



Connecting Our Community Since 1829

The
Three-Year Strategic Plan
2022 - 2025

*A Roadmap for
Growth and Sustainability*

Adopted by the Board of Trustees
February, 15, 2022

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Introduction

We are pleased to present the Claverack Free Library's Strategic Plan, 2022-2025. An update of the Strategic Plan approved by the Claverack Free Library's board of trustees on September 18, 2018, this plan strives to define our unique position of service to the community and lays the groundwork for sustainability and growth well into the future.

The 2022-2025 Strategic Plan reflects two unique circumstances that library leadership faced over the past two years: the opening of the new library building and the COVID-19 pandemic.

The new Claverack Free Library opened its doors on October 26, 2019, in the repurposed former A.B. Shaw Firehouse. The new library – with 11,000 square feet dedicated to the collection, meeting and cultural spaces, and general services – is nearly seven times larger than the former library, a wooden frame building next door. The new facility is fully A.D.A.-compliant and offers a vast range of possibilities for growth of services and outreach.

The other notable circumstance came in the early months of 2020, with the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic. Staff and volunteers were beginning to settle into the new building when, like nearly every similar institution following public health directives, the library closed its doors for three months. With guidance from the Mid-Hudson Library System, the staff stepped up to find creative ways to safely deliver the essential services the library's patrons had come to rely on for work, edification, and entertainment. During this difficult time, the director, library assistant, and clerks were able to continue to work providing curbside pickup of materials, virtual programming and meetings, all of which offered a lifeline for the many people who found themselves confined at home.

As of this writing, the library has reopened to pre-pandemic level operating hours and patron visits have reached an all-time high. This Strategic Plan notes the budgeting and management challenges the staff and board must meet to grow into the new building,

provide funding for expanded staff, and protect and make the most of the resources we now have.

In an effort to gather opinions and broader points of view, the library board participated in *Turning Outward*, an initiative created by the Harwood Institute and led by the Mid-Hudson Library System. From March to November 2021, a committee made up of staff, trustees, and Friends of the Library, met with small and diverse groups from the community to gather their vision of the kind of community they wished to live in and how the library can help facilitate and coordinate new ideas and programs. The input from more than 60 participants helped to inform this plan.

The 2022-2025 Strategic Plan, specifically the results of targeted actions, will be discussed, measured, and evaluated each year in June at the Annual Meeting of the board of trustees.

Mission

Our purpose is to provide resources to encourage intellectual, cultural, and social engagement through literacy and independent thinking.

Vision

The Claverack Free Library will deliver pathways for the pursuit and discernment of truth through knowledge to enable every member of the community to better understand one another and the world.

Values

The Claverack Free Library values free and open access to information through its collections and services. We are committed to connecting our patrons to the ideas, information, and materials they wish to explore in a friendly and confidential manner.

The following are the library's core values:

- Service to and engagement with the community
- Intellectual freedom
- Equity, diversity, and inclusion
- Innovation and adaptability

The Strategic Plan

Strengths

S1 - Library Staff

- Provides patron-centered, personalized help
- Strong leadership by the director
- Is friendly, professional, creative, and adaptable
- Is familiar with the many diverse services offered

S2 - Board and Volunteer Support

- A committed board of trustees, dedicated to sustainability and retaining volunteers with professional expertise
- A robust Friends organization host and help with events and programs
- Improved policies and procedures are in place

S3 - Library Facility

- Uniquely located in the hamlet center
- Fully A.D.A.-compliant/up-to-date communication technology
- Offers ample meeting space available for public use: study/workspaces/cultural events
- A neutral gathering point in the community
- Is welcoming to all ages and backgrounds

S4 - Patron Services

- A vast collection of both print and digital material
- Resource sharing through the Mid-Hudson Library System
- Varied and unique programs, offered to those with diverse interests and backgrounds
- High-speed Internet access, device sharing, and technology support
- 24-hour free Internet access from parking lot
- Electric vehicle charging station
- Self-checkout of loan materials

S 5 - Financial Strength

- No long-term debt
- Library income sustains our current operations
- A commitment to maintain a reserve fund to use for future capital projects and for long-term sustainability
- Annual independent financial oversight (through audit or review)
- Strong development initiatives
- An active and growing Friends of the Library organization that supports the annual operating budget

S 6 - Historical Standing

- Library in continual operation since 1829
- The dedicated local history room
- Retention and improvement of historic original building
- Outstanding renovation and adaptive re-use of iconic firehouse

S 7 - Organizational relationships

- Membership in Mid-Hudson Library System, offering:
 - training materials/programs for staff and trustees
 - interlibrary loan
 - legal and policy updates
 - technology support
- Collaboration with county and regional libraries
- Strong working relationships with elected officials
- Service area encompasses two school districts
- Connection to other civic organizations

S 8 - Institutional/Internal

- Technology, data systems, digital security, and e-rate reimbursement
- All non-circulation processes including accounting, financial reporting, and development have been moved from board members/volunteers' home computers to library computers
- A group of volunteers serves on a standing technology committee to maintain the library's computers and non-MHLS-related data and advise the board on necessary safety measures, upgrades, and other considerations

Challenges

C 1 - Library Staffing

- Growing staff and expanding competencies
- Budgeting increased compensation

C 2 - Board and Volunteer Support

- Recruitment and retention of a diverse representation of trustees and other volunteers
- No process and procedures in place for orientation of new trustees and no standard exit-interview process
- Unclearly delineated responsibilities of the roles of staff, volunteers, and trustees

C 3 - Facilities

- Uncertain costs of maintaining the new library
- Routine maintenance of and improvements to buildings
- Need for additional furnishings
- Shortage of parking
- Drainage in the parking lot
- Management of the former library

C 4 - Patron Services

- Meeting evolving needs of the community
- Provide clear and consistent communication of library services
- Uncertain supply chain availability of collection materials
- Matching operating hours/staffing/budget with patron demand

C 5 - Financial Strength

- Assuring financial sustainability
- Mounting regular 414 funding initiatives
- Uncertainty of continued donations
- Uncertainty of broader financial conditions
- Accurate public perception and understanding of sources of library funding

C 6 - Institutional/Internal

- Maintain and utilize a comprehensive calendar of all library programs, events, and meetings
- No schedule for reviewing and renewing vendor contracts
- Maintaining and coordinating technology, data systems, and digital security:
 - No single person currently has access to, or a working knowledge of all the various software programs that reside on library computers
 - Library staff working at the circulation desk have no physical access to programs or data stored elsewhere in the library without leaving the desk
 - All accounting, financial, and development/donor data reside onsite without a routine backup plan

C 7 - A lack of diversity in the library's service area

Actions

A 1 - Staff Development

- Increase staff hours and compensation
- Encourage staff training and professional growth
- Seek paid professional individuals for:
 - programming planning and implementation
 - building management and maintenance
 - technology coordination and database management

A 2 - Board and Volunteer Support

- Actively seek potential diverse board members, maintain an active list of candidates
- Regularly review, assess, and revise changes to by-laws regarding board terms
- Create a formal orientation plan for new trustees including assigning each new member a mentor and arranging new members meeting with all committee chairs
- Create a template for exit interviews by trustees to solicit insight regarding their experience on the board
- Continue development of the Friends organization as a fundraising arm
- Examine, define, and assign various roles now performed by trustees and staff

A 3 - Facilities and Operations

- Encourage broader use of community spaces by outside organizations by building relationships and collaboration with other organizations
- Hire person to oversee maintenance of buildings systems, improvements, and regularly scheduled inspections
- Improve drainage/water management in the parking lot
- Work toward more energy-efficient building and environmental sustainability
- Improve exterior lighting
- Add cleaning services as needed (revisit building use policies)
- Expand parking spaces

A 4 - Patron Services

- Expand library reach:
 - add operating hours
 - increase services and programming to meet diverse and changing patron needs, specifically, diversity, equity, and inclusion programming and STEM-related programming
- Continue to add multicultural materials to the collection
- Develop a marketing and communications plan to engage multiple audiences such as patrons, town government, and other non-profit organizations
- Design and implement consistent contact through new marketing/PR efforts employing the website, email communication, and media releases
- Utilize MHLS Outreach program
- Better serve the home-bound and technology-limited
- Explore extending the library's chartered area to include the town of Taghkanic
- Assure consistent representation Taghkanic and Claverack town meetings

A 5 - Financial Strength/Sustainability

- Annually assess the climate for a vote on public funding referenda (Chapter 414)
- Research and secure new grant sources
- Retain original library as income generator
- Expand donor base
- Grow sources of additional funding from the residents and town government of Taghkanic
- Hold regular all price-point fundraising events
- Recruit new trustees with financial expertise

- Streamline coordination with Friends for fundraising initiatives and support their growth
- Consistently provide detailed information about library funding in communications through the annual report, newsletters, and website

A 6 - Historical Standing

- Grow interest in the library's local history collection
- Digitize existing historical materials
- Seek funding sources for archival storage
- Explore research project into the local indigenous population
- Plan for future expansion to include other collections

A 7 - Institutional/Internal

- Maintain and follow the comprehensive calendar of all library functions, including events, meetings, scheduled building maintenance, and regularly review all library contracts
- Technology, data systems, and digital security:
 - develop a procedural manual for staff to include the various administrative functions residing on the library's computers
 - purchase off-site/cloud storage and backup for all non-MHLS systems and data
- Continue to improve collaborative relationship with town of Claverack government and surrounding towns and agencies. Work together on infrastructure improvements and facilities sharing
- Foster diversity by:
 - adopting a DEI policy and displaying it on library website
 - promoting an understanding of cultural differences through programs and the collection
 - establishing an inclusive intern program
 - recruit paid interns through Columbia-Greene Community College's Office of Career Success & Experiential Learning.

Addenda

The following attachments serve to inform the above actions and will be updated in subsequent plans.

Demographics

HISTORY

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 Native Americans in 1662 and shortly thereafter a settlement called Klaver Rachen, or Clover Reach, and is now known as Claverack.

TODAY

The township of Claverack has a population of 6,058 (per the 2020 U.S. Census) and encompasses 48 square miles. Communities within Claverack include:

Churchtown, on the south town line; the hamlet of Claverack, in the western part of town and the original location of Columbia County's County Seat; Hollowville, southeast of Claverack hamlet; Martindale, on the east town line, on either side of the Taconic State Parkway; Mellenville, in the northwest part of the town, west of Philmont; and Philmont, an incorporated village in the northeast part of the town.

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 municipal library. In addition, the library serves neighboring communities. The Taconic State Parkway passes through the town. The town is also bisected by State Route 9H, a north-south corridor connecting the Town to Albany. The area is served by Amtrak and is two hours north of New York City and two-and-one-half hours west of Boston.

In response to the COVID-19 pandemic, more second-home owners have permanently moved to Claverack, many of them from the New York City metropolitan area. There are fewer traditional fruit and dairy farms, but more organic and specialty farms and distilleries. New businesses are being developed within the community. The Town of Claverack adopted a Comprehensive Plan in April 2008 and periodically updates their zoning laws; additional information is available on the town website: townofclaverack.com

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 is open to the public and offers an extensive collection, including books, children's books, DVD's, and periodicals of general interest. Hawthorne Valley, a private Waldorf School in nearby Harlemville, also has a very small library that serves its school community.

Turning Outward: Visioning Claverack's Community

During 2021, the Claverack Free Library turned outward to the community through a series of conversations to help better align residents' wants and needs with library goals. Led by a team of library staff, trustees, and Friends of the library – with guidance from the Mid-Hudson Library System – the Turning Outward initiative is a step-by-step process developed by the Harwood Institute for Public Innovation and offered through the American Library Association.

Turning Outward encourages open discussion and collaboration to better understand our communities and to put community aspirations into long-range planning.

Throughout the course of the summer more than 60 people participated in these conversations, with teens and senior citizens, new neighbors and longtime residents, parents and single family members all sharing their visions of what they'd like their community to look like, what changes might be made, and who is trusted to lead.

There was a striking similarity in responses:

Overwhelmingly, people expressed the desire to live in a welcoming, diverse, and walkable community, one that offers places to gather and recreational opportunities such as parks and

common-use trails. They want a community that has more well-paying jobs and affordable housing to encourage younger people to remain where they grew up or move into the area.

As for concerns, most everyone identified a need for a true town center, a place to meet and make friends. They also noted the lack of racial and cultural diversity and the absence of opportunities to connect with those of differing views and opinions. Another common concern is the critical shortage of volunteers for vital community organizations.

More specific concerns include a lack of access to broadband, preservation of farmland and protection of the environment, no public transportation, isolation of older residents, and no easily accessed listing of community events, organizations, and activities.

Actions to address these concerns include:

- delivering broadband to everyone in the town to facilitate education and working from home
- collaborating with government to lower speed limits and provide crosswalks and sidewalks
- updating the Town's Comprehensive Plan to assure smart planning and zoning
- identifying parks and trails for public use
- creating a centralized community bulletin board and town-wide newsletter
- holding a volunteer fair to showcase the many ways residents can become involved and serve our town

It was agreed that a collaborative effort between our elected officials and local organizations will engender the trust necessary to bring about change for the better in our community.

The Claverack Library is committed to serving as a catalyst to bring people together in Claverack and the surrounding area and welcomes everyone to learn more by contacting director@claveracklibrary.org.

Annual Prioritized Facility Plan

BACKGROUND:

In October 2019, the new Claverack Free Library and community space opened – free of debt – in the former A.B. Shaw firehouse next door to its former building. The renovated 11,000

square foot building is now fully ADA compliant, with built-in hearing assistance, a large print reader, an elevator, electric doors and other accommodations. A years-long capital campaign raised \$2.8 million through 750 contributions from local businesses, private foundations, and

private donors, as well as grants from the State Aid for Library Construction funding, SAM, and the NY Economic Development Program. Several improvement projects are necessary to assure the safety of patrons and staff, increase access for the visually impaired and provide for potential disaster recovery.

Construction is currently underway to refit the former library building to allow the library to partner with the Town of Claverack to temporarily house the Town Court and other town offices during construction of a new town hall. The rent from this arrangement will cover the cost of renovations, which include a new entrance with full accessibility and a new bathroom and septic system. In the future, these improvements will allow the library to rent the building at market rate to generate income to support the library's annual operating budget. *(Note: No funds from DLD will be applied to the former library building.)*

The stated goal throughout is to employ local contractors and materials suppliers (as well as minority and women-owned businesses) to complete these projects at the lowest responsible cost and to incorporate green energy components whenever possible. In addition to adding energy-efficient HVAC systems in the new library, two electric vehicle charging plugs have been installed for public use and a NYSERDA Energy Audit has been conducted.

FACILITY PRIORITIES:

TOP THREE SPECIFIC PROJECTS WITH ESTIMATED OR CONTRACTED COSTS (2021/22):

Project 1: Emergency Generator – cost installed - \$28,000

Project 2: Lighting Upgrades

- 1) Additional lighting in community room - \$6,000
- 2) Solar lighting for safety in main parking lot - \$9,000

Project 3: Exterior Work

- 1) Improved parking lot drainage - \$35,000
- 2) Roof access for safety of maintenance - \$7,000
- 3) Expanded parking on library property - \$25,000

Approved by the Board of Trustees, May 18, 2021

Members of the Three-Year Strategic Plan Committee

Mame Bradley

Audre Higbee

Stephen King

Julie Nack

Jennifer Post

Susan Roberts

Thea Schoep