

Claverack Free Library

2018-2021 Strategic Plan

(Revised Trustee Copy, 9/18/2018)

Introduction

We are pleased to present the Claverack Free Library Strategic Plan, 2018-2021. This document is an update to the Strategic Plan approved by the Claverack Free Library Board of Trustees on July 14, 2015. It defines our uniqueness and identifies how the library will remain viable in the foreseeable future.

Committee Members

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Mission Statement

The Mission of the Claverack Library is to provide patrons with resources to become independent critical readers, thinkers and information users and to connect our community with each other and the world.

Our vision reflects the library's guiding principles. To deliver this promise, we rely on three outstanding resources: Our staff, our collections and our volunteers. Today's libraries are places where patrons connect with one another and with the world. They are cultural centers, gathering places for discussions and yes, still places where you will find books and access to a wide variety of resources.

Demographics

The Town of Claverack is located a few miles east of Hudson, New York. While it is truly difficult to establish the real origin of the name “Claverack” it is probable that it resides within a combination of the following explanations: According to one version, the name “Claverack” is a Dutch term, signifying a clover reach or fielding that may have been applied by Henry Hudson during his voyage upriver in 1609, noting vast fields of white clover covering the landscape. In a second version early mariners divided the Hudson River into raks or reaches, the distance a ship could sail in one day on its way from New Amsterdam (NYC) to Fort Orange (Albany). The mariners called this area of the Hudson River Claver Rak (or Reach) The word Claver referred to physical marks, extensive tall bare clay cliffs, that appeared on the landscape. And a third explanation is that early settler Jan VanHoesen purchased a large tract of land from the Indians in 1662 and shortly thereafter a settlement called Klauver Rachen, or Clover Reach, was established in the vicinity of today’s hamlet of Claverack.

Communities and locations in Claverack include:

Brick Tavern	A hamlet in the northwest corner of the town.
Churchtown	A hamlet on the south town line.
Claverack	The hamlet is in the western part of the town.
Hollowville	A hamlet southeast of Claverack hamlet.
Martindale	A hamlet by the east town line, by the Taconic State Pkwy.
Mellenville	A hamlet in the northwest part of the town, west of Philmont.
Philmont	An incorporated village in the northeast part of the town.
Red Mills	A location east of Claverack hamlet.

The Claverack Library is chartered to serve the inhabitants of the Town of Claverack (46.48 square miles), excluding the incorporated Village of Philmont, which has its own library. In addition, the library serves neighboring communities. The Taconic State Parkway passes through the town. The town is also bisected by Route 9H, a north-south corridor connecting the Town to Albany. The area is served by Amtrak and Metro North Railways and is two hours north of New York City and two and one half hours west of Boston, MA.

Changes since the 2010 Census are quite significant and will be noted in our Strategic Plan after the 2020 Census. More New York City residents have permanently moved into Claverack. Farming has changed and many new businesses are being developed within the community. The Town of Claverack adopted a Comprehensive Plan in April 2008 and updated their zoning laws Dec. 13, 2012.

Claverack is served by the Taconic Hills Central School District and the Hudson City School District, each of which incorporates a small school based library specific to the needs of its students. Nearby Columbia Greene Community College serves the region. The College’s library is specific to the programs it offers. Hawthorne Valley, a private Waldorf School in the nearby hamlet of Harlemville, also has a very small library that serves its school community.

The Strategic Plan

Our purpose is to define a strategy for The Claverack Free Library. We have continued to utilize a SWOT (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats) Analysis, originally developed for the 2015-2018 Strategic Plan, to help us in evaluating all areas of The Claverack Free Library and to assist us in developing a plan to make The Claverack Free Library viable for a greater number of our community members. Our plan empowers the library staff and the Board of Trustees to build on strengths, resolve weaknesses, exploit opportunities and avoid or minimize threats.

STRENGTHS

S1 The library is Available to Everyone

S2 Friendly and Courteous Staff

- The library offers a welcoming, clean, friendly and professional environment.
- Library staff assist not only with reading selection, but with computer use, wireless access, faxing and printing services.
- Dependent on volunteer availability, the Library Director arranges for home deliveries, which is a free service available on a short-term or long-term basis for library patrons who are unable to visit the library due to health or disability barriers.

S3 Inter-Library Loan through the Mid-Hudson Library System

- This cost effective service provides materials not owned by our library.
- Patrons have increased access to eBooks and eMagazines.
- Patrons can also learn languages through Mango Mobile Library Edition on their mobile devices.
- The Library Director continues to evaluate data and trends to help assess the needs of library users.

S4 Children's Programs

- The Library Director continues to build Children's Programs, to cultivate new patrons and library users.
- Library staff consistently evaluates current programs, adding additional support staff and volunteers as needed.
- The library staff continues to collaborate with the Philmont Library when possible.

S5 Young Adult Programs

- The Library Director has been able to offer more programs, including Battle of the Books and the Junior Engineering Program.
- Increased programming has led to the formation of the Teen Advisory Panel.

S6 Adult Programs

- The library provides varied programs related to the current library/community population. Recent programs have included “Estate Planning”, Summer Tai Chi on the Library Lawn, “Local Claverack History in Postcards”, “Local Resources for Substance Abuse and Prevention” as well as “Ticked-Off”, a program on tick-borne illnesses, held in the AB Shaw Fire House, presented in collaboration with Assemblymember Barretts’s office.

S7 Public Computer Center

- A high-speed internet connection allows the community to stay connected and the library to stay relevant.
- Technology support, software updates, virus filtering, etc. are provided free of charge by a knowledgeable team of volunteers.
- Patron tech support is provided by library staff.

S8 Positive Public Perception

- No late fees
- Extended borrowing periods
- Welcoming atmosphere

S9 Location of Library Building/Access to Outside Activities

- The library’s location at the crossroads of Route 9H and Route 23 is an asset (visibility, centrally located, well maintained roads, etc.)
- Benefits will continue until a decision is made regarding the status of the current building.

S10 Community Involvement in Library Programs

- There is large volunteer support from organizations such as AB Shaw and Churchtown Fire Companies, The Philmont Library, The Hudson Area Library, the Churchtown Dairy, Triform Community and The Won Dharma Center that assists us with special events such as “Book It”, the annual 5K Run/Walk and the semi annual Book Sales.

S11 Friends Group

- The Friends Group is a strong, robust and essential arm of The Claverack Free Library, formed in 2014 to augment library fundraising, arrange events and advocate for the library.
- The Friends Group will continue to recruit a vibrant active membership, which will enhance their efforts to support the library.
- The Board of Trustees will continue to engage and support the Friends Group, exploring with them ways to increase the Friends' effectiveness in supporting the library, which is critical as we move into the new library building.

S12 Communication

- The library staff utilizes Mail Chimp, Facebook, and Instagram to share news of library events. Meetings, programs and workshops are announced using local newspapers, signage and The Claverack Free Library website.

S13 New Library Construction

- The Building and Capital Campaign Committee has been created to manage completion of the new building project. A construction timeline has been presented to the Board.
- With the expertise of a local architect and a professional construction engineer, there is an active, fluid plan toward completing the building project.
- The Board of Trustees continues to avoid incurring debt in repurposing the former AB Shaw Firehouse as the new library.

S14 Policies and Procedures

- The ongoing progress to develop and obtain Board approval of Library Policies continues.
- The Library Director will continue to develop library procedures and share these procedures with the Board of Trustees.
- The library policy inventory exceeds that of the majority of libraries in the MHLS as well as a very high percentage of policies suggested by MHLS.

S15 Active Trustees and Friends of the Claverack Library

- Trustees and Friends of the Claverack Library share professional expertise by providing a variety of In-Kind services in areas that libraries would otherwise include in their operating budgets. Such services include (and are not limited to) creating and leading youth programs such as the Summer Junior Engineering and Battle of the Books; raising funds for the repurposing of the new building; professional accounting and bookkeeping responsibilities; maintenance of computer hardware and software, as well as internet and printer connectivity; building and much of the grounds maintenance; as well as creation and mailing of the semi annual newsletter.

WEAKNESSES

W1 Sense of Community Awareness

- Description: There continues to be limited awareness of the library, including the variety of its holdings, free 24 hour WiFi internet access, community programs as well as the new building project. There is an absolute need to increase our outreach to the local community. Within our community, there is a desire for people to connect with others in the library space and to have easy access to technology.
- Proposed Solution: The Library Director and trustees will brainstorm ideas to build library awareness. Also the new library building will provide space for community gatherings.

W2 Sensitive Library Data

- Description: Currently all financial information, including bill paying software, is held on the library Trustee's computer.
- Proposed Solution: If the library moves toward on-line bill paying, consideration will be given to housing that financial information and software on a separate secure computer.
- A policy to review records management (setting up a timetable for maintaining and purging donor cards and financial statements) should be created to better manage sensitive data.

W3 Library Data Held on Personal Computers Rather Than The Library Trustees' Computer

- Description: A fair number of trustees hold library related information, some of which is confidential (donor information), on their personal computers. While this situation provides trustees flexibility in managing library resources, it places the library in a precarious situation given the possibility of confidential information being lost or stolen. All library data should reside on a designated library computer.
- Proposed Solution: The Technology Committee will discuss and compare solutions for centralizing all data and information on the library staff computer, with additional log-in requirements for volunteers. The Technology Committee will report its findings to the Board of Trustees with plans for solutions, e.g. a workshop for trustees.

W4 Lack of Space

- Description: The Claverack Free Library is the third smallest library building of the eleven library buildings in Columbia County. It is important to recognize that the other libraries in the Mid-Hudson Library System have community rooms and staff offices. Recent interior cleaning effort has resulted in a semblance of more space. The need for additional space remains. There is a need for a larger work/reading area, large space dedicated to computer use and more shelf space. There is currently limited space for programs and community gatherings and no area to show movies. There is also limited "work area" space and no separate office space for the library director.

- Proposed Solution: Efforts to weed books, very successful to date, are ongoing. At this time little can be done to create more working space in the current building. Creating a community of patrons congregating and interacting requires relevant, useful, and flexible spaces, which is being addressed in the plan for the new building.

W5 Lack of Photographic Inventory and Storage of Historical Literature, Documents

- Description: The Library has a significant historical inventory. A complete inventory list, including photographs of all items is incomplete.
- Proposed Solution: A volunteer professional librarian is completing an inventory of significant historic holdings of the library. Future consideration will be given for proper storage and digitizing of materials for public access.

W6 Importance of Current Library Building

- Description: In 1998 the library building was listed on the National Register of Historic Places. There is a lack of awareness of the value of the current library building and its property as well as its historic significance to the library and the community at large.
- Proposed Solution: The Board of Trustees will continue to properly maintain the current building.

OPPORTUNITIES

O1 Library Director

- Description: The Library Director will continue to motivate, establish and maintain effective working relationships with associates, supervisors, volunteers, other community agencies and the public.
- Proposed Action: The Library Director will continue to expand collaboration with other libraries to offer a variety of programs that will appeal to a broad cross-section of the community.

O2 Chapter 414 Funding

- Description: The Library 414 funding campaigns for 2015 and 2017 to increase income from the Town of Claverack were successful. Continued tax payer support is crucial to the successful functioning of the library.
- Proposed Action: The Claverack Free Library Board of Trustees must continue to pursue a successful 414 campaign every other year, at a minimum, to offset anticipated increases in the cost to successfully manage the Library.

O3 Community Outreach

- Description: The library staff and trustees will continue to investigate methods of community outreach to grow attendance at library programs and functions.
- Proposed Action: Continue to develop an informative/interactive website. Expand the use of Mail Chimp and other forms of communication with the community.
- Create a program exit evaluation form to gather pertinent information to expand and improve programming. Examples: Create a column for attendees to list how they found out about the library event they are attending; ask attendees for input on future program offerings; have attendees rate the event they have attended.
- Continue to create flyers for programs to be placed in local businesses, as well as effective signage on Routes 9H and 23.
- New types of programs, more practical in nature, such as a local car maintenance program, presentations on various health issues, estate planning, shall be actively pursued to address topics that will broaden the scope of our program offerings, bring in new faces and possibly bring about new revenue streams.

O4 New Building in Process

- Description: Space limitation of the current library was a major reason for seeking a larger library space. Considerable work has been completed on repurposing the former A. B. Shaw Firehouse. Not only has community feedback on completed work been positive, but the community has voiced a positive attitude toward the repurposing effort and is eagerly awaiting its opening as the new library. The new building space will increase possibilities of increased library offerings. Consideration should be given not only how to attract more patrons to the new library building, but also how to have them extend their stay.
- Proposed Action: The current design plan identifies the spaces within the new library that will offer larger areas for community programs, which will continue to expand the value of the library to the people in our community. In order to change the view of the new library building from a 'place to visit' to a 'place to stay', the New Building Committee has planned space for providing additional services such as an area to offer refreshments; a gaming/music room, exhibition space, an area for quiet study and work; space for 'homework helpers' and 'technology helpers', as well as a maker space. It is also suggested that we explore the addition of parking spaces for recharging electric cars.
- Within a short distance of one of the busiest intersections in the county, opportunities exist for the library to entice visitors as a clearing house of local information. Partnership with and space for publications from the Town of Claverack, Columbia County Chamber of Commerce, Columbia County Tourism, tourism information for surrounding counties with a focus on the Capital District, etc. should be pursued. Not only will these entities benefit, we will have additional opportunities to increase visits to our library.

O5 Three-Year Planning Strategic Planning Committee

- Description: A regular review of the strategic plan will be an appropriate means of determining whether goals and objectives are being met and ensuring the ongoing relevance of the plan.
- Proposed Action: The Three-Year Strategic Planning Committee will report annually to the Board of Trustees on the implementation of the proposed solutions. In addition, the committee will review and revise the three-year plan each year, in March, to ensure that the plan is forward-looking and that it responds to new developments and makes the appropriate changes as needed.

O6 Additional Funding

- Description: Users of library services residing in towns adjacent to Claverack do not fund the library through town taxes.
- Proposed Action: Board members will attend town meetings of adjacent towns, provide data regarding town residents' use of the library and request funding.

O7 The New Building Financial Reconciliation of Income and Expenses

- Description: A comprehensive income and expense report, by year, beginning with the start of the Capital Campaign, was recently produced.
- Proposed Action: An itemized comprehensive income and expense report, in a clearly understood, agreed upon format, (detailed with categories of expenses and income) needs to be updated and reviewed for each monthly Board meeting until we are in the new building.

THREATS

T1 Public Misunderstanding of Library Finances

- Description: The public may not be aware of how the current library operations are funded or how construction of the new library is funded. Residents may also not fully understand how much of their tax dollars go to support the library, and how much the library depends on outside sources/fundraising events to generate enough income to pay for library operating expenses.
- Proposed Solution: The library web site and the semi annual newsletter should include the current annual budget and income sources, as well as the number of volunteers and volunteer hours, and in-kind services, which will translate to taxpayer monetary savings. A committee made up of both financial and communications committee members will investigate options for the manner in which this information will be disclosed to the community.
- Signage on the lawn should be visible to inform the public of Board meetings, which provide another avenue for the community to better understand the current state of library finances

T2 Lack of Parking

- Description: The library does not own the driveway and part of the parking lot between the school and the new building, but does have a right-of-way to this area. This space and the parking area owned by the library may not provide enough space for patron use when the new library is completed and open for business.
- Proposed Solution: The Board of Trustees continues to explore possible solutions to the parking situation.

T3 Lack of Local Business as a Support System

- Description: Many have a vision of/for a vibrant ‘Claverack Hamlet’, with the new library as an anchor demonstrating town vitality. In reality, businesses that help make the hamlet a lively part of a town’s identity are lacking.
- Proposed Solution: Engage with the town representatives to invest energy to make what is now basically a crossroads at the Route 9H/Route 23 intersection, an inviting space for businesses to successfully operate and for people to interact. Board members are encouraged to monitor projects that are proposed for the town of Claverack, not just the hamlet, and attend Town Zoning Board meetings and speak as a private citizen, on behalf of businesses interested in moving into any part of the town, particularly in the ‘hamlet’.

T4 Changing Demographics

- Description: In lieu of new census data (2020), the trustees must be cognizant of changing demographics in the community served by the Claverack Library.
- Proposed Solution: The Director, Trustees and staff will continue to audit the changing demographics of the community and design programs and services that address their needs.

T5 Digital Material

- Description: Use and demand for electronic forms of media continue to rise. The overall cost and licensing limits make it difficult for the library to meet this demand.
- Proposed Solution: An increased budget is necessary to expand the library’s digital inventory

T6 Book Sale Success Dependent on Future Use of Library Lawn

- Description: The Route 9H/Route 23 corner lot owned by the library is a treasure and a visible financial asset to the health of the library. It provides a clear view of the library, library signage, large tents set up for special events, children and adults on the lawn during library programs, and the book festival to motorists in a major intersection of Columbia County. The annual Spring and Fall book festivals are highlighted here because of the substantial income generated to offset library operating expenses.
- Proposed Solution: Possible sale or lease of the current library should include an easement for, at a minimum, use of the lawn for library functions.

T7 Condition of Current Building

- Description: The current building, a historically important building, requires constant attention to ensure a safe and healthy environment exists for all who enter the library.
- Proposed Solution: Every effort must be made to ensure the current library building remains a safe and healthy environment.

T8 Financing of New Building Construction

- Description: Generating financing of the new building construction has been a long and arduous task. The focus on funding the library as planned, will require continued state investment, hard work and effort as the new library building is completed.
- Proposed Solution: Great strides have been made to fund construction to date without incurring debt. The Board of Trustees must audit the status of funding that has been promised but not yet received and must continue seeking opportunities for new funding.

T9 Operating Cost of the New Library Building

- Description: At this time a cost analysis of what money it will take to operate the new library is necessary. The 2018 operating budget for the library's current smaller one floor building is \$115,000.
- Proposed Solution: A committee will be formed and given top priority to determine the cost to operate the library in the new building and to find ways to close the financial gap.

Guiding Principles

The Claverack Free Library Strategic Plan 2018-2021 adheres to the Guiding Principles as stated in the Claverack Free Library Strategic Plan 2015-2017. They are defined as:

READ—DISCOVER—LEARN—MEET—CONNECT

READ

Most people identify libraries with reading, and rightfully so. Our participation with the Mid-Hudson Library System provides our patrons access to more books than ever before. Additionally, a large selection of audio books, DVDs, and e-Books are also available to our community. Our broad goals include becoming our community's favorite place from which to borrow books, DVDs, and music.

DISCOVER

As with all libraries today, the Claverack Free Library offers technologies that provide connection to much more than printed material. Our computers, which provide access to material the world over, are in constant use. Discovery of endless subject matter is available at the Claverack Free Library. The Claverack Free Library is a source of free public access to computers and the Internet for many in our rural community for whom this is otherwise unavailable.

LEARN

The Claverack Free Library is a vital educational institution in our community for all ages, infancy through adulthood. Promoting learning for all ages is our business. Our children's programs introduce children to the world of books, reading and learning. The number of adult programs has increased in the recent past and is varied.

MEET

As a physical community presence, the Claverack Free Library has been a staple of the community's need to meet for social gatherings. It has been understood for some time now that a larger library space is needed to meet today's changing demand. Plans are in place and work has begun to move the library to a much larger building. The new library building will provide needed space for all populations including seniors, teens and young children to meet in a safe, neutral, and flexible environment. For example, teenagers and young adults will be able to meet in a comfortable place to do homework and find information for class assignments, as well as for social contact and group activities.

Additionally, consideration is being given to offer teen programs that enhance the library experience by, for example, offering poetry slams and musical performances, anime clubs, homework help, classes on SAT preparation and financial aid, media creation facilities, and gaming nights. The Claverack Free Library's focus on children will be enhanced. Story time and other events designed to educate, inform, and entertain children are extremely popular and highly valued. We recognize how these children's programs provide the opportunity for children to play together, enabling them to develop social skills from an early age. A separate space for children in the new library building will be provided where they are accepted and treated as worthy individuals. For adults, the new library building will provide meeting places for small or large groups, as well as programs such as a day time book club, tai chi, yoga, knitting and more.

CONNECT

Libraries today also act as cultural centers, gathering places for discussions, etc. When the larger library building opens, we will be able to provide an expanded and diverse range of community activities that will engage and connect members of the community. Furthermore, the new library building will cement the library's role as a unique symbol of the extent of a community's commitment to the informational, educational and cultural values it represents. This unique function, for which alternatives are difficult to find, will also help the community to connect.