

Freeport Community Library *Freeport, Maine*



2022-2024 Strategic Plan

Freeport Community Library Board of Trustees

10 Library Drive | Freeport, ME 04032

Letter to the Freeport Community

The Freeport Community Library Board of Trustees is pleased to present the Library's Strategic Plan for Fiscal Years 2022-2024.

This is the first update to the Strategic Plan first developed for the library back in 2019. With the onset of the pandemic, the library and its staff have had to adjust quickly to changing situations and guidelines forced upon the library due to the spread of COVID-19. The library staff navigated these stressful and often trying times with aplomb, continuing to serve the community despite the challenges of the coronavirus.

We discovered that our library, like so many public libraries across our country, meets a growing need for social connection in these media and technology-focused times. Our library is a welcoming place for individuals to meet and community groups to gather and connect. We have a very unique and lively relationship with the students of Freeport Middle School. Freeport's students are not only the next generation of library users, but also the next generation of community builders.



The pandemic has also shown the importance of the library's remote offerings. The ability to connect with patrons of all ages remotely has been a key method to maintain connection to the community while the physical library was not accessible to patrons. Whether it was self-guided reading "walks" around the library grounds, holding speaker events via Zoom, or providing online streaming capability for movies and TV shows, the library staff exhibited perseverance in the face of difficult circumstances to continue to serve the community. The addition of upgraded internal wireless service while also expanding wireless service to support gaining internet access from outside the library is another improved patron experience that will be used well into the future. The ability for patrons to check out wireless "hotspots" is yet one more way the library is attempting to serve customers that otherwise would not be able to connect to the digital world.

Our library continues to serve its traditional role as a place to access information and materials in ways that combine personal contact with patrons, new technology and careful hands-on collection building. Through membership in Minerva, library patrons have quick access to materials in a variety of formats from a large number of libraries across the state. The library's unique Maine Collection and Sportsman's Collection serve a community need that cannot be replicated.

The Plan that follows builds on the strengths of our library as an anchor institution in our town, highlights the importance of reaching patrons within and beyond the physical space

of the library, and looks to the future as we continue to grow with Freeport. As we work to weave our mission statement into the other threads of community life, we need to remember that the return our library gives back to the community is tangible and relevant.

Progress against the original strategic plan goals was mixed. The proposed expansion of the library (Goal 1) has taken significantly longer than planned, as many steps have to be completed in a serial fashion, plus multiple delays resulting from the pandemic. The library did successfully launch a new, streamlined website (Goal 2) that is much more user-friendly than the previous version. The efforts to prioritize and implement new ways to connect people in the community to information, ideas and each other (Goal 3) remains an ongoing effort. The steps taken by the library staff during the pandemic to continue serving patrons was just one way that the library managed to make progress against this goal despite the hurdles faced. The Board of Trustees expects that further progress on this goal will be made during the next three year period covered by this strategic plan.

Thanks are due to the library staff and its director, both with its significant input into this process and its willingness to continue supporting the idea and practice of a strategic plan.

Sincerely,
Freeport Community Library Board of Trustees

Trustees (2021):

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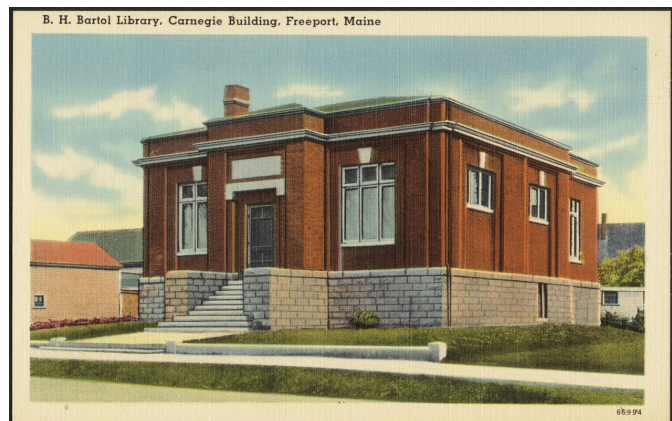
Contents

A Brief History	4
Population Demographics	5
Library Usage Statistics	8
National Trends	11
Planning Process	13
Mission Statement	14
Strategic Goals and Objectives	14
Conclusion	17
Bibliography	18

A Brief History

By the early 1800s, Freeport residents wanted access to books and information so library associations were created. At the time, patrons paid a membership fee, could keep a book for four weeks, were charged a late fee of one cent a day and paid a \$2.00 fine for the serious offense of sharing a book with a nonmember.

By 1900, membership ebbed and the association disbanded which led to the indignity of needing a traveling library from Connecticut. Proud Freeporters formed a new library association that provided access to 600 books for a yearly membership fee of one dollar. At the same time, another group began fundraising to build a permanent library. Happily, this dovetailed with the Andrew Carnegie Foundation awarding grants to deserving towns throughout the country that met their requirements ("Carnegie Library"). Freeport was awarded \$6,500 to construct a library as long as it provided a building lot. They also had to invest the \$3,500 they had already raised. They used that income to support the library's needs. The Foundation required the town to provide \$500 a year from public funds to prove there was a local commitment. When the estate of B.H. Bartol, a successful mechanical engineer, offered \$1,000 to the building committee if the library was named after him, they agreed. On May 26, 1906, the B.H. Bartol library was ready to open (Thurston).



*B. H. Bartol Library, Carnegie Building, Freeport, Maine.
1930. Web. 20 Oct 2018.
<<https://ark.digitalcommonwealth.org/ark:/50959/5t34tb104>>*



For over 90 years Bartol Library was a vibrant and busy town library, but by 1994 it was clear that Freeport had outgrown the space and was experiencing problems with its location in the middle of a very commercial Main Street. As a result, on April 19, 1995 the first meeting of the Library Building Committee met to plan for a new library away from the center of town. Two types of planning began. First was an understanding of the community's needs and how the building could be designed as a modern

community library. To that end, Jay Lucker from MIT was hired and with Kay Haines, Bartol's head librarian, visits were made to other new libraries and surveys were circulated to Freeporters. Winton Scott from the Portland Design Team was chosen as the architect.

With gathered information as well as input from the library staff, he created the library's design. The next steps were to obtain town approval of a bond for \$2,875,000 to construct the new library, to purchase land for the new library, and to restore and convert the Bartol Library into a retail space. The bond passed on March 5, 1996 at a municipal election. The converted Bartol Library space has been leased to companies over time, which has provided the town with income (Town of Freeport).

In the meantime, progress was made toward new construction with the purchase of a site behind the Baptist Church on land that abuts Freeport Middle School. As a result of this location, the library today is often filled with middle school students after school. Construction began in October of 1995 and by the summer of 1997 the building was completed. The town named the new library the Freeport Community Library to signal its position as not just a lending library, but as a modern library committed to being a community center.

Population Demographics

Like most of Maine, the median age of Freeport residents is rising and the Town does not anticipate a change in this trend. The 2011 Comprehensive Plan for the town anticipates an increase in the over 65 population, stating: "because of its proximity to metropolitan services and attractions found in Portland or Boston, Freeport is a desirable place to retire. We should anticipate retirees 'from away' relocating in Freeport."

Population growth has been steady and is projected to remain at about 1.1% growth per year through the end of this decade. As a job and retail center with access to a variety of social, cultural, health, and financial services as well as rail and bus transportation options, Freeport is considered a service center community by the State. An estimated 3.5 million people visit town every year. The majority of those visits are in the summer.

Based on the most current available national, state, and local statistics, the town continues to show a positive trend in key demographics indicators such as: Population, Housing, Education, and Income.

Despite the fact that Maine's population continues to rise as baby boomers age and retire, the so-called baby boomlet (those born in the 1980's and 90's) appear to be having a positive influence in communities like Freeport by becoming first-time home buyers and renters along with starting families of their own. Both the under-5 year old and under-18 year old populations have increased since 2010, which is consistent with our own library observations and statistics over the same time period. As libraries plan for the future, the following need to be considered:

- ❖ Changes in demographics will influence the way people interact and behave in public spaces including libraries.
- ❖ Trends in the way education is delivered will continue to affect the role and the services provided by public libraries.

- ❖ More and more people will use the library's technology resources.
- ❖ The general population will live longer and be more active.
- ❖ The value of interacting with others will continue, but the tools and approaches will continue to change as social media and other technologies continually evolve.

Population (July 1 2019 estimates)*

Population	8,558
Persons under 5 years	4.9%
Persons under 18 years	21.4%
Persons 65 years and over	18.2%
Foreign born persons	5.5%

Housing (2015-2019)*

Owner occupied housing	75.6%
Median value of owner occupied housing	\$294,100
Households	3,447
Persons per household	2.54

Education of persons age 25 +*

High school graduate or more	95.8%
Bachelor's degree or more	55.2%

Income (2015-2019 in 2019 dollars)**

Median household income	\$86,128
Per capita income (2012-2016)	\$49,876
Persons in poverty	2.2%

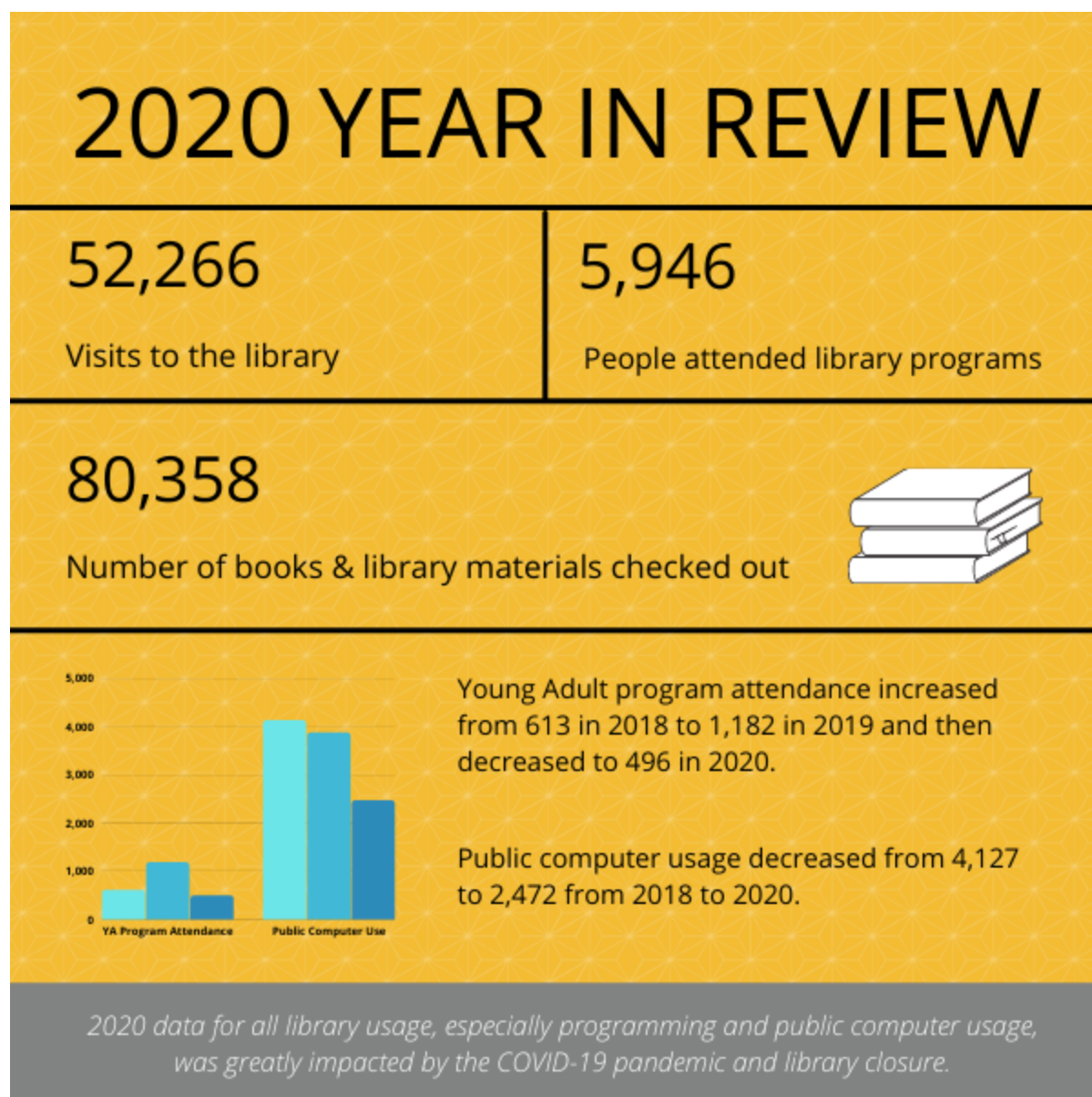
* From: U.S. Census Bureau "Quick Facts" 2019,
<https://www.census.gov/quickfacts/fact/table/US/PST045217>

** From "Quick Facts" 2019.





Library Usage Statistics



The Freeport Community Library joined the Minerva network on December 16, 2014. Minerva is a shared library system that joins over 60 libraries in Maine. These libraries share their resources (e.g., books, movies, and music), allowing patrons to easily request material online that is not held at their local libraries. The requested interlibrary loan materials are delivered to the requestor's home library and then returned to the donor library once the requestor returns the item(s) to their home library.

An additional benefit to member libraries is continual technical support of software services, professional networking, and a shared knowledge base—all at a much lower cost than an individual rate.

The impact on the number of interlibrary loans requested by Freeport Community Library patrons has been substantial.

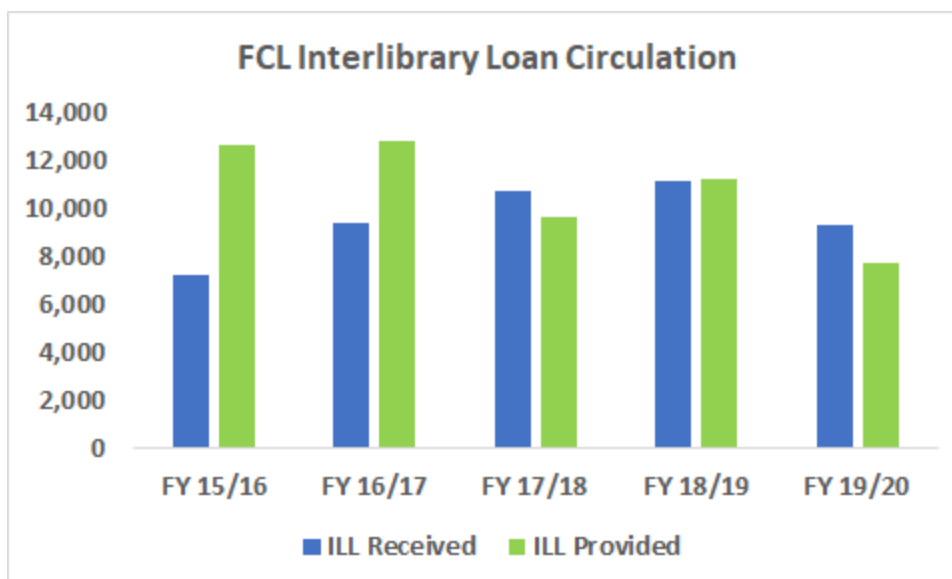


Figure 1. Interlibrary loan statistics at the Freeport Community Library. Retrieved from <https://www.maine.gov/msl/libs/data/annualreportstats.shtml>.

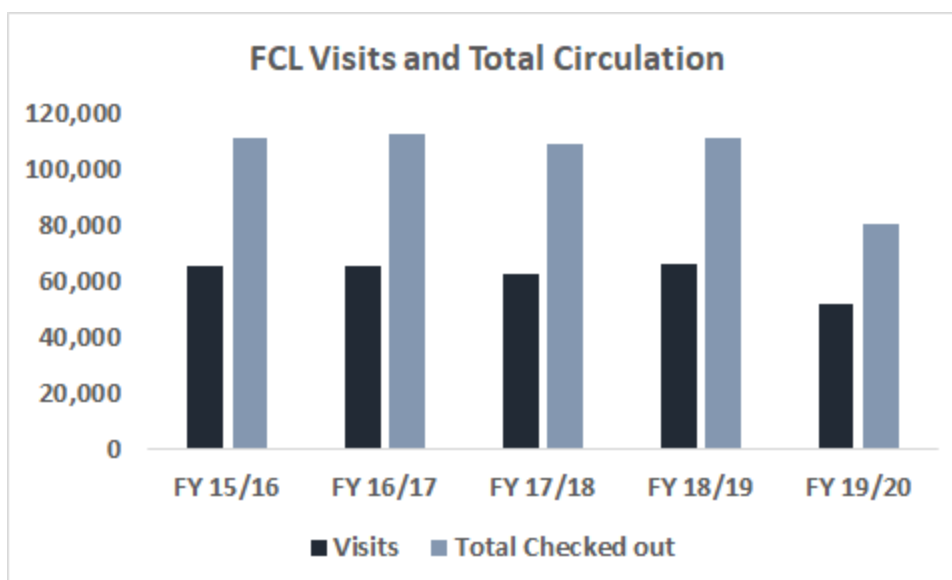


Figure 2. Visits and total circulation at the Freeport Community Library. Retrieved from <https://www.maine.gov/msl/libs/data/annualreportstats.shtml>.

Although circulation of materials has been steadily declining, program attendance has remained strong. This trend is echoed in public libraries across the United States, according to a 2017 survey conducted on behalf of the Public Library Association (retrieved from <http://publiclibrariesonline.org/2017/12/the-2017-public-library-data-service-report-characteristics-and-trends/>).

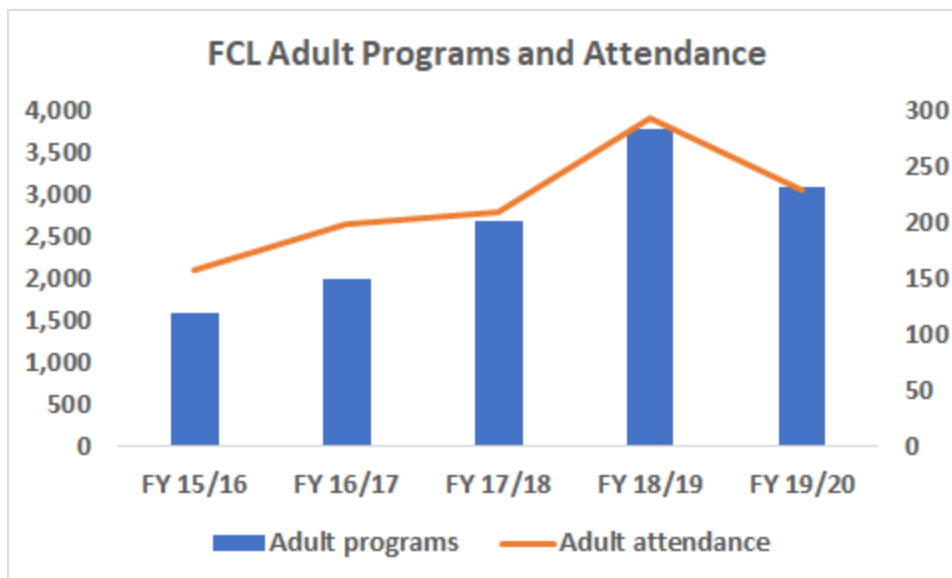


Figure 3. Programming and attendance at the Freeport Community Library. Retrieved from <https://www.maine.gov/msl/libs/data/annualreportstats.shtml>.

The number of young adult programs offered at the Library has increased, as well as the number of people using the children’s and young adult rooms.

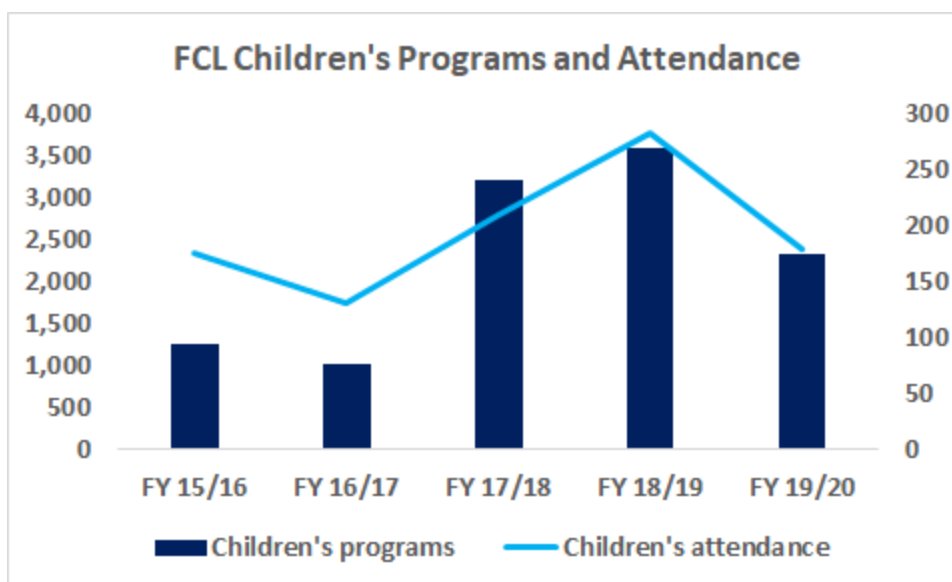


Figure 4. Young adult program statistics. Retrieved from <https://www.maine.gov/msl/libs/data/annualreportstats.shtml>.

There has been one library use survey of the general public. This survey was conducted November 4, 2014 (Election Day) by the Friends of the Freeport Community Library. Two-hundred and thirty-six surveys were returned. A selection of the results follows.

Do You use the Freeport Community Library?

Answer	# of Responses
Frequently	91
Sometimes	111
Never	34

If *Sometimes* or *Frequently*, please indicate what ways you use the Library (check all that apply)

Option	# of times checked	Option	# of times checked
Borrow books	156	Borrow music, movies, audio	104
Children's programs	39	Free movies on Thursdays	19
Read magazines	34	Quiet study	34
Computer usage	30	Copy machine	16
Author book talks	20	Museum passes	9
Wildlife park pass	4	Tutoring	2
Personal research	18	Business meeting	9
Do puzzles	5	Buy used books	30
Travel series talks	12	Friends Recommends	2
Book group	4	Other adult education	3
Art shows	32	After school programs	6
Toddler story time	18	Summer reading program	13

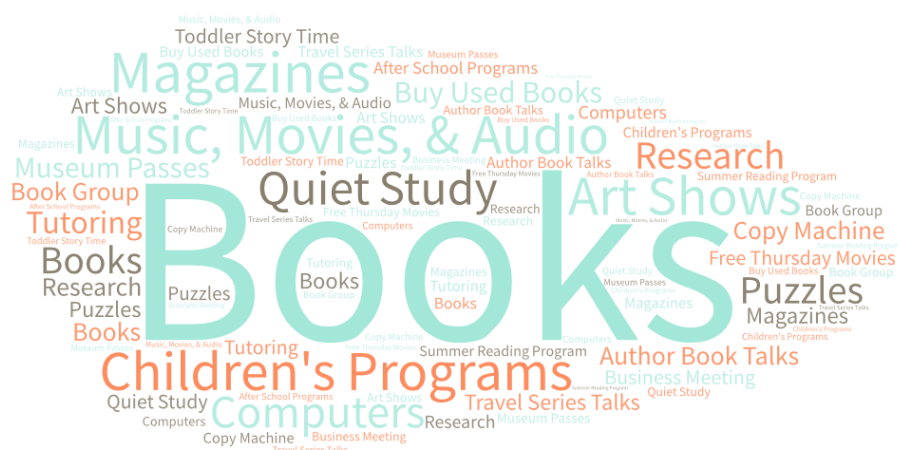


Figure 5. How respondents stated they used the library. Words used more frequently are displayed in a larger font.

National Trends

The American Library Association and its affiliate, the Public Library Association, annually document trends in public library services . The following information comes from these

Creative Aging

Welcoming Teens

Maker Movement

Outside the Physical Interior of the Library

12

importance has become crucial. Changes FCL made to the outside of the library to meet this growing need include the outdoor cafe tables, picnic tables, and an extensive external WiFi addition, all of which have made outside FCL a safer place for working, relaxing, gathering and family activities. Changes made by FCL to virtual services during the pandemic include offering WiFi hotspots for checkout, offering the Kanopy online streaming service, upgrading the internal library WiFi access points, shifting patron programming online and as a self-guided walk-through (such as children's story walk). How libraries will adapt and grow to meet future needs, and what the focus of future changes become, will be reliant on the changes in society as a whole and our community's shifting wants and needs paired with the collaboration of the library staff and its resources.

Connected Communities

Public libraries are usually seen as anchor institutions in towns and cities, but they are also part of the large ecosystem of services that create a vital community. Public libraries across the country are partnering and collaborating with local social services, other community organizations, schools, and local businesses to solve problems, address health and financial literacy, engage and involve citizens, and create more welcoming and inclusive communities. Adequate staffing, trained and involved volunteers, and more flexible space and schedule are necessary for this outreach.

Planning Process

This is the first update to Freeport Community Library's strategic plan. The Board of Trustees has spent the last year working through the strategic planning process. This included tweaking the library's mission statement, considering a wide variety of strategic options, and streamlining those options into a more concise and actionable list of strategic goals and objectives.

The library staff supported this endeavor by providing meaningful feedback on the current strengths and potential for the library. The resulting strategic goals were created to support the library's place within the community over the next three years.

Much of the plan solidifies what the library staff does every day: creating a warm, welcoming, resource-rich environment for all, both within and outside the physical space of the library. The biggest challenge moving forward will be to become an even more efficient organization so that the current staff have the ability to better focus on the strategic goals and objectives while maintaining the high level of customer service for which the Freeport Community Library is known.

Mission Statement

Our library is a safe, welcoming, community space connecting people to information, ideas, and each other to promote curiosity, discovery, informed citizenship and life-long learning through free and open access to information.

Strategic Goals and Objectives

Goal 1: Promote physical infrastructure improvements to the library

Objective A: Expand teen area of the library to take advantage of the unique connection to Freeport Middle School **(FY22-24)**

- ❖ Acquire architectural plans for basic layout
- ❖ Meet with local school partners to assess needs and desires
- ❖ Include expansion plans in the next community survey to get input from stakeholders
- ❖ Support external fundraising efforts as appropriate/required

Objective B: Work to improve patron usability and experience of the library **(FY22-24)**

- ❖ Install new library signage to improve patron library navigation
- ❖ Make soundproofing and lighting improvements
- ❖ Install new main circulation desk
- ❖ Make other improvements as deemed appropriate

Goal 2: Given staffing and resources, prioritize and implement new ways to connect people in the community to information, ideas and each other

Objective A: Improve patron access to library services while both inside and away from the library **(FY22-24)**

- ❖ Improve broadband and WiFi speeds and physical range of access inside and outside the building
- ❖ Continue improving patron accessibility and user experience of the library website
- ❖ Continue to support WiFi hotspot access
- ❖ As funding allows, upgrade public computers in library

Objective B. Create a formal communications plan, incorporating ongoing communication tactics and channels **(FY22)**

- ❖ Confirm equitable communication with a cursory audience analysis; breaking down patrons into different segments and identifying their preferred method of communication.

- Use best practices to guide utilization of multiple communication channels (newsletters, website, emails, social media, town communications/website, etc.) depending on the message and the target patron segment for each message
- Study trends in social media to develop a plan and strategy to reach targeted audiences so we remain relevant to evolving needs

Objective C: Promote opportunities for curiosity, discovery, informed citizenship and life-long learning through free and open access to information **(FY22-24)**

- ❖ Continue to coordinate summer learning opportunities with educators and commercial programs
- ❖ Identify, connect, and establish library accounts with community members in need: new Mainers, ESL, ASL, etc.
- ❖ Promote customized digital learning (courses and locations), promoting Library Resources over other products
- ❖ Provide advice and connections for health, housing, literacy and other areas
- ❖ Promote job skills learning and job search resources
- ❖ Provide more available space for people of all ages to study, discover and learn. Continue to collaborate with schools
- ❖ Provide senior computer/technology and enrichment services directly or through partnerships
- ❖ Investigate adding business support services through our expansion. Create space that allows for patrons to work from the library

Objective D: Engage the community in developing and promoting resources and partnership opportunities **(FY22-24)**

- ❖ Promote volunteer service coordination and expansion
- ❖ Offer multi-generational programming
- ❖ Identify new opportunities to promote the library with users and non-users through research, surveys, forums, and conversations

Goal 3: Ensure a strong, helpful, and customer-focused organization

Objective A: Support staff development including providing appropriate time, funds and space **(FY22-24)**

- ❖ Library director to work with the Library Board of Trustees if incremental funding required beyond town resources to provide staff development opportunities

Objective B: Provide a welcoming atmosphere to all library patrons **(FY22-24)**

- ❖ Review library policy regarding Diversity, Equality, and Inclusion
- ❖ Provide diversity training to the staff and board, leveraging state and non-profit organization resources as appropriate and available
- ❖ Research offering diversity programming opportunities to the community as well

Objective C: Review potential ideas for new or revised library services coming out of the pandemic **(FY22)**

- ❖ Conduct a community survey to consider patron ideas for library services coming out of the pandemic
- ❖ Incorporate community feedback as appropriate as the library staff updates its services over time



Conclusion

Creation of this strategic plan is the culmination of many hours of hard work by the Board of Trustees and the Freeport Community Library Director and staff. While the process seemed arduous at times, the Board of Trustees takes great pride in the results. The Board of Trustees will work with the Director and staff to track the progress against the strategic goals and objectives in this plan over the next three years.



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