



# Scarsdale Public Library

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STRATEGIC PLAN 2020-2022  
COMMUNITY SUMMARY

January 2020

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# Forward



**This past year, the Scarsdale Public Library, in partnership with the Friends of the Scarsdale Library (FoSL),** embarked on a six-month process to create a strategic plan that will guide us as we prepare for the reopening of our transformed Library. This joint effort continues our partnership to create an enhanced library to best serve the needs of the Scarsdale community in 2020 and beyond. We want to thank everyone who participated in the process – from our steering committee to the many people interviewed, to the community members who participated in roundtable discussions, and to the over 800 community members who responded to the public survey. The feedback from every part of our community is a testament to the tremendous affection people have for the Library, and its important place in our village.

**We are pleased to share this plan with you on the Scarsdale Library website,** and by making hard copies available at our temporary space, the Loft. The plan gives direction and helps us set priorities as we prepare for our move, in order to shape programs, set policies, and hire staff with logic and well-considered perspective—not to mention a great deal of enthusiasm. We hope the excitement of staff, volunteers, and the larger Scarsdale community will infuse the process, and that everyone in the village will feel energized and enlivened by what is happening in our reimagined building.

**We thank the Scarsdale Library staff for their commitment and dedication to the community,** the Friends of the Scarsdale Library for providing financial support for this project and beyond (always advocating and supporting the Library) as well as the members of the Library Board for their dedication and support. We recognize past-President Diane Greenwald for her passion and commitment to the Library, Plan A Advisors for their guidance, and the Scarsdale community for sharing your hopes, ideas and financial support to make this new version of the Library a reality.

**We invite you to read through the Scarsdale Public Library Strategic Plan.** We look forward to welcoming you back to 54 Olmsted Road, and to sharing this beautiful new space.

Warmly,

Handwritten signature of Elizabeth Bermel in black ink.

**Elizabeth Bermel**  
Library Director

Handwritten signature of Dara Gruenberg in black ink.

**Dara Gruenberg**  
President, FoSL

Handwritten signature of Elyse Klayman in black ink.

**Elyse Klayman**  
President, Library Board

Handwritten signature of Margot Milberg in black ink.

**Margot Milberg**  
Vice President, Library Board

# Introduction

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**Libraries across America are more popular than ever.** Their usage, however, has changed and their purpose has broadened. Libraries are more than gateways to books and information; they are places for work and study, and public gathering spaces where conversation takes place, along with lively programs and debate. In short, they are increasingly active centers for children, teens, adults and seniors who come for all kinds of reasons, many not for books at all.

**Scarsdale Public Library is in an enviable position.** With the support of the Village’s taxpayers and the successful completion of an ambitious fundraising campaign, the Library is poised to move back into an historic building greatly enlarged and purposefully-renovated to meet contemporary and future needs. This re-set can enable the Library to launch a new portfolio of programs and services to meet the needs of a diversity of patrons. Additionally, after having slimmed its staff and operations during construction, housed in temporary space, it can now purposefully rehire for empty positions in line with a new vision for the Library.

**However, the Library’s leaders were wise to recognize that such a defining,** once-in-a-generation moment in the life of a civic institution required the Library to take a hard look at how it should meet the public’s needs. For the Library to remain responsive to the entire community, it would need to understand how the community is evolving and uncover larger trends that might influence the Library’s direction. To that end, the boards of the Library and the Friends of Scarsdale Library recognized that a strategic planning process would be an ideal way to develop a responsive and forward-looking plan of service. It would also be a great way to engage a range of “stakeholders” from across the community in identifying needs that might be newly met.

**The goal of any good strategic plan** is to build on an institution’s strengths, address its weaknesses, mitigate threats, and thoughtfully take advantage of opportunities. This strategic plan does so while addressing a number of larger trends that became apparent during the planning process including, but not limited to: a growing number of seniors who are aging in place; the population of immigrant families focused on English literacy and enfranchisement balanced with a desire to retain cultural ties; and teens whose developmental needs are ever challenging. The plan also imagines a public service strategy that helps the Library to think critically about the composition of its collections and its mix of programs to make sure it is optimizing the use of perennially limited resources.

# Planning Process & Research Findings



# Planning Process

The entire strategic planning process was guided by a **Steering Committee** comprised of Library and Friends board, and representatives. The Steering Committee identified research participants to engage a wide cross-section of perspectives and data sources.

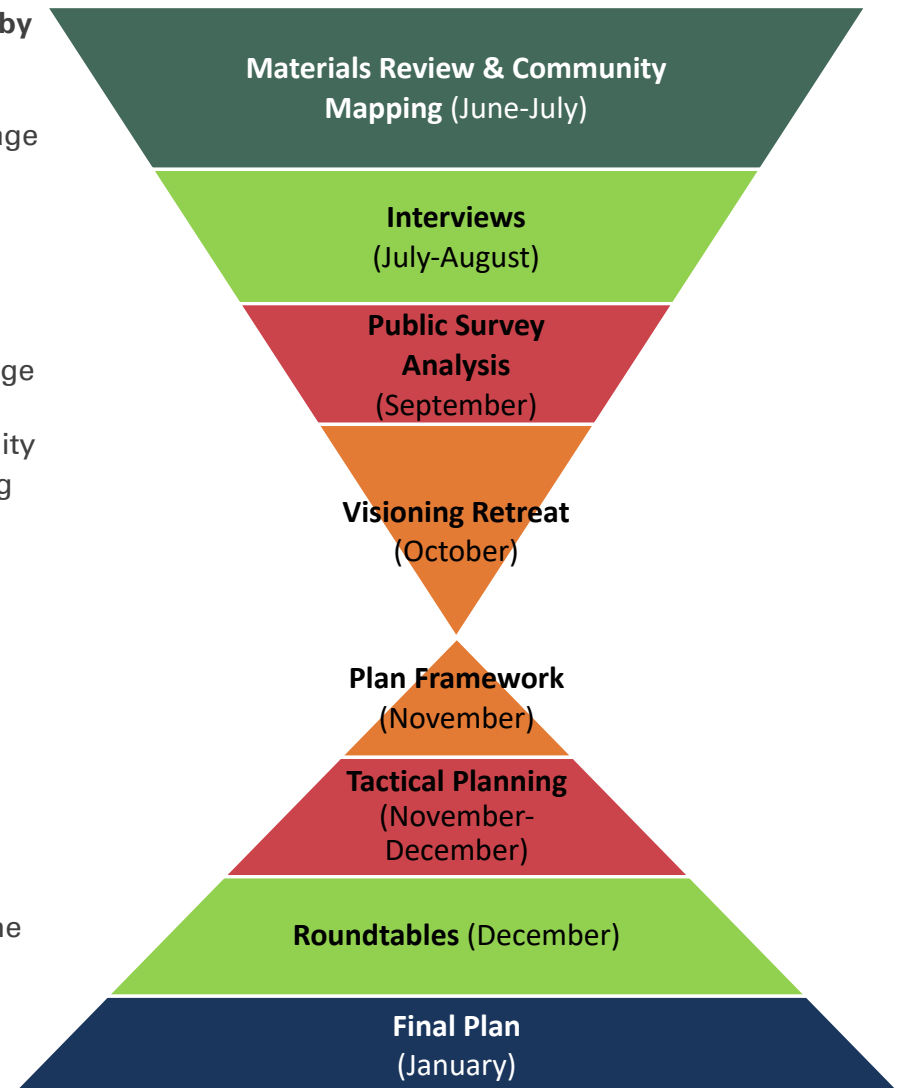
**Review of Library materials and a community mapping exercise** provided foundational context.

**Confidential interviews** with board members, Village colleagues and community leaders coupled with **roundtable conversations** with groups of community representatives all contributed to an understanding of specific needs and service opportunities.

A **public survey** offered community members an opportunity to contribute directly to the planning process, particularly as investments in staff, collections, programs and services are prioritized.

A **visioning retreat** brought Library and Friends board members together with staff for a day of learning and imagining, which set a vision for the future and a framework for the strategic plan.

**Training and coaching sessions** with staff led to the development of **tactical plans** for each of the strategic plan's objectives.



# SWOT Analysis

**A number of major themes surfaced in the research conducted as part of the strategic planning process.** Many of these themes are summarized below as a SWOT Analysis, which offers a concise means of cataloging an organization’s Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats so that it may build a plan for the future responsively. Good planning builds on internal strengths and takes advantage of external opportunities; it works to address internal weaknesses and mitigate external threats or challenges. This strategic plan aims to address many of the items identified below, which reflect commonly held understandings among the board and staff.

Strengths	Weaknesses
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◦ New facility</li> <li>◦ Professional &amp; voluntary leadership</li> <li>◦ Fundraising track record</li> <li>◦ Relationship w/Village</li> <li>◦ Profile in the community</li> <li>◦ Children’s services</li> <li>◦ Collections</li> <li>◦ Programming partner</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◦ Staff diversity and skills (languages, fundraising, communications, technology, etc.)</li> <li>◦ Customer service</li> <li>◦ Succession planning</li> <li>◦ Limited parking</li> <li>◦ WLS technology</li> </ul>
Opportunities/Needs	Threats
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◦ Services to targeted populations</li> <li>◦ Open positions</li> <li>◦ Continued fundraising and donor stewardship</li> <li>◦ Community hub</li> <li>◦ Partner to schools, organizations</li> <li>◦ Reposition user experience with reopening</li> <li>◦ Programming</li> <li>◦ Professional development</li> <li>◦ Park-like setting</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◦ Sense that we are in competition with other nonprofit and Village services</li> <li>◦ Growing political polarization</li> <li>◦ Economic downturn</li> <li>◦ Changes in patterns of library usage among patrons</li> <li>◦ Cost of ebook licensing</li> </ul>

# Major Research Themes

In addition to the SWOT Analysis, a number of major themes, summarized below, surfaced across interviews and roundtables with community stakeholders (select, illustrative quotes from interviews are included as well). This plan seeks to address the findings highlighted here, in addition to the SWOT Analysis, through the goals and objectives detailed later in this report.

■ **New arrivals.** Scarsdale regularly welcomes new residents, some who've come from afar. Some residents view this development as a tension and wonder, "Will Scarsdale change or will Scarsdale change them?"

*"There is tolerance but not necessarily inclusion."*

*"30-somethings, they really want Brooklyn. They want that feel."*

*"There are changing demographics and the culture of volunteerism is changing...There are more dual-working parents in Scarsdale than ever before"*

■ **Serving as a community hub.** There's a strong sense that the Library can be an antidote to loneliness, isolation and even anomie...and a positive force in bringing people together.

*"With phones and computers, we can get so much at home... so the communal spaces become more important."*

*"The library can serve as the epicenter of that kind of face-to-face conversation."*

*"From national politics down to the local, it is much more of an us vs. them feeling. Where we once were able to dialogue, trust is declining."*

■ **Meeting unmet needs.** If the Library, at core, is about connecting people with resources, it is well-positioned to make connections for a range of issues faced by Scarsdale families.

*"...someone who connects you to community resources, like parenting or mental health counseling."*

*"We have great services in the schools, but it is only during the day."*

*"...finding afterschool extracurricular activities for kids who have disabilities."*



# Major Research Themes continued

*"Scarsdale is a very youth- and family-centered community. Everyone moves here for the schools. The downside is that if you don't have children or teens, where do you fit in this community?"*

▪ **Seniors-R-Us too.** There is a significant Scarsdale population "aging in place," living longer than previous generations. Does the Library have a special role to play in meeting their needs?

*"20 years ago the services to seniors were for someone who was 70. Now, a 72-year-old needing senior services is almost laughable. The average age is now early 90s... Living longer, healthier, better educated, want more stimulation."*

*"Hospitality was not the culture of the place. It was: 'you approach us, rather than we approach you.'"*

▪ **Staffing.** The Library has a once-in-a-generation opportunity to reimagine its staffing model.

*"A really strong tech person. If a kid has an issue it closes down their night."*

*"We will be really appreciative if the library can add a Chinese-speaking librarian."*

*"Need to focus more on teen services, which were peripheral. We need a teen advisory board."*

▪ **Program for a purpose.** Programming possibilities are endless...but there are many competing providers and the Library should be purposeful in choosing areas of focus.

*"What about the Muslim holidays, Chinese new year? Feature the non-school holidays and highlight them, have an educational program around them."*

*"One issue with Scarsdale is there is so much programming! How could the library distinguish itself?"*

*"The community now views the library as one of the things you support annually."*

▪ **Raise (more) money.** The success of the Campaign for Excellence, and a transformed library, should make it easier to raise money going forward, including new rounds of capital investment. Additionally, The Friends of Scarsdale Library has "repositioned" itself within the community.

*"Can we feed this energy to the next generation? Can we get it to a hum? There's a lot to get done from here to there."*

*"I wouldn't mind, if it feels right, to do a capital raise every few years."*

# Plan Framework



# About the Framework

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**A strategic plan’s “framework” consists of mission, vision, goals and objectives.** Mission is the business of an organization; the purpose for which it exists. Scarsdale Public Library’s current mission statement was reaffirmed in this planning process.

A vision describes the future position of an organization; what it hopes to achieve after a specific period of time. Scarsdale Public Library’s new vision statement articulates the role that the organization aspires to play in the life of the Scarsdale community over the three years of this plan, and perhaps beyond.

Scarsdale Public Library’s strategic plan is framed by five key goals—statements of expected outcomes or impacts—that the organization aims to achieve in the next three years in support of its mission and to realize its vision.

A number of objectives were set to achieve each goal. Objectives are plans that are implementable over up to three years. Objectives have specific actions and measurable outcomes. They are generally assigned to an individual or small group responsible for implementation.

# Mission and Vision

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**MISSION:** To encourage the joy of reading, the exploration of ideas, and the pursuit of lifelong learning for the children and adults of our community.

## VISION

Our transformed Library will be an intellectual and cultural center for Scarsdale. As a cornerstone of our democracy, this Library will encourage the free exchange of ideas and bring our diverse community together.

Scarsdale Public Library will be known for its welcoming culture of possibility and accessibility, treasured as a place to read, write, create, discuss, listen, debate, connect and reflect. Committed to institutional reflection, innovation and professional excellence, Scarsdale Public Library will be a dynamic asset for our community and a leading public library.

# Strategic Plan Goals

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**Goal I: Reopen!** Prepare for and use the reopening to introduce and showcase the reimagined library – a celebration of and invitation to one of Scarsdale’s defining institutions.

**Goal II: Community Hub.** Animate the library’s facilities, collections, and relationships to make it an acknowledged center of community life, an inclusive space that actively welcomes every patron and community member.

**Goal III: User Experience.** Ensure that each patron’s experience of the facilities, staff, communications, technology and resources reflects library service at its best.

**Goal IV: Intentional Programming.** Respond to the needs and interests of Scarsdale’s increasingly diverse population through inspiring public programs, enhanced when appropriate by collaboration and partnership.

**Goal V: Essential Resources.** Develop and empower the Library’s staff and volunteers, and build the financial capacity to successfully advance the Library as a model of excellence.

# Goal I: Reopen!

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**Prepare for and use the reopening to introduce and showcase the reimagined library – a celebration of and invitation to one of Scarsdale’s defining institutions.**

## **Context**

The Campaign for Excellence to transform Scarsdale Public Library followed a community-wide survey and strategic planning process conducted in 2012. It inspired passionate involvement from Village residents and raised expectations about the role that a transformed library could play as a community center. To meet and even exceed those expectations, and to assure donors that the Library is fulfilling its promises, the months leading up to and immediately following the reopening are a critically important time to introduce residents to the Library’s new facilities, programs, services, and staff.

## **Objectives**

1. Implement a wide-reaching communications campaign to prepare and then welcome the community to its transformed library.
2. Plan and execute events for the grand re-opening that celebrate the campaign committee, donors and supporters, and that welcome the community’s many constituents.
3. Roll out an inaugural series of programs that highlight and familiarize the public with the library’s many features and its programming possibilities.

# Goal II: Community Hub

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**Animate the library’s facilities, collections, and relationships to make it an acknowledged center of community life, an inclusive space that actively welcomes every patron and community member.**

## Context

As a community-wide institution in Scarsdale, dedicated to serving residents across the lifespan, the Library has a unique role to play in fostering civic engagement and strengthening social fabric. Particularly in a time of growing political polarization, the Library can create spaces for community-wide learning and respectful discussion, and programs such as a Community Read. Additionally, because of its central role, the Library can serve as a hub for referrals to other community resources such as social services and can function as a safe space and resource for Scarsdale’s students outside of school hours.

## Objectives

4. Create programs and services that bring groups together in the library year-round to meet, celebrate, learn, and experience in ways that create new bonds between residents.
5. Connect Scarsdale residents with community resources, positioning the library at the hub of many spokes.
6. Promote volunteerism and civic engagement to strengthen the community’s social infrastructure.
7. Work closely with the schools as the library’s essential partner, meeting the needs of students and their families at all times, outside school hours.

# Goal III: User Experience

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**Ensure that each patron's experience of the facilities, staff, communications, technology and resources reflects library service at its best.**

## Context

While libraries continue to fulfill their historic role as centers of information, they increasingly provide a range of programs, classes, and additional functions that rely upon flexible spaces, evolving technologies, and new areas of expertise. In an effort to meet the needs of a diversity of patrons, Scarsdale Public Library must strengthen staff training, systems and policies, and communications with the public to ensure a seamless and welcoming experience for patrons whose needs are increasingly multi-faceted. The Library may also wish to explore means of enhancing technology access locally, outside the limitations of Westchester Library System services.

## Objectives

8. Refine and expand the library's marketing and communications channels for access, accuracy, readability, and relevance.
9. Make outstanding customer service and technology hallmarks of this library.
10. Put systems in place that emphasize efficiency, quality and accessibility to improve the user experience for patrons and staff alike.
11. Review and revise policies and procedures to reflect the library as it will operate **when reopened**.



# Goal IV: Intentional Programming

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**Respond to the needs and interests of Scarsdale’s increasingly diverse population through inspiring public programs, enhanced when appropriate by collaboration and partnership.**

## **Context**

Scarsdale’s diversification continues apace with a significant increase in new American families; many bring older parents for whom English is a second (or third) language. Additionally, many long-time Scarsdale residents elect to “age in place,” and remain active into their later years, eager for intellectual and social engagement, aided by accessible spaces and adaptive technologies. The Library is uniquely positioned to adapt and to meet changing needs, particularly through partnerships with other service providers.

## **Objectives**

12. Enhance and expand library programming to offer meaningful and unique opportunities that promote inclusivity and access within our diverse community.
13. Utilize the library’s new facilities to their maximum by developing programs that introduce and activate new spaces.

# Goal V: Essential Resources

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**Develop and empower the Library's staff and volunteers, and build the financial capacity to successfully advance the Library as a model of excellence.**

## **Context**

The Campaign for Excellence inspired scores of volunteers to work collaboratively to transform the Library for successive generations. Now, poised to reopen, the Library has an opportunity to strengthen and expand its loyal base of voluntary leaders. And, on the cusp of reopening, the Library has a once-in-a-generation opportunity to design a new staff structure and add new professional positions to meet the changing needs of patrons.

## **Objectives**

14. With the Library Director, and support from the Friends and Village leadership, ensure that the human and financial resources are in place to implement the Library's new Strategic Plan.
15. Identify and prioritize funding needs, and raise the philanthropic support needed to supplement public funding for library programming, services and capital needs, encouraging donor participation at all levels.
16. Develop a staffing structure to effectively match program and service needs, and provide ongoing professional development.
17. Formalize and institute a succession plan for the Library's professional and voluntary leadership.

# Appendices



# Acknowledgements



Scarsdale Public Library’s Board is grateful to our partners, the Friends of Scarsdale Library, for helping to underwrite this plan. We are grateful for the trust and support of the Scarsdale Board of Trustees, past and present, and to all the past Library Board members, on whose shoulders we stand.

This Strategic Plan effort has been made possible by energies of the Strategic Planning Committee, comprised of members of the Library Board, the Friends and the Library staff.

Scarsdale Public Library’s leadership offers heartfelt thanks to Plan A Advisors, our consultants for our strategic planning process. Adam Gaynor and Evan Kingsley provided professional guidance, inclusive facilitation and informed analytic advise, resulting in this articulate plan.

## **The Strategic Planning Steering Committee**

Margot Milberg, Chair  
Wendy Archer  
Shira Ronis Barkoe  
Beth Bermel  
Lori Gagliano  
Diane Greenwald  
Dara Broxmeyer Gruenberg  
Elyse Klayman  
Jamie Kefer  
Michele Lichtenberg  
Roberta Stein-Ham  
Karen Zielinski

## **Scarsdale Public Library Board of Trustees**

Elyse Mall Klayman, President  
Margot Milberg, Vice President  
Gary Katz, Finance Officer  
Diane Greenwald,\* Secretary  
Felicia Block, Trustee  
Alan Bey, Trustee  
Laura Liu, Trustee  
Deb Morel, Trustee  
Svati Shashank, Trustee  
  
Jane E. Veron, Village Board Liaison  
Elizabeth Bermel, Library Director

\* Former Board President

## **Friends of the Scarsdale Library Board of Directors**

Dara Gruenberg, President  
Wendy MacMillan, Vice President  
Jamie Kefer, Vice President  
Lori Harrison, Secretary  
Mona Longman, Treasurer

## **Directors**

Lauren Bender	Renu Lalwani
Allison Block	Meg Lazarus
Betsy Bohrer	Michelle Lichtenberg
To-Dao Casey	Deborah Lichtenstein
Anne George	Reshma Shetty
Alison Gordon	Alexandra Vargo Tagami
Nancy Kaplan	Loretta Vickers
Wendy Kleinman	Marin Weinberg
	Gabrielle Wise

# Gratitude to Participants

The Library is grateful to the following participants in Roundtable Conversations held in December 2019, facilitated by Plan A Advisors and hosts by Jane Veron, Janice Starr and Margot Milberg, respectively.

## Business Roundtable

Amber Yusuf  
Barbara Roth  
Casey Klurfeld  
Chris Morin  
Claudia Uribe  
David Schwartz  
Howard Givner  
Karen Ceske  
Michelle Friedman  
Scott Rompala  
Wendy Gendel

## Special Needs Roundtable

Adela Hongyu Lin  
Cindy Dunne  
Hoosna Haque  
Janice Starr  
Jordan Copeland  
Lisa Bezos  
Marian Green  
Mary Blum  
Rosemary Kugler  
Susie Sands

## Teen & Parent Roundtable

Alisa Kohn  
Amy Nadasi  
Anita Mann  
Anna Feldstein  
Anna Schwartz  
Annabel Mayer  
Ben Ewing  
Carl Finger  
Claudia Schwartz  
Crystal Feng

Danielle Kohn  
Diya Shadaksharappa  
Ehud Gelblum  
Eli Gelblum  
Francesca Lloyd  
Holly Schuster  
Julia White  
Katie Michael  
Kiki Hong  
Lydia Doherty  
Michelle Kaplan  
Natalie Lloyd

Noam Arenstein  
Olivia Liu  
Sam Cohen  
Serena Finger  
Sophie Brenner  
Tracy McCarthy  
Wubet Jean-Baptiste  
Xiaolin Cheng  
Yuki Brenner

## We appreciate the time and insights provided by those who participated in one-on-one interviews including:

Beth Bermel, Library Director  
Kenneth Bonamo, SHS Principal  
Gerald Crisci, School Director of Technology  
Leah Dembitzer  
Madelaine Eppenstein, Scarsdale Forum VP  
Tim Foley, Scarsdale Forum President  
Jay Genova, Director SEFC  
Brian Gray, Village Director Parks + Rec  
Diane Greenwald, Library Board, Past President  
Dara Broxmeyer Gruenberg, FoSL President

Thomas Hagerman, School Superintendent  
Elyse Klayman, Library Board President  
Karen Kolodny, Director JCC  
Laura Liu, Library Board  
Jon Mark, Former Scarsdale Mayor  
Andrew Maturro, Police Chief  
Steve Pappalardo, Village Manager  
Eric Rauschenbach, Director of Special Education  
Ellen Reinheimer, Board Co-President,  
JCC Mid-Westchester  
Marc Samwick, Mayor

Ann Sacher, Scarsdale Adult School, Board Chair  
Jill Serling, Director Scarsdale Adult School  
Svati Shashank, Library Board  
Scott Silberfein, School Board President  
Joey Silberfein, PTC President  
Jane Veron, Village Trustee  
Lauren Yang-Guo, SCA Chair

**We are indebted to community members from across Scarsdale who responded to a public survey in extraordinary numbers.**

# Public Survey

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**Over 820 residents—a remarkably high number relative to the Village’s population**—responded to the public survey which was made available online and in hard copy over a span of a few weeks.

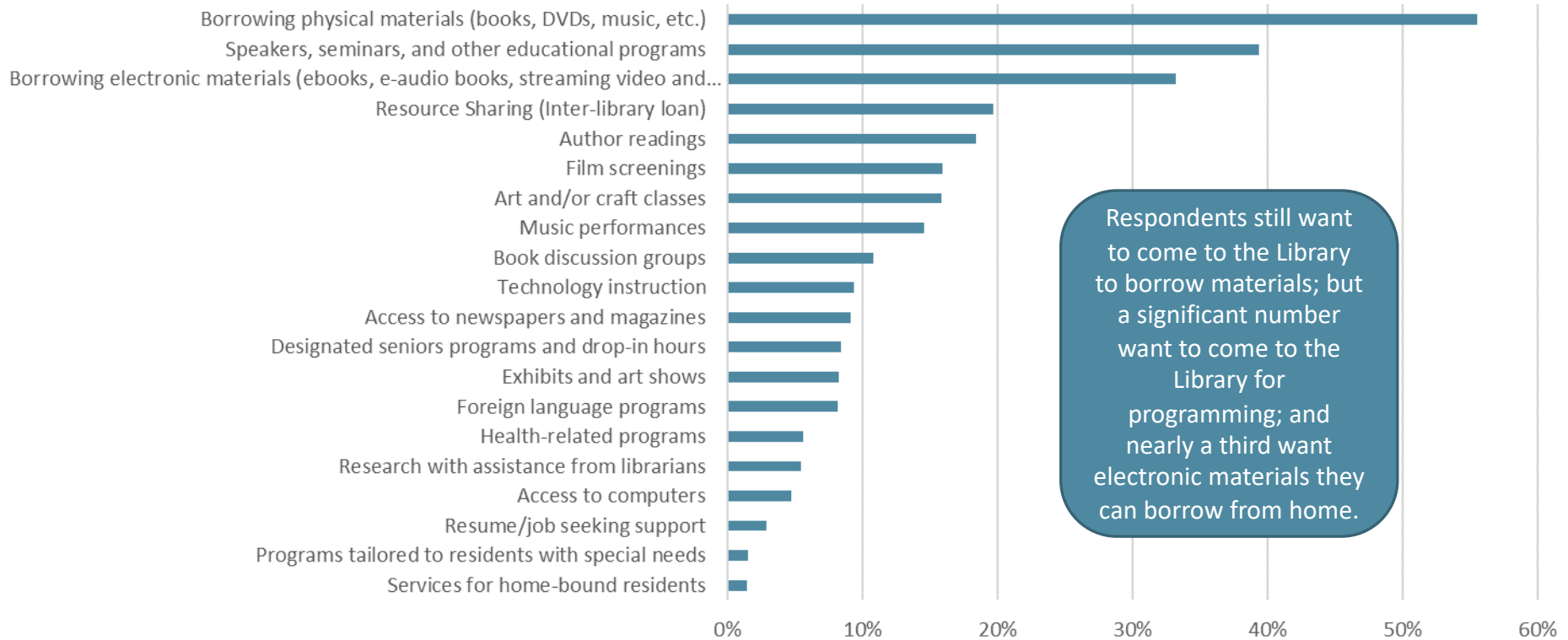
***Methodology:*** The Library recognized that a survey of this kind can offer us a broad reach to the community and some valuable insights but also has statistical and structural limitations. The Library worked with our expert consulted to develop a short, targeted survey that would allow for verification of some Library assumptions, weighing of community priorities, and to provide benchmarking for some services and resources. The Library reflected on the survey results only in the context of the full framework of the Strategic Planning effort.

While many of the findings corroborated assumptions held by the staff and board, some new findings helped to inform the direction of this plan, and the many thoughtful responses to open-ended questions will enable the staff to shape programs and services over the coming years.

A few notable findings are presented on the following pages.

# Public Survey

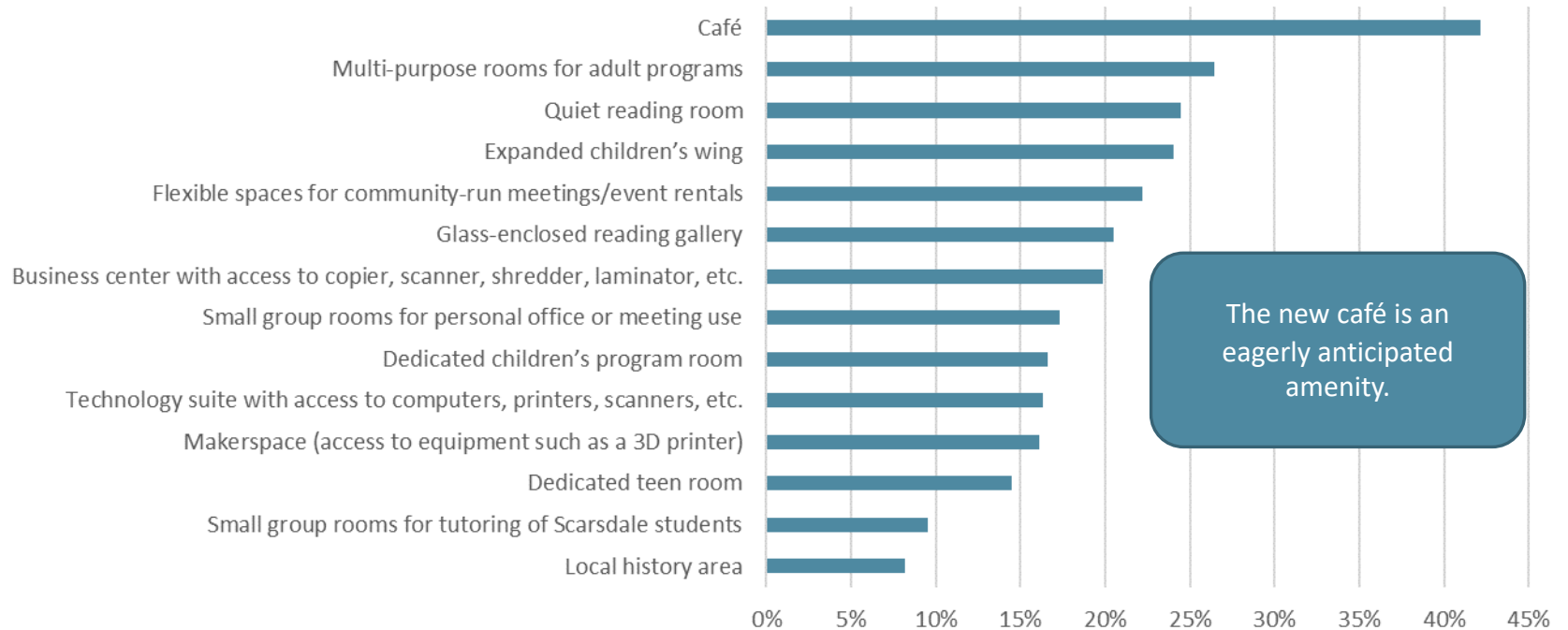
Please select up to three (3) services/programs that you are most interested in using/attending:



Respondents still want to come to the Library to borrow materials; but a significant number want to come to the Library for programming; and nearly a third want electronic materials they can borrow from home.

# Public Survey continued

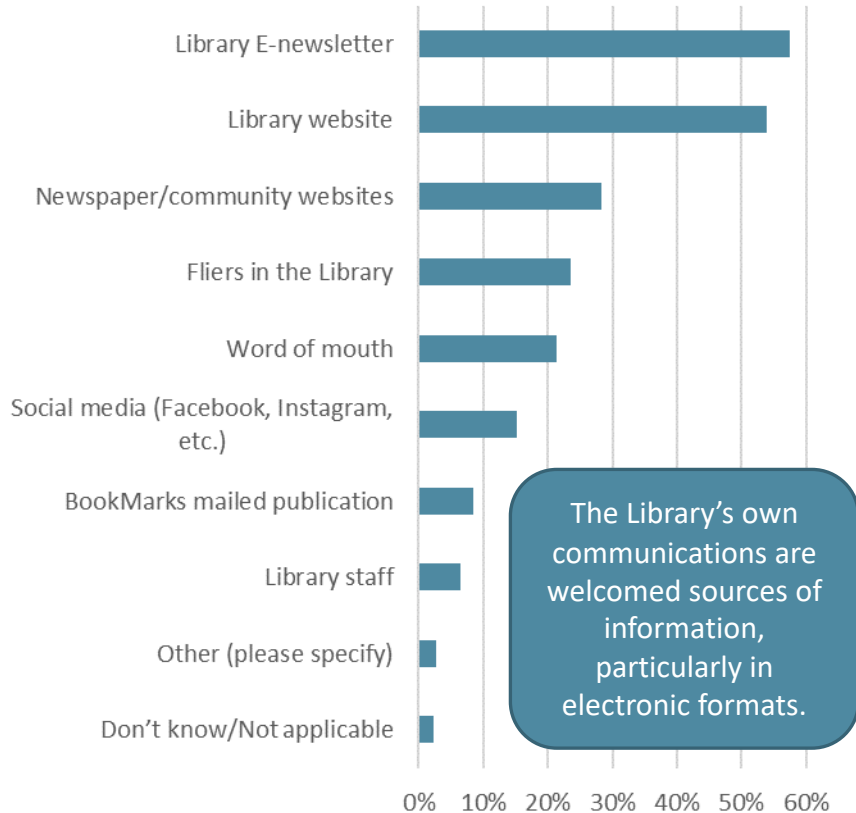
Of the new physical features that will be available in the new building, please select up to three (3) that you are most eager to use





# Public Survey continued

How do you typically find out about library services and programs? (check all that apply)



If you or a member of your household would benefit from services in another language besides English, please indicate the language(s) below. (check all that apply)

