

Hartland Public Library Strategic Plan, 2015 – 2020



Background

The Hartland Library Board of Trustees approved a new strategic planning process at their meeting on June 15, 2014 to replace the previous five year plan adopted in 2010. We formed a strategic planning committee (composed of a mix of staff, board members and community members) and began the process with a focus on the Hartland community – understanding community needs, trends, and interests.

To gather information, we held two focus groups at the library in early 2015, facilitated by Vermont Department of Libraries consultant Amy Howlett. The focus groups were composed of community members, with representation from a variety of community and demographic groups. We also solicited input through a short, open-ended online survey (asking respondents what works well at the library and what could be better, and encouraging new ideas). Amy Howlett led a retreat for library staff members, and we met independently with the Hartland select board and Hartland Community Arts. The focus groups and staff retreat were structured using the SOAR model (Strengths, Opportunities, Aspirations, and Results) – a positive, forward-thinking model for planning.

Strategic planning committee members reviewed all of the feedback we received, and they identified several main focus areas for the plan:

Focus Areas for Hartland Library Strategic Plan, 2015-2020

We envision the library as:

A hub for lifelong learning, information and community engagement

A gathering place to connect with other community members

A place to collaborate, innovate, learn new skills, and be creative

We will achieve this through:

Digital literacy training and other technology support

Ongoing early literacy education to support a lifelong love of reading

Educational and recreational resources that serve community needs and interests

Flexible spaces for collaboration, socialization, creative production, play and quiet study

Ongoing collaboration with community groups and other libraries

Excellent customer service and responsiveness to community needs

Creative community engagement and outreach

Digital literacy training and other technology support

Libraries play a key role in supporting digital literacy in communities: learning about new technologies and devices, developing technology skills for career and school preparation, and finding and evaluating information online. We would like to enhance our services in this area. Some of the ways we might do this include:

- increase existing staff technology support
- provide more one-on-one technology training
- partner with other area libraries and community organizations to provide better technology help and training

Ongoing early literacy education to support a lifelong love of reading

We will continue to provide quality early literacy education for children, and support for parents and caregivers. We will enhance partnerships with local schools, preschools/nursery schools, and day care centers to reach more children in the community.

Educational and recreational resources that serve community needs and interests

We will continue to purchase high quality fiction and non-fiction books in all formats, as well as DVDs.

We will enhance our readers' advisory services to offer customized book recommendations, introduce patrons to new authors and genres, and promote a love of reading.

We will continue to offer programming for all ages – especially programs that help participants tap into creativity and learn practical skills. Some possible programs might include:

- More live streaming and Skype events utilizing the library's videoconferencing equipment
- Help kids create a weekly Hartland news radio show or podcast at the library
- Record life stories – Story Corps at the library, Vermont Folklife program at the library
- Life skills programs on basic homesteading and household skills like hunting, sewing, carpentry, cheesemaking, etc.
- "Share your passion" programs at the library – invite community members to share their unique interests and skills, lead workshops at the library to teach others
- Investment club and retirement planning programs
- Storytelling programs
- Workshops on critical thinking and information literacy, evaluating information found online
- Discussion group about environmental issues
- Book talk program – library staff and volunteers present new and noteworthy books

Flexible spaces for collaboration, socialization, creative production, play and quiet study

The ways people use public libraries is changing, and the library is increasingly serving diverse needs and purposes in our community. Community members seek engagement at the library, places to meet and collaborate, socialize, create, and study. Some of the space needs we've identified as part of this planning process include:

- quiet areas and better sound muffling
- teen area (with hangout space)
- more cozy seating
- more room for adult fiction
- a second bathroom
- additional meeting space
- possibly enlarge the community room to accommodate larger events

To further understand our space needs, we plan to conduct a building audit with a space planner and solicit further community input. We will plan for a building expansion within the next 10 - 15 years by building community support for the project, developing a fundraising plan, conducting a feasibility study, and drafting an architectural plan. We also recognize that the library building has uses that overlap with the uses of other town buildings. We will work with other town organizations to explore ways that we can be more efficient in our collective use of space, including maintenance responsibilities and funding.

Ongoing collaboration with community groups and other libraries

We will seek out possibilities for collaboration with various community groups, especially (but not limited to): Hartland Elementary School, the Hartland Rec Center, Hartland Historical Society, Aging in Hartland, and area high schools. Building on the success of the One Card program, we'll continue to collaborate with area libraries through resource sharing, joint programs, and possibly shared staff.

Excellent customer service and responsiveness to community needs

Continuing to provide exceptional customer service is a key goal. One of the ways we will do this is to enhance our volunteer training and management to ensure good customer service. We'll also continue to solicit community input about library services, and adjust our program and service offerings to meet community needs. Several respondents to our community survey requested expanded operating hours for the library. We will look into this possibility, which will be dependent upon increased funding (see resources section below).

Creative community engagement and outreach

We will explore new ways to reach the community through community events, partnerships, etc. Our focus will be especially on demographic groups that are less likely to come to the library, particularly teens and younger adults (20s and 30s). We'll implement services to make library use easier for busy people, such as bags of picture books for parents to pick up, more online tools to help patrons discover new books, and customized book recommendations for individuals.

Resources Needed

In order to realize certain aspects of this plan, we recognize that we will need some additional resources. These include:

- More hours for existing staff to enhance program offerings (especially youth programs) and possibly to extend library open hours.
- A new part-time staff position to provide technology assistance – one on one tutoring, helping people learn new technologies, drop-in user groups.
- Ramp up fundraising in preparation for a building expansion, and create a special fundraising account for the building fund.

Adopted by the Hartland Public Library Board of Trustees 11/22/15