

CROTON FREE LIBRARY

2024 STRATEGIC AND LONG-RANGE PLANNING REPORT

Approved January 8, 2024

Committee Members:

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Accepted by the Board of Trustees:

January 8, 2024

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INTRODUCTION

The Long-Range Planning Committee annually updates the Croton Free Library's plan for fulfilling its overall mission: to provide high-quality, free library services and programs and a gathering place for its community.

The Strategic and Long-Range Planning Report fulfills a legal requirement: Under New York State law, a private, "association" library like ours cannot receive public funding unless it meets the New York State Commissioner of Education's standards, one of which requires the library to maintain a Board-approved long-range plan of service.

The report also fulfills practical goals. Preparing and approving this report helps the Library formulate concrete plans for its future and review plans from previous boards. Moreover, preparing the written report provides a useful framework for thinking about the Library's future and consciously planning for it and aids the Board when evaluating whether the

Library has met its objectives. In other words, how does the Board envision the Library growing and how can that best be accomplished?

The report reflects Board proposals and activities that have been raised over the past year and comments and suggestions from Board Committees, the Director, and the staff.

CROTON FREE LIBRARY MISSION STATEMENT

“The mission of the Croton Free Library is to encourage the joy of reading, the exploration of ideas and the pursuit of lifelong learning for the children, teens and adults of our entire community.”

Books, media, and state-of-the-art technology help us provide free and equal access to knowledge, information, and a wide range of artistic expression. The Library serves as a gathering place and learning center for Croton-area residents, with dynamic cultural and educational programs, and space for community organizations to meet.

LONG-RANGE PLANNING COMMITTEE AS DEFINED BY THE LIBRARY BYLAWS

The Long-Range Planning Committee works with the Director and Board to identify goals for the coming years, establishes and maintains a strategic and long-range planning report for fulfilling the Library’s overall mission and presents such report annually for adoption by the Board and oversees and updates Library policies and Bylaws.

PROPOSED ANNUAL SCHEDULE FOR THE LONG-RANGE PLANNING COMMITTEE’S WORK ON THE STRATEGIC AND LONG-RANGE PLANNING REPORT

At each monthly board meeting throughout the year – All Trustees take note of possibilities for updates to Library Objectives and Action Steps for the coming year’s Report

April/May – Committee collects relevant information from reports delivered at the Annual Meeting and in *Shelf Life* newsletter

September/October – Committee generates fresh ideas at Blue Sky Meeting scheduled in September; collects input from Fundraising Committee gathered for Annual Appeal letter; discusses above-mentioned materials with Director and meets to review, revise and update the Strategic and Long-Range Planning Report

November – Committee finalizes Report

No later than the December board meeting – Board votes on the updated Strategic and Long-Range Planning Report

January – Director posts on the Library’s website and makes available to the public the final approved Strategic and Long-Range Planning Report

LIBRARY GOALS

The Croton Free Library’s overall goal is to maintain the high quality of service to the community we have established over the years, and to improve and innovate, even as we continue to maintain that quality on a daily basis.

Our goals match those of libraries with a similar profile: a small library serving an educated suburban community with many school-aged children. We enjoy widespread support from our patrons, who have for many years covered, or very nearly covered, our operations with tax monies, donations, and other sources. We have also been fortunate to receive grants and bequests that provide us with an endowment for capital projects and other non-operational costs.

In support of our stated mission, our general service goals focus on four areas: Accessibility, Facility, Sustainability and Visibility.

ACCESSIBILITY: BE OPEN TO ALL AND OFFER SERVICES, MATERIALS, PROGRAMMING AND SPACE IN A WELCOMING MANNER

- To optimize patron access to and uses of Library resources by staying open weekdays, weekends, and evenings and by participating in the Westchester Library System's internet service system and interlibrary loan system and other technology systems
- To welcome teen-aged users with age-appropriate and interest-appropriate space, materials and programs
- To devote resources and services for children, maintaining the quality of our children's collection across formats and media and offering an extensive program of events geared towards children
- To offer appropriate reference services and materials for adults and students, including internet access
- To address the multi-lingual learning needs of the Croton community
- To remain open and accessible during community-wide emergencies and long-term power outages through the use of the Library's wi-fi access and permanent generator

FACILITY: MAKE AVAILABLE ACCOMMODATING SPACE, MATERIALS, EVENTS, STAFF EXPERTISE

- To maintain and improve upon the physical space of the Library and to provide flexible, multi-use spaces in order to respond to the community's needs
- To purchase or license materials in a variety of formats and media such as books, periodicals, e-books, audio and audiovisual and multimedia products that satisfy the diverse tastes and needs of our users and keep our collection up-to-date
- To encourage creativity and technological innovation through the CreativeSpace room and programs and materials
- To present a variety of free artistic, informational and educational programs online and at the Library, especially making use of the Ottinger Room, and to promote community interaction via special events for patrons of all ages
- To maximize the use of the Library as a community gathering place as well as cultivate leadership and community involvement

- To continuously develop the skills and expertise of Library staff and trustees to bring the best innovation to the Croton Free Library and expertly serve the community's needs

SUSTAINABILITY: BE FORWARD-THINKING IN TERMS OF MAINTENANCE, IMPROVEMENT OF THE PHYSICAL SPACE, AND OF THE LIBRARY'S OFFERINGS. BE A GOOD STEWARD OF THE PUBLIC'S MONIES AND TRUST

- To regularly review policies, finances and investments to ensure they remain aligned with the Library's mission
- To encourage community financial support of the Library via engagement with the Library through a variety of fundraising events
- To adapt to changing technologies and environmental conditions

VISIBILITY: BE A PART OF THE COMMUNITY AND INVITE THE COMMUNITY TO BE A PART OF THE LIBRARY

- To provide exhibition space for local artists and community groups and make available the Ottinger Room and small meeting room as a meeting place for the community's use as appropriate
- To communicate with patrons and the overall community through the Library's e-newsletter, program announcements in the *Gazette* and other news sources, printed flyers throughout the village as well as the Library's website and other forms of social media and signage

2024 LIBRARY OBJECTIVES AND ACTION STEPS

In order to accomplish the stated goals, the Library presents these objectives and action steps. These strategic priorities are the intended focus of the Library's actions over the next three to five years but are intended to be adapted and to evolve as conditions and priorities warrant.

ACCESSIBILITY

- Seek new opportunities for access to electronic materials and databases such as free digital access to *The New York Times*
- Continue to engage with the public via live as well as hybrid events for varying ages and tastes
- Offer unique and welcoming recommendations, events and programs to patrons to encourage their engagement with the Library
- Weed the collection to keep it up to date, relevant and aligned with community standards

FACILITY

- Offer training and continuing education to staff and trustees
- Continue to evaluate plans and sources of funding for a renovation of the facility
- Develop plans for better use of the publicity kiosk in Croton Commons

- Expand use of outdoor areas for events, classes, and individual study/meetings
- Conscientiously monitor, assess and address the maintenance of the physical plant

SUSTAINABILITY

- Assess and enhance the security and safety preparedness of the physical facility and the cyber-infrastructure of the Library
- Upgrade the security camera system
- Adapt the Book & Bake Sale per the changing used-book market
- Regularly review, update and publicly post Library policies for consistent, transparent and reliable Library operations
- Be accountable to the environment by adding more programs such as the Trex plastic recycling program

VISIBILITY

- Find innovative ways to engage with the public via programs, displays and offerings such as Seed Exchange, Spice of the Month Program and expanded pre-college advising
- Populate the Library's online calendar and website with useful information in an organized and accessible fashion
- Continue to foster strong relationships with local community and governmental groups
- Investigate ways of gathering input from the Croton community in order to understand community priorities and aspirations

2023 LIBRARY ACCOMPLISHMENTS

ACCESSIBILITY

- Established free full digital access to *The New York Times*
- Increased the number of museum passes, based on patron feedback
- Hosted a Tiny Art Show, exhibiting over 70 canvases by local artists of all ages
- Supported two Battle of the Books teams
- Applied for and received a grant to fund more activities in the CreativeSpace

FACILITY

- Offered Google Suite training to staff and trustees
- Established the @crotonfreelibrary.org email system for staff and trustee use
- Engaged architectural firm Butler Rowland Mays to evaluate our current physical space, seek input from employees, trustees, and the community, and propose improvements

SUSTAINABILITY

- Reviewed, finalized, and adopted an Employee Handbook
- Created a Room Use Application and adopted a Room Use Policy
- Adopted a Sexual Harassment Prevention Policy

- Transferred all banking activities to Chase Bank and established a separate Fundraising bank account

VISIBILITY

- Hosted library orientation for 5th graders from Pierre van Cortlandt Middle School
- Spoke to the Croton Seniors group about library programs and services