

## 2024-2029 LYME PUBLIC LIBRARY STRATEGIC PLAN

### INTRODUCTION

The 2024-2029 Lyme Public Library Strategic Plan was crafted with an eye towards enhancing the library for residents of the beautiful little town we live in and love. The Board of Directors, under the leadership of Judy Ulrich and in partnership with the library director, Melissa Fournier, developed this new strategic plan with input from the community to guide our direction over the next five years.

Since our last strategic plan in 2019, the world has experienced an unprecedented global pandemic that resulted in the early deaths of millions of people, a transformation of work and the workplace, and the increased use of technology in our lives, among other changes. The pandemic brought with it profound isolation and associated mental health challenges for many – notably women who were pulled from the workplace to support their children doing remote schooling, teens and older people. Many communities, like ours, experienced a change in their demographics with urban dwellers seeking the sanctity of the country and transforming the housing market. The political landscape became increasingly polarized, with many concerned that our democracy might be threatened. This political polarization even made its way to our libraries, in requests for book banning and other forms of censorship.

Over time, technology of all kinds has become foundational to education, health care, shopping, religious services and more. In many ways, this technology has been an asset in creating and preserving community, but for so many, the effects were not always positive, especially for the elderly who may have little access to technological know-how, and pre-teens and teens who rely increasingly on technology to maintain social contact. Further, the recent emergence of artificial intelligence (A.I.) into the mainstream is poised to have a significant impact on our lives in ways we should begin to anticipate.

As more material is sought in digitized formats, libraries increasingly have played an enhanced community role by: offering play spaces for young children or a hangout/homework place for teens; creating educational venues to address community interests such as gardening, land preservation, local history, etc.; serving as a resource for meeting the needs of new or expecting parents; functioning as computer centers for those without technological know-how or the resources to have their own computers, and, in some communities, becoming a “library of things” where commonly used objects can be shared.

In reflecting on these changes, we asked ourselves: What does our community need from us? To answer that question, we surveyed the Lyme community, the board, the Friends of the Lyme Public Library and the staff. Thank you to all you who helped us. In seeking your input, surveying what’s happening in our region and across the country, and looking at what we learned from our previous Strategic Plan and the changes in the world around us, we enhanced our mission and vision; identified new strategic and organizational goals, and the actions we need to take to achieve those goals. We also defined measurements to evaluate our progress over time.

**VISION**

The vision of the Lyme Public Library is to connect our community to the world and each other.

**MISSION**

The mission of the Lyme Public Library is to serve the Town of Lyme as a community center for:

- lifelong learning, discovery, and literacy;
- cultural and community gatherings and events; and
- evolving informational, technological and community needs.

**BRIEF OVERVIEW OF THE TOWN OF LYME**

The Town of Lyme has a population of roughly 2,400 people. This population is nearly 97% white, with little diversity of language, country of origin, etc. In recent years, there has been an increase in the number of:

- year-round residents;
- wealthier residents, although pockets of poverty remain;
- single older adults; and
- families with young children and those expecting children.

**SWOT**

Under the guidance of director Melissa Fournier, our respondents were asked about our library's strengths and weaknesses, the opportunities and threats we face, and the aspirations for our future, which were then codified into our strategic goals and tactics. These follow:

Strengths

- The library has a modern, attractive building with spaces available for public meetings.
- The library has an extensive collection of print, electronic and other resources that are highly valued by patrons.
- The library has a welcoming and knowledgeable staff, and an engaged board of directors, as well as a supportive Friends of the Lyme Public Library and the Foundation of the Lyme Public Library.

Weaknesses

- The library's physical location makes it less accessible to some potential patrons.
- The library has more restrictive days and hours than other area libraries.
- There is a lack of public awareness of how the library is funded and of its need for funding.
- There is confusion about the roles of the library director, the library board, the Lyme Public Library Foundation and the Friends of the Lyme Public Library.
- As a small-town library, we have limited resources.
- The library website is considered by some patrons to be "old" and hard to navigate.

### Opportunities

- The library has resources that are valued by the population groups that are increasing in Lyme, including single older adults and families with young children.
- The increasing number of year-round residents and wealthier residents may mean more opportunities to recruit volunteers and secure charitable donations.
- The library's physical location makes it an attractive venue for hosting outdoor special events.
- The successful collaborations the library has established with other organizations in town can be expanded, and there are other organizations with which the library could explore sponsorships.

### Threats

- There is an increased likelihood of experiencing censorship attempts, and
- Securing adequate funding remains a challenge.

### **TARGET AUDIENCES**

- Older adults
- Families of infants and young children
- Teenagers
- Town leaders
- Lyme residents who are patrons and who are not, as well as newcomers

### **STRATEGIC GOALS**

Moving forward, we are committed to expanding, improving and exploring three key areas where the library can best meet the needs of our community. Our strategic goals are as follows:

1. Become an integral component of life in the Town of Lyme.
2. Serve as the town's center for lifelong learning.
3. Provide an excellent patron experience.

To achieve these goals during this five-year Strategic Plan, we will commit ourselves to undertaking actionable activities (or "tactics") to accomplish them. The tactics are listed beneath each goal.

#### Strategic Goal 1 – Become an integral component of life in the Town of Lyme

We are committed to playing an integral role in the lives of our town's residents. The tactics we will pursue here include, but are not limited to, the following:

- Strive to increase the public's use of the library, and its community rooms and outdoor space.
- Collaborate with other organizations in town to provide important sources of information for new and existing residents.
- Identify needs of key partners within the community and find opportunities to develop or expand partnerships with them to meet mutual needs.

- Host an annual “Coffee with Your Library Leadership” event for town leaders (select people, board and commission chairs) to discuss priority issues and ensure officials provide their input into and understand the work of the library.
- Further develop engaging social events to bring people together, such as the highly successful, monthly Sweet Spot.
- Create a signature event to bring readers and writers together.
- Host a “volunteer fair” every other year to enable local boards and organizations to showcase their work in the community and to encourage volunteer support.

### Strategic Goal 2 – Serve as the town’s center for lifelong learning

Libraries are much more than places where books live. As a result, we are committed to supporting the community’s use of the library by providing updated collections of materials in multiple formats; programs of interest that meet the needs of our patrons and the wider community; and technology, materials and programs that help meet the needs of physical accessibility and racial inclusion. The tactics we will pursue here include, but are not limited to, the following:

- Continue to enhance our evening programming, made possible by the Friends of the Lyme Library.
- Offer ongoing educational sessions for children and adults.
- Maintain a well-curated and robust selection of up-to-date materials and resources in print and online formats.
- Provide a wide array of technical support.
- Adapt our services to continue to meet the changing needs of residents.
- Improve homebound residents’ access to books.
- Enhance the library’s communication with residents through continually developing our existing communication channels.
- Monitor whether the library’s collections meet the evolving interests and needs of our patrons.

### Strategic Goal 3 – Provide an excellent patron experience

The Town of Lyme, the library board, library staff and the Friends and Foundation are committed to providing a state-of-the-art facility that supports the needs of the community. The tactics we will pursue here include, but are not limited to, the following:

- Provide a safe and well-maintained facility that is compliant with ADA specifications and also meets the ever-changing needs of our patrons.
- Strengthen our computer-literacy programs.
- Ensure an engaged, informed library staff by continuing to support educational opportunities for employees.
- Continue to review the design and functionality of the library newsletter.
- Send regular, engaging emails connecting the library to residents who sign up to receive library information.
- Improve the library website.
- Further enhance the library’s social media presence.

- Develop protocols that define how the library can serve as a cooling station during heat waves; provide heating options during extremely cold weather or major snow events; and serve as an electrical/solar charging station during blackouts.

## **COMMUNICATIONS**

In our communications, we seek to increase awareness of the library's:

- available resources and programming;
- meeting rooms and special event spaces;
- availability for community partnerships; and
- funding needs.

## **FUND-RAISING**

In addition to the communications and strategic goals, the library will seek to increase donations, grants and other sources of revenues. The tactics we will pursue include, but are not limited to, the following:

- Define targeted areas requiring funding and identify potential grant opportunities, if any.
- Develop annual fund-raising activities in conjunction with the Friends of the Lyme Public Library and the Lyme Library Foundation.

## **MEASUREMENTS**

The library will measure its success towards achieving the goals set out in this strategic plan by tracking key measures on a quarterly dashboard. The items included on this dashboard will include, but are not limited to, the following:

### Collection & programming measures

- Strengthening feedback for library programming among patrons and staff.
- Enhancement of the library's print and digital collections in accordance with community input.
- Increasing the number of volunteers who can provide technology support to patrons, grant-writing assistance to staff and/or support in other targeted areas.
- Launching new partnership activities with the schools.

### Library usage measures

- Increase in overall library usage (in-person, online, etc.).
- Increase in library card holders.
- Increase in participation in programs, lectures and presentations.
- Increase in website usage.
- Identification of trends in borrowed books and other materials.

### Fund-raising measures

- Increase in the number of grant applications and grant awards.
- Successful fund-raising events.

Other measures

- Improvements in the ADA compliance of the library's facilities.
- Investigation of collaborative programs of potential interest to teens.
- Board members' completion of at least one annual continuing education course.

**FUTURE AREAS OF EXPLORATION**

Moving forward, the library will also explore its potential for becoming a lending center for critical items needed by residents, either by housing those items at the library, establishing a network of residents willing to loan items or identifying another viable method.

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