



SHREWSBURY PUBLIC LIBRARY STRATEGIC PLAN FOR FISCAL YEARS 2025–2029



Submitted by:



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Shrewsbury Public Library

Strategic Plan for Fiscal Years 2025–2029

TABLE OF CONTENTS

- INTRODUCTION 3**
 - PURPOSE OF THIS STRATEGIC PLAN..... 3
- THE PLANNING PROCESS 4**
 - STRATEGIC PLANNING ADVISORY COMMITTEE..... 4
 - COMMUNITY FEEDBACK GATHERING ACTIVITIES 5
 - ADDITIONAL PLANNING INPUT..... 7
- WHAT WE LEARNED 7**
- OUR PLAN 8**
 - COMMUNITY VISION STATEMENTS 8
 - VISION STATEMENT 9
 - MISSION STATEMENT 9
 - CORE VALUES STATEMENTS 9
 - STRATEGIC PILLARS AND GOALS 9
 - ANNUAL ACTION PLANS 11
 - MEASURING AND COMMUNICATING OUR PROGRESS 12
- PLAN APPROVAL 12**
- DIRECTOR’S ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS 12**
- DIRECTOR’S FINAL THOUGHTS 12**
- APPENDICES..... 13**

INTRODUCTION

Purpose of this Strategic Plan

The Shrewsbury Public Library's Strategic Plan covering fiscal years 2020-24 was developed immediately after the building's renovation and expansion project was completed. It guided us as we planned programs and services for residents eager to enjoy the new facility. We saw usage numbers surge and remain steady as we kept pace with the demand for more programs for people of all ages.

In March 2020, when the COVID-19 pandemic mandated that buildings be closed, we scrambled to provide alternative services and repurposed the facility to create a no-contact, self-service holds pickup area. Our staff pivoted to virtual programs, including live-streaming story times on Facebook, posting instructional videos on YouTube, offering take-home crafts, etc. Despite the disruption caused by the pandemic, we continued to use our annual Action Plan as a roadmap to serve the community.

In 2021, as COVID restrictions eased, we gradually shifted to in-person programming. By 2022, our usage numbers compared favorably to pre-COVID numbers. It was apparent that community members loved and supported the Library.

The last three years demonstrated to me, Library trustees, and staff the value the community places on the Library. So, with renewed energy and vigor, the trustees embarked on a project to develop a new strategic plan for fiscal years 2025-30.

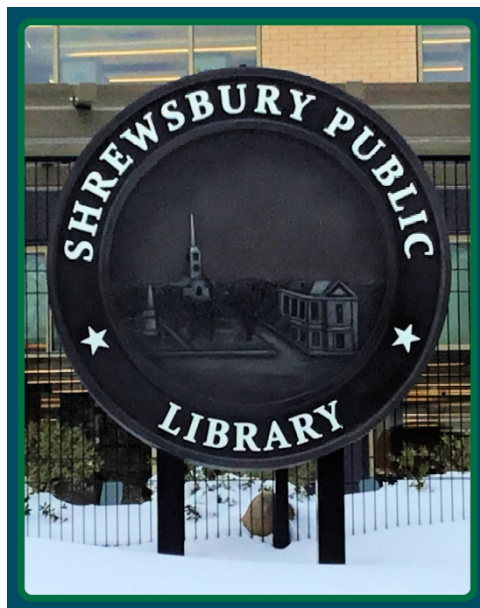
The goals for our planning project were to:

1. Envision the role of the Library during a time of technological shifts and increased challenges to libraries; and
2. Set a course for equitable growth, change, and excellence for the future.



Many individuals and groups shared their ideas and participated in passionate discussions and conversations about the Library's role.

We are keenly aware that the ways people access information is constantly changing, and librarians, as information professionals, must provide access to information in various formats and be ready to embrace new trends in librarianship.





THE PLANNING PROCESS

The Library viewed the process of developing a Strategic Plan as an opportunity to hear from our primary stakeholders—Shrewsbury residents.

After conferring with other MA library directors and receiving glowing recommendations about her, we selected Barbara Alevras of Sage Consulting Services as the consultant who would facilitate our strategic planning process.

In August 2022, the Library Director and consultant launched the planning process by identifying what we wanted to learn from the community and how to engage as many community members and demographic groups as possible.

In addition, we developed a project schedule with a timeline of activities that supported our mid-July target date to submit the Strategic Plan to the Massachusetts Board of Library Commissioners (MBLC). See *Appendix A—SPL Strategic Planning Project Flowchart* for details.

Strategic Planning Advisory Committee

In September 2022, we invited 15 community members to serve on the Strategic Plan Advisory Committee (SPAC). The SPAC was tasked with providing input and advice regarding activities related to developing the Library's Strategic Plan.

Committee members represented diverse community constituencies, including Library staff and volunteers, local businesses, non-profit organizations, school personnel and students, town government and committees, and miscellaneous demographic groups (various age groups, backgrounds, occupations, parents, etc.).

Our SPAC 2022-23 members were:

- **Noreen Camerato**, Retired Kindergarten Teacher
- **Amith Chinthapati**, Student, St. John's High School
- **Michelle Conlin**, Shrewsbury Select Board
- **Ashish Cowlagi**, India Society of Worcester
- **Chris DeLauder**, Town Conservation Commission
- **Louise Garone**, Parent and DEI Task Force
- **Milind Kanitkar**, Parent; Town Finance Committee; and DEI Task Force

- **Christina Manos**, Director, English Language Education Department, Shrewsbury Schools
- **Matthew McDonough**, Library Patron
- **Karen Quintana**, Founder, Aprende Spanish Immersion Preschool (Shrewsbury)
- **Vanessa Ramos**, Outreach Coordinator, Shrewsbury Youth and Family Services
- **David Snowden**, Assistant Town Manager
- **Tuyen Truong**, Library Staff
- **Rajesh Velagapudi**, Parent and DEI Task Force



SPAC members attended three meetings in which they: 1) brainstormed community engagement ideas; 2) participated in a community visioning exercise; 3) reviewed community feedback highlights and trends, and 4) provided valuable feedback regarding key strategic plan components, like the mission statement, vision statement, core values, and our strategic framework.

The SPAC's community visioning exercise results are presented in *Appendix K—SPL Community Vision Statement Results Report 2022*.

Community Feedback Gathering Activities

To better understand the community's needs and assess the Library's performance and value to current and potential patrons, we conducted feedback-gathering activities from fall 2022 into early 2023.

The activities encouraged community members to share their ideas and provide feedback on what they want the Library to focus on and provide over the next five to ten years. Residents were asked to assess the Library's current offerings and services and to share their ideas regarding future community needs.



In addition to conducting the SPAC's Community Visioning Exercise, our community feedback-gathering activities included:

- **Community Survey** (802 respondents): A comprehensive marketing plan was developed to make the survey accessible to everyone in the community. The survey was available in hard copy and digital formats, in English, Spanish, and Chinese languages, and was promoted aggressively in multiple formats on multiple platforms (email, social media, flyers, etc.).



We were very pleased that the 2022 survey yielded 802 responses, including 140 hard-copy responses and 2 Mandarin responses. (see *Appendix E—SPL Community Survey Highlights Report 2022*)

- **Focus Groups** (43 participants): In January 2023, we conducted three focus groups for adults and one for teens.
 - **Adults** (24 participants): We asked participants nine questions related to assessing current Library offerings, identifying potential future enhancements, and brainstorming local, national, and international issues the Library should be prepared to address during the Plan's five-year term. Five to ten community members attended each focus group. (see *Appendix F—SPL Focus Group Summary Report 2023*)
 - **Teens**: On January 23, 2023, a teen focus group with 19 Teen Advisory Board members was conducted by Library staff. We gathered feedback and ideas regarding the Library's teen space, programs, and marketing activities, as well as information regarding their volunteer interests and current issues important to teens. (see *Appendix G—SPL Teen Focus Group Summary Report 2023*)



- **Strengths, Opportunities, Aspirations, and Results (SOAR) Exercises** (33 participants): Staff, the Board of Trustees, Foundation Board members, and Friends of SPL board members' input was sought through SOAR exercises that were conducted in October 2022. Two SOAR exercises were conducted for staff, and one combined session was conducted with each Board's members. (see *Appendix H—SPL SOAR Exercise Summary Results Report 2022*)

To complete our user needs assessment, the consultant helped: 1) compile the data gathered; 2) analyze the feedback received; and 3) identify, summarize, and prioritize key themes, ideas, and trends. She then assisted us as we developed our vision statement, mission statement, strategic pillars, and multi-year strategic goals.



Focus Group Participants: What Are The First 3 Words You Think of When You Think of the Library?

Additional Planning Input

After gathering subjective input from community members, we compiled hard data about community demographics and trends. We also collected information related to key Library activities. These statistics are summarized and presented in *Appendix B—Shrewsbury Community Profile 2023* and *Appendix C—Shrewsbury Public Library Profile FY 2022*.



WHAT WE LEARNED

It was very heartening to learn that residents have an overwhelmingly positive image of the Library, appreciate the beautiful facility and the great resources available, feel welcomed by efficient and knowledgeable staff, enjoy programs offered by librarians, and generally believe the Library is a vital part of the community.

Community members contributed hundreds of new ideas for collections, programs, services, and improvements to our physical space, which will be considered as we develop our annual Action Plans.

Staff feedback was also overwhelmingly positive regarding general working conditions and reasons they love working at the Library. They provided numerous ideas for improving the work culture and ways to enhance the physical space and collections.

Trustees, Foundation Board members, and Friends of the SPL board members also shared their ideas for enhancing the Library's space, resources, and services.



OUR PLAN

Community Vision Statements

The Library's fifteen-person strategic planning advisory committee brainstormed a series of vision statements reflecting the ideal Shrewsbury and prioritized the vision statements to identify those the Library can best support and positively impact.

Following are their top two community vision statements:

- Shrewsbury is an inclusive, welcoming, family-friendly community that values diversity, kindness, and citizen and civic engagement, cultivating community connections for informed, civic-minded residents at all stages of life.
- Shrewsbury supports strong, strategic partnerships that strengthen the community, and uses diverse channels to inform and engage new and long-term residents of all ages to encourage accountable, collaborative, transparent government that enhances public trust and encourages respectful citizen involvement.

Appendix K—SPL Community Vision Statement Results Report 2022 presents the full community visioning exercise results.

Vision Statement

We democratize access to unlimited knowledge, introduce innovative technology, and provide state-of-the-art communal spaces for everyone to pursue their goals.

Mission Statement

We empower the community by providing a welcoming space, engaging programming, and access to informational resources and technology that support the recreational and educational needs of all users.

Core Values Statements

We are committed to:

- Providing excellent customer service
- Protecting intellectual freedom
- Safeguarding users' privacy
- Challenging censorship
- Upholding diversity, equity, inclusion, and belonging principles

Strategic Pillars and Goals

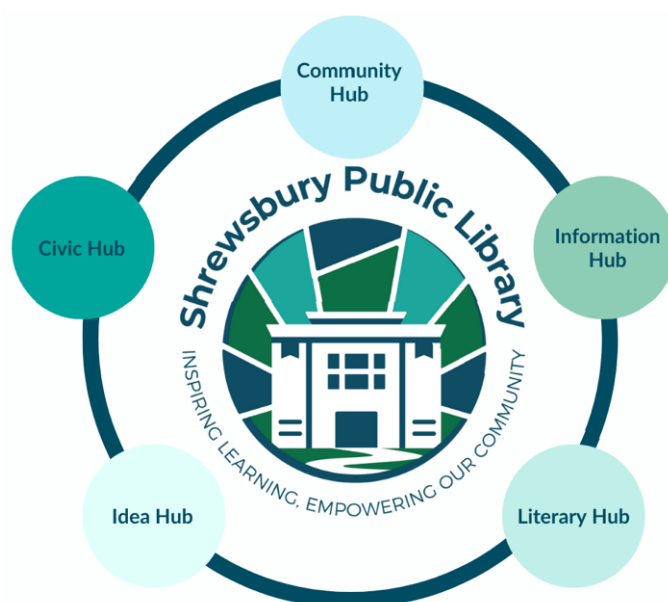
This Plan's strategic framework has broadly defined strategic pillars and goals that help us to prioritize the allocation of resources while enabling us to be creative and innovative as we adapt to emerging challenges and opportunities. While the Strategic Plan will guide the development and delivery of the Library's programs, resources, and services, our annual Action Plan will help us set more detailed supporting objectives and specific time-based supporting activities.

Over the next five years, SPL will prioritize positioning the Library as a Community Hub, Literary Hub, Information Hub, Civic Hub, and Idea Hub.



Staff: What Are The First 3 Words You Think of When You Think of Your Job?

Strategic Framework



Community Hub: Present safe, welcoming, and accessible physical and virtual spaces.

- 1.1: Embrace opportunities to forge strong connections with and between community members.
- 1.2: Offer programs and services to engage residents of all ages.
- 1.3: Expand access to underserved populations.
- 1.4: Bring library resources to the community (pop-up libraries).
- 1.5: Constantly assess services to ensure a positive user experience.

Literary Hub: Cultivate creativity, inspire a love of reading, and foster a commitment to lifelong learning.

- 2.1: Prepare future readers by focusing on early literacy activities.
- 2.2: Cultivate reading habits in children through play and fun.
- 2.3: Develop inspiring collections for varied interests.
- 2.4: Engage the whole community around one theme/book.
- 2.5: Afford residents opportunities to participate in book clubs and summer and winter reading programs.

Information Hub: Offer easy access to plentiful resources and materials that support community members' diverse interests.

- 3.1: Advocate for robust annual materials budgets.
- 3.2: Examine emerging formats of information and entertainment to offer the latest and the best.
- 3.3: Promote library offerings through various channels.
- 3.4: Implement programming for the physical, mental, spiritual, and emotional well-being of community members.
- 3.5: Establish the Library as the centralized source in the community for information about town resources.

Civic Hub: Celebrate community diversity, invite participation in democratic processes, and foster empathy for all.

- 4.1: Leverage the talent in our diverse community and invite community members to contribute to multicultural programming.
- 4.2: Convene community conversations where people can discuss issues that affect the community in a congenial manner.
- 4.3: Champion anti-racist, equitable, and inclusive policies, collections, and programs.
- 4.4: Promote civic literacy and educate people on the democratic process.

4.5: Provide access to peer-reviewed, nuanced, factually accurate information.

Idea Hub: Continually reimagine what a library can be by exploring opportunities to expand services and offering innovative programming.

- 5.1: Lead in the library landscape by training staff to be tech-savvy and eager to experiment with new ideas.
- 5.2: Offer cutting-edge technology tools to facilitate DIY learning, crafting, and enable users to gain proficiency in STEAM subjects.
- 5.3: Collaborate with educational institutions, community groups, and local businesses to enrich the Library as an incubator of ideas.
- 5.4: Bridge the digital divide in the community.

To accomplish these goals, SPL leadership will ensure adequate staffing and resources by advocating for a sufficient operational budget, invoking the support of the Friends and Foundation boards, leveraging contributions by generous parties in town, and using state aid funds judiciously.

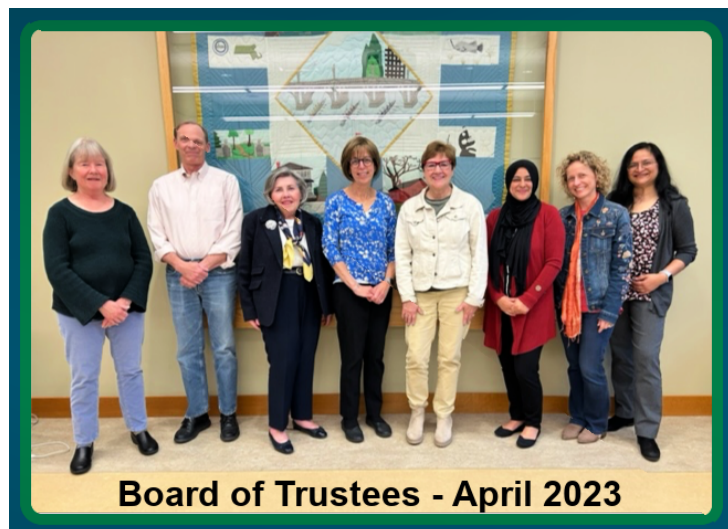
Annual Action Plans

The Shrewsbury Public Library will develop an annual Action Plan during fiscal years 2025-2029 of specific activities and strategies with clear timelines designed to help the Library achieve its strategic goals. The Action Plan will capture new initiatives and tasks designed to support the Library's specific objectives and to address changing needs. Tasks with target dates will be assigned to specific departments (e.g., circulation, technical services, youth services, and adult services). The *Action Plan* is updated annually and kept on file at the Massachusetts Board of Library Commissioners (MBLC).



Measuring and Communicating Our Progress

The Library Director and management team will annually review and report on progress toward the Strategic Plan's strategic pillars and goals as well as specific activities presented in the annual Action Plan.



PLAN APPROVAL

On April 25, 2023, the Library's 9-member Board of Trustees approved the Library's vision statement, mission statement, and core values statements. On May 23, 2023, the Board approved the Strategic Framework and the goals.

On June 20, 2023, the Board unanimously approved this *Strategic Plan*.

DIRECTOR'S ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I am immensely thankful for everyone who contributed to the Strategic Plan, including my staff, the Board of Trustees, Foundation Board members, and members of the Friends of the Library. I am especially grateful to all the community members who responded to the survey, served on the Strategic Planning Advisory Committee, participated in a focus group, and helped translate the survey into Spanish and Mandarin. I couldn't have completed this project without the help of our consultant, Barbara Alevras, who guided me every step of the way and made the project appear less daunting than it could have been.

DIRECTOR'S FINAL THOUGHTS

I derived inspiration from many online articles that I browsed, especially other libraries' strategic plans, the American Library Association (ALA) Center for the Future of Libraries, and the trends highlighted in the Center's document (www.ala.org/tools/future/trends).



APPENDICES

Following is a list of Strategic Plan document appendices. They are available for download and review at the following link:

<https://shrewsburypubliclibrary.org/about/mission-and-history>

Appendix A—SPL Strategic Planning Project Flowchart: The flowchart presents the Library’s planning methodology, including the timeline, major project milestones, community needs assessment activities, and process participants.

Appendix B—Shrewsbury Community Profile 2023: This infographic presents key Shrewsbury community statistics.

Appendix C—Shrewsbury Public Library Profile FY 2022: This infographic presents key Library statistics related to its fiscal year 2022 programs and services.

Appendix D—SPL Boards’ Survey Results Report 2022: This survey was conducted with the trustees, SPL Foundation, and Friends of the SPL officers in October-November 2022.

Appendix E—SPL Community Survey Highlights Report 2022: The community survey was conducted in October-November 2022. A summary of the results is presented in addition to graphs and charts.

Appendix F—SPL Focus Group Summary Report 2023: This report presents highlights of the feedback and ideas about the Library’s collections, services, and staff generated in a series of three focus groups conducted with 24 community members.

Appendix G—SPL Teen Focus Group Summary Report 2023: This report presents input staff collected in a focus group with 19 Teen Advisory Board members.

Appendix H—SPL SOAR Exercise Summary Results Report 2022: This report documents the results of three environmental assessments of the Library’s strengths, opportunities, aspirations, and results conducted with the Library’s staff, the Library’s Board of Trustees, Shrewsbury Public Library Foundation board members, and Friends of the Shrewsbury Public Library officers.

Appendix I—SPL SPAC Survey Results Report 2022: The Strategic Planning Advisory Committee (SPAC) survey was conducted in November 2022.

Appendix J—SPL Staff Survey Results Report 2022: The staff survey was conducted in October 2022.

Appendix K—SPL Community Vision Statement Results Report 2022: This report presents a prioritized list of the final community vision statements generated by the Strategic Planning Advisory Committee.

