

Sustainable Libraries Initiative Certification



About the Harrison Public Library

Founded in 1905 as the Harrison Reading Room, the Library has been proudly serving Harrison for 120 years.

In 1962, the Library moved to its present location at Bruce Avenue.

In 1967, the Harrison Public Library merged with the Silver Lake Free Library (in existence since 1929) to become the Harrison Public Library and West Harrison Branch.

Our Buildings



Richard E. Halperin Memorial Library Building
2 Bruce Avenue
Harrison, NY 10528

Building Square Footage 14,000
Building Opened 1962
Major Renovation 2014-2015



West Harrison Branch
2 Madison Street
West Harrison, NY 10604

Building Square Footage 9,000
Building Opened 1927
Building Expanded in 1964 and 1977

The Harrison Public Library Mission Statement

The purpose of the Harrison Public Library is to be the center of information and discovery within our community. We strive to serve our community by offering innovative programming, relevant collections, and responsive services that support lifelong learning, the joy of reading, and the free exchange of ideas in a diverse, inclusive environment.

2024 Annual Report

Service Population (estimate): 30,780

Library Visits: 154,874

Physical Items: 87,580

Items Borrowed: 182,462

Group Events: 1,804

Group Event Participants: 44,353

Section A: Getting Started

Adaptation of Sustainability Policy

The Harrison Public Library is committed to consistently reducing its environmental footprint and being a thoughtful steward of the resources our community depends upon.

The Library Trustees, Administration and Staff strive to represent this goal at all levels of our organization and every aspect of our operations. This is enacted in the adoption of this Sustainability Policy, which emphasizes employing environmentally sound, economically feasible practices, including the application of our Sustainable Purchasing Policy.

In our commitment to sustainability, we will also continue to strive to be an educational resource for our patrons regarding environmentally conscientious practices which may also be demonstrated in our programming and collections.

Reviewed and approved by the Harrison Public Library Board of Trustees, 2/1/2023.

Adaptation of Sustainable Purchasing Policy

(Excerpt) The Library shall take the following into consideration when making purchases, although this is not an exhaustive list:

- Recyclability of the items
- Packaging and whether the product contains or produces toxins
- Transportation distances and impacts for delivery of the items
- Ability for an item to be repaired or repurposed rather than re-purchasing
- The entire life cycle of a product, from manufacture through use and disposal
- The environmental practices of the vendors under consideration

*Reviewed and approved by the Harrison Public Library Board of Trustees,
2/1/2023.*

Section B: Outdoor Spaces

Reading Garden at
Halperin Building



West Harrison
Branch Garden - to
be fully completed
by end of June 2025

GARDENS

The Harrison Public Library is proud to now have gardens at both of its buildings! These areas are public spaces for the community to enjoy, and provide ample opportunities for teaching about gardening, healthy eating, and insects.

Meticulous Groundskeeping

The Library took steps to remove invasive plants, eliminate chemical pesticides and herbicides, and have healthy planting areas.

For example, organic mulches were selected and applied around plant bases, ensuring proper soil health and plant growth.

Impact: The library garden has seen reduced weed proliferation and lower water usage, demonstrating the effectiveness of the mulching strategy.

In addition, our pollinator garden attracts insects that help to keep our small but mighty ecosystem healthy!



Section C: Indoor Spaces

Workstations With Daylight View



Halperin Building -
Study Area

Halperin Building -
Front Desk

The majority of staff
workstations across
both buildings have
daylight view.



Halperin Building -
Children's Discovery
Center

West Harrison
Branch -
Front Desk



Operable Windows for Natural Ventilation



Indoor Plants and Access to Fruits & Vegetables



The Halperin Building's seed library is a hit for residents who enjoy gardening at home.



At special events, patrons can harvest from the Halperin Building Reading Garden's raised beds. (Coming soon to the West Harrison Branch!)

The West Harrison Branch's Tower Garden (installed by local sustainability advocate Danielle Colavito, pictured) has become a library staple. Patrons, especially children, enjoy harvesting from it and using its bounty to add some greens to their diet!



Section D: Transportation

Both Buildings On Major Bus Route

Bee-Line Bus Route 5 stops at both library buildings.

In addition, the Halperin Building is right across the street from downtown Harrison's Metro-North station.



Halperin Building bus stop



West Harrison Branch bus stop

Zoom Room at Halperin Building



In April 2024, we began offering a dedicated Zoom Room to patrons.

The room features wireless casting to a TV screen and provides the ability to start an instant Zoom meeting and invite participants.

Having this room helps us to serve patrons who work remotely and lessens the need for these patrons to drive to work.

Section E: Energy

Highlights

- LED light bulbs have been installed at both buildings.
- Maintenance on the HVAC equipment is scheduled twice a year at both buildings and is performed by PolyTemp, our HVAC vendor.
- We amended our operations plan to require the purchase of ENERGY STAR-rated equipment whenever possible. This commitment aligns with our Sustainability Policy, ensuring responsible energy use and long-term cost savings.
- Personal appliances such as refrigerators, heaters, and coffee makers are prohibited.
- Workstations and printers are centrally located for multi-staff use.



Workstations and printers, such as those at the West Harrison Branch pictured above, are all centrally located for multi-staff use.



LED light bulbs, such as those in the Halperin Building's Children's Discovery Center pictured above, have been installed at both buildings.

Section F: Water

Water Smart Landscapes



Reading Garden at
Halperin Building

We have designed the Halperin Building's Reading Garden as a water-smart landscape, and the new garden at West Harrison is being built the same way. We are partnering with Peter Gisolfi Associates LLP to ensure both projects save water and look great.

Water Disposal



Both library buildings have sanitary sewers. All wastewater generated from cleaning is disposed of in these utility sinks.

Water Bottle Fillers



Water bottle fillers have been installed at both buildings.

In addition, we no longer purchase bottled water. These steps help to reduce plastic waste.

Decrease in Water Usage

From 2023 to 2024, HPL's water usage in gallons decreased from 165,326 to 107,712. A drop of nearly 35%.

Section G: Materials

Upcycle Craft Programs



Where some see old newspapers, we see flowers waiting to come to life.

Using upcycled materials for craft programs and donated old coloring books instead of newly printed coloring pages demonstrates our commitment to sustainability and sets a positive example for children.

Upcycle Paper Flower Bouquet Craft for Adults and Teens, West Harrison Branch, March 2025

Reusable Kitchen Supplies



We use reusable (coated ceramic) plates and bowls, as well as reusable cups and utensils in the employee kitchen at each building.

Electronic Library Card Signup



Our most frequently used paper form used to be our library card application. Now, the vast majority of library card signups take place through a QR code that sends patrons to the application online.

Section H: Collective Impact

Taste of Harrison



The Harrison Public Library has a successful working relationship with numerous eateries in the downtown Harrison area. Harrison hosts an annual food festival, called Taste of Harrison. During Taste of Harrison, people can purchase a wristband that allows them to sample food from more than 20 downtown eateries. All proceeds go to the Library. At the 2025 event, our community raised over \$32,000 for the Library!

Taste of Harrison, downtown Harrison, May 2025

Advocating for Seniors



Holiday Concert at West Harrison Senior Center,
December 2023

The Library has close relationships with both the downtown and the West Harrison Senior Centers.

In 2024, we partnered with STEM Alliance to host a program called “Cyber Seniors” at both senior centers to teach seniors how to use a computer.

Ultimately, the 25 seniors who completed the course received a free Chromebook and a hotspot.

We also host other programs at the senior centers, such as concerts and craft events.

Tackling Food Insecurity



Westchester Library System proudly partners with United Way and Feeding Westchester to help coordinate, collect, and distribute canned goods across Westchester County. Both library buildings serve as drop off sites for this annual three week program.

Support for Local Business



Allegría Ristorante, West Harrison, NY

In late 2023, the Library Director and West Harrison adult librarian visited Allegría shortly after it opened (right next door to the West Harrison Branch) to welcome restaurant staff to the community.

A few months later, in January of 2024, the Library hosted a civic engagement luncheon and conversation at the restaurant.

Furthermore, in September of 2024, Allegría provided the food (at a discounted price) for the West Harrison Branch's Open House, and as a token of our appreciation, the Library left out menus from Allegría for the public to take in order to promote the restaurant.

Section I: Social Cohesion

Cultural Competency Education

In early 2023, all library staff members were required to take "Librarian's Guide to Homelessness (Core Training)," which despite its very specific title, covered a wide range of topics relating to understanding all types of people. For example, the training taught staff to lean into the mindset of *we are all different and that's okay*, as opposed to trying to figure out how somebody else might be similar to oneself. The training also taught staff the value of empathy in customer service and encouraged staff to consider somebody's upbringing and home environment (e.g., *Was this person raised in poverty? Grow up in a crowded, loud, competitive household/neighborhood? Might this person be accustomed to different social norms than I?*) before reacting in a difficult situation.

Program Development Based On Community Aspirations

Our West Harrison Branch's adult librarian holds a degree in statistics and has assisted with numerous data analysis projects for the Library. These projects have included analyzing American Community Survey (ACS) and census data to help the Library better understand the community's demographics, as well as analyzing circulation and programming data.

Recently, this librarian has been struck by studies outlining loneliness in society, particularly among men. In April of 2024, he started a Men's Meetup Group at the West Harrison Branch. Over the past year (as of March of 2025), he has hosted discussions on topics such as sports, travel, books, community, careers, and mental health in an effort to help men get to know other men. Food is served at these gatherings, which typically draw between five and nine men.



Photos from Previous Slide

1. Sushi Making Workshop with Oishinbo of Harrison, March 2025.
2. State Assemblymember Chris Burdick (left) and State Senator Shelley Mayer (right) stand next to the library's mascot during the West Harrison Branch's Open House in September 2024.
3. Children's Library Assistant Miss Mariella (right) at the West Harrison tree lighting ceremony, December 2024.
4. Halloween Doggy Dress Up, October 2023.
5. Patrons pose at the downtown Harrison veterans' memorial during a library-led walking tour in February 2023.
6. Patrons pose at the Jay Estate in Rye during a library program in July 2023.

And this barely scratches the surface of what we do!

Section J: Resilience Planning

Resiliency Planning in the Collection



The Harrison Public Library actively maintains and updates a diverse collection of materials that address sustainability, climate change, disaster preparedness, social equity, and local community issues. These resources are available in multiple formats—including books, eBooks, audiobooks, and databases—to ensure accessibility for all patrons. Our collection includes:

- Guides on emergency readiness and environmental stewardship
- Books on climate change and local conservation efforts
- Titles exploring racial and social justice, inclusion, and equity
- Materials that support civic engagement and community resilience

Community Disaster Recovery Support System



Both library buildings are recognized as cooling and heating centers by Harrison government.

In addition, after an apartment fire in November 2022, the American Red Cross set up a temporary office in the study room of the Halperin Building in downtown Harrison.

Finally, staff members who were working at the library in the aftermath of Hurricane Sandy in 2012 will never forget the sight of the Halperin Building - which was fortunate enough to have its power restored very quickly - filled wall-to-wall with patrons (many sitting on the floor) charging their electronics and trying to figure out a way to work through it all.

Storytimes with First Responders



We host storytimes with first responders, including firefighters and police officers, and they have become one of our most loved and well-attended events. Children get to meet local heroes, ask questions, and build trust in a fun, welcoming setting. These events are now held every year and always shared on our Instagram, helping us celebrate our first responders and strengthen community connections.

Storytime with First Responders, downtown Harrison, July 2024

Section K: Financial Sustainability

Adequate Fund Balance

As a municipal library, the Harrison Public Library maintains its fund balance in alignment with the Town/Village of Harrison's Fund Balance Policy.

We have and will continue to maintain a good working relationship with the Town.

The Library adheres to the financial practices and guidance set forth by the Town to ensure responsible fiscal management. The Library currently has a **healthy fund balance**; however, any appropriation of these funds requires formal approval by both the Library Board and the Town Board.

Employee Benefits

- Full-time employees are eligible for health care through UMR, a UnitedHealthcare company. They are also eligible for dental insurance separately through Aetna.
- Full-time employees may enroll in The New York State and Local Retirement System (NYSLRS).

Section L: Collections

Collection Development Policy



The library's current collection development policy integrates Triple Bottom Line principles, which encompass community-driven collection development, a strong emphasis on diversity, equity, and inclusion, and an objective to minimize energy waste and the use of natural resources. We make every possible effort to ensure maximum inclusivity in the design and management of our collection.

Improved Use of Collection and Space

In 2023, we conducted a space audit to find ways of better utilizing the main library building's collections and facilities. In preparation of our 120th Anniversary in 2025, we implemented changes based on that audit to make our collection and space more efficient and inviting. These changes included shorter shelves, more natural lighting, and an expanded computer and study area.

These improvements will ensure we continue offering a welcoming and resourceful environment for our community.

Before



After



Future Plans

- We are looking forward to hosting programs at and harvesting food from the West Harrison Branch's new garden!
- Continue to optimize library space, especially at the West Harrison Branch.
- Expand our reach throughout the Harrison community. For example, we are growing our partnership with Brightview, a local senior living center, to host intergenerational programs at their facility.
- Analyze data to identify underserved groups in the community.
- Work together as a staff to plan programs and design services to meet the needs of the aforementioned groups.

Acknowledgements

We would like to thank the following for helping us complete the program:

- Our outstanding staff: the Library is the crown jewel of the Harrison community because of them!
- Our Board of Trustees, for its understanding that sustainability is a core value of librarianship.
- Our mentor, Jill Davis, Director, Hendrick Hudson Free Library, for guiding us through the many steps required to complete the program.
- Our custodian, Jeff Buschel, for his tireless work in helping our buildings meet the certification guidelines.