

Avon *free public library*

THE CENTER OF YOUR COMMUNITY



STRATEGIC PLAN 2018 - 2022

Adopted by the Library Board of Trustees March 20, 2018

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Introduction	1
Board of Directors	2
Strategic Planning Committee	2
The Planning Process	3
What Guides Us	4
Our Vision.....	4
Our Mission	4
Our Values.....	4
Areas of Focus and Goals	5
Collections and Services.....	5
Books and Other Content Resources	5
Library Users’ Experience.....	5
Communications, Marketing, and Public Relations	6
Staff Development	6
Facility	7
Technology	7
Community Space	7
Building and Grounds.....	7
Growth and Sustainability.....	8
Financial Sustainability.....	8
Library Governance	8
Partnerships	8
Library Asset and Strengths Map	9
Plan Implementation and Library Metrics	11

INTRODUCTION

The Avon Free Public Library traces its roots back to 1798 and a collection of 111 books in the home of Samuel Bishop, a resident of what was then called Northington, a district of Farmington that in 1830 was incorporated as the Town of Avon. The full story of Mr. Bishop's collection and how it grew to become today's vibrant library can be found on the [library's website](#). As for those original 111 books, they now hold a place of honor in the library's Marian Hunter History Room.

Like the library the town has grown, from the 1,750 residents of Samuel Bishop's time to the present day population of more than 18,000. It is to the members of our community, and those who will follow, that we owe our existence and dedicate our efforts. Our website aptly describes today's Avon Library as "The Center of Your Community."

Over the years, the library has taken its place as one of Avon's leading cultural and educational institutions. Following a dramatic renovation and expansion project completed in 2012—one that more than doubled the library's size—our focus has been on broadening the community experience, building on our strong partnerships with community organizations, and optimizing the use of our resources and space for the benefit of all.

Community partnerships continue to be a critical factor in the library's success, foremost of which is the strong and enduring relationship with the Town of Avon. It provides 92% of our funding as well as operational support of the facility through shared town services. Friends of the Avon Library, another steadfast partner, provides financial support for many of our programs and projects, and its volunteer members contribute their time and talent in a variety of ways. The Avon Historical Society shares responsibility with the library for the Marian Hunter History Room in which it curates over 400 years of Avon's history.

Our most treasured partnership is with the community we serve. We strengthen our community of readers by increasing their connections to one another and to our collections. We cultivate the love of reading, an appreciation for the arts and humanities, and the understanding of science and technology by offering a variety of programs and activities. Among them are cultural and historical experiences, lectures, exhibits, book discussions, concerts, common reads, and early childhood literacy activities. We build connections across Avon through partnerships with educational, social, and civic organizations, fostering a strong sense of community and civic engagement.

We house our collection and offer our services in a welcoming public space. On any given day you can find people of all ages reading, exploring the Internet, studying, or simply relaxing. You may come across a scheduled gathering of people quietly discussing the news of the day. Take a stroll through the Gallery and enjoy ever-changing displays of art, historical artifacts, and the handiwork of community members of all ages. Upstairs in the children’s department you may come upon toddlers having a tea party, youngsters developing their creativity under the guidance of one of our talented children’s specialists and, sharing a fanciful reading nook with a family of teddy bears, a grandparent reading a picture book to the delight of a rapt youngster. Nearby, in a special space all their own, teens gather to take part in a fascinating organized activity, enjoy a movie, or catch up on homework. Nearly every day the community room is the site of a performance, lecture, movie, recital or other event. During the summer months the community comes together to shop for fresh, local goods at our farmers market and chat with friends and neighbors.

This five-year plan charts the course for even greater community engagement, responsible growth, and enhanced offerings and services. It will serve as a flexible framework to be built upon and amended to reflect and address the challenge of change.

Much remains to be done, unmet needs to be addressed, and opportunities to be seized. With the support of the community, the dedication of a talented staff, and the leadership of a dynamic director and committed Board of Directors, the Avon Free Public Library will continue to serve as The Center of Your Community.

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Carin Salonia - President	Eric Gauvin
Fred Lin - Vice President	Dave Howe
Vincent LoPresti - Treasurer	Amee Mody
Betsy Bougere - Secretary	Jennifer Shufro
Peter Anderson	Margaret Tilney
Anne Fitzgerald	Joan Reiskin – Friends of the Library

STRATEGIC PLANNING COMMITTEE

Betsy Bougere - Chairperson
Peter Anderson
Amee Mody
Glenn Grube - Library Director

THE PLANNING PROCESS

At the July 2017 Board of Directors meeting we set leadership direction for the 2018-2022 Strategic Plan. We discussed 2014-2017 accomplishments, conducted an environmental scan, and analyzed strengths and opportunities. The Board directed the Strategic Planning Committee to develop a five-year plan, to be reviewed and updated annually each July.

The Committee conducted user surveys and interviews to assess current data. Ten library employees were interviewed, including the managers and at least one staff member of each department. Avon residents were surveyed on library use, preferences, collections, programs, and services.

The Committee discussed community needs, library resources and services, the use of technology and space, and innovative ways to deliver services. The Committee reviewed the financial structure of the library and its relationship with the Town of Avon as well as other key support partners, including Friends of the Avon Library and the Avon Historical Society. It reviewed the Connecticut State Library's Best Practices in CT Public Libraries to help prioritize strategic goals. The strategic plans of public libraries in nine Connecticut towns were examined to benchmark areas of focus and emerging trends in library management.

In December 2017 Board members and library staff provided input to the plan draft. It was subsequently updated and discussed at that month's Board of Directors meeting.

The resulting plan updates our Vision, Mission and Values. It defines areas of strategic focus and specific goals that will support the strategy, governance, and management of the library over the next five years.

WHAT GUIDES US

OUR VISION

Excellence in service to our community, seeking and seizing opportunities for growth and development, embracing the future while honoring the past.

OUR MISSION

To provide all members of our community with a welcoming place that champions the love of reading and lifelong learning, stimulates curiosity, nurtures creativity, offers reliable information resources, unites generations and provides technology, programs and services that enrich, inspire and delight.

OUR VALUES

Access for All: Foster an inclusive, welcoming environment that promotes safe, free and convenient access to programs, services and information.

Service: Respect the traditional role of the library's service to the community and address the unique needs of individual users.

Personal Growth: Promote the joy of reading and lifelong learning. Connect people with the world of ideas and information through programs and other opportunities that stimulate, enlighten and enrich.

Innovation: Embrace the challenge of change. Explore possibilities and apply creativity and fresh thinking to all we do, seeking new and better ways to serve our community.

Responsibility: Provide resources and facilities that better our community and its institutions, businesses, civic and cultural groups.

Excellence: Deliver superior library services. Hire and cultivate staff who are knowledgeable, passionate and committed to the role libraries play in individual lives and the community.

AREAS OF FOCUS AND GOALS

COLLECTIONS AND SERVICES

Books and Other Content Resources

Focus: To select, acquire, curate and provide free and easy access to materials, in all formats, that meet the varied needs and interests of the community.

Goal 1: Maintain and enhance the collection, ensure ease of access to media, and promote public awareness of available materials.

Goal 2: Solicit input, including from underserved populations, to determine the community's needs and interests, and develop the collection to meet those needs.

Goal 3: Create local digital content, documenting history as it happens in conjunction with library programs and projects, the Avon Historical Society and other partners as appropriate, and share it with the community.

Library Users' Experience

Focus: To offer innovative and valued programs, events, displays and services that address community needs.

Goal 1: Leverage the library's collection, breadth of successful program development, and partnerships to provide experiences in the arts and humanities that enrich and inspire.

Goal 2: Offer interactive experiences that unite people around literature and the arts, information, and idea exchanges that help them learn, share and create.

Goal 3: Increase user literacy in such areas as reading, emerging technologies, finance, health, the environment and other contemporary issues.

Goal 4: Provide users with consulting tailored to individual needs and reflecting the changing ways information is made available and consumed.

COMMUNICATIONS, MARKETING, AND PUBLIC RELATIONS

Focus: To communicate clearly, openly and with consistency, internally and externally.

- Goal 1:** Develop a marketing plan and strategies that increase library use and communicate the library's vision, mission, and values.
- Goal 2:** Create a consistent, identifiable graphic style for use in all communications materials.
- Goal 3:** Recommend ways to improve internal communications within and between all service groups.
- Goal 4:** Develop the library's website and social media presence as pivotal resources for public communications.

STAFF DEVELOPMENT

Focus: To recruit, develop, and retain highly trained staff, and build team and organizational capabilities and a culture that support the library's strategy and delivery of services.

- Goal 1:** Develop and implement an annual performance assessment and development planning process, initially for full time staff, based on job descriptions and critical skills and competencies.
- Goal 2:** Develop and implement a Board of Directors-led performance assessment and development planning process for the Library Director.
- Goal 3:** Encourage and support experiential, programmatic and on-the-job professional development for all staff.
- Goal 4:** Encourage and support development of staff's knowledge of emerging technology, and equip them to transfer that knowledge to the public.
- Goal 5:** Formalize a new employee orientation program.
- Goal 6:** Foster inter-departmental collaboration.
- Goal 7:** Develop and implement a Board of Directors' position description and formal on-boarding and development process.

FACILITY

Focus: To offer a welcoming and safe community space, helpful services, and convenient hours of operation while introducing new ways to serve users, including the use of technology and community outreach.

Technology

Goal 1: Create an organizational culture that embraces the mindful and responsive use of technology and media in new and innovative ways with users and staff.

Goal 2: Improve the technology infrastructure by upgrading desktop PC operating systems, adding a server, improving our telephone and voicemail systems, and augmenting the security camera network.

Goal 3: Investigate, purchase and support technology products and services that enable staff to increase efficiency, productivity and collaboration.

Community Space

Goal 1: Optimize the use of physical space, reexamining the opportunities to adapt both the interior and exterior to support a full range of activities sought by the community.

Goal 2: Increase the library's hours of operation.

Building and Grounds

Goal 1: Ensure that the function and appearance of the building and grounds are well maintained. Implement a regularly scheduled walk-through with Avon Department of Public Works to identify and address outstanding issues.

Goal 2: Conduct a periodic risk assessment to identify and remediate any hazards.

Goal 3: Develop and share an Emergency Preparedness Plan with staff and conduct periodic emergency preparedness drills.

GROWTH AND SUSTAINABILITY

Focus: To assure short- and long-term financial strength, excellence in library governance, and viable, effective strategic partnerships.

Financial Sustainability

- Goal 1:** Develop and periodically review a long-range capital plan.
- Goal 2:** Manage and enhance investment strategies to maximize benefit to the library.
- Goal 3:** Establish a rainy day fund to cover possible unforeseen future expenses.
- Goal 4:** Develop and promote a donation and gifts program.
- Goal 5:** Continue to collaborate on strategic priorities with Friends of the Avon Library.
- Goal 6:** Develop guidelines for Board fundraising and staff-initiated grant applications.

Library Governance

- Goal 1:** Manage the Strategic Plan to ensure that goals are prioritized, acted upon and whenever possible, achieved.
- Goal 2:** Continually improve and communicate library policies.
- Goal 3:** Create new policies, as needed, consistent with the library's evolving service model.
- Goal 4:** Review the Board of Directors by-laws every three years and revise as necessary.

Partnerships

- Goal 1:** Continue to collaborate with Friends of the Avon Library to jointly refine and optimize that important relationship. Create a memorandum of understanding that is reviewed with both Boards annually.
- Goal 2:** Strengthen communication and collaboration with the Avon Public Schools.
- Goal 3:** Establish or strengthen partnerships with government, educational, cultural, and social welfare organizations and other potential partners.
- Goal 4:** Create a plan to select and develop the volunteer staff. Develop an orientation program and handbook, and offer training in key aspects of library operations.
- Goal 5:** Optimize partnerships with regional, state and national library organizations to share best practices.
- Goal 6:** Partner with other libraries to optimize use of unique strengths and share resources when practical.

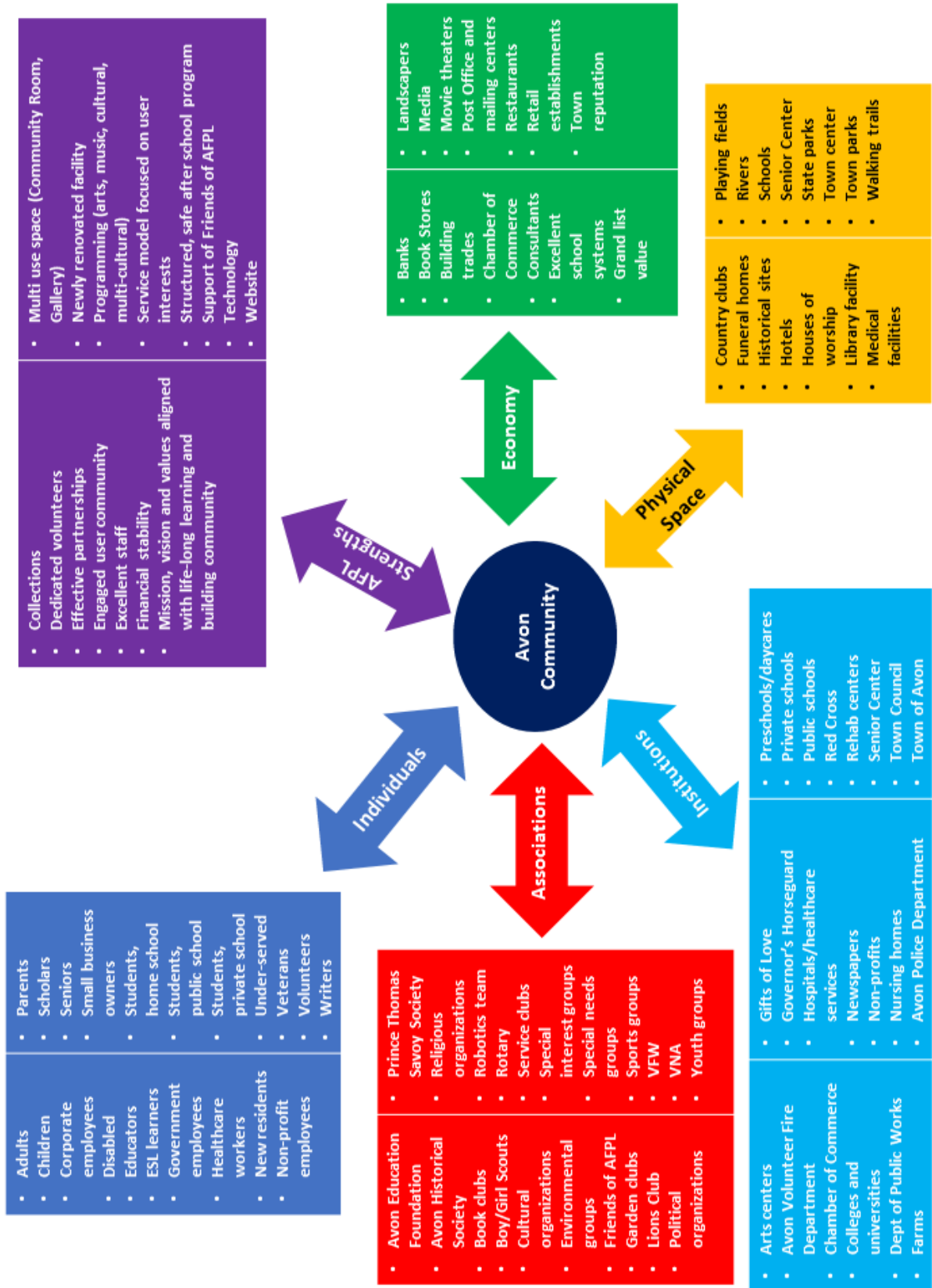
Appendix

LIBRARY ASSET AND STRENGTHS MAP

Asset mapping is an inventory of the institutions, organizations and businesses that constitute a community. By identifying the social, material and intellectual assets of its community, a library discovers a local network of resources to help broaden its impact and contribution.

The Strategic Plan was developed with a full understanding of our position in the web of community assets that strengthen and support the Avon community, focusing the library on its role and identifying opportunities for collaboration with community partners.

The following page shows our Avon Community's Asset Map.



PLAN IMPLEMENTATION AND LIBRARY METRICS

This plan provides a strategic framework for improving library service over the next five years. It identifies areas of focus that align with current strengths and presents goals to address apparent deficiencies. The Library Director and Staff, in conjunction with the Board of Directors, will develop action steps toward achieving these goals. They will conform to the SMART acronym: **S**pecific, **M**easurable, **A**ttainable, **R**ealistic and **T**ime-bound.

In addition to undertaking these SMART steps, the Library will continue to track outputs and outcomes to measure success. Outputs are specific quantitative measures of library activity. They track the circulation of library materials, changes in the size and composition of our collection, public use of technology, and community involvement. These objective measures can show absolute gains or losses in specific areas of library service, be compared against industry trends or historical data, and be aggregated to gauge Avon's position among peer libraries. A statistical dashboard will be added to the Library's website for real-time tracking of key activity indicators.

While harder to measure and compare, outcomes often tell a richer story than outputs. Outcomes measure specific benefits resulting from library programs or services. Outcomes can be qualitative or quantitative and help answer the question "What good did we do?" Through the use of surveys, comment cards, and regular dialogue with Library users and other Avon residents, progress towards our goals will be evaluated by increased patron satisfaction and positive outcomes derived from participating in library programs.

As a high-level framework for improvement, this plan will necessarily be influenced by changes external to the library. The Board of Directors will review and revise action steps and make additional suggestions for the plan annually, informed by the metrics gathered and other changes relevant to the Library and the Avon community.