

# Gwinnett County Public Library FY10 – 12 Strategic Plan

## **Why We Plan**

This document lays out a road map to guide the library system over the next three years as it strives to fulfill its vision in a community that is evolving demographically and serving both life-long and new library customers who need the services provided by a public library more than ever in an economic downturn.

### GCPL VISION:

Gwinnett County Public Library provides resources and services that  
**inform, inspire, enrich and amaze** –  
as we promote community and personal growth

Planning strategically provides benefits to the library and its customers by allowing thoughtful discussion and decisions about library services, based on an examination of hard demographic data, observations about the County and the library's users, and direct customer input. It should be noted that the plan does not specifically address every service the library offers. For example, the foundation of any public library rests on materials, reference and programming. These elements will always be an integral part of our service. Instead, the plan outlines issues that require increased focus during the next three years in order to continue to be responsive to our customers in fiscally responsible ways that support our mission:

### GCPL MISSION:

Gwinnett County Public Library: Supporting your informational, educational, and recreational interests with convenient, creative, customer-friendly access to materials and services.

## **The Process**

This plan is the product of a system-wide effort that began, as it always does, with a community analysis of each branch service area and the county as a whole, with the goal of identifying new and continuing community needs that the library can effectively address. However, an analysis of demographic information is only as good as the currency of the data itself. With only one year to go until the next decennial census, much of the available data is woefully outdated. And it is difficult for projections to adequately reflect the changing needs dictated by recent and continuing lay-offs, foreclosures and reductions in the discretionary income of many library customers. To more fully identify the needs of our customers, we solicited their input by encouraging county residents to participate in an online survey about how they use the library, what services they think are most important, and what one thing the Gwinnett County Public

Library can do to improve. In casting the broadest net possible, we advertised and made the questionnaire available on the library's website for two weeks, and we reached out to community stakeholder groups such as the public schools, homeschoolers, senior citizens, Health and Human Services Coalition members, Gwinnett County government, the Chamber of Commerce and cities within the County, many of whom publicized the survey on their own organizational websites. We also promoted the questionnaire in the Gwinnett Daily Post, letting participants know that their input would be utilized in developing the Library's new strategic plan. Gwinnett citizens, especially library users, are rarely hesitant to express their opinions, and this time was no exception! We received more than 4,000 responses in a two week period. The open-ended question, "What one thing can GCPL do to improve?" produced the following suggestions or concerns:

- Add more computers/allow more time on computers – 30%
- Buy more materials – 19%
- Dissatisfied with noise – 8%
- Buy DVDs for adult collection – 6%
- Have more programs – 5%
- Build larger/expanded facilities – 5%
- Offer training classes – 4%
- Nothing wrong/don't change – 4%
- Dissatisfied with catalog – 3%
- Security concerns – 3%
- Dissatisfied with teens/kids – 3%
- Dissatisfied with customer service – 2%
- Install Microsoft Office applications on public computers – 2% (Done)

With a wealth of information in hand, we sent out a call for staff members from all levels of the organization. A group of 25 staff members ranging from the Executive Director to front line staffers and multiple levels in between, along with a very able facilitator, met three times in April and May to review the community analysis documents and survey results and discuss the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats for the library and its community. This discussion resulted in a list of issues that needed to be addressed, and from those issues came the goals and objectives that will help us to better meet the needs of our customers over the next three years.

### **Goals and Objectives**

Our goals articulate the services that the Gwinnett County Public Library will deliver to its customers and the benefits our customers will receive when the goals are met. The objectives under each goal will be used to assess progress toward the goal, and will alert us to the need to reallocate resources in order to achieve success.

***Goal 1: GCPL customers will receive skilled, proactive assistance from staff whose training and duties effectively address customers' library service needs.***

*(This goal involves assessing current use of staff and developing new staffing models to provide improved service to library customers.)*

Objective 1.1:

By June 30, 2011, each branch/department will have in place a creative, flexible staffing configuration that supports the delivery of excellent, responsive service.

Objective 1.2:

By June 30, 2011, all staff will receive regular training to enhance or refresh the skills needed to provide excellent, responsive service.

Objective 1.3:

By June 30, 2012, 90% of customers will rate their service experience as good or excellent.

***Goal 2: GCPL customers will utilize an efficient, technologically advanced library system that invites user participation and provides convenient, customizable access to resources and services.***

*(This goal involves utilizing technology to enhance/improve library efficiency and the customer experience.)*

Objective 2.1:

Add or enhance points of convenient customer access to resources and services by:

- a. Adding capability for downloadable media on all public computers by June 30, 2010.
- b. Enhancing onscreen help for self-checks by June 30, 2010.
- c. Improving customer notification by June 30, 2011.
- d. Adding more "Catalog only" access points by June 30, 2011.
- e. Installing Information kiosks (virtual concierge) by June 30, 2012.
- f. Allowing self service payment of fines/fees at point of use by June 30, 2012.
- g. Providing ability for customers to access library resources and services through the communication device of their choice by June 30, 2012.

Objective 2.2:

By June 30, 2011, enhance language options on the library's website to promote the value of library services to immigrants as they adapt to a new culture.

Objective 2.3:

By June 30, 2012, improve usability of the website by:

- a. Improving ease of searching the library catalog to find needed materials.
- b. Providing ability for customers to contribute content (personal rankings and reviews) that can assist other customers in choosing materials of interest.
- c. Adding functionality that allows customers to customize the web portal for convenience and usefulness.

- d. Adding functionality that allows customers to better manage the delivery order and timing of hold requests.

***Goal 3: GCPL buildings will provide a modern, comfortable, well-designed environment that supports easy customer access to library resources and services.***

*(This goal involves assessing existing library space and space needs in order to adapt existing space to better serve customers. Recognizes that major library construction/renovation is included in the current Long Range Facilities plan, and changes covered in this plan will need to focus on low-cost, high impact solutions)*

Objective 3.1:

By June 30, 2012, identify public and private funding stakeholders and gain their support.

Objective 3.2:

By June 30, 2012, all branches and Headquarters will have incorporated sustainable elements into their facilities and operations.

Objective 3.3:

By June 30, 2012, all branches will have incorporated an arts component into their facilities and operations.

Objective 3.4:

By June 30, 2012, all branches will have incorporated at least one additional feature that makes the building more comfortable and user-friendly.

Objective 3.5:

By June 30, 2012, all branches will have identified and/or implemented strategies to maximize flexible use of building spaces to meet customer needs.

***Goal 4: GCPL will increase community awareness and support through a network of community volunteers, supporters, partners, advocates and champions.***

*(This goal involves building community support for library needs and enhancing capacity by acquiring resources not available within the organization.)*

Objective 4.1:

Develop one new partner each year for each identified constituency group.

Objective 4.2:

By June 30, 2012, establish a Library Champions speaker's bureau.

Objective 4.3:

By June 30, 2012, the Friends Group will recruit at least 100 members to serve as advocates.

Objective 4.4:

By June 30, 2012, participation and support will grow, as reflected by:

- a. 5% annual increase in financial support (cash/in-kind/grant)
- b. 10% increase in volunteer hours
- c. 25% increase in program attendance
- d. 10% increase in cardholders

**Summary**

The goals and objectives in this plan acknowledge the County's demographic shifts and recognize the reality of the County's – and thus, the Library's – economic challenges:

- While we provide service as a system, the public served by each branch should, in large measure, determine the kind of staff, service and space that best fits their needs. For this reason, the first step will usually involve a needs assessment for each branch to determine how to implement the objectives in a way that will achieve the overall goal and display real progress at the end of the plan's timeframe.
- Like many of our individual customers, we have focused on goals that do not "break the bank". Instead we emphasize the basic needs of a customer-focused organization: skilled staff, comfortable buildings, and service that increases the library's usefulness to its customers.
- While funding challenges make it impossible to immediately fund some of the highest ranking requests made by survey respondents -- more materials, more computers, more/larger buildings -- goals focus on maximizing the use of current resources.
- We need to increase awareness of the Library's services and build broad support for a library system that plays a vital role in the lives of the community. Only by doing this will we gain support for future library building projects and services.
- The plan provides for flexibility within the context of the goals and objectives that are adopted. This means that activities and work plans may change over the course of the year, or over the life of the plan, as we make the adjustments needed to improve customer service system wide and at each of our 14, soon to be 15 branches.

The process of developing a strategic plan is valuable in and of itself, because it challenges assumptions and gives staff an opportunity to think afresh about the value of the public library,

why it exists, how it can serve the community more effectively, and how it functions within its community environment.

But the true test of the plan will be the achievement of its intended purpose: keeping the Library focused on priorities that will best meet the needs of the community and bring about improved services for Gwinnett County residents. The goals and objectives outlined above will guide the Library over the next three years as we continue to focus on developing and implementing a service model that meets the needs of the county's population while providing excellent value for the taxpayer's dollars

## Strategic Planning Committee

Denise Auger, *Community Partnership Coordinator*  
Joyce Baker, *Library Associate, Centerville*  
Rhonda Boyd, *Deputy Director*  
Sue Calbreath, *Events and Outreach Division Director*  
Michael Casey, *IT Division Director*  
Keith Davis, *Librarian I, Grayson*  
Laura Dobbins, *Library Associate, Duluth*  
Elisabeth Douglas, *Librarian I, Lawrenceville*  
Liz Forster, *Branch Services Division Director*  
Deb George, *Materials Management Division Director*  
Karen Harris, *Branch Manager, Norcross & Diversity Projects Coordinator*  
Pat Herndon, *Branch Manager, Grayson*  
Sarah Hill, *Assistant Branch Manager, Buford*  
Victoria Kidd, *Branch Manager, Five Forks*  
Angela Leaphart, *Librarian I, Centerville*  
Michelle Long, *Public Relations Director*  
Dione Regan, *Library Assistant, Suwanee*  
Kim Rodriguez, *Human Resources Director*  
Eamon Shelton, *Capital Projects Manager*  
Barbara Spruill, *Branch Manager, Collins Hill*  
Nancy Stanbery-Kellam, *Executive Director*  
Steve Thomas, *Assistant Branch Manager, Peachtree Corners*  
Jane Walters, *Business Services Division Director*  
Casey Wallace, *Library Associate, Buford*  
Meg Wilson, *Branch Manager, Dacula*

Facilitator: Cal Shepard, *Lyrasis*