

# **CROTON FREE LIBRARY**

## **2025 STRATEGIC AND LONG-RANGE PLANNING REPORT**

Approved December 2, 2024

### **Committee Members:**

Adam Decker, Chair  
Susan Ranis, Board President  
Leslie Ellis  
Margaret Mahoney  
Laura Jaeger

### **Accepted by the Board of Trustees:**

December 9, 2024  
Susan Ranis, President (29)  
Justin Johnson, Vice-President (28)  
Barry Feinberg, Treasurer (28)  
Bethany Basile (27)  
Adam Decker (28)  
Leslie Ellis (29)  
Kate Fabian (28)  
Mayla Hsu (26)  
Marianne Merola (27)  
Laura Jaeger (26)  
Margaret Mahoney (26)  
*Jesse Bourdon, Library Director*  
*Previously updated and approved January 8, 2024; February 13, 2023*

### **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

- Throughout the Year – Committee collects relevant information from discussions and reports delivered at the Annual Meeting and Monthly Board meetings.
- September/October – Committee generates fresh ideas by meeting with the Board, library staff, and community members to explore possible areas for growth and improvement; 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 draft of Strategic and Long-Range Planning 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, including children utilizing the library after weekday school hours alone or with a caregiver.
- 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 throughout the library and in all of our 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

- To partner with other Croton and area community groups, governmental organizations and non-profits to build community relationships and increase community involvement with the library and library assets.

## **FUTURE 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.
- Seek new opportunities to increase usage of the library by underserved groups in our community and other potential library users not currently taking advantage of all library resources
- 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 build a plan for the large-scale renovation, improvement and modernization of our physical plant including preparing for our largest ever capital campaign to repair and revitalize our library spaces.
- 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
- 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
- Consistently evaluate our energy sources to balance both economic and environmental cost

### **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

## 2024 LIBRARY ACCOMPLISHMENTS

### PROGRAMS

- Utilized donated funds to expand digital access to media accounts
- Increased the number of museum passes, based on patron feedback, including DIA Beacon
- Supported two Battle of the Books teams
- Increased children's programming
- Adopted a fine-free policy for most circulation materials
- Offered Red Cross First Aid Training to staff and trustees
- Hosted a Community Read-In for Banned Books Week
- Hosted an event for local authors
- Increased our self-paced programs and project resources
- Hosted a Writers Circle at the Library to nurture local budding writers
- Enhanced our World Languages Program
- Enhanced resources for new English speakers, including new Beginner Adult English classes in partnership with the Croton-Harmon school district.

### FACILITY

- Continued to work with architectural firm Butler Rowland Mays to create a plan to improve our physical space and began preparations for our capital campaign to turn our plan into a reality.
- Established a Renovation Advisory Committee that is made up of both trustees and members of the community
- Updated camera system

### POLICIES AND GOVERNANCE

- Reviewed, finalized, and adopted a Patron Code of Conduct
- Created a Unattended Child Policy and a Recording in the Library Policy
- Amended By-laws

### COMMUNITY VISIBILITY AND OUTREACH

- Hosted library orientation for Kindergartners from Carrie E Tompkins Elementary School and 5th graders from Pierre van Cortlandt Middle School
- Spoke to the Croton Seniors group about library programs and services
- Partnered with the NY Blood Center for monthly blood drives
- Formalized the longstanding mutually beneficial relationship between the Village and the Library with a written agreement
- Reached out and successfully obtained input from our community as to our building and grounds needs via a survey to our community