



**South Country Library
Long Range Plan
(2021 - 2026)**

“Building community by sharing the wonders of learning, creating and connecting with one another”

Board of Trustees

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Approved by Board 2/20/20

*Revised and approved by Board 4/15/21

**In light of the COVID-19 pandemic, the board revisited the original February 2020 document and re-approved it in April 2021 with revisions, including an adjusted timeline.*

Introduction

As the South Country Library moves into a new decade, we present a long range planning document to guide the library for 2021-2026. This plan is designed to take into account the current and evolving needs of an active, engaged and diverse South Country community and how the library can continue to meet those evolving needs and discover ways to improve and expand upon what we are offering. It was developed by the board of trustees and library administrators, with input and assistance from staff and community members.

The guiding vision behind this planning process is for the library to be utilized as a thriving center of the South Country community in terms of its resources, space and opportunities for learning, creativity, and recreation. To maintain a welcoming and modern facility that provides both traditional and innovative services to everyone in our community without exception. To provide superior patron experiences, relevant materials and services, enriching classes and community events, and to ensure that we remain responsible stewards of taxpayer money by offering real and lasting value.

Planning Process

In March 2019, the board of trustees and library administrators participated in a planning retreat to initiate the planning process. The following tools were determined to be necessary to assist the board in identifying which actionable items would be included in the library's five-year plan.

1. Re-invention of the library's mission statement

With the intention of establishing a short, yet expressive mission statement that would inform all aspects of the plan and encapsulate a vision of what the library is and should continually strive for, the board approved the following mission statement in April 2019: "Building community by sharing the wonders of learning, creating and connecting with one another".

2. Input from community members and library staff

Input was received from the community in the form of a comprehensive survey made available in Fall 2019 at the library, online, and at a variety of organizations throughout the district. We sought to discover what the library was doing well and what it needed to improve upon in terms of customer service for our patrons, programming, materials, technology and the use of our space. The survey also asked what needs the community has that are not currently being addressed by the library, but which could be. We received 755 responses which were incorporated into our planning. Library administrators also conducted a number of "coffee with administrators" events where feedback was solicited. Library staff input was received through committee and department heads meetings, as well as one-on-one discussions.

3. Library statistics

Our internal statistics were assessed for patron usage and trends in all 4 departments (adult, young adult, children's and circulation). Statistics were evaluated for the library's circulating materials, program attendance, online resources, computer and Wi-Fi use, and volume of assistance provided at the service desks.

4. Engineering study of the library facility

An engineering firm conducted a study of the main systems of the building (HVAC, electrical, plumbing, roof, windows, carpet, etc) in order to determine their current condition and expected lifespan. The study submitted to the board provides a valuable baseline for where these systems are currently, and although there is a mixture of newer and older equipment and structures which will demand regular attention and maintenance, it was concluded that overall the building is in solid condition.

5. Space planning study of the library facility

An architectural firm evaluated our spatial layout to identify ways that we can make better use of our existing space in order to meet the evolving needs of the library and community. The study submitted to the board concluded that the building has fully adequate space to meet our current and future needs and provided an exciting plan for re-imagining various aspects of that space. It is a flexible and versatile plan, designed to be accomplished in phases that work best for the library in terms of budget and time. The library hopes to work within its yearly operating budget in order to accomplish the plan's phases.

6. Sustainability

With the intention of both reducing the library's environmental footprint and also decreasing utility expenditures, a commitment to sustainability was discussed by the board and library administrators. Our upcoming sustainability initiatives will consist of practices that are environmentally sound, economically feasible, and socially equitable. The South Country Library plans to play an important and unique role in promoting community awareness about resilience, climate change, and a sustainable future.

Long Range Plan

Although these actionable items are meant to guide the library in an integrated manner, for presentation they are divided into the following sections: **Facility, Programs & Services, Technology, Collections and the Patron Experience.**

Library Facility

Action Item # 1 The creation of an all-ages, hands-on, do-it-yourself learning lab/makerspace for patrons to learn and experience a wide variety of interactive technology, craftwork, building, creating and collaborating.

Action Item # 2 The library will make an official commitment to making our building and business practices more sustainable and friendly to the environment by working with the Green Business Partnership (GBP) which provides guidance and benchmarks toward becoming officially certified as a “green business”.

Programs & Services

Action Item # 1 The library will expand its outreach efforts two-fold: 1) bringing our programs and services out into the community to accommodate residents who are unable to visit the library due to transportation or physical limitations. This includes visits to local senior facilities and a variety of educational centers. 2) Partnering with local organizations to combine resources and provide programming that the library could not otherwise provide on its own.

Action Item # 2 Four-pronged approach to literacy: ESOL, Finances, Law and Technology. The library will boost our literacy offerings in the areas of ESOL (expanding our offerings for non-speakers of English), financial literacy (credit counseling, personal finances, banking, etc), legal issues (basic legal assistance) and technology (one-on-one tech assistance and a wide variety of tech instruction, as per community survey requests).

Action Item # 3 Commitment to Wellness. The library will commit a substantial amount of its programming resources toward providing progressive guidance and instruction for the physical/mental wellness of our community’s residents: nutrition, diet and cooking, medicine, disease prevention, physical health, mental health, exercise and the provision of outlets for creativity (music, art, crafts, etc).

Action Item # 4 In response to survey requests, the library pledges to evaluate the days and times of our popular programs in order to maximize attendance and accommodate residents with varying schedules.

Action Item # 5 The library will offer a variety of remote/virtual programs and services for residents who are unable to be physically present at the library.

Technology

Action Item # 1 As per community requests and high statistical usage, the library will broaden and improve its offerings at the business center station which currently include scanning, faxing, copying and wireless printing. Machines will be added and services will be refined and improved to maximize speed, ease of use, features, and overall quality/efficiency.

Action Item # 2 A mobile app version of the library's website will be introduced which will make patron use of our online offerings (catalog search, program registration, access to databases, homework help, library news and info, etc) more accessible and user-friendly for those utilizing mobile devices including phones and tablets.

Action Item # 3 A financial commitment will be made to fund technology for the library's forthcoming learning lab/makerspace, endeavoring to increase patron knowledge and ability in using both current and future technologies.

Collections

Action Item # 1 While our physical collections will remain robust, as patron use of e-books and streaming services offered by the library continue to accelerate (the use of which will be matched by increases in funding for these items), we will evaluate our physical items to see where collections can be reduced, relocated or integrated into other collections. The resulting space will be used to meet community requests for additional quiet seating space and meeting/study rooms, as well as meeting the future goal of creating a more functional and aesthetic flow on the main floor.

Action Item # 2 The library will devote financial resources to further develop its loanable "library of things" collection. These items, which currently include musical instruments, telescopes, digital scanners, lawn games, mobile hotspots and much more, are designed to meet the needs of patrons who may only need a piece of equipment occasionally (thus

saving them the cost of purchase) or to allow a patron to try out an item before making a commitment to purchasing the item for themselves.

The Patron Experience

Action Item # 1 Patron “goodwill” initiatives: Library administrators and the board of trustees will revisit all library policies and procedures that play a role in patron use of the library, including circulation policies, room bookings, program registration, computer use, business center activities and more, with an eye toward making library policies and procedures as concise, clear and user-friendly as possible. In recent years, the library has reduced or eliminated fines on most materials, expanded materials loan periods and checkout amounts, introduced automatic renewals and simplified the process for program payments and room bookings. We pledge to continue efforts to reduce or eliminate any unnecessary obstacles or barriers to the borrowing of our collections or to the effortless use of the library’s many offerings.

Action Item # 2 The library will commit additional time and financial resources toward training and professional development for our staff, by way of classes, webinars, workshops and conferences, to ensure that staff are fully trained and up-to-date in the fields of customer service, technology, collection development, programming and the administration of a wide variety of essential public services.

Over the next five years, the South Country Library looks forward to expanding, improving upon and refining the services that we offer to our community and we sincerely hope you will reach out to the library’s board of trustees and administrators if you have input that can assist us with our mission.

Thank you for your past and continued support!

