- updating, upgrading and expanding all operational technologies (hardware and software) to ensure maximum efficiency and effectiveness of support services and public services, which could free public service staff from performing repetitive tasks and allow them more time to assist customers with information access and lifelong learning resources;
- seeking and engaging in partnerships and collaboration with community and local organizations that support the Strategic Goals and can help make a difference in the lives of county residents;
- capitalizing on and strengthening the value of library services to support resident's needs learned through surveys, community meetings and focus groups; and
- reviewing current funding and exploring options for more reliable, predictable dollars to support core library services and to enhance and expand services identified as important and needed by the community.

What will it cost to achieve the Plan's Strategic Goals over the next five years? Some will not require any additional dollars, but rather a change in mind-set and expectations plus a commitment to do things differently. It also requires sweat equity at all levels, from members of the Library Board to staff who shelve materials. Some of it will require reallocating existing dollars. For example, in our technology-driven era, best practices would mean allocating less money for purchasing print reference and

non-fiction books and allocating more money to purchase media and electronic content, such as online databases, eBooks and Internet access.

Nevertheless, new dollars will be needed as the Library Board, administration and staff identify how to best address the:

- constantly changing and growing demand for technology-based services, devices and resources;
- acquisition and ongoing maintenance of technologies that can increase operational efficiencies and help manage staffing costs;
- inadequacy of existing library facilities to support 21<sup>st</sup> century library services that are needed and expected by county residents;
- need for collaborative and cooperative (library, local government and developers) planning required to build new and replacement facilities;
- need to increase, expand and diversify marketing and promotion of library services, resources and events to expand awareness to families, individuals, businesses and retired active adults; and
- need to address staff compensation at all levels in an effort to retain dedicated, well-trained staff and to be competitive in the regional marketplace.

The New Chapter begins with:

- a revised library Mission statement;
- the first-ever set of Core Values for the Charleston County Public Library, which will serve as guiding principles for the library to operate, function and serve customers;
- a newly adopted Vision for CCPL's future; and
- Strategic Goals to help move the library toward its Vision during the next five years.



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## Mission

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Charleston County Public Library connects our diverse community to information, fosters lifelong learning and enriches lives.

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## Core Values

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**Accessibility.** We provide and promote open access for all to our facilities, information, services, resources and technologies.

**Exceptional Customer Experiences.** We provide an exceptional experience for our customers and staff. We empower our staff to give excellent service to the community.

**Reading, Literacy and Lifelong Learning.** We encourage and support the development of literacy at every age level and support reading for information and enjoyment. We support learning as a lifelong activity and see our role as helping to create an educated community.

**Partnerships and Community Engagement.** We pursue strategic partnerships, alliances and collaborations that support outreach to our community.

**Diversity.** We seek diverse expertise, opinions and viewpoints from our staff and our community in order to best provide for everyone's learning needs.

**Innovation.** We embrace innovation and flexibility to provide better service to an ever-changing community and world.

**Stewardship.** We are trusted, responsible managers of the funds provided by our community.

**Knowledgeable Staff.** We value and respect our staff and encourage them to expand their potential. We encourage a work environment based on trust and teamwork.



## Vision

Charleston County Public Library is the path to our cultural heritage, a door to resources of the present and a bridge to opportunities in the future.

## Strategic Goals

CHARLESTON COUNTY PUBLIC LIBRARY: FY 2013 - FY 2017

The following Strategic Goals reflect community's input and comments, comparisons with a group of peer libraries in the state and region, the consultant's assessment of library usage along with experience and knowledge of best practices and trends for public libraries in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. The pages following this listing address each Strategic Goal with suggested priorities and objectives for each year of the plan, including cost estimates where they can be determined.

- GOAL I. CCPL's organizational structure and functional operations are aligned to support our mission and facilitate achievement of the goals of the five-year Strategic Plan.**
- GOAL II. CCPL contributes to the growth and development of our community's young children, preparing them to be ready to read and learn.**
- GOAL III. CCPL encourages a love of reading and learning for everyone.**
- GOAL IV. CCPL's services, collections and resources are conveniently and easily accessible to the community when, where and how they need them.**
- GOAL V. CCPL provides exceptional service resulting in a consistently positive customer experience.**
- GOAL VI. CCPL's facilities are educational and cultural hubs in the community and serve as welcoming destination points for everyone.**
- GOAL VII. CCPL is trusted, recognized and well supported as a customer-focused public service.**

# I. Introduction

Following the appointment of Doug Henderson as Charleston County Public Library's Executive Director in 2010, the Library Board of Trustees issued a Request for Proposal to engage the services of a qualified consulting firm to develop an all inclusive, flexible five-year strategic plan that would evaluate the library's system and user needs. Providence Associates, LLC was hired in February 2011 to address every aspect of the operations of the library system, including programs, services, facilities, staffing, public relations, marketing and fundraising.

CCPL is at a critical crossroads, as are public libraries across the country. New approaches are being used to deliver traditional and new services to users, a result of new and emerging technologies plus the impact of the changing economy. It is important that the CCPL has access to a carefully prepared evaluation of current programs and services, and that it plan, short-term and long-term, for the future.

Never have public libraries been more important to our communities, a fact reflected in record-level service demands from users. It is imperative that CCPL identifies and addresses the challenges and changes required to meet these 21<sup>st</sup> century demands. Future success will be based on providing communities with what they want, need and expect from their libraries.

Successful libraries must address the critical issues required to provide services relevant to the lives of current and potential users. Key among these is the need to:

- provide a customer-focused and customer-driven organization;
- promote the library as a "destination" that is the place for the community to connect;
- create inviting, comfortable, spacious, attractive, colorful and bright facilities;
- design functional, flexible and adaptive spaces for all ages;
- provide convenient access to and delivery of services;
- become the core resource for lifelong learning and literacy in the community;
- develop interactive spaces for children from birth to age 12, encouraging and supporting their imagination, love of reading, learning and discovery;
- create a "happening" place for teenagers, providing them inspiration and support for learning and social networking;
- provide family-focused learning, activities, programs and events;
- become a vital resource for active adults over 55, engaging them through programs, technology and volunteer opportunities;

- develop collections, in all formats, that stay current and reflect the popular interests of the community;
- provide up-to-date and plentiful access to technology and virtual services, including: Wi-Fi; laptops; self-service; downloadable e-content; a robust, dynamic and easy-to-use website; classes to enhance technology skills; digital creativity learning; workforce development and job search opportunities; and classes in English as a Second Language;
- improve the layout and interior space design of buildings to enhance customer experience and help ease the use of the library;
- design and construct future buildings with flexibility so the space can be repurposed to meet the need and expectations of an ever-changing community;
- adopt a “less is more” approach to maintain strong, relevant and visible collections by consistently reviewing reference, non-fiction, fiction and media for materials that are now available online or through databases and items that are out-of-date or have not circulated in the past three years;
- provide service that maximizes customer satisfaction by fostering staff interaction with users and streamlining operations with suggestions like roving librarians, the use of portable service kiosks, self-service technologies and a user-friendly intuitive catalog and website; and
- allocate funds and resources to the priority areas identified by the community.

Each of the above points was considered in developing the five-year strategic plan.

It is appropriate to point out that the primary responsibilities of libraries have not changed significantly over time. Libraries collect resources, organizing them and creating multiple access points for retrieval. What has changed for libraries, and changed dramatically, is the use of technology within the library for these tasks.

Today, technology is critical to any information agency. Web access to the library is essential. Services and facilities should be designed to accommodate a wide-range of materials in formats that exist today and are likely to be obsolete tomorrow, while recognizing the evolving nature of technology and the creation of formats in the future that are unknown to us now. Library users will be using these resources in new ways, both inside and outside the library.

Today’s library users are more inclined to use technology, and they are efficient at doing so. Some have never known any other way, and they expect libraries to be well equipped with current technologies and to conveniently and efficiently access more and more resources.



In the future, library staff at CCPL will be performing many of the same tasks and providing many of the services as in the past. However, they will be use new tools and techniques that require different skill sets and proficiency in a wide variety of technological devices. These new tools and techniques dictate the need for library facilities to have different physical designs with space that is flexible enough to adapt to new needs and methods of service delivery.

## II. The Planning Process

Providence Associates' strategic planning process focuses on gathering significant input from library users and non-users living in Charleston County. The process was designed to provide a clear understanding of how residents view their public library, including what they:

- value and appreciate about the Charleston County Public Library;
- need and expect in terms of services and facilities;
- believe to be the strengths of the libraries;
- identify as needed improvements and desired enhancements; and
- are willing to pay for those improvements to library services.

Public libraries have always been about service. The world today is a service-driven society. It is also a society in which customer service is judged by measures of competence, convenience, easy access, efficiency and customization. Competition drives the market, and organizations with services that are the most convenient, easiest to access and use, most efficient and provide a variety of personal customizable options are consistently successful. Today the public library's biggest competitors are:

- Online search engines, such as Google, Yahoo, Bing and others;
- iTunes and Amazon.com, which wirelessly deliver discounted books, movies and music to smart phones, iPads/tablets, computers and residents' doorsteps;
- Wi-Fi hotspots located throughout communities;
- iPads, Kindles, Nooks and other e-readers;
- Wikis and blogs; and
- Online newspapers and magazines sites.

After more than 100 years of little change, today's public library must "turn on a dime" to meet the needs of a dramatically changing and increasingly diverse audience that expects instant, 24/7 access and response because of technological advancements of the last 10 years. The strategic plan's development is driven by the library's service needs along with the service expectations expressed by current and potential customers and acknowledged by library staff.

Providence's methodology for facilitating the strategic planning process for the Charleston County Public Library included:

- working in partnership and collaboration with the library's Strategic Planning Committee, which included representatives from the Library Board, Friends of the Library and staff members representing various levels and geographically diverse areas of the organization;
- visits to every CCPL facility;
- engaging in a thorough community needs assessment through focus groups, one-on-one interviews with selected community stakeholders and developing demographic profiles and five-year population projections for each of the library's service areas;
- identifying and prioritizing library service functions;
- compiling public library best practices, including: service to children; service to teens; technology applications; website enhancements; programming; and collaboration and partnerships with community agencies and local governments;
- reviewing and revising of the library's mission statement;
- establishing organizational core values;
- preparing a vision for CCPL;
- reviewing the library's inputs and outputs over the last three years; and
- executing a statistically valid and reliable random county-wide telephone survey of county residents, including both library users and non users, to determine their perceptions and opinions about the library's services and facilities.

There were four phases to the planning process:

- Phase 1: Project orientation, gathering background information and engaging the Strategic Planning Committee.
- Phase 2: Input and analysis of community and staff needs and expectations.
- Phase 3: Developing the strategic plan based on findings from phases one and two.
- Phase 4: Developing a plan for implementation.

### III. Community Input

Since the library is a publicly funded service that touches the lives of Charleston County residents from birth, it was important to hear directly and openly from them about what they see as the needs and expectations of their public library. In order to reach the broadest representation and number of county residents from different age groups and interests, the consultants:

- held in six community meetings, one each at the Main Library and the Regional Libraries;
- facilitated four focus groups representing home school families, pre-teens and teens, retired adults, and individuals from organizations supporting early childhood development and learning;
- met one-on-one with seven area elected officials, administrators and planning department employees; and
- oversaw a countywide telephone survey conducted by a South Carolina market research firm experienced in working with libraries, businesses and other institutions in Charleston.

In order to expand awareness of what is possible in today's libraries, each community meeting and focus group session began with a PowerPoint presentation illustrating 21<sup>st</sup> century public library functions and spaces at libraries around the country. Attendees were introduced to:

- automated self check out and return of library materials;
- a self-service laptop computer dispenser for in-library use;
- flexible and mobile furniture, shelving and gathering spaces;
- facilities located in mixed-use developments;
- cafés integrated into some libraries;
- vending kiosks for after hours retrieval of materials or access in remote areas;
- facilities that are inviting and comfortable destinations for the community with meeting rooms and group study spaces;
- multiple displays of materials promoting discovery through browsing;
- children's areas divided into age-specific zones reflective of the needs of each age group; and
- teen areas providing current technology while support studying and socializing.



Summaries of community response from these meetings focus groups, interviews and survey follow. The responses from all participants were vastly positive!

## **Community Meetings and Focus Group Summary: May 9 – 12, 2011**

### **How County Residents Use the Library**

- Borrow movies (DVDs).
- Borrow audio books.
- Borrow books for personal reading.
- Attend children's programs.
- Attend meetings in library meeting rooms.
- Participate in book discussions at the library.
- Use public-access computers.

### **What County Residents Like About the Library**

- Having a relationship/interaction with library staff.
- Reserving library materials from home computers.
- Having meeting rooms for library programs and community activities.
- Attending library programs and storytimes.
- Using the Interlibrary loan service.
- Accessing magazines in the library.
- Having Wi-Fi access for personal laptops and smart phones in the library.
- Having computer access at every library.

## Needed Library Improvements (by category)

### *Computing and Technology:*

- Up-to-date and faster public use computers with current versions of productivity software, e.g. at minimum Microsoft Office Suite 2007.
- High-speed Internet access for all PCs and Wi-Fi throughout the buildings.
- A redesigned website that is easier to use with access to resources and improved intuitive functionality.
- Extended computer sessions beyond one hour, especially for persons engaged applying for jobs, creating resumes, reports, school projects, etc.
- Computers in children's areas dedicated for use by children, preschool and school-age students.
- Computers in teen areas dedicated for use by teens.
- Additional computer classes for adults plus computer classes for older children.
- Increased privacy for computer users, e.g. screen filters, physical dividers between users, etc.
- Access to devices like iPads and Kindles with eBooks and magazines for loan and in-library use.
- MS Office Suite, PowerPoint, Adobe Photoshop, Acrobat software, etc. available on adult, school-age children and teen computers.
- Touch screens within the library to find information.
- Computers where flash drives can be used to download information. (CCPL provides this, but it is not widely known in the community.)
- Computers and furnishings for use by visually impaired.
- Computers in the South Carolina Room with Internet access.
- Additional classes on how to use the library's computer system and new technologies.
- Laptops available for check out to use in the library.
- Online access from home and in the library to self-service check out, check in, meeting room reservation, program registration and payment of fines and fees.
- Access to self-service fax machines.
- Access to self-service scanners.

- Online checkout of eBooks without visiting the library. (This now is possible with CCPL's OverDrive service that began in September 2011.)

### ***Library's Computerized Catalog:***

- Improved transparency and a simplified, "Amazon.com"-like library catalog to better identify, find and reserve materials.
- Information on available eBooks within the library's catalog.
- Improved browsing of the catalog online to find materials in all formats.

### ***Library Facility Spaces:***

- A dedicated children's area that is separated from adults with its own program space.
- A dedicated teen area that incorporates learning, socializing and gaming.
- A dedicated quiet area.
- Dedicated, enclosed study spaces that will accommodate up to eight people.
- A café or snack area/vending services.
- More comfortable seating throughout, including a lounge-like area in periodicals.
- Easier access to shelved materials, eliminating the need to reach or stoop for older patrons or people in wheelchairs or scooters to reach or stoop.
- Improve access for physically challenged users in all library facilities, including exterior automatic sliding doors or pushbuttons to automatically open doors.

### ***Customer Service:***

- Unanimous desire for Sunday hours restored at all regional branch libraries along with extending closing time to 9 p.m. Mondays through Thursdays.
- Unanimous desire to check out back issues of magazines.
- More copies available of recent movies for check out.
- More efforts to seek and use library volunteers.

- Adults resent library branches being used as “babysitters” for working parents, especially at the West Ashley Branch Library that serves as a school bus “drop-off” for public and private school students, many who remain until parents pick them up anywhere between 5-8 p.m. This is not the library’s purpose or responsibility.
- Improved customer awareness from some library employees who could be friendlier and more approachable.
- Better training so staff can assist customers with computers and other technologies.

***Community Awareness and Library Publicity:***

- More publicity and broader marketing of services offered by the library.
- Email alerts sent to alert customers to news, events, programs, etc.
- More public service announcements on television to promote library services and content, especially during TV programs that are more likely to be viewed by non-readers.
- Information sent to area houses of worship for their newsletters and to small local newspapers that target diverse populations in the county.
- Promotion of the library as a wonderful place to spend the day.
- Targeted advertisements to promote the library and its services since many people aren’t aware of all the library offers. Suggestions include:
  - TV/media spots;
  - Newsletters distributed by area houses of worship;
  - Mailers to residents;
  - Community outreach; and
  - Community partnerships (e.g. create a promotional DVD and show it on the TV monitor in the local McDonald’s and similar local businesses where many library patrons go).



***Location of Library Buildings:***

- Libraries located on public transit routes and in proximity of retail shopping areas and community centers that naturally draw people.
- Libraries visible from the street with easily identifiable signs at all locations.

***Funding:***

- Residents expressed interest in knowing the amount of their annual taxes that pay for library services. This could be achieved by working with the County to highlight this on annual property tax bills. If the library should move to a dedicated annual library millage, this would automatically be reflected on property tax bills.
- Investigate and consider moving to a “dedicated” millage to fund the Charleston County Public Library, something currently done in 16 other county libraries in the state of South Carolina.
- Majority of residents would support requests for increased library funding if they are told exactly how the funds, operational or capital, would be used and what specific benefit residents would receive.
- When customers donate money to a specific library (whether in person or by mail), they want assurance their donation will be used at that location. Gifts need to be recognized in a timely fashion.



## Telephone Survey, May 2011

*Conducted by MarketSearch Corporation, Columbia SC*

The survey investigated general usage and perceptions of the library and reactions to, and support for, potential new directions. Specific topics addressed through the research include:

- General awareness and perceptions of CCPL (familiarity, general impressions, perceived need for a public library in general and support for CCPL in relation to other tax-supported services);
- Use of the library (in general, by location and specific services); and
- Facility evaluations and preferences, including evaluation of current locations and interest in new features, services and amenities.

<b>Survey Methodology:</b>	Telephone Survey
<b>Sample Size:</b>	400 completed surveys
<b>Data Collection Dates:</b>	May 9 – 16, 2011
<b>Market Area:</b>	Charleston County
<b>Respondent Specs:</b>	Stratified mix of households throughout the county
<b>Sampling Error:</b>	± 4.9 percentage points margin of error

### *Telephone Survey Findings*

- ***Nine out of ten (90 %) of County residents are familiar with the Charleston County Public Library:***
  - 54% of respondents indicate they are *Very Familiar*; and
  - An additional 32% say they are *Somewhat Familiar*.
- ***General impressions of CCPL tend to be positive (91 %):***
  - 65% say their impressions are *Very Positive*;
  - 26% say their impressions are *Somewhat Positive*;
  - 7% are neutral; and
  - Only 1% has negative impressions.



- **While positive impressions are generally consistent across all demographic segments, the following groups *have particularly favorable perceptions* of the library:**
  - Residents who have lived in the area more than 10 years;
  - Those who have visited CCPL within the past year; and
  - Those over the age of 35.
  
- **The library *is perceived to be a vital part of the community and generates strong support* among the County's residents.**
  - 91% *Strongly Agree* that "*The Library is an important part of this community;*"
  - 90% *Strongly Agree* that "*There will always be a need for a public library;*"
  - 90% say they feel the services provided by the Charleston County Public Library are *Very Important* to the County;
  - 57% assess their support for the Charleston County Public Library as a tax-supported service to be at the level of 9 or 10 on a 10-point scale (overall mean rating of 8.6); and
  - 51% rank the benefits of the library *At the Top* when compared to benefits of other tax-supported services in the Charleston area.
  
- **Not only are perceptions of and support for the CCPL strong, *findings identify high usage levels among County residents.***
  - 75% have visited the library within the past six months;
  - 78% have visited the library within the past year;
  - 86% have visited the library within the past two years; and
  - 93% of area residents have visited the Charleston County Public Library at least once in their lifetime.

These levels are reasonably consistent with levels of library visitation evidenced in other areas.

- **Usage tends to be reasonably consistent across all demographic segments. Those most likely to have visited CCPL within the past six months, however, include:**
  - “Other” ethnicity (86%);
  - College graduates (81%);
  - Those with children in the household (80%); and
  - Those who have lived in the area for 11 to 30 years (79%).
- **While traditional uses of the library (checking out books and/or DVDs/CDs/audio books) are most common, *nearly half of County residents have used the Charleston County Public Library to read magazines, newspapers or reference materials, use computers, and/or its website within the past year.***
  - 71% of all residents have checked out books within the past year;
  - 56% have checked out DVDs, CDs, and/or audio books;
  - 48% have visited the CCPL website;
  - 46% have read magazines, newspapers or other reference materials at the library; and
  - 45% have used library computers.
- **Reasons for not visiting the library within the past year (among those who haven’t) *relate primarily to lack of motivation and/or need* rather than any negatives regarding the library itself, its locations and/or other physical factors.**
- **The Main Library location tends to be the most common single location used by area residents.**
  - 47% of County residents indicate they have visited the Main Library location within the past two years.
- **While each of the branch locations has users represented in the study, when it comes to a single location used most often, findings identify the top five library locations to be:**
  - Mt. Pleasant Regional (18%);
  - Main (18%);
  - Village (Old Village of Mt. Pleasant) (11%);



- St. Andrews Regional (off Sam Rittenberg) (11%); and
- James Island (8%).
- **When it comes to specific Charleston County Public Library locations and facilities, library users feel they are safe, clean, convenient, comfortable and, as already indicated, important to the local community.**
  - 91% Agree Strongly that *"The Library is an important part of this community;"*
  - 88% Agree Strongly that *"I feel safe at the Library;"*
  - 83% Agree Strongly that *"The Library is clean and well-maintained;"*
  - 79% Agree Strongly that *"The Library is conveniently located;"*
  - 78% Agree Strongly that *"The Library is a welcoming and inviting place;"*
  - 64% Agree Strongly that *"There is adequate parking at my Library location;"*
  - 62% Agree Strongly that *"My Library's hours of operation are adequate for my needs;"*  
and
  - 54% Agree Strongly that *"The Library is up-to-date and has pretty much everything we need."*
- **For the most part, there are not significant differences in evaluations of the Main Library versus branch locations on these dimensions. The one exception, however, is that the Main Library is significantly more likely to be evaluated as "up-to-date and pretty much has everything we need."**
  - Main Library also tends to rate more positively than branches (though not to a statistically significant degree) with respect to hours of operation, being welcoming and inviting, and being clean and well-maintained.
  - The branch locations (as a whole) tend to rate more positively than the Main Library (though not to a statistically significant degree) with respect to being safe, conveniently located and having adequate parking.

- **Residents tend to favor all of the ideas posed to them in the survey regarding library upgrades and features if new libraries are built in the County. *Those generating the greatest support include:***
  - study spaces;
  - more computers;
  - dedicated story time rooms; and
  - more casual seating and reading areas.
  
- ***As for issues regarding the potential location of new library facilities, findings identify strong support for locating libraries near***
  - public transportation;
  - in highly visible, easily accessible areas; and
  - other community services.
  
- **There are mixed reactions to the idea of building larger libraries in locations that are central to users instead of operating multiple smaller library branches.**
  - 39% support larger libraries in central locations; and
  - 45% oppose larger libraries over small branches in communities/neighborhoods.

***Overall, findings identify a very strong position for Charleston County Public Library. Usage of the library is high, impressions are very favorable, and support is quite strong. There do not appear to be significant concerns among residents regarding awareness or convenience of library locations. Reaction is positive to most of the ideas evaluated in the survey.***



## Stakeholder Interviews

David Warren, Providence’s Charleston-based consultant, conducted face-to-face stakeholder interviews, including meetings with local elected officials at county and municipal levels, governmental planning staff and the Board of the Friends of the Charleston County Public Library.

The latter exists to support CCPL within the framework of the library’s community role and the goals of the Library Board of Trustees. This group provides invaluable assistance, including supplementary funds for special programming needs. With the assistance of an executive director, the Friends are poised to assist the library in implementing the five-year strategic plan.

The consultant met personally with the mayors, county officials and administrative staff as follows:

- The Honorable Teddie E. Pryor, Sr., Chair of Charleston County Council
- The Honorable Anna B. Johnson, Member of Charleston County Council and Council Liaison to the Library
- Allen O’Neal, Charleston County Administrator
- The Honorable Joseph P. Riley Jr., Mayor of the City of Charleston
- The Honorable William D. Swails, Mayor of the Town of Mt. Pleasant
- The Honorable R. Keith Summey, Mayor of the City of North Charleston

The Chair of the Library Board and other Board members met individually with mayors from the following incorporated areas in Charleston County:

- Awendaw
- Folly Beach
- Hollywood
- Isle of Palms
- James Island
- Kiawah Island
- Lincolnton
- McClellanville
- Meggett
- Ravenel
- Rockville
- Seabrook Island
- Sullivan’s Island



These elected officials expressed support for the county public library and a willingness to assist in advocating in support of current and future needs of the library system and promoting library services in their communities.

Meetings and discussions were conducted with members of the planning departments of the City of Charleston, the town of Mt. Pleasant and Charleston County. These meetings provided information about the planning efforts in each community and how the library may be impacted. These included the Town of Mt. Pleasant's negotiations for a new East Cooper Regional in Carolina Park, proposals in North Charleston to relocate the Cooper River Memorial Branch to ShipWatch Square, and a master plan by the City of Charleston for the "Calhoun Corridor" which includes the Main Library. This information was shared with the library's administration and the Library Board.

The Charleston County School District and the library have partnered on projects in the past, but some of those efforts have gone unrealized. The consultants met with CCSD's Media Services Coordinator, who said she would like to work closely on joint projects with the library. Both educational entities have plans that provide opportunities for working together.

The consultants tried to meet with other local stakeholders, but those did not pan out for various reasons. The Library Board and administration should continue a dialog with community leaders and stakeholders to seek their advice and direction.

## IV. Staff Input

The consultants interviewed library administrators, support services department heads and staff as well as held focus group meetings with branch managers, children's services staff, teen services staff, circulation services staff and Main Library staff from reference, readers' advisory and A/V media services. In addition, staff was able to provide comments through an anonymous online survey that asked about job satisfaction, adequacy of staff development and training, adequacy of resources available to serve customers and do their jobs, internal communication and other related concerns.

As mentioned earlier, this document focuses on the future. It is a transformational plan can positively affect every resident in the county, the Library Board and CCPL staff members. Currently, a new Executive Director and a strengthened Library Board are in place. The new administration is taking steps to address major issues that plagued the staff and organization, including communications, clear performance expectations, employee recognition and encouragement. Changing the organizational culture, including staff perceptions and attitudes, and developing trust throughout the organization will take some time. Every staff person from the director to public service desk employees, delivery staff and shelvers are accountable for establishing a more open, cooperative and collaborative organization. This requires continuous efforts in communication, staff participation in decision-making and increased positivity and support from everyone.

The staff comments, represented in this section, reflect the impact of 10-plus years of previous administrations that were lacking in effective modern management and internal communication practices. It is and has been the reality of the staff. Therefore, staff remains somewhat skeptical, even though a positive change has occurred in the first year of a new administration. Staff morale, at this time, remains low.

While the majority of staff indicated a commitment and dedication to serving the public and satisfaction with their immediate supervisor, a majority also indicated that:

- Staff does not feel appreciated by library administration;
- Staff does not feel that their input and suggestions are taken seriously and considered by administrators;
- Staff feels they are not treated equally by administration or supervisors, and there is a perception of favoritism;

- Staff does not feel compelled to take the initiative to implement best practices since they feel they will be criticized by administrators, since this occurred under past administrations;
- Staff does not have adequate equipment and resources needed to perform tasks, especially in the area of technology (staff computers) and adequate workspace;
- Staff needs ongoing training in existing and new technology applications to be able to adequately respond to public needs and expectations in this service area; and
- Communications throughout the organization are inconsistent, at best.

Again, while perceptions shade what people feel is reality, it is important that staff recognizes what the new executive director accomplished in the past year and that staff acts upon and participates in the opportunities provided. These include volunteering and supporting the newly established Communications Committee, reading and contributing to the staff Intranet, and taking responsibility to read the weekly electronic staff newsletter issued by the executive director. New opportunities for involvement, participation and the sharing of ideas will be plentiful with the adoption and implementation of this Plan.



## V. The New Chapter: Strategic Plan 2013 - 2017

Here begins the detailed five-year strategic plan for Charleston County Public Library and adopted by the Library Board of Trustees on November 22, 2011. The Strategic Goals and the recommended objectives with prioritized phasing within each reflect the library's revised Mission, Core Values and Vision and the best practices for meeting the needs and expectations of Charleston County's residents within the five-year implementation timeframe.

The Plan is a transformational, living and evolving document that is subject to changes that reflect issues under the library's control and those outside the library's control, such as economic changes, growth, shifts in population, economic development, etc. The Plan should be reviewed at least every six months and adjusted annually in response to these changes.

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### MISSION

Charleston County Public Library connects our diverse community to information, fosters lifelong learning and enriches lives.

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### CORE VALUES

**Accessibility.** We provide and promote open access for all to our facilities, information, services, resources and technologies.

**Exceptional Customer Experiences.** We provide an exceptional experience for our customers and staff. We empower our staff to give excellent service to the community.

**Reading, Literacy and Lifelong Learning.** We encourage and support the development of literacy at every age level and support reading for information and enjoyment. We support learning as a lifelong activity and see our role as helping to create an educated community.

**Partnerships and Community Engagement.** We pursue strategic partnerships, alliances and collaborations that support outreach to our community.

**Diversity.** We seek diverse expertise, opinions and viewpoints from our staff and our community in order to best provide for everyone's learning needs.

**Innovation.** We embrace innovation and flexibility to better serve an ever-changing community and world.

**Stewardship.** We are trusted, responsible managers of the funds provided by our community.

**Knowledgeable Staff.** We value and respect our staff and encourage them to expand their potential. We encourage a work environment based on trust and teamwork.



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## VISION

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Charleston County Public Library is the path to our cultural heritage, a door to resources of the present and a bridge to opportunities of the future.

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## STRATEGIC GOALS

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The following Strategic Goals reflect community's input and comments, comparisons with a group of peer libraries in the state and region, the consultant's assessment of library usage along with experience and knowledge of best practices and trends for public libraries in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

- GOAL I. CCPL's organizational structure and functional operations are aligned to support our mission and facilitate achievement of the goals of the five-year Strategic Plan.**
- GOAL II. CCPL contributes to the growth and development of our community's young children, preparing them to be ready to read and learn.**
- GOAL III. CCPL encourages a love of reading and learning for everyone.**
- GOAL IV. CCPL's services, collections and resources are conveniently and easily accessible to the community when, where and how they need them.**
- GOAL V. CCPL provides exceptional service resulting in a consistently positive customer experience.**
- GOAL VI. CCPL's facilities are educational and cultural hubs in the community and serve as welcoming destination points for everyone.**
- GOAL VII. CCPL is trusted, recognized and well supported as a customer-focused public service.**