

Enoch Pratt Free Library

Strategic Plan 2024-2029





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Letter from the Chair, Board of Trustees and Board of Directors



For more than 140 years, the Enoch Pratt Free Library has provided citizens of Baltimore City access to books and services. In 1882, Enoch Pratt said my library “shall be for all, rich and poor without distinction of race or color...” That idea remains the cornerstone of what the Pratt Library is today. And with this strategic plan, we are excited to set the trajectory for the Pratt Library over the next five years.

The library’s mission is to empower, enrich, and enhance the quality of life for all through equitable access to information, services, and opportunity. A public library is a place where everything is free, and people are treated equally and equitably when they enter. No matter someone’s life goals or past, the Pratt Library meets our customers where they are without judgment and without cost. The Pratt provides access and information in many forms -

books, databases, access to the internet and computers, or one-on-one assistance from a social worker, lawyer, librarian, or peer navigator. These services are available at no charge at the Pratt.

The Pratt Library fosters individual, educational, economic, and community success in Baltimore City and Maryland. Every person can come to the library to fulfill their own needs and dreams, but the Pratt is special. The Pratt also works towards the health of our community as a whole, using data and customer input to ensure we provide services and materials at each library location needed for each neighborhood to thrive.

This is an exciting time at the Pratt Library. The Pratt was the first library in Maryland to eliminate overdue fines for patrons. The library provided vital resources to communities across the state during the pandemic and continues to do so with Wi-Fi access and a state-wide distribution system for materials. The Pratt saw record-breaking usership with the highest circulation of materials in 12 years in FY23 while increasing the number of library card holders. As we look to the future, we will break ground on our first new library in more than 15 years while also opening a new branch through an innovative public/private partnership. This strategic plan will guide us and support the direction of the Pratt Library so we can continue to serve customers for another century and beyond.

Christine Espenshade

*Chair, Board of Trustees and Board of Directors
Enoch Pratt Free Library*

Letter from the Library Interim CEO



The Enoch Pratt Free Library has remained a vital institution in Baltimore City and the state of Maryland since 1882. Our goal is to provide access to our community for generations to come. To that end, with input from stakeholders, we have identified three key focus areas for this five-year strategic plan.



Create a Sustainable Infrastructure: With 22 aging buildings, we must focus on improving and modernizing our spaces to best serve our communities. A recent Facility Condition Index found more than \$300 million in needed building repairs and expansion. We will advocate for many forms of funding to meet those needs, as well as look to new innovative models to make our community libraries more sustainable. We will continue to improve accessibility and ensure we're providing the most up-to-date technology while being vigilant with data collection and privacy.



Strong Organizational Culture: The Pratt is only as good as the staff members who make up the organization. We will work to support career pathways by expanding employee development opportunities. We will focus on equity, diversity, and inclusion aligning with the Pratt's mission and vision.



Transformative and Empowering Programs and Services: The Pratt will make sure we're providing the programs and services our communities want and need with a greater eye towards community engagement and feedback. We'll evaluate programs and partnerships to ensure the highest quality services.

These are ambitious goals for the next five years. However, they are imperative for the health of our organization. I'm excited for the work ahead and what we can do to build on the tradition of excellence that our customers expect.

Darcell Graham
Interim CEO
Enoch Pratt Free Library

Introduction



We would like to begin by recognizing the invaluable groundwork laid by the Strategic Planning Committee under the guidance of our former Board Chair, Dr. Mychelle Farmer. The committee's concerted efforts have laid a foundation for charting our course for the next five years. We approached this process with a renewed emphasis on data-based decision making, efficiency, and what will best serve our community in the future.

Our mission statement emphasizes empowerment, enrichment, and equitable access, and is a source of pride and guidance. However, our community's evolving landscape demands a shift in focus toward challenges to infrastructure. As we begin this next phase of our history, infrastructure must take center stage in addressing the needs of our community.

Our vision statement paints a vibrant picture of the role the Pratt Library plays in the lives of residents of Baltimore City and the State of Maryland. Focused on our mission, which is rooted in access, equity and community success, we will continue to provide vital services and support to enable individuals, economies, and communities to prosper.



Our Mission

Our mission is to empower, enrich, and enhance the quality of life for all through equitable access to information, services, and opportunity.

Our Vision

Enoch Pratt Free Library fosters individual, educational, economic, and community success in Baltimore City and the State of Maryland.

Strategic Planning Process

Development of our Strategic Plan has been a collaborative endeavor that has drawn upon the collective wisdom of our board, staff, and executive team. We have crafted a roadmap that aligns with our core values and strategic objectives to ensure that the plan reflects our organization's diverse perspectives and expertise. Thus, we are confident in its ability to guide us toward our goals.

Our planning process has focused on the integration of data-driven decision-making into our work. For the past five years, we have partnered with OrangeBoy, Inc., whose platform, Savannah®¹, has played a pivotal role in collecting, analyzing, and interpreting data. We are now able to identify trends, track performance, and set measurable goals. Leveraging this data-driven approach will enhance our ability to make informed decisions and drive positive outcomes for the library and the communities we serve.

Throughout the planning process, we have prioritized the goals of positive transformation and meaningful impact. We expect that implementation of the Strategic Plan will empower our navigation of challenges with confidence and resilience. We will embrace meaningful change as we prioritize innovation, collaboration, and agility, thus testifying to our unwavering commitment to excellence and dedication to advancing the library's mission.

1. Savannah® is a cloud-based customer lifecycle management platform that leverages market-leading analytics to help organizations make data-driven decisions.



Goal 1: Create a Sustainable Infrastructure

The Pratt Library will continue to build and improve infrastructure that supports optimization, opportunity, collaboration, innovation, accessibility, and equity to advance internal operations, utilization of space, and user experiences.

Functional, Accessible, and Inclusive Spaces: The Library will create and maintain library spaces that are functional, inclusive, accessible, safe, welcoming, and diverse through collaborative community feedback, planning, and engagement.

STRATEGIES:

01

Create the Accessibility/Inclusion Plan in coordination with the Master Facilities Plan to serve Pratt customers with disabilities more effectively regarding facility renovations, updates, and planning.

02

Adopt a communications plan to improve transparency regarding the Master Facilities Plan to the public and internal staff.

03

Implement an internal library functionality plan regarding equipment, maintenance, privacy audits, and business contingency plans via the Master Facilities Plan assessment.





Financial Sustainability: The Library will secure public and private funds to support its priorities.

STRATEGIES:

01

Continue lobbying efforts to secure federal, state, and city funding.

02

Expand strategic partnerships that economize expenses and leverage financial resources.

03

Maintain and build on successful fundraising efforts directed at individuals, corporations, and foundations. This will include unrestricted annual support as well as support for special initiatives and projects, specifically branch improvements.



Community Engagement: The Library will expand the possibilities of how we engage with the community, offer services and resources, and respond to challenges by utilizing buildings and assets of non-traditional spaces.

STRATEGIES:

01

Work on a neighborhood level to define community partners for each location to quickly move services to alternative spaces during closures, updates, and renovations

02

Explore innovative approaches to improve our physical, technological, and social infrastructure to support and empower partners in alignment with the Master Facilities Plan.

03

Leverage public and private partnerships to share resources, expertise, and commitments to achieve efficient and effective outcomes.



IT Continuous Optimization: The Library will prioritize IT environments that are resilient and agile, drive innovation, and support organizational goals in a rapidly changing digital landscape to enhance operational efficiency and improve services and resources for the community.

STRATEGIES:

01

Maintain comprehensive documentation of IT plans, processes, and configurations, ensuring accessibility and regular updates.

02

Ensure that the organization aligns with IT processes and procedures to foster collaboration, reduce risk, and increase efficiency.

03

Integrate robust security measures to safeguard against cyber threats, ensuring compliance with regulations and standards.

04

Provide ongoing training for the organization and IT staff to equip them with the necessary skills to implement and maintain procedures effectively.

Data Collection and Privacy: The Library will uphold customer privacy and trust with responsible data collection and usage for analytical purposes to improve the organization and best serve the community.

STRATEGIES:

01

Create an inventory of data needs as an organization based on federal/state/city reports.

02

Provide staff with information and training on data collection methods and analysis strategies.

03

Clarify data privacy policies for customers.



Goal 2: Strong Organizational Culture

The Pratt Library will continue to prioritize staff development and diversity while fostering a safe and collaborative environment, streamlining operations, and tracking key metrics to improve performance and customer service.

Organizational Development: The Library will strengthen equity, inclusion, and belonging efforts to ensure employees feel valued and have equal opportunities to succeed.

STRATEGIES:

01

Increase alignment with the mission and vision by integrating them in daily work, processes, and programs.

02

Maintain a diverse, safe, and equitable workplace and library culture which aligns with the library's values and goals.

03

Prioritize diversity in staff hiring, learning, and development by providing equitable opportunities and access.





Employee Development and Continuous Learning: The Library will create strategies for recruiting, engaging, and developing talent by identifying continuous learning and career plans that incorporate performance management and professional growth.

STRATEGIES:

01

Allocate resources to provide staff with tools, training, and learning opportunities.

02

Design roles that meet organizational needs based on appropriate qualifications regarding education, experience, knowledge, skills, and abilities.

03

Develop recruitment and talent acquisition strategies that align with the library's mission, vision, and values while expanding talent outreach.

04

Provide ongoing learning opportunities for managers to improve their supervisory and leadership skills.



Continue staff forums and other avenues for collaboration to gather staff feedback across the organization.

Operational Excellence: The Library will focus on leveraging expertise, technology, and standardizing practices to improve operational efficiency, compliance, and internal stakeholder satisfaction.

STRATEGIES:



Harness the organization's expertise to create operational frameworks for programs and initiatives that foster cross-functional participation and investment to achieve maximum impact.



Evaluate and map current workflows and building new ones that reflect continuous improvement.



Develop transparent, efficient, and properly communicated policies, processes, and procedures using technology resources and tools.



Goal 3: Transformative and Empowering Programs and Services

The Pratt Library will continue to deliver and improve community-driven, creative, and culturally responsive programs and services that empower individuals and communities of diverse backgrounds.

Diversity and Inclusion in Programming: The Library will provide transformative and comprehensive programs to the community, ensuring inclusive and equitable access and participation for all individuals and neighborhoods.

STRATEGIES:

Driving a comprehensive system-wide initiative that engages every department in a collective endeavor to inform and improve the creation and delivery of culturally responsive programming supported by the Office of Equity and Fair Practices (OEFPP) and Programs and Outreach (PAO) teams.

01

Explore options of programs and services in languages other than English.

02

Expand marketing strategies to reach diverse communities, including non-library users.

03

Consider accessibility needs through the Accessibility/Inclusion Plan.



Community Engagement and Feedback Mechanisms: The Library will continuously engage the community and improve feedback and data-gathering mechanisms.

STRATEGIES:

01

Develop frameworks for data-informed decision-making by utilizing surveys for customer feedback and creating regular meetings to discuss community needs across branches, grouped by community.

02

Revise and re-implement post-program surveys and regular evaluations for continuous improvement.

03

Utilize data from various sources (census, city, library, schools) to inform program placement and customer needs across the system.

04

Develop intentional programming regarding content creation – considering the quality of services, needs in the community, and likeliness of engagement.

Program Evaluation and Improvement: The Library will evaluate program success utilizing data collection and measurement protocols and applying them to a data-driven decision-making process to implement responsive programs and services to meet needs.

STRATEGIES:

01

Analyze data to identify program success and gaps and identify opportunities for improvement.

02

Focus on continuous revisions of key performance indicators such as active cardholders over time and increasing focus on implementing retention strategies to maintain customer activity, engagement, and satisfaction.

Partnerships and Collaboration: The Library will maintain, grow, and evaluate a robust network of partners to extend capacity and complement services offered in library facilities.

STRATEGIES:

01

Identify appropriate team members for exploratory conversations on partnerships and create an inventory of partnerships across the library.

02


Develop a standard MOU process for partnerships, including implementing tools to analyze partnership success and effective processes to review and revise MOUs based on defined expectations and terms.

Implementation Plan

The Strategic Plan is designed to lead us over a period of five years. During the first year of implementation, we will identify specific initiatives and projects that align with the strategic objectives outlined in the plan. We will prioritize initiatives based on their potential impact and feasibility. Once we identify the initiatives, we will allocate budget, personnel, and technology to support their implementation. This may involve reallocating existing resources or seeking additional funding or partnerships to ensure successful execution.

To ensure consistent performance, we will break each initiative into actionable steps with clear timelines, responsibilities, and performance indicators. Cross-functional teams will collaborate to develop action plans, ensuring alignment and accountability. We will also define key performance indicators (KPIs) and milestones to measure success and create business intelligence reports to track the strategic plan goals, performance, and achievement using Savannah@.

We will integrate our strategic plan with other plans, such as the Master Facilities Plan, and leverage tools like the Advancing Equity dashboard to track critical data concerning workforce composition, diverse and underserved communities, and digital equity.



Flexibility and adaptability are essential in responding to emerging opportunities and challenges while staying focused on our strategic objectives. As circumstances evolve, the implementation plan may need to be adjusted accordingly.

We believe in celebrating successes, acknowledging contributions, and sharing lessons learned to foster a culture of continuous improvement and innovation. Communication and transparency will be a cornerstone of the implementation process. We will establish regular communication channels to keep stakeholders, staff, and the community informed and engaged.

Finally, successful implementation requires integration with the organization's culture and values. Initiatives should align with existing and updated workflows, processes, and cultural norms to ensure sustainability and long-term success.



Looking Ahead

As we look forward to the implementation of this five-year plan, we also look forward to a shift in leadership in the organization. A new Pratt Library CEO will bring in their own innovative ideas and initiatives to the library. We look forward to the national search to find the next leader of the Library, and offer flexibility in our plan to embrace their ideas and direction. The Pratt is a vital institution in our city and state. To serve our customers for generations to come we must invest in our infrastructure, embrace a data-driven culture, and ensure that we are providing high quality programs and services in an equitable way to help our customers reach their life goals.

Acknowledgments

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