

**SPRINGFIELD TOWN LIBRARY  
STRATEGIC PLAN  
JULY 2023 - JUNE 2028**

**EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

In the coming five years, Springfield Town Library will continue to fulfill all of its core functions as an essential town institution while enhancing its services in response to current conditions and evolving community needs by focusing on these three aims:

***Sustainable Library Certification***

Springfield Town Library will seek and obtain certification as a Sustainable Library. To achieve this certification, STL will make every effort to ensure that all library decisions are:

- Environmentally Sound
- Economically Feasible
- Socially Equitable

***Expanded Resources for Community Members***

Springfield Town Library will expand its offerings as a vital resource center for the community, with particular attention to housing, employment, education, child development, recreation, public health, public safety, and economic development.

***Hub for Civic Engagement***

Springfield Town Library will offer more opportunities for Springfield residents to learn about and discuss topics of local interest. STL will remain a stronghold of local democracy by serving as an archive of town history, enabling civic engagement, supporting other civic institutions, and ensuring that all people have access to accurate information.

In announcing these aims, the Springfield Town Library Board of Trustees affirms and endorses all American Library Association Core Values. We thank the many civic leaders, educators, nonprofits, community members, library patrons, and library staff who helped to prepare this plan.

**BACKGROUND**

***Springfield Town Library***

Springfield Town Library is an essential town institution providing free and equal access to educational, cultural, and recreational materials so that town residents can improve their lives and make informed decisions. Library programs help people to learn and grow in ways that foster civic engagement, economic development, and public health. As a gathering place, the library brings community members from all walks of life together for programs that foster the well-being of individuals, communities, and the town itself.

As a resource center open to everyone, the library equips people with the tools and information they need to cope with emergencies and make the most of opportunities. The library's children's

room and young adult section ensure that all Springfield youth have access to books and other educational materials, regardless of the incomes of their families. Library programs offer families free high-quality activities for their children while the library building is a safe place for youth to gather.

Founded in 1871, the Springfield Town Library has served the community for over 150 years. Today, the library provides free and equal access to books and other physical materials as well as virtual offerings beyond the dreams of its founders, such as online courses, e-books, e-audiobooks, online magazines, and streaming movies. On-site computers and Wi-Fi ensure all people have access to the technology that has become necessary in today's world. STL's ever-expanding "library of things" (including garden seeds, crafting tools, a telescope, passes to popular attractions, and more) ensures that enriching experiences also are available to all.

At present, library holdings include more than 38,000 books and other physical materials, along with more than 18,000 electronic holdings, for a total of more than 50,000 items that any library patron can borrow. Cooperative agreements with other libraries allow any cardholder to borrow any book held by any Vermont library. Databases and other electronic subscriptions held by the library enable access to thousands of sources of information that would otherwise remain behind paywalls, allowing Springfield students, parents, entrepreneurs, businesses, and nonprofit organizations to consult reports, books, scholarly articles, and other reference works to which they would otherwise not have access.

Other library offerings include educational and recreation events for children, youth, and adults; a meeting place for local clubs and nonprofit organizations; and a wide array of resources for people to consult as they seek to solve problems.

Thousands of people visit the library every year, from children who participate in the 1000 Books Before Kindergarten program to seniors who learn to use new technology at library workshops. In 2022, the library logged more than 16,000 visits and offered more than 300 programs. The library website and Wi-Fi were busy too, with each logging more than 17,000 uses. Patrons used library computers for job searches and other vital inquiries more than 1,700 times, and librarians answered more than 1,600 reference questions. The library lent out more than 40,000 items in that period.

The library has substantially reduced the costs of such services to the town by seeking and obtaining grant funding for many programs and purchases. In the past five years, the library has brought \$142,095 in grant funds into our community. Friends of Springfield Town Library (FOSTL) also helps to reduce costs. In the past five years, FOSTL has subsidized \$42,038 in library improvements and purchases.

Library staff meet regularly to plan and evaluate library activities. Every month, trustees elected by town citizens meet with the library director to assess those activities as they relate to the library's mission, aims, and policies as well as the current strategic plan. Every five years, library

staff and trustees assess the operations of the library in order to devise a strategic plan for the next five years.

The 2018-2023 strategic plan called for the library to become a community hub of connection and cooperation to support Springfield's revitalization; to expand learning opportunities for children, teens, and adults; and to modernize the library. Despite the unforeseen challenges of COVID-19, library staff rose to the challenge, meeting or making progress toward all of the goals specified:

- **Community Hub:** The new family room offers a quiet spot for consultations, small meetings, and study groups, while the Flinn Room continues to serve as a site for larger meetings and community events. The library has forged strong relationships with numerous local civic, nonprofit, and business organizations.
- **Learning Center:** A renovated and reorganized Children's Room makes it easier for families to access books and other learning materials. Expanded programs for children, teens, adults, and seniors offer everyone more learning opportunities. Virtual programs and expanded online resources allow library patrons to learn from the comfort of their own homes.
- **Modernization:** Highlights in this realm included new computer stations for patron use in the lobby; increased availability of e-books and downloadable audiobooks; digitization of town history archives; redesign of the young adult area; and a new library website with enhanced searching capabilities.

The 2023-2028 strategic plan builds on that growth while responding to new opportunities and challenges.

### ***Strategic Planning Process***

The Springfield Town Library Board of Trustees convened a Strategic Plan Committee consisting of two trustees, the library director, and another library staff member. All library staff and trustees were welcome to attend committee meetings, which were duly warned public meetings at which any interested party could participate. In preparing the plan, the committee followed best practices as outlined in the *Strategic Planning for Public Libraries* handbook published by the Public Library Association as well as recommendations included in Vermont Department of Public Libraries workshops on strategic planning and Asset-Based Community Development.

Committee members collected information by polling the public, surveying educators, consulting staff members at social service agencies, and interviewing a diverse range of community members. In seeking public input, the committee not only asked about existing and prospective library services but also asked survey respondents to identify the three top problems facing our town. In so doing, the committee obtained a snapshot of the current concerns of town residents.

This allowed the committee to devise a strategic plan that responds to the most urgent needs of our community.

In addition to collecting information about the challenges facing Springfield, the committee identified community assets. By drawing upon and fostering the growth of these positive aspects of our community, Springfield Town Library will help catalyze community development.

### ***From Information to Action***

In consultation with library staff and trustees, the Strategic Plan Committee identified ways the library can respond to current community challenges and opportunities.

#### Economic Challenges

Housing topped the list of community challenges identified by survey respondents and other informants. Related concerns included jobs, economic development, and health. As a centrally-located public space, the library can serve as a distribution point for information about resources available to community members. The library website can be expanded to include a regularly updated repository of local resources. Library educational offerings can be expanded to include more training in skills that local employers need employees to have. The library can support, collaborate with, and facilitate communication among organizations working to solve these community problems.c

#### Education and Child Development

Survey respondents and other informants identified child development and education as a realm requiring more resources. Springfield School District students score lower than the state average in reading, mathematics, and science proficiency. The library can support educators by linking programs and acquisitions to topics identified by local teachers. The library can enhance its own educational and recreational offerings for children and teens.

#### Climate Change

Climate change has already brought more erratic weather and widespread power outages to our region. Survey respondents expressed concern about Springfield's readiness to cope with the changes to come. The library can ensure that its own practices are environmentally sustainable. The library can serve as a place for people to warm up, access wifi, and recharge devices during outages. The library can ensure that all people have access to the information they need to understand climate change and other environmental challenges so that they can make well-informed decisions about their own practices and the town's practices.

#### Civic Engagement

Locally and nationally, social media has made it more difficult for people who disagree with each other to discuss their differences civilly and productively. Many survey respondents specifically asked for more library programs that would enable such discussions. The library can offer more opportunities for people to learn about and discuss controversial matters in a spirit of mutual inquiry rather than heated debate. The library can ensure that all people have access to accurate information.

### Inclusion

By passing a Declaration of Inclusion in 2022, the Springfield Select Board summoned all town departments to ensure equitable access to town resources and ensure that all actions, policies, and operating procedures reflect the town's commitment to inclusion. As an element of its certification as a Sustainable Library, the library will evaluate its policies and procedures to ensure that they are socially equitable.

### Public Safety

As reflected in survey responses and comments at public meetings in 2022, many town residents are concerned about public safety. As a safe gathering place, the library can enhance its offerings for teens. Library programs can offer citizens the opportunity to dialog with town officials and each other in a spirit of problem-solving. The library can support local civic organizations working to undermine the sources of crime and violence.

### Public Finances

Springfield already has one of the highest tax rates in the state, and the town budget in the most recent year called for cuts across the board. The library can seek grant funding to cover as many library programs, repairs, and purchases as possible. The library can support FOSTL in its efforts to raise funds for the library. As an element of its certification as a Sustainable Library, the library can ensure that all decisions are fiscally responsible.

## **STRATEGIC PLAN**

- I. Springfield Town Library will seek and obtain certification as a Sustainable Library.** To achieve this certification, STL will make every effort to ensure that all library decisions are Environmentally Sound, Economically Feasible, Socially Equitable (i.e. the "Triple Bottom Line").
  - A. Evaluate, revise, and/or implement policies and procedures according to the Triple Bottom Line*
  - B. Participate in collective impact projects to increase resilience in the community*
  - C. Ensure financial stability for needed library resources and services*
  - D. Provide collections and services according to the Triple Bottom Line*
  - E. Provide programs according to the Triple Bottom Line*
  
- II. Springfield Town Library will continue existing connections and expand resources for community members.**
  - A. Create an area in the library with housing-related materials and continue partnerships with housing-related civic organizations.*
  - B. Collaborate with other organizations to create a print and online resource database in line with Asset Based Community Development ideals.*
  - C. Continue to offer tech help classes for job seekers and community members.*

- D. Collaborate with the Department of Labor to host or promote resume writing assistance services.*
- E. Collaborate with Black River Innovation Campus, Springfield Chamber of Commerce, and/or other organizations to expand and promote business-related library materials and services.*
- F. Support improved educational outcomes for K-12 students.*
- G. Continue to support life-long learning and recreation for community connection for all ages.*
- H. Support healthy initiatives in and for the community.*
- I. Encourage activities that address transportation and parking challenges for library patrons.*

**III. Springfield Town Library will increase its role as a hub for civic engagement.**

- A. Hold or participate in a program that encourages voter registration.*
- B. Host forums and other opportunities for conversations.*
- C. Provide collaborative resources for citizens, committees, nonprofits, and civic organizations.*
- D. Highlight and provide access to its local history collection.*

**CONCLUSION**

It is the policy of the State of Vermont that “free public libraries are essential to the general enlightenment of citizens in a democracy and that every citizen of the State of Vermont should have access to the educational, cultural, recreational, informational, and research benefits of a free public library” (VSA Title 22, Chapter 3, § 67).

Springfield Town Library fulfills that vital function for the Springfield area. Library materials and programs help people to learn and grow in ways that foster civic engagement, economic development, public health, and personal well-being.

By seeking and obtaining sustainable library certification, the library will ensure that all of its practices are environmentally sound, economically feasible, and socially equitable. By expanding resources for community members, the library will enhance the well-being of individuals while contributing to the town's economic development. By serving as a hub of civic engagement, the library will foster communication and cooperation among community members and the institutions that serve them.

With this plan as a roadmap, STL will build on more than 150 years of service to the community to help the Town of Springfield meet current challenges and make the most of its opportunities into the future.