

Southbury
PUBLIC LIBRARY
Strategic Plan Report
2023-2027

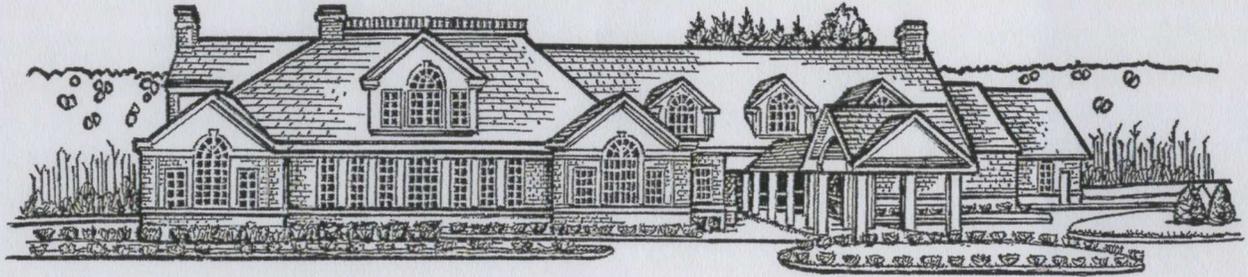
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SOUTHBURY PUBLIC LIBRARY STRATEGIC PLAN: 2023-2027

“Uncertainty is The Business of the Future”

INTRODUCTION

This strategic plan was created through the dedicated work of the Library staff and Library Board. It sets forth their shared Vision and Mission for the Library and identifies strategies for achieving its Goals. The intended audience for this plan is the Library Board members and Library staff; the very people who created this document. These pages represent the Library’s commitment to move ahead on pathways to better serve the people of Southbury.

Process

Strategic planning is important to the long-term success of an organization, but perhaps of even greater importance is the process used in developing the plan. Creating a vision in the minds of the leaders who oversee the Library and instilling that vision in the minds of those responsible for its day-to-day operations is

critical if the wisdom on these pages will truly improve the Library and its service to the community. For this reason, the Library Board members and Library staff were fully engaged in the planning process.

On January 11, 2023, the Board of the Southbury Library set into motion this latest cycle of Strategic Planning. From its initial meeting on January 18, 2023, until it completed its work in April the Work Group met 5 times. Between these meetings, smaller teams were created to work on individual elements of the plan.

The Strategic Planning Work Group was comprised primarily of Library Board members and Library staff. Three other participants were added because of their expert knowledge, and an experienced facilitator was engaged to guide the planning process. The completed plan was submitted to the Library Board for approval at their May 10, 2023, meeting.

Information

A solid base of information is needed to properly support the strategic planning process. In pursuing its goals, the Library must be mindful of the world around it, understand the community it serves, and have a realistic assessment of its own capabilities.

A great deal of published information is available on Southbury. Data from the Federal Government, the State of Connecticut, and the Town provide an overview of Southbury's economic, demographic, and educational environment. These published data were supplemented by the Library's research. In assessing the Library's capabilities, the Work Group reviewed metrics on the Library's operations, strategic plans of other libraries, and drew on the findings of six focus groups held with people familiar with the Library.

The Work Group also undertook a community-wide survey to get direct feedback from the people it serves. Overall, the 1,477 survey respondents rated the Library highly with 96% saying it was "Excellent" or "Good." The Library building and many of the Library services also received high scores, but the survey did identify areas that need improvement and pointed to segments of the community that are currently underserved.

SWOT

Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats

An essential part of the strategic planning process is looking inward to assess your strengths and weaknesses and looking outward to identify possible opportunities and potential threats.

Strengths: Our internal analysis identified 11 core strengths that contribute to the Library's continued success. These will be monitored, maintained, and further enhanced to assure the Library's future. At any time one or more of these strengths could be pulled out for special attention. This would certainly be done if an area is falling woefully short of its desired level, is being threatened by unforeseen events, or if a decision is made to take it to an even higher level of performance.

Weaknesses: Our Community Survey and internal review did identify some weaknesses. These weaknesses are addressed by the strategies and action steps outlined in this plan.

Opportunities: The Focus Groups and the Community Survey identified several opportunities for pursuing new initiatives or ratcheting up existing ones. However, care will be taken in considering any new venture. A new opportunity has to be consistent with the Mission and Goals of the Library and be a good match for the Library's staff and resources. Once a public commitment is made to an activity it can sometimes be very difficult to backtrack.

Threats: A listing of potential threats is possibly endless and even pointless. Some concerns, such as the aging of the population seem inevitable, while others that currently command our attention may never happen, and there is always the possibility that a threat may appear out of nowhere and affect the Library and the community in significant ways. The best that can be said is that the Library Board members and Library staff need to be mindful, identify threats early on, and hopefully be agile enough to either avoid them or at least blunt their impact.

SETTING GOALS

Time, staff, and budgets limit what can be accomplished over the five-year time horizon of our plan, so it was important to choose wisely in setting Goals. Goals must be doable, affordable, and above all, they must advance the Mission of the Library.

An internal review of the Library's operations identified two Core Strengths that needed some attention. The Work Group set Goals and devised strategies to address these areas.

Our survey generated a wide-ranging list of suggestions to improve operations and to provide new service. The Work Group responded to this by formulating strategies to evaluate and explore these options.

Quite apart from the quantitative data we received from our survey, two facts were readily apparent: many respondents were not fully aware of the range of services available from the Library and participation in the survey by some segments of the community was quite low. The Work Group deemed it important to devise marketing strategies to improve both community awareness and to increase the involvement of underserved segments of Southbury.

MISSION, VISION, and GOALS of the Southbury Public Library

Mission: Transforming Lives by Educating, Inspiring and Connecting.

Vision: The Heart of the Community.

Goals of the Southbury Public Library 2023 -2027

1. **Core Strengths:** Monitor and maintain the core strengths of the Southbury Library to ensure its continued ability to serve the community.
2. **Public and Financial Support:** Build public involvement and support for the Library. Fully leverage and safeguard our financial resources to enhance the Library, and consider revenue producing activities.
3. **Information Base:** Gather, analyze, and maintain information on the Library's operations. Conduct surveys and focus groups to evaluate the activities of the Library and assess the needs of various segments of the community.
4. **Marketing:** Undertake marketing efforts to both heighten and broaden awareness of the offerings of the Library and increase participation by underserved segments of the community.

Goal 1: Core Strengths

Monitor and maintain the core strengths of the Library to ensure its continued ability to serve the community.

1. A well designed, well-functioning and well-maintained building and grounds.
 - Continue to maintain a good working relationship with Public Works.
 - Continue to evaluate how Library space is used with flexibility in mind.
 - Meet periodically with a group from staff, Library Board, and the Town to monitor the current status of the buildings and grounds.
2. Adequate levels of funding from, donations, our endowments and the Town.
 - Addressed in Goal #2
3. Technology in the Library is functioning well and kept up to date.
 - Continue to review and evaluate technology through monthly meetings of the Technology Committee.
 - Maintain and keep up-to-date current technology in the Library.
4. Good relationships between the staff, the Library Board, and the Town.
 - Staff participate in Town Hall meetings and activities.
 - Staff continue to attend and participate in Library Board meetings.
 - Create opportunities for smaller groups of Library staff, Town Hall, and Library Board to interact.
 - Selectman Liaison continues to keep the Library Board informed.
 - Continuing education opportunities for Library Board members.
5. A well-trained and experienced staff.
 - Align staff training and development with strategic planning goals.
 - Support continuing education by attending professional conferences.
 - Support learning opportunities for part-time staff.
 - Focus on in-service training for staff.
 - Close Library one day a year for in-service training.
6. A cadre of energetic volunteers & Friends that support the Library.
 - Continued participation of Friends at Library Board meetings.
 - Allow Friends to use parts of the building for activities.
 - Continue outreach for new volunteers as needed.

- Host events in appreciation of volunteers.
7. An Information base to evaluate activities of the Library and the needs of the community. (Addressed in Goal #3)
 8. A well-educated community that makes good use of the Library and thinks highly of its programs and activities. (Addressed in Goal #4)
 9. A collection of books and materials that meet the current needs of the community and are in line with standards set by the Connecticut State Library.
 - Maintain an environment where outside influences do not interfere with the professional judgment of trained librarians.
 - Keep the collection fresh and relevant by adding new and discarding materials no longer needed.
 - Keep abreast of digital trends in collection development.
 10. Fully functioning member of Bibliomation, a consortium of 80 libraries.
 - Continue to have staff actively participate in Bibliomation.
 11. Policies and practices in place which are in line with the best practice guidelines of the Connecticut State Library.
 - Continue to review policies and keep them up-to-date.
 - Continue to participate in the Connecticut State Library.
 - Continue to make policies available via website and in the Reference Department.

Goal 2: Public and Financial Support for the Library

Build public involvement and support for the Library. Fully leverage and safeguard our financial resources to enhance the Library, and consider revenue producing activities.

Objective 1: Over our five-year time horizon continue to fully leverage the financial resources of the library to provide one million dollars of enhancements above and beyond the support provided by the town.

- Utilize available funds to acquire equipment, technology, and programs to meet the needs of the community.

Objective 2: Establish policies and procedures to safeguard the Library's considerable financial position.

- Research past donations to identify restrictions and donor intent.
- Develop procedures to assign restrictions and/or donor intent to future donations and gifts.
- Document and evaluate safeguards currently in place.

Objective 3: Build public involvement and support for the Library.

- Endeavor to build ambassador groups with a focus on different ages, backgrounds, and interests.
- Continue to provide events that provide education and entertainment to the community.
- Engage with the community by being involved with town activities.

Objective 4: Engage in revenue producing activities.

- Continue to educate the community on donation opportunities.
- Research new opportunities to support the Library, such as grants.

Goal 3: Information Base

Gather, analyze, and maintain information on the Library's operations. Conduct surveys and focus groups to evaluate the activities of the library and assess the needs of various segments of the community.

- Analyze data from surveys to provide information on Library usage, and the needs of designated groups of patrons. For example, teens, people aged 18-40, and disabled patrons.
- Use survey software and other tools to analyze survey data.
- Explore ways of creating more survey opportunities, and survey methods employing easy to use tools, e.g., mobile kiosk for limited quick surveys.

- Join with Region 15 to explore ways to better meet the needs of the school-age population.
- Explore using the services of a professional consultant to evaluate our space use and space needs and provide recommendations for improvement.

Goal 4: Marketing

Undertake marketing efforts to both heighten and broaden awareness of the offerings of the Library and increase participation by underserved segments of the community.

Objective 1: Word of Mouth.

- Strengthen personal connections and the human touch.
- Promote upcoming programs and services at the circulation desk.
- Handouts made available at the circulation desk.
- More frequent staff connections with patrons: Reader's advisory; recommendations and staff picks; displays, posters etc.

Objective 2. Print Marketing.

- Alternate flyer sizes.
- Quarter-sheet flyers publicizing the month's events; weekly when needed.
- Bookmarks listing monthly events and highlighting special events and services.
- New professional signage around the library.
- Portable digital screens on desks, such as picture frames.
- Street signage.

Objective 3: Social Media.

- Leverage using Facebook and Instagram.
- Investigate using TikTok, Snapchat, LinkedIn, etc.
- Look at analytics - boost post.
- Create content that invites interaction.
- Target parents to tell children to follow/share.

- Devote time to creating posts, reels, and videos.
- Connect to website, in-house promotions.
- Promote tagging and sharing.
- Novelty photo-ops.

Objective 4: Local Media.

- Establish connections with local publications.
- Provide stories rather than ads.
- Generate and distribute interesting press releases.
- Identify and use online local media such as digital community boards.

IMPLEMENTATION

Words on paper have the power to improve and even transform an organization, but the challenge for the Library Board and staff is to convert these words into actions that will be pursued consistently over the plan's 5-year time horizon.

The pages of this plan lay out **what** the Library will do, and **why** these steps will be taken. An Implementation Plan will identify **who** will be responsible for each strategy and the timeline for **when** these results will be achieved. Some strategies will stand out as being particularly important to the future success of the Library. These should be identified and prioritized. If a particular strategy has a measurable budget impact that cost would be estimated, and the source of those funds identified.

Responsibilities for strategies should be incorporated into job descriptions and progress on them should be a topic of conversation at staff meetings and during staff reviews.

At least annually, the leadership of the Library will conduct a review to gauge progress on the Strategic Plan. As part of its review, it is expected that the Library Board and staff will reexamine, revalidate and if necessary, revise strategies. In so doing the Library must remain mindful of its Mission, and its Vision of being "The Heart of the Community."

Appendix I

STRATEGIC PLANNING WORK GROUP

Library Board Participants

Shirley Michaels, Chairman

Sharon Elias, Vice Chairman

Charles Crowdis

Chris Rempfer

John Schmidt

Library Staff Participants

Heather Aronson, Head Librarian

Rebecca Randall, Assistant Head Librarian/Head of Reference

Jennifer Kistner, Head of Youth Services

Michael DeGirolamo, Reference Librarian

Eli Kelly, Teen Librarian

Community and Professional Participants

Kenneth Kerin, Planning Facilitator

Jason Buchsbaum, Board of Selectmen

Wayne McCormack, Financial Consultant

Joan Stokes, Head Librarian, Plumb Memorial Library, Shelton, CT

Appendix II

SOUTHBURY LIBRARY COMMUNITY SURVEY

The Southbury Library undertook a community-wide survey to solicit direct feedback from the people it serves.

- The target audience was adults, 18 years or older, who are Southbury residents and/or users of the Southbury Library.
- The survey was launched on February 17, 2023, and closed March 17, 2023.
- Its purpose was to gather information on Library usage, user satisfaction, and to get opinions on potential new initiatives.

An in-house team conducted the survey. In designing the questionnaire, the team used templates from published sources and adapted questions to fit the informational needs of the Library.

The Library contracted with SurveyMonkey to receive and tabulate the responses and produce needed tables and graphics. The in-house team analyzed the data, as well as responses to the open-ended questions.

Overall, 1,477 responses were received. More than half the responses also included written comments. This response was more than sufficient to meet our informational needs.

Value of the Survey

- The survey provided a snapshot of how the community rated the Library's facilities, collections, technology, and events.
- It provided a quantitative foundation for formulating and fine tuning the Goals and Objectives of the strategic plan.
- An analysis of the data identified specific areas that require attention, and guided the crafting of strategies to improve those areas.
- Findings could provide quantitative support for future budget requests to address specific needs that were identified.
- Repeating these questions on a future survey will provide a basis for measuring progress over time.