**Gloucester Lyceum and Sawyer Free Library**

**Strategic Plan FY2020 – FY2024**

**Executive Summary**

Universally, participants in this strategic planning process were passionate about Gloucester, lovingly describing its quirky character, community ties, quality of life and especially the abundance of natural amenities and scenic beauty. They had a very strong sense of belonging, only desiring to increase their connections to place and people through more venues and vehicles to participate in community.

Participants were very supportive and enthusiastic about the library and held positive views for the vital role it plays in the community. It was described in various thematic terms as a “Secular Sanctuary,” an “equalizer: free – belonging to no *one* group,” a “community center: connecting Gloucester to itself,” an “access point to the world” of knowledge. They also shared aspirational desires for a library that was spacious, welcoming, comfortable, and inviting; respecting the past while meeting the technological and informational demands of an evolving community. People want a library that reflects themselves and their community values.

In the final analysis, the attributes of Place, Belonging and Connection are foundational values and desires of the Gloucester community. And Community is paramount. People care deeply about their community, history and institutions, and they are hopeful for a future in which diversity is embraced, children are safe and educated, and adults have opportunities to sustain both home and work lives. As a civic, egalitarian space, the library is a hub of their intellectual and communal lives. It is the community’s center for connection, access, and learning.

**Gloucester Lyceum and Sawyer Free Library**

**Strategic Plan FY2020 – FY2024**

**Vision**

To foster the values of place, belonging, and connection in the Gloucester community.

**Mission**

To be a place of learning, innovation, and creativity, to nurture and strengthen the community.

**Goals**

* Align library assets to inspire learning, drive development, grow social capital, and create opportunities.
* Provide access to content.
* Ensure the long-term sustainability of the public library.
* Cultivate leadership.

**Approved by the Board of Trustees on September 25, 2018**

**About This Plan**

A unique approach to strategic planning for a public library was devised to achieve the best result possible. There were three separate, distinct groups directing the process to create a 360° view of the community about what matters, is valued and needed. From this comprehensive view, the strategic direction and the role of the library in Gloucester’s future emerged.

The goal for the Community Strategic Planning Committee (CSPC) was to engage as many of members of the Gloucester community as possible and to listen to them. The Community Strategic Planning initiative invited the Gloucester Community to provide insight and input for the Gloucester Lyceum and Sawyer Free Library’s 2020-2024 Strategic Plan. The Library Director, asked the CSPC to “think beyond the usual” and employ an appreciative, open-inquiry approach to engage a representative sample of the population for feedback about the values, sense of connection and desires that motivate the community and, from this data, extrapolate recommendations for the library to innovate and evolve to become a hub for community, connection, access and learning in the heart of Gloucester.

CSPC formulated and developed an effective and extensive outreach campaign, branded thinkGloucester, to build awareness and engage community participation through a range of market research methods. It devised three primary research questions that synthesize to: 1) What residents’ value about Gloucester; 2) What they envision for its future; and 3) How the library might sustain these aspirations. A survey was designed, launched, and tabulated, focus groups were facilitated by Gloucester Conversations, Wellspring House, and Committee members, and interviews were conducted resulting in over 700 participants.

The goal for the Board of Trustees was a thought-provoking process to deepen the relationship between members of the Board of Trustees and connect with our shared purpose and values. The Board clarified their personal values; identified the values of the library; drafted a vision, mission, and goals for the Board; and developed a set of attributes to be used to recruit new library trustees.

The Assistant Library Director led a staff working group in a process of research about the community – demographics, assets, and trends and the trends in the library profession as a means of understanding the community and its needs and developing a new service model for the library. The entire staff engaged in a SOAR (Strengths, Opportunities, Aspirations, Results) exercise as part of this process.

**Gloucester’s Story**

Gloucester’s proximity to the ocean, significant open space, and rich historic and artistic institutions are important assets. There is a collective a sense of nostalgia for the ”ideal” past. However, the community is changing in many significant ways.

In general, the population is white, English-speaking, declining, and aging. The school-age population is diminishing. Persons over 65 now account for more than one-sixth of the total, well above the state average. Gloucester is projected to lose 15.76% of its population over the next twenty years. New immigrants, a small, but fast-growing minority, are contributing to an already culturally diverse city.

Gloucester is considered a Gateway City - targeted for increased state investment because of below average incomes and adult education levels. The median household income in Gloucester is $61,505, significantly below the state medium of $68,563 and the Essex County average of $69,068. Wealth is situated disproportionally in the neighborhoods of Lanesville, Magnolia, Annisquam, and East Gloucester. Each have approximately twice the average household income of Downtown Gloucester. Ten percent (10%) of the adult population lacks a high school diploma or an equivalent.

Technology is gaining on Fishing-related employment, the city’s historic economic base. Education, Healthcare, and Social Assistance is the largest sector of employment at roughly 25%. Manufacturing, led by Technology and including Food Processing, employs about a quarter of the labor force and accounts for about half the city’s total household income. The balance of local jobs is in Food and Beverage and Tourism-related businesses. Many of these are low-paying, part-time or seasonal. About a quarter of the labor force commutes more than thirty minutes each way to work, twice the number of a generation ago. There has been an influx of sophisticated businesses and individuals working from home that rely on high-speed broadband access. This trend has been the impetus for the CoWork Gloucester initiative.

The educational needs of residents include access to good public schools, development of life literacies: English language – reading and writing, computational, financial, heath, and technology, opportunities for vocational skill training and retooling, and support for life-long, participatory learning activities.

Community resiliency and wellness are on the minds of many. There is particular concern about the impact of the opioid crisis on individuals, families, and the community. The bottom line is the people of Gloucester care about each other and rally around those in need.

The region and the City have some very successful, stand-out community organizations that are making a difference by addressing some of the region’s most serious needs: food security, affordable childcare, educational support, economic and workforce development, and affordable housing.

Important to the entire community is the environment. People want to enjoy, sustain, preserve and protect the natural assets of the green spaces, beaches, and harbor. They are interested in becoming better stewards of these resources.

The arts and culture scene is very strong with museums, an active theatre and arts colony, and two state-designated cultural districts. The possibilities for expanding the positive creative economy are many with placemaking, affordable live / work space for artists, and preservation and celebration of local history and archives.

**Changing Roles of Public Libraries and Librarians:**

Most people think about the library as a quiet place with books, a nice-to-have amenity. They assume the library will always be there for those who want to use it. But more is required and should be expected for the community. The value of the library in the 21st century is in its assets – people, place, and platform. Each is essential to identifying and meeting the community’s needs.

* Library as people – librarians are members of the community who help identify and solve community problems by offering services shaped to best meet local needs.
* Library as place – where the community works, meets, shares and creates; all functions transcend the boundaries of the building’s walls.
* Library as platform – central hub for learning, participation, and community connections with a different kind of access structure, distribution infastructure, more sophisticated analytics, and interoperability for scaling and facilitation of innovation than the library of the 20th century.

Librarians are stewards of the community’s resources: expertise, capital, ideas, spaces, software, data, experiences, services, and / or stories. They are partners with the community through proactive, transformative social engagement for learning and knowledge creation. Librarians work to build human capital, relationships, and knowledge networks in the community.

The library provides easy connections to Wi-Fi and high-speed broadband for mobile devices. There are technology-centric spaces for co-working, collaboration, and making, large spaces for children and teens, and meeting and activity rooms of different sizes to accommodate public events and performances. There is transparency among spaces.

Citizens are engaged in the business of making their personal and civic identities. Communities are being shaped in nontraditional ways by social media, based on mutual interests with networks being the dominant social organization. The library’s collections are more about locally produced knowledge and resources in which the true collection is the community – its talent, expertise, and aspirations.

The library Is a key partner in sustaining the educational, economic, and civic health of the community during a time of dramatic change. Knowledge is no longer stable and employment is transient with skills quickly becoming obsolete. The library meets the demand for continual renewal and adaptation of skills based on and in response to changing circumstances and amplifies the impact through the community members they empower.

**Addenda**

1. Strategic Plan Contributors
2. thinkGloucester Engagement Project Report July 2018
3. Staff Strategic Planning Recommendations June 2018
4. Library Trends as Related to Gloucester Demographic Trends Summary
5. A Strategic Plan for the Board of Trustees July 2018
6. Update on the Strategic Plan FY2014 - FY2019
7. Core Principles and Roles of Libraries and Librarians
8. Library Building Program February 2016

**Sources**

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*The New Librarianship Field Guide,* R. David Lankes, 2016

*Public Libraries in Massachusetts: An Evolving Ecosystem,* Sasaki, Spring 2018

*Rising to the Challenge: Re-Envisioning Public Libraries,* The Aspen Institute, October 2014