Executive Summary

The Williamsburg Regional Library (WRL) is a dynamic civic institution. The library serves the regional community with professional information services, robust collections, stimulating educational and cultural programs, and a staff committed to customer and public service. Outstanding traditional library services are the foundation of WRL. The 2021-22 Strategic Plan update builds on this tradition and commitment to a quality library. With this firm foundation, WRL will also creatively deliver new services and outreach programs during a critical time in our national history.

The 2021-2022 Strategic Plan is designed to focus on a one-year period because circumstances are evolving too swiftly to allow for longer term planning and goals. This revised plan updates the library’s 2016-2020 plan with an inspirational mission statement, new and updated strategic priorities, and a clear commitment to the library’s Financial Framework.

The Strategic Priorities for 2021-22 are: (1) Reinventing library services; (2) Communicating and raising awareness; (3) Rethinking library spaces; and (4) Strengthening community connections and partnerships. The Financial Framework will continue to serve as a bridge between the Strategic Plan and the annual budgeting and decision-making processes.

Recent events are rapidly transforming all aspects of life at a jarring speed, overturning long established educational norms, occupations, work environments, social interactions, and community connections. The disparity of access to both resources and opportunities in the community has been brought into sharp focus by the pandemic with its layoffs, school and business closures, and increased stress on already vulnerable families.

Over the upcoming year WRL will respond quickly to these unfolding events and societal changes. The library will continue to prioritize the health and safety of its users and its staff, while maintaining excellence in continuity of operations and services. As an anchor in this community, WRL will reimagine delivery of innovative services to nurture learning and enhance educational and family support, while connecting to and enlivening community life. WRL will work tirelessly as an innovator and energetic partner with available local support to lift up area citizens and enable them to navigate and succeed in this rapidly changing world.

Betsy Fowler
Library Director

Natalie Miller-Moore
Chair, Library Board of Trustees
Acknowledgements

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Carrie Binsfeld, Finance and General Services Director
Sally J. Andrews, Board of Trustees Secretary
Sam Sadler, President of the Friends of WRL Foundation
Jean Stettler, Board of Trustees Vice-Chair
Sandy Towers, Assistant Library Director

WRL Leadership Team
Betsy Fowler, Library Director
Sandy Towers, Assistant Library Director
Carrie Binsfeld, Finance and General Services Director
Eletha Davis, Mobile Library Services Manager
Benjamin Goldberg, Development Officer
Rob Haas, Program Services and Security Director
Barbara Jones, Mobile Library Services Manager
Mark Lutner, IT Director
Alicia Phinney, Circulation Services Director
Melissa Simpson, Adult Services Director
Ben Strohm, Youth Services Director
Barry Trott, Special Projects and Technical Services Director
Introduction

The Williamsburg Regional Library's 2021-2022 Strategic Plan builds on the library's existing strategic plan and acknowledges the unique challenges and opportunities for library service during a time of worldwide pandemic and national movement towards racial justice. This plan identifies the immediate goals of the library over the next year, as WRL works to ensure the continuity of core services, the development of responsive new services targeted to evolving community needs, and the ongoing need for improved public facilities. The plan is predicated on working closely with community partners to deliver enhanced coordinated services during the pandemic, and with local governments to incorporate renovations and a new library facility in the James City County and City of Williamsburg Capital Improvement Project Plans.

Mission

Inspiring and nurturing a vibrant community

Vision

The Williamsburg Regional Library will contribute to a strong, informed, and resilient community by providing access to resources, programs, and public spaces. Public libraries are essential to a vibrant community and a healthy democracy. WRL delivers outstanding and equitable library services to all members of a diverse region. WRL sparks innovation, inspires creativity and learning, and creates connections. WRL empowers individuals to transform their lives.

Core Values

WRL Believes In:

- Providing outstanding customer service
- Offering balanced, relevant, and responsive collections
- Supporting lifelong learning
- Providing equitable access to all library services
- Adapting services to meet changing community needs
- Embracing technology, innovation, and positive change
- Offering a wide variety of learning experiences
- Providing welcoming public spaces where reading, learning, and imagination thrive
- Providing civic spaces for communicating, collaborating, and exchanging ideas
Valuing a well-trained, public-service-focused staff
Fostering a positive and diverse workplace culture
Managing its resources in an ethical and fiscally responsible manner

Challenges and Opportunities 2021-2022

Challenges

- COVID-19 pandemic and its impact on business, jobs, schooling, and community connections
- Barriers to learning and accessing needed services, including internet access for all households and support for virtual learning
- Racism, racial justice, and the need for change
- Climate change, including storms and extreme weather
- Divided political environment and lack of agreement on shared facts and civil dialog

Opportunities

- Broadband access and the digital divide
- The health and well-being of the community and staff
- Educational support for virtual and hybrid learning
- Workforce development and training.
- Community conversations to promote healing and forward momentum around racial justice issues.
- Critical response capacity through building and service upgrades

Funding and Support Assumptions

- The City of Williamsburg, James City County, and York County will continue to participate in the regional library contract for library services. All three
jurisdictions will continue to fund the operating budget of the Williamsburg Regional Library to provide quality public library services for their residents.

- The library will continue to receive annual State Aid funding that WRL will continue to designate to fund library collections.

- The Friends of Williamsburg Regional Library Foundation (FWRLF) will continue to provide non-budgeted resources in the form of specific grants for innovative collections, programs, and services as funding allows. The FWRLF may conduct special fundraising campaigns for projects as identified jointly with the library board and the director to support the library strategic priorities.

- The library will build new and strengthen existing partnerships with local businesses, nonprofits, and community organizations to reach new users and provide more comprehensive and focused services. In collaboration with the FWRLF, the library will energetically pursue outside funding sources through grants to support new initiatives.

- The library will continue to creatively repurpose and enhance spaces in the existing facilities to meet community needs and will work closely with the City of Williamsburg and James City County to request and invest CIP funding in renovations and a new library facility.

- The library will continue to repurpose staff vacancies to address the most compelling priorities.
2021-2022 Strategic Priorities

The Williamsburg Regional Library (WRL) is focused on four Strategic Priorities for the 2021-2022 timeframe.

1. Reinventing Library Services
WRL will build on its legacy as a trusted source of information to help individuals navigate complex issues, promote community conversations, and connect with critical resources. Facing profound and sweeping societal change, WRL will continuously evaluate and reinvent public library services to help meet the challenges faced by the community, including systemic racism and the need for educational support, job help, and access to digital resources, while continuing to provide exceptional service to those community members who value and rely on the library as a source of materials to read, listen to, and view.

2. Communicating and Raising Awareness
WRL has laid a firm foundation by building understanding of its role in the community and the value it brings. The library will build on that foundation to continue to raise awareness of library services, spaces, and programs with a powerful consistent marketing strategy and outstanding digital presence, that incorporates the library website, social media, and multi-media productions. WRL will expand its efforts to engage non-users and underserved members of the community, working with community partners and local government and non-profits, and taking advantage of new communication tools.

3. Rethinking Library Spaces
WRL will work closely with local jurisdictions to plan, design, and construct a new library in Williamsburg or James City County in response to evolving library services and population growth. WRL will continue renovations of the James City County Library, ongoing improvements in the existing Williamsburg Library building, and utilization of outside spaces to support community engagement and community building. WRL will offer a wide variety of learning experiences and creation opportunities for the community. WRL will prioritize safe, healthy, accessible spaces that offer a wide variety of learning experiences and creation opportunities for the community.

4. Strengthening Community Connections and Partnerships
WRL will develop and implement a dynamic outreach plan to equitably serve historically disadvantaged and vulnerable populations through community collaborations, outreach activities, and investment in digital, physical, and programmatic resources. WRL will
work closely with regional educational institutions and other partners to identify community needs, maximize effective use of combined resources, and amplify the impact.