

Montville Township Public Library

Strategic Plan
2022-2024



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A Message from the Director

In recent years, much has changed at Montville Township Public Library, and we provide services differently than we did 15 or even 5 years ago. We've moved books, movies, and library programs to the online environment, added new technologies, and streamlined library services such as check-out, holds pick up, and reference for more convenient service to the public. We present hundreds of library events each year on varied subjects, as the concept of the library as a community hub has broadened from its original focus on books and literacy.

Yet, our core mission--to connect Montville Township residents with lifelong learning opportunities through first-rate resources and a beautiful facility--has always been paramount, and remains constant. The library has been, and always will be, a cherished place for all community members to meet, learn, and grow. It is only the methods we use to accomplish this goal that are constantly evolving. With this core vision in mind, we have created a plan for the next three years of library service.

The Montville Township Library's Strategic Plan 2022-2024, created by Library staff and the Library Board of Trustees with community input, aims to strengthen the wonderful library services the community expects and enjoys, while enhancing the Library's role as a core community institution. This is the perfect time for us to reassess where we are and where we want to go, as the COVID-19 pandemic has profoundly changed every facet of library service, and our community at large.

We are proud of the way we rose to meet the challenge of the health emergency and the progress we have made over the past four years, but there is much more work to be done. This plan focuses on our library facility, customer service, technology, programs, collections, and relationships with community businesses and organizations to help us reach our full potential. The document will serve as a blueprint for making improvements each year while allowing us to adapt to changing priorities and meet new challenges that may arise during this time.

Please join us on the journey to creating a better library and a better future for the community. Above all, we welcome your feedback on the process and look forward to meeting and sharing our progress with the entire community as we work to make Montville Library the Place to Grow.

Catherine LaBelle
Library Director

Executive Summary

The Montville Township Public Library (MTPL) is a busy and successful institution with a beautifully designed building and outdoor space. Our library events are recognized throughout Morris County and our municipal monetary allotment, funded at the minimum level required, has historically been sufficient for the Library to provide innovative library collections and services. In undertaking our 2022-2024 strategic planning, Library management and the Library Board of Trustees evaluated our strengths and weaknesses, researched trends in local and nationwide library services, and solicited feedback from the community and staff through surveys and focus groups to produce a plan that is forward-thinking, responsible, and responsive to community expectations.



Planning & Methodology

During the spring of 2021, we shared a survey with residents about library usage, strengths, and areas in need of improvement to which we received 865 responses. In the fall of 2021, we engaged with Library Crossroads Consulting to conduct four focus group discussions with specific populations: older adults, parents, teenagers, and our library staff. The focus groups helped us to determine specific community needs and dig deeper into our patrons' expectations.

Goals & Objectives

As a result of our research and the community feedback, we have identified four long term goals with corresponding objectives and measurements to guide us on our path to a better library for the Montville Township community.

Create a welcoming and friendly environment that shows awareness of and respect for all community members.

- Enhance our physical spaces to meet the changing interests and needs of residents.
- Invest in staff development to support staff engagement, teamwork, job knowledge, and career growth.
- Reevaluate Library workflows, policies and procedures to manage our resources effectively and meet changing staff, community and fiscal needs.

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Goals & Objectives, continued

Support educational and learning opportunities for community members of all ages and backgrounds.

- Build fresh and engaging collections targeted toward community needs and ensure access for all in-person and remotely.
- Create an environment to support lifelong learning.
- Provide opportunities for self-directed and remote learning.

Improve our technology infrastructure and services.

- Keep pace with advances in technology to make sure that library resources and training are up to date.
- Improve patron access to technology in our collections and services.

Increase awareness and use of the Montville Township Public Library within the community and Northern NJ area.

- Continue to build a network of community support and advocacy for the library.

Our Vision.

The Montville Township Public Library is the Place to Grow

Our Mission.

The Montville Township Public Library connects residents of all ages with learning opportunities for growth and success through inviting dynamic spaces, technology, and resources



Community Overview



Montville Township, incorporated in 1867, is one of the largest towns in Morris County and is composed of three areas: Montville, Pine Brook and Towaco. It has a total area of 19.1 square miles and its neighbors include Boonton, Boonton Township, Fairfield, Parsippany-Troy Hills, Lincoln Park, and Pequannock. Montville Township is 30 miles west of New York City and 10 miles north of Morristown, the county seat.

The 2020 population for Montville Township according to Morris County government's "Population Trends by Municipality," was 22,450. The township has grown steadily in population since the 1920s according to Census data. Census data reveals that Montville Township is one of only a few Morris County municipalities to increase in population at the end of each ten-year span. Between 2000 and 2020, the population grew by 7.7%. There are currently 7,526 households, and 85.9% of housing units are owner-occupied.



In addition to being consistently ranked one of the best places to live in the state, Montville Township has become a desirable location for residential and commercial property developers due its close proximity to major transportation routes in Northern New Jersey.

Montville Township has an active business community with over 3,000 registered firms and businesses according to Census data. Commercial businesses are concentrated along Route 46, Route 202, and Changebridge Road. A number of business expansions and additions are in progress, as are Township development projects including sewer expansion, parks and recreation upgrades, and new street signs.

The Township is home to highly rated schools. Within Montville Township there are several preschools, two private schools and seven Township public schools. Montville Township High School's graduation rate is above the state median. Its "College Readiness Index," based on AP/IB participation rate, is 46.3 out of 100. 93.9% of 2020 graduates went on to college, higher than the state figure of 76.3%. Montville Township is situated within commuting distance of a dozen higher education institutions.

Demographics at a Glance

Montville Township is a diverse community with changing demographics. Census data gives us a snapshot of the Township's makeup as of 2019, the most current data available.

- 17.3% of residents are 65 and over, while 23.5% are under 18.
- 20.9% of residents are foreign-born, and 25.5% of residents speak a language other than English at home.
- The median household income is \$145,292, while 3.2% of the population (approximately 718 people) is considered to be living in poverty.

Unemployment data is not available at the municipal level. Morris County's unemployment rate is currently 6%.

Library Profile



The Montville Township Public Library was created in 1989 after a municipal referendum establishing a free public library was passed. Previously, the library was an association library located in the north end of town in what currently is the Senior House. The library's current 18,000 square foot facility opened on March 5, 1995.

Funding & Governance

As a municipal library, MTPL receives $\frac{1}{3}$ of a "mill," or .033333% of every \$1,000 of assessed property value, in appropriations funding from the Township for its operating budget. Montville Township's equalized valuation for 2022, for example, is \$5,030,635,009. At .0333333 percent, we have an operating budget of \$1,718,033 for 2022. The Library's budget in 2021 was \$1,676,877. On average, it costs each resident \$74 in taxes to use the Library for the year 2021.

In addition to operating funds from the Township, the Library adheres to certain operational and reporting requirements in order to be eligible for additional Per Capita Aid from the State of New Jersey, administered by the New Jersey State Library. In 2022, the projected state aid given to Montville Township will be \$1.25 per capita (per person).

MTPL is governed by a nine-member Board of Trustees who volunteer their time. Seven Trustees are appointed by the Mayor with consent of the Township Committee. The other two statutory positions include the Mayor or alternate, and the Superintendent of Schools or alternate.

Staff & Operations

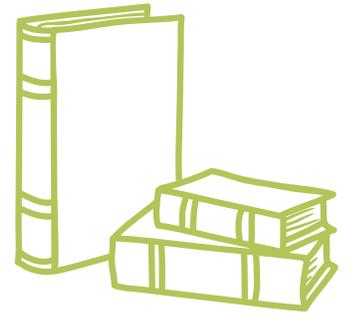
The Library staff is composed of three departments: Administration, Circulation, and Programs & Services. The Library currently employs 21 staff members across the three departments. The Library employs six librarians with American Library Association-accredited Masters of Library Science. The Library prides itself on a culture of cross-training and customer service; staff are empowered to perform work in a variety of areas serving all age groups.

MTPL is a member of the Morris Automated Information Network (MAIN), a consortium of over 49 public libraries in northern New Jersey. All libraries in Morris County are members, including the Morris County Library; as well as two libraries in Somerset county, one in Warren County, and the entire Hunterdon County Library System. MTPL cardholders can inter-loan items and borrow directly from the libraries in the consortium. Additionally, cardholders may request statewide interlibrary loans, which we administer through the New Jersey State Library's catalog.

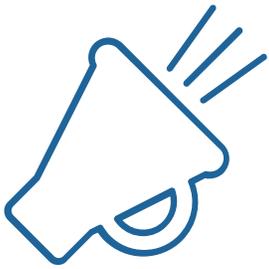
MTPL is also a member of the Open Borrowing reciprocal lending program, allowing users walk-in borrowing privileges at the Sussex County Library System, Warren County Library System, LMxAC consortium libraries in Middlesex and Union counties, and PALS Plus consortium libraries in Passaic County and parts of Essex County, including Fairfield.

Collection & Outreach

MTPL has a collection of approximately 85,000 physical items including books and DVDs. Across multiple collections, the Library also loans thousands of digital items, including books and movies; we also provide access to premium research databases, homework help resources, and more.



MTPL's digital collections and online resources are made up of a mix of MTPL-funded resources available exclusively for MTPL cardholders; consortium-wide resources that are cost-shared by all libraries in MAIN; select resources from the Morris County Library; and resources underwritten entirely by the New Jersey State Library.



The Library strives to publicize its offerings and expand access whenever possible. In 2021, we worked with the local elementary schools to issue library cards to each student. Our partnerships with the schools, Chamber of Commerce, One Montville, the Women's Club, and other local organizations allow us to spread the word about library services and connect further with our community. We are pleased to attend town wide events such as Montville Day and connect with residents. Our outreach efforts also include social media platforms and a newsletter with 5,874 subscribers.



Strengths and Successes



In 2017, the Library developed a three-year strategic plan (2018–2020) with the help of the consulting group Library Development Solutions. Due to the COVID-19 health emergency, the Library Board of Trustees voted to extend the plan through 2021. We are proud of the objectives we achieved in implementing the plan. Below is a list of Library successes due to the hard work of the staff at Montville Township Public Library and the support of our Board of Trustees:

To Create a Welcoming and Friendly Environment, we:

- Shrunk service points in the library to one information desk to provide a more efficient and pleasant customer service experience.
- Engaged an architect to assess cost effective and sound opportunities for renovation and improvement.
- Invested in a new chiller and a new boiler to improve energy efficiency.
- Created a self-pick-up center for library holds for optimal convenience and privacy.
- Invested in staffing and staff development with added positions for technology and programming and the creation of a Staff Development Plan and training days.
- Eliminated fluorescent lighting in the building and moved to LED through an NJ Direct Energy saving program.
- Set a new target collection size to accommodate space use changes and reduced the size of the collection by over 15% by eliminating outdated and unused materials.
- Increased self-check use to over 60%.

To Create lively and vibrant print and digital collections and resources, we:

- Refreshed the collection in all age groups and formats.
- Provided multiple choices for digital books and movies through the addition of streaming options Kanopy and hoopla.
- Reallocated budget lines to increase digital book and audio budget by 50% in response to increased demand, especially during the pandemic.
- Increased our electronic circulation from 7.38% of our 2019 total circulation to 25.82% in 2020.
- Created a YouTube Channel and offered virtual program options for patrons not able to come to the library.

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Strengths & Successes, Continued

To Provide a dynamic and interactive environment to facilitate discovery and personal growth for all residents, we:

- Received five grants for staffing and programming for a total of \$13,300 used to develop our eBook collection, run a lecture series on America's Founding Era, celebrate Teen Read Week, hire and pay a high school intern interested in a library career, and buy hotspots for our new Library of Things.
- Increased our book and reading focused events to include five author visits in 2021.
- Decreased waitlists for programs
- Extended Wi-Fi coverage and speed.
- Rolled out the MAIN app allowing for account information, renewal, and self-check out from mobile devices.

To Increase Awareness, we:

- Redesigned the website for a more modern, streamlined, and satisfying customer experience.
- Grew the newsletter following by 189% between 2017 and now.
- Decreased unsubscribe rates by segmenting the newsletter to targeted audiences.
- Restarted and revamped our Instagram account and committed to posting at least 3 times a week.
- Built partnerships with preschools, elementary schools, One Montville, and other community organizations. Through our partnership with the elementary school media specialists, we added 524 new children's library cards in 2021.



Reevaluating & Refocusing

Despite nearly eighteen months of challenges due to the COVID-19 pandemic, we are happy to report that the Library has returned to nearly normal operations. The health emergency impacted every aspect of library service and continues to do so, but we are proud of the manner in which we were able to reimagine and reformat library services to provide them to the public virtually uninterrupted. Our item circulation and library visit totals declined dramatically in 2020, and are only now beginning to rise. Circulation declined 56%, but has already risen 33% in 2021 over the previous year. Likewise, library visits are on an upward trajectory and will surpass the total from last year by the end of October 2021. Recovering from the pandemic will be an ongoing challenge at the library, as it will be in society at large.

In March of 2020, the Library shut down completely due to the novel coronavirus (COVID-19) and remained closed by Executive Order through June of 2020. We brought services and programs online, conducting story times, lectures, and more from our living rooms and kitchens and created a library channel on YouTube for patrons to access at any time. In June, we began curbside pickup service, which proved to be extremely popular, and in August 2020, we reopened the building to the public. To ensure public safety and adhere to gathering restrictions, we offered a selection of services by appointment, with time limits.

When it was safe to do so, we rolled back limitations and expanded services. We eliminated the need for appointments and time limits in April 2021, and resumed indoor seating and study room usage, expanded computer sessions, and expanded hours.

The ongoing pandemic has resulted in a shift in community needs, and has emphasized the importance of adapting to changing priorities. Overwhelmingly, our most popular request by survey respondents and focus group participants was for better and more outdoor seating. This is a dramatic shift from our previous strategic planning; outdoor seating was not a theme among public responses collected in late 2017.

As the library looks ahead to the next three years, we are excited to continue providing the services you know and love, as well as adapt to the changing expectations and needs of our community.

MTPL by the Numbers

Please note: the pandemic has greatly impacted library use. We have slowly begun to bounce back; significantly more people visited the library, attended our programs, and borrowed our materials so far this year than in 2020. We have been delighted to welcome the community back as restrictions have lessened. As life slowly gets back to normal, we hope to see a return to the level of activity we had in 2018 and 2019, and an increase beyond that over time.

Metric	2018	2019	2020	2021 to date
Circulation (print & electronic)	193,358	195,902	110,589	147,031
Visits to the Library	194,202	148,431	44,373	42,807
Summer Reading Participation	579	330	244	388
Library Program Attendance	17,854	18,252	10,313	6,206
Community Program Attendance	1,389	777	98	62
Reference questions answered	76,311	68,9662	17,562	14,741
Computer sessions	11,786	9,904	2,443	1,642



How We Determined Community Needs

During the spring of 2021, we shared a survey with residents in both paper and electronic format. Paper copies were made available at the circulation desk and self-check machines, and a cross section of 1440 households were randomly selected to receive a mailed survey with stamped self-return.

The survey asked residents to tell us how they use the Library, what they love about it, and what is not working well for them. We were thrilled that 865 people responded to our survey, an increase of 35% from the last strategic planning survey sent in 2017. We also received a 10% increase in responses from those without library cards due to the mailing component of the survey. Combing through the responses, we saw patterns emerge and were able to get a preliminary sense of what our community as a whole looks for in their library.

After the survey feedback was analyzed, we engaged with Library Crossroads Consulting to conduct four focus group discussions with specific populations: older adults, parents, teenagers, and our library staff. The focus groups helped us to determine specific community needs and dig deeper into our patrons' expectations.

In creating the plan, we also reviewed demographic data for Montville Township and Morris County and considered national trends shaping library services. With this information and the information shared in community feedback, we have developed 4 long term goals with possible action steps.

The collective feedback we received, combined with our research and day to day observations of library usage and engagement, has helped us gain a clearer picture of our community's current values, expectations, and needs and how we can serve them for the next three years. We have learned that Montville is a community that values:

Learning. Our established Montville "U" lecture series, story times, STEM programs for teens, and other educational endeavors are well-attended and well-received. Residents want even more programs, with an expansion of topics covered such as increased programming in the areas of personal wellness, practical life skills, and English Language Learning.

Diversity. Our annual cultural celebrations--Diwali, Ramadan, and Lunar New Year--are popular among all age groups. In addition, we have enjoyed a positive response about our heritage and history month events, such as those that tie into Asian-American and Pacific Islander Heritage Month, Pride Month, Black History Month, Women's History Month and more. "More cultural programs" was a frequent suggestion among survey respondents, and when asked about what qualities they value in their town, each focus group mentioned Montville Township's diversity.

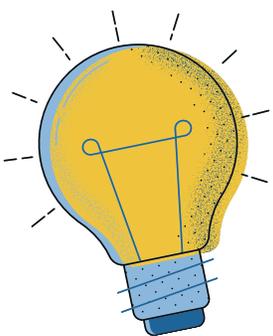
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Space to Study and Work. Stop by the Montville Township Library any day of the week and you will see people of all ages availing themselves of our study spaces, wireless internet, computers, printing, scanning, and other services--or even reading books, newspapers, and magazines. While over 90% of Montville Township residents have a computer and/or home internet, many residents choose to use ours. Our community values space to focus on tasks for school, work, and life, and wants those spaces to be maximized and improved.

Access to Quality Collections and Content. Our community makes great use of both physical and digital collections at MTPL. New books fly off the shelves, as do the staff recommendations on display. Book discussions for all ages have proven to be popular, as have technology classes about our resources. Our loanable museum passes are a perennial favorite. The Montville Township community wants an even more varied collection featuring more books, more eBooks, and more digital resources.

Gathering. Every day we see patrons gathering and connecting at the Library, whether at a program, after school, or even on line for checkout. The Library is a place for community, where people connect over shared interests. More space for quiet study and meetings; more indoor and outdoor seating; and a better configured children's area, are top concerns.

Community Partnerships. We have a track record of resource and program sharing with community organizations such as our book clubs and recycling work with One Montville, wellness programs with local organizations, building and grounds beautification through Montville Garden Club volunteers and more. Patrons would like to benefit from more of these partnerships including working with local organizations to promote small businesses and help those in need.



With our findings in mind, we formulated four strategic planning goals with actionable objectives.

Library Goals & Objectives

Goal 1

Create a welcoming and friendly environment that shows awareness of and respect for all community members.

Objective 1 Enhance our physical spaces to meet the changing interests and needs of residents.

Possible Action steps:

1. Periodically review needs and determine priorities for repurposing space, high-impact/low-cost changes, and more significant improvements, within budget constraints.
2. Reimagine and refresh the Library grounds to create an outdoor space that better supports community learning and enjoyment.
3. Reevaluate and redesign the Children's area to provide more space for reading and play.
4. Revitalize the teen space to bring furniture up to date.
5. Accommodate individual and community needs for more seating, spaces to meet
6. Repair or replace the front doors for enhanced security and functionality.
7. Install additional power outlets in the building.

Possible Key Measurements:

- Improve HVAC control system to better monitor temperature control by first quarter 2022

Objective 2: Invest in staff development to support staff engagement, teamwork, job knowledge, and career growth.

Possible Action steps:

1. Provide all staff with customer service training on cultural diversity, conflict resolution, and best practices for customer service.
2. Provide all staff with technology training on library resources, technology equipment, and trends.
3. Offer reader's advisory training to all staff to give them the tools to foster a culture of literacy.
4. Develop a culture of inter-departmental collaboration where staff engage in co-learning experiences,

Objective 3: Reevaluate Library workflows, policies and procedures to manage our resources effectively and meet changing staff, community and fiscal needs.

Possible Action Steps

1. Invest in training to ensure our purchasing conforms to all regulations governing municipal public libraries.
2. Reevaluate all library policies at least once every three years.
3. Create a patron privacy policy.

Goal 2

Support educational and learning opportunities for community members of all ages and backgrounds.

Objective 1: Build fresh and engaging collections targeted towards community needs and ensure access for all in-person and remotely.

Possible Action Steps:

1. Evaluate the success of our Bookstore Browse project and fine tune signage and categories.
2. Expand the Library of Things to include more technology and entertainment items
3. Set a target collection size for J non-fiction to accommodate space use changes.
4. Continue to grow the collection in the areas that are of interest to them.
5. Refresh the adult non-fiction core, midlist fiction, large print, and world language collections.
6. Provide better access to the latest publications by increasing both digital and physical holdings

Possible Key Measurements:

- Survey feedback that indicates positive improvement in the collections.

Objective 2: Create an environment to support lifelong learning.

Possible Action Steps:

1. Develop an instructional program for English Language Learning that supports all levels of proficiency in English.
2. Develop program to support health and personal wellbeing.
3. Develop instructional programs on practical skills such as college preparation and home improvement.
4. Expand our discussion groups to include more reading genres and topics other than books.
5. Reinstitute our Special Education programs and expand them to include all ages.
6. Improve access to library services for those with mental and physical disabilities

Possible Key Measurements

- Become a Talking Book & Braille Center deposit center to provide materials to the visually impaired.

Objective 3: Provide opportunities for self-directed and remote learning.

Possible Action Steps:

1. Use YouTube, webinars, and local broadcasts to extend Library programs to additional audiences
2. Investigate our potential to create new spaces, such as for a technology Discovery Center providing opportunities for digital content creation.
3. Host outreach programs at non-library sites to connect with underserved populations.

Goal 3

Improve our technology infrastructure and services.

Objective 1: Keep pace with advances in technology to make sure the library resources and training are up to date.

Possible Action Steps:

1. Add and upgrade infrastructure, PCs, and mobile devices.
2. Review and expand digital content to ensure our current platforms are cost effective, accessible, and up to date.
3. Utilize the library's internal and external electronic signs to inform the public of news and events.
4. Investigate technology products and services that enable staff to increase efficiency productivity, and better support patron needs.

Possible Key Measurements:

- Upgrade the library server which is reaching the end of its five-year life.
- Upgrade the rear projector media panel in Pio Costa.

Objective 2: Improve patron access to technology in our collections and services.

Possible Action Steps:

1. Create a Library Discovery Center for patron access to current technology for learning and enjoyment.
2. Increase the number of technology classes with a variety of subject matter.
3. Add more technology items to the Library of Things for checkout.
4. Make the library's website more intuitive, allowing users to easily search for library items, place holds, download/stream content, and find program and calendar information.

Possible Key Measurements:

- Create a Memory Lab for preservation and transfer of outdated audio and video to new formats.
- Add production equipment and software to the Discovery Center.
- Expand our Library of Things which may include tablets, tech kits for kids and teens, and media streaming devices.

Goal 4

Increase awareness and use of the Montville Township Public Library within the community and Northern NJ area.

Objective 1: Continue to build a network of community support and advocacy for the library.

Possible Action Steps:

1. Partner with High School & Middle School media specialists to increase teen library card enrollment, and connect students with helpful Library resources.
2. Partner with local businesses and cultural organizations to support their missions.
3. Publish annual report for the public.
4. Continue to grow our newsletter subscriber list and improve the newsletter.
5. Survey the community frequently to elicit feedback.

Possible Key Measurements:

- An outreach schedule and slate of events at the Chamber of Commerce, apartment complexes and senior centers that showcase our library programs and services and also support the mission of the organization we visit.
- Create quarterly surveys included in the newsletter schedule about specific areas for improvement including collections, programs, resources, and services.
- Participation in community projects such as Food for Fines.



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