



**WHITEHALL PUBLIC LIBRARY**

# **2026 – 2029 STRATEGIC PLAN**

**100 BOROUGH PARK DRIVE  
PITTSBURGH, PA 15236  
[WWW.WHITEHALLPUBLICLIBRARY.ORG](http://WWW.WHITEHALLPUBLICLIBRARY.ORG)**







# A Brief History

On September 6, 1961, the Whitehall Borough Council appointed a Board of Library Trustees, and funds were provided for shelving and furniture. The Friends of the Whitehall Public Library, organized in 1961, began to conduct a fund drive for new books. They raised \$20,000 for the purchase of approximately 4,000 new books.

On December 5, 1962, Beatrice Mulholland was hired as the first librarian. The Whitehall Public Library was dedicated on May 5, 1963.

Since then, the library, a member of the Allegheny County Library Association, has expanded twice.

With 50,000 items cataloged in the collection, the library also has access to thousands of electronic books as well as other digital content. We annually welcome thousands through our doors and host hundreds of programs for all ages.

In 2019, WPL was one of two finalists for Library Journal's esteemed **Best Small Library in America** award, noted primarily for its progressive work around building bridges between newly resettled refugees and long-term resident patrons.

And in 2022, WPL officially became a fine free library in response to addressing mitigating potential barriers to library use.



# Our Mission

Whitehall Public Library is the community resource for education, exploration, enrichment, and enjoyment.







# Our Vision

The Whitehall Public Library will be an invaluable resource for every community member.



# Our Beliefs and Values



## Accessibility

We believe that our library facilities, resources, and programs must be physically accessible to all, as well as accessible to library users in the virtual environment (whenever possible).

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## Accountability

We believe that we must be accountable to the Whitehall community for the services that we provide.

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## Creativity & Innovation

We value excellence and support creative ideas and innovative solutions in our services, programs, and collections.

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## Inclusivity & Welcome

We recognize that diversity involves including, understanding, and valuing differences in individual and group characteristics such as race, religion, ethnicity, gender, gender identity and expression, socioeconomic status, age, disability status, and sexual orientation.

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## Information & Literacy

We believe in providing resources and services that contribute to life-long learning and nurture intellectual curiosity for people of all ages.

# Our Beliefs and Values



## Intellectual Freedom

We believe in the basic principles of intellectual freedom, the open exchange of information, and the importance of an informed and literate community.

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## Life-Long Learning

We believe that a free public library promotes education and is essential to the public good.

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## Partnerships

We believe in the power of collaboration and pledge to be good community partners, particularly with respect to the Borough, the Baldwin-Whitehall School District, and Allegheny County Library Association member libraries.

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## Respect & Dignity

We believe that all of our library patrons have the right to privacy, confidentiality, and intellectual freedom and pledge to treat everyone equally.

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## Safe Environment

We believe in providing a safe and positive environment that provides our patrons and staff with opportunities to continue to grow and develop.

# Our Strategic Direction: 2026–2029

To inform the development of this strategic plan, the Whitehall Public Library engaged the community through a comprehensive feedback process. We conducted four focus groups representing key stakeholders to gather in-depth perspectives on strengths, challenges, and opportunities. In addition, we invited the broader community to participate in a public survey to share their experiences and ideas. Across all groups, participants expressed strong pride in the library and borough, while identifying opportunities to strengthen communication, expand program accessibility, increase visibility, and reduce barriers to engagement. Their input provides a thoughtful and representative foundation for the library's future direction.

“

It's a wonderful place to raise a family—recreation and the pool are absolutely wonderful!

”

“

The library is an excellent asset to the community!

”

“

The library is a real gem!

”

## COMMUNITY SURVEY

We designed a community survey open to Whitehall residents as well as WPL patrons from neighboring communities. There were three sections of the survey:

- Living in Whitehall
- Whitehall Public Library
- Key Demographics

Residents overwhelmingly describe Whitehall as a welcoming, evolving, and family-friendly community with strong assets—particularly the library, pool, parks, and recreation programs. Long-term residents express pride in the borough's growth and continued affordability, while newer voices highlight increased diversity and friendliness.

“

I believe WPL does a fantastic job reaching out to the diversity of our community.

”

# Our Strategic Direction: 2026–2029

## FOCUS GROUPS

Across four stakeholder groups—youth participants, school partners and educators, Friends and Board members, and library staff—feedback was overwhelmingly positive about the library’s welcoming atmosphere, strong programming, and community value. Stakeholders consistently described the library as a place that feels inclusive, supportive, and meaningful.

### YOUTH PARTICIPANTS

SHIM Afterschool Program students described the library as welcoming and positive, with most having used it for books, movies, or computers. They provided excellent ideas to remove access barriers and provide deeper engagement.

### TEACHERS & SCHOOL PARTNER PARTICIPANTS

Teachers expressed strong appreciation for past and current collaborations with the library. They emphasized the importance of programs such as Book Buddies, classrooms visits, and theme-based resource bundles.

### FRIENDS & WPL BOARD PARTICIPANTS

Friends and Board members emphasized that programming is the primary driver of attendance, visibility, and fundraising. They suggested ideas to further increase programming participation.

### STAFF PARTICIPANTS

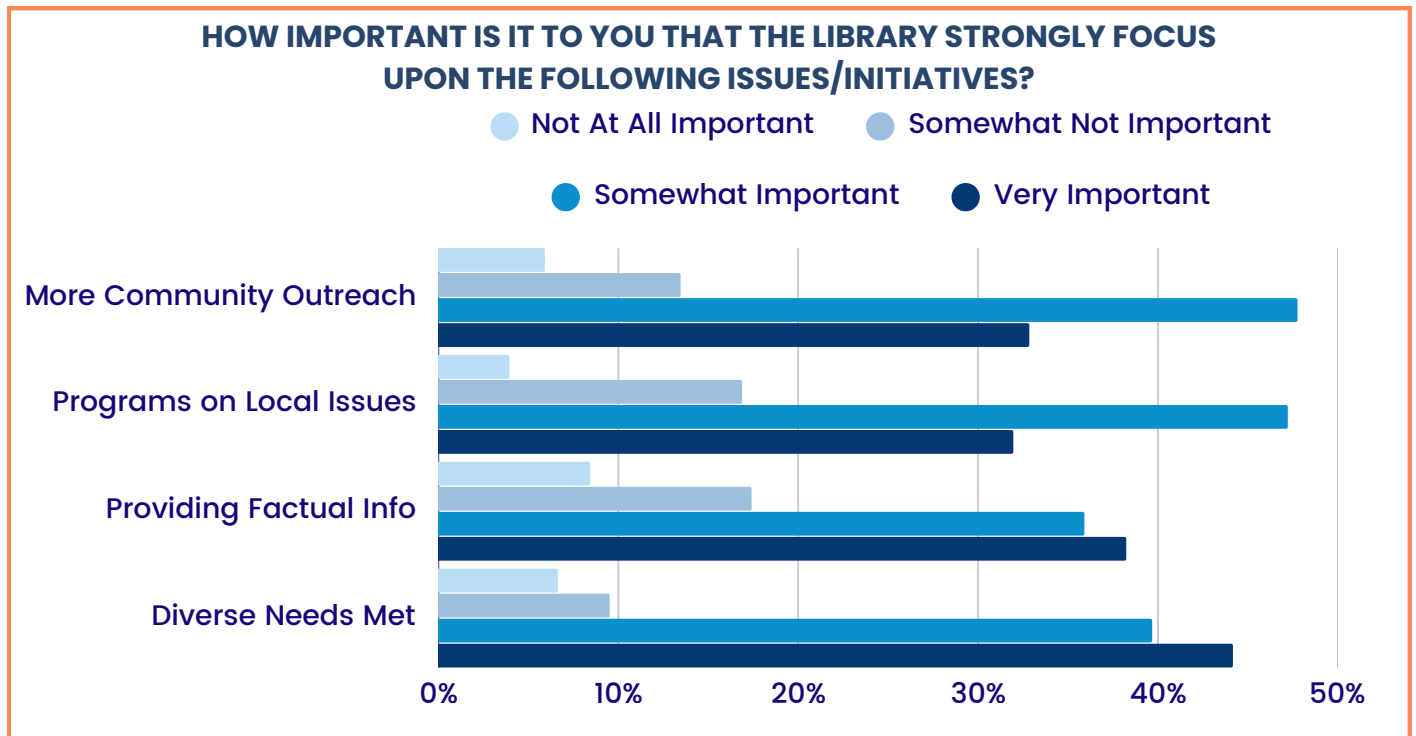
Staff members described the library as welcoming, community-centered, and rich in programming and resources. They expressed pride in their work and strong camaraderie among colleagues. They offered suggestions to further strengthen the positive culture already in place.

# Our Strategic Direction: 2026–2029



## FOCUS GROUPS

Lastly, to expand upon the data collected via the survey, we conducted a variety of focus groups at the library as well as in the community in order to have meaningful conversations with our stakeholders. We held focus groups with parents and caregivers, immigrant/refugee youth and adults, and a general community focus group. Feedback collected during these focus groups served as additional context and deeper understanding of both the SWOT analyses and survey results.



In terms of translating the data and analyses into a meaningful and forward-thinking strategic plan, the Board grounded our approach in the idea that this was our opportunity to really dream and reimagine what the public library is or might be for our patrons and community-at-large. We allowed ourselves space to think of the library as something more than a collection of books, and what resulted from those conversations and planning efforts was an articulation of what the library represents to our patrons and neighbors. In this sense, the following plan outlines how we envision and benchmark the WPL as **People**, **Physical Space**, **Community Connector**, and **Champion of Literacy and Reading**.



# Connecting the community through communication. We envision...

1

the Library as  
**Partnerships**

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2

the Library as  
**Civic Responsibilities**

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3

the Library as  
**Services**

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4

the Library as  
**Programming**

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We Envision...

# 1

## the Library as Partnerships.

Our library is more than a collection of books; it is the heart of a connected community. We are looking forward to continuing our commitment to long-standing partners like South Hills Interfaith Movement (SHIM), the Bhutanese Community Association of Pittsburgh (BCAP), local schools, and the Whitehall Borough Recreation Department—the organizations that help our neighborhood thrive. By deepening these roots, we're ensuring that the resources you need most are always within reach.

But we aren't stopping there! We are actively inviting new voices to the table—from the historical flair of the Society for Creative Anachronism to the civic support of State Representative John Inglis' office. Whether it's teaming up with local banks or Baird & Co., our goal is to weave a wider web of opportunity for seminars, paperwork assistance, or fun and creative classes, with the hope of making the library a launchpad for every resident's success.

# Objectives



Strengthen and sustain relationships with long-standing partners.



Expand partnerships and address emerging community needs with local organizations.



Increase visibility and coordination of partner offerings.



Integrate partnerships into programming and services.



Foster inclusive and reciprocal community relationships.

## Survey Says...

The library is a real gem... community involvement in projects and activities is much appreciated.

The way the community supports us fosters such connection.



**We Envision...**

# 2

## **the Library as Civic Responsibilities.**

The WPL is focused on connecting our patrons with important resources that boost their ability to engage fully in the civic life of our community. Whether that is through partnering with local government officials to offer a space to meet with residents of the Borough, providing patrons with access to federal tax forms, hosting sustainability-focused programs, or participating in the WPL has historically acted as a bridge between public and private life.

More recently, WPL has addressed our community's diverse needs by providing information to the community about their Constitutional rights and by starting a Free Little Food Library to address food insecurity in our neighborhood. The WPL will continue to act as a third space by providing a place for community members to easily gather, connect, and engage with one another. In the future, WPL intends to expand its ability to address community needs through hosting bi-annual public forums.

# Objectives



Strengthen the library as a community hub for civic engagement.



Expand access to civic information and resources.



Continue and expand collaborations with local organizations and public agencies.



Address community needs through responsive and inclusive initiatives



Increase opportunities for community voice and participation.

## Survey Says...

“ The library is an excellent asset to the community ”



“ The library shows how people in the community care about the community and each other. ”



“ I love the sense of community and the welcoming nature of WPL. ”



# We Envision...

# 3

## the Library as Services.

Our library is committed to serving as a dynamic community hub that extends far beyond traditional book lending. We offer a diverse range of materials for checkout—including movies, video games, cake pans, board games, and museum passes—ensuring residents have access to educational, recreational, and cultural experiences. In addition, we provide essential services such as printing, copying, and faxing to support everyday needs. Our knowledgeable staff deliver personalized assistance through InterLibrary Loan, one-on-one device instruction, research support, and reader’s advisory services.

Through strong partnerships, we also host satellite office hours for Senator Pisciotto and Representative Inglis, facilitate drop-in services with SHIM, coordinate Medicare sign-ups and AARP tax assistance, and collaborate with Vitalink to provide space for community blood drives. Moving forward, our strategic priority is to actively assess evolving community needs and thoughtfully expand our services to ensure we remain responsive, relevant, and impactful.

# Objectives



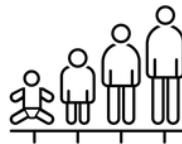
Increase awareness of library services and resources.



Improve accessibility and ease of use for all patrons.



Expand community-based and partnership services.



Enhance personalized support and lifelong learning services.



Continuously assess and adapt services to meet evolving needs.

## Survey Says...

The library is a very peaceful place with a lot of resources ...and a very helpful staff.

The library offers a fantastic community with wide resources that absolutely serve a vital service to residents of all ages.



**We Envision...**

# 4

## **the Library as Programming.**

The WPL's programming strategy will focus on both continuing and enhancing our existing programs while actively developing new and innovative offerings to meet the evolving needs of our community. We will ensure that our core programs, such as story time for young children, adult workshops, and tech literacy offerings are consistently offered with the high-quality content and are accessible to a diverse range of participants.

At the same time, we will assess programming that addresses unmet needs. This may include expanding our children's programming initiatives, hosting author talks, and providing more hands-on workshops on topics such as digital media, financial literacy, and cultural enrichment. Through continuous evaluation and community engagement, we aim to create a dynamic and inclusive programming schedule that not only supports lifelong learning, but also fosters community connections and personal growth.

# Objectives



Ensure accessible and flexible program scheduling.



Expand programming to meet identified community needs.



Strengthen youth and family engagement.



Foster community connection through programming.



Maintain high-quality core programming while evaluating impact.

## Survey Says...

“I think we actually get more connected from the amazing services the library has.”

“I have used the library more since they became part of the Carnegie system . I like that I can get books that Whitehall Library may not carry.”



The WPL understands that the way communities utilize their libraries is ever-changing, and that libraries in turn must remain responsive to those needs and changes. We are committed and excited as we progress towards realizing the vision and associated goals laid out in this plan. And we look forward to further solidifying our mission as the community resource for education, exploration, enrichment and enjoyment.

# Acknowledgements

We extend our sincere thanks and acknowledgment to so many for their collective leadership, guidance, and feedback throughout this plan's development process. We especially thank the Library Board of Directors, the Library Director and Staff, the Friends of the Library, members of Whitehall Borough Council and our contributing community partners.

## WPL BOARD OF DIRECTORS

- Elizabeth Tuttle, President
- Melissa Jones, Vice-President
- Meg O'Brien, Treasurer
- Tracy Brandtner, Secretary
- Barbara Gjerstad
- Allison Brooks
- Deanna Gray

## FRIENDS OF THE WPL

- Barbara Duff (*President*)
- Judy Grattan (*Vice President*)
- Donna Goedert (*Secretary*)
- Robert McKown (*Treasurer*)
- Susan Cooley
- Jan Christensen

## CONTRIBUTING PARTNERS

- Baldwin-Whitehall School District
- South Hills Interfaith Movement
- Whitehall Borough

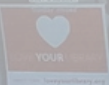
To learn more about the Whitehall Public Library, please visit our website: [www.whitehallpubliclibrary.org](http://www.whitehallpubliclibrary.org)



100 Borough Park Drive

YOUR  
Get ready to  
Love Your Library  
with our new  
Love Your Library  
campaign. We're  
asking you to  
donate today to  
help us keep our  
library open and  
thriving.

Whitehall  
Public Library



Whitehall  
Community  
Room

LOVE YOUR LIBRARY  
Celebration  
Day!  
September 23, 2024  
10:00-1:00  
Save the date!  
Join us as we thank you for your  
Library Love and Support!

- Artist Talks
- Library Worker's Luncheon
- Book Club
- Refreshments at Bookman Plaza
- Live from Library
- Bookends, Library Trunk Treats,
- Children's & Library Activities
- Library BINGO

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ALL DAY | EVERY DAY  
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