

BASALT REGIONAL LIBRARY DISTRICT

STRATEGIC PLAN

NOVEMBER 2019 – DECEMBER 2022



INTRODUCTION

Basalt Regional Library is at the center of the community. The Library is often referred to as the mid-valley hub of the Roaring Fork Valley and is considered the “living room” and “treasure” of Basalt, Colorado.

The Library is architecturally beautiful and provides a warm, welcoming and stimulating space for patrons. The Library creates opportunities for shared education and offers a safe and dynamic gathering place for diverse social interactions, connecting members of the community to resources which better their lives (books being only one integral element of that equation).

To ensure that the Library continues to serve the community’s changing needs and goals, and to understand how it might extend even more value, the Library Board and Director embarked on a strategic planning process in October of 2018. A committee of Board members and library advocates was formed to gather community feedback on programs and services. In addition to collecting input via web-based surveys, the committee also conducted a total of nineteen focus groups. These “community conversations” included people in all age and demographic ranges. Focus groups also included conversations with local educators and schools, non-profit organizations, valley-wide libraries and community leaders, to further explore mutually beneficial synergies valuable to the community.

The input pouring in from these community conversations reconfirmed that the Library’s friendly, knowledgeable staff are highly appreciated by the community. The Library’s classes, collections, databases, and unique materials are considered first-rate, the programming deemed diverse, creative and valuable. Springing from that solid base of excellence, focus group participants began to creatively identify new ways for the Library to expand opportunities to learn, explore and engage with one another.

While in-person focus groups were more time-consuming than the survey method for gathering input, the conversations produced a wide array of benefits. Each group meeting served to increase awareness about library offerings and provided an opportunity for participants to problem-solve on issues such as future programs, broad community needs, effective marketing, etc. The format allowed community members to ask questions and search more deeply for

solutions. A flow of creative ideas emerged regarding program enhancement, improving library outreach/communication, and tackling broader community challenges.

During each focus group, all ideas were captured on flip charts, and at the end of the session, each participant identified his/her “top five” ideas. Patterns in priorities emerged, leading to the formulation of five overall strategic goals for the Library, as listed below. Note also that as the conversations took place, the Library staff were closely attuned and implemented many individual suggestions as staffing and budget allowed.

Identified Strategic Priorities

1. Improve Awareness of the Library’s Resources and Programs
2. Solve Key Barriers to Access
3. Serve a Broader Community
4. Expand Connections and Partnerships with Valley Organizations
5. Meet the Need for Additional Resources and Ensure Financial Sustainability

Going forward, a critical dependency for enhancing Library services and programs is financial feasibility: how can the Library meet the need for the additional resources required and balance budgetary priorities. Thus, one of the Library’s key strategic goals is to develop new and diverse fund-development initiatives (grants, fund-raising etc.).

To that end, a key ongoing theme for the Library is *sustainability*, in all its forms: whether it’s ensuring the ongoing financial security of the Library, or maintaining the building’s LEED certification and “green” infrastructure, or promoting retention and professional development of staff, or forging long-term partnerships with other valley organizations.

Going forward, the Library aims to continue to enhance and expand services by implementing, experimenting, measuring impact and understanding financial implications. And, most of all, continuing to listen and gather community input. Thus, the Library’s strategic plan is a “living” plan, an ever-evolving effort anchored to community needs.

STRATEGIC GOAL #1

Improve Awareness of the Library's Resources and Programs

Universal feedback from the community revealed that the public lacks awareness about the full range of the Library's services and programs as well as some important basic features (for example, that public libraries are free, safe and confidential).

Examples of ideas recommended to improve public awareness:

- Expand use of social media, text, email, and web site to improve awareness (e.g. opt-out email newsletters and program reminders)
- Increase advertising and marketing (e.g., radio, local newspapers, mass mailings and newcomer initiatives). Increase Library info "on the streets" (e.g., banners, posters, A-frame boards, sidewalk boxes)
- Increase presence at public and school events (e.g., booths, meeting attendance)
- Increase outreach and marketing to Latinx community (e.g., marketing / ads in Spanish, increase in Tricolor radio ads, posters on RFTA buses)
- Hold additional events to drive publicity and attendance (e.g., annual events, open houses, host local organizations' events, "library card day" at markets)

STRATEGIC GOAL #2

Solve Key Barriers to Access

The two frequently mentioned key barriers to Library access were lack of transportation and demanding work schedules. There are several potential ways to address these barriers.

- Explore transportation alternatives to bring people to the Library:
 - initiate and coordinate a local “activist” effort (working with the Chamber of Commerce, local businesses, non-profits, etc.) to address how to institute a circulator bus in mid valley
 - collaborate with non-profits and others who have buses to bring people to the library

- Take Library resources out to the people:
 - work with non-profits and others who have buses to take our books (and staff) out to the community
 - take "pop-up programs" (books, programs, staff) to different locations and spaces
 - deploy a bookmobile to take books and outreach programming to the community

- Extend hours: perhaps later hours in the evening, potentially Fridays (for families gathering videos, CDs for weekend entertainment), and/or more hours on Sundays. Try a pilot program for a few months to test usage.

STRATEGIC GOAL #3

Serve a Broader Community

Focus Group feedback indicated that specific groups could benefit from new Library initiatives (to better integrate into the community, decrease social isolation, expand learning on critical topics). Such groups include the Latinx population, millennials, cross-generational groups (seniors and children) and newcomers. Innovative suggestions were received for new programs and events which could strengthen learning opportunities and social connections among these diverse community members.

A key supporting element would be to tap into the broad pool of experienced locals to initiate, organize and deliver these programs.

[Note that achieving this strategic goal is also highly dependent on improving awareness and solving barriers to access, the first two strategic goals.]

→ Expand offerings of special interest to:

- Latinx community (e.g., classes, workshops in Spanish)
- millennials (e.g., evening programs, quiz/trivia, networking, job search help)
- seniors (e.g., tech doctor, TED talks, book groups)
- parents (e.g., parenting workshops, kid information literacy)
- teens (e.g., homework help/tutoring, financial planning)

→ Optimize the use of indoor and outdoor space to promote connections (e.g., initiate a coffee shop as an incubator business experiment)

→ Develop and implement an annual cross-cultural blockbuster event to draw a wide variety of people from the community

STRATEGIC GOAL #4

Expand Connections and Partnerships with Valley Organizations

To drive more value to the community as well as valley organizations, the Library can further coordinate and partner with local entities as well as serve as a vital “connector” to promote cross-collaboration and expanded / shared services. Thus the Library and these organizations can mutually benefit each other’s goals and better serve the community.

- Public and private schools, preschool through high school and beyond:
 - improve awareness about library programs and resources among teachers (e.g., attend school staff meeting, orient teachers, hold new teacher workshops)
 - collaborate on programs (e.g., more after school programs, tutoring, bring students to library)
 - work with schools to improve awareness among students and parents (e.g., promote library programs through school communication mechanisms)
- Community leadership:
 - collaborate more with local agencies on providing resources to the community, synergize with each other’s strategic plans
- Valley-wide libraries:
 - plan, share, and coordinate joint initiatives (e.g., advertising and marketing, resource sharing and programming)
- Non-profits:
 - coordinate with valley non-profits to provide more value to the community

STRATEGIC GOAL #5

Meet the Need for Additional Resources and Ensure Financial Sustainability

Finding additional revenue resources is essential for the library's continued growth and success. First, the community voiced numerous ideas for how the Library can serve the community better, implementation of which would require additional funding. Second is the looming reality that the Gallagher Amendment and a weakened economy could diminish the mill levy funds which currently support the Library's budget. Also, the supplemental mill levy ends in 2023, for which the Library needs to be prepared.

For these reasons, it is critical that the Library find additional financial resources as well as ensure the Library's long-term financial sustainability.

- Pursue grants from various agencies
- Develop a range of fund-development campaigns and initiatives to diversify and enhance financial support of the library



MEASURING SUCCESS

Library staff will continue to gather information to assess the impact of the Library on the community, both quantitative (in numerical terms) and qualitative (non-numerical, e.g. anecdotal examples of the Library's all-important impact on patron's experiences and lives).

It is challenging to connect specific Library initiatives to improvements in the community's experience; nevertheless, measures, trend analysis and anecdotal evidence can reveal some meaningful correlations. Mechanisms for analyzing and reporting data will be enhanced, and the Director will review quantitative and qualitative trends with the Board on a quarterly basis, creating a "dashboard" to track progress. This will be useful not only for understanding the Library's progress against plan but will also provide a foundational base for justifying the community's future investment in the Library.

The two ways the Library plans to measure progress against plan:

1) *Operational* measures of success (Library will track number and types of initiatives implemented to address the strategic priorities), e.g.:

- Increase in number and type of marketing initiatives (e.g., number of banners, emails sent and opened, Instagram and Facebook instances)
 - Plus, increase in data capture of which marketing vehicles most successfully raised awareness (elicit and track "how did you hear about ..." from program attendees)
- Increase in number of ways the community can access the Library and its resources (e.g., buses taking books to the community, buses bringing patrons to the Library, pop-ups programs, etc.)

- Increase in number of partner events and coordinated planning efforts with non-profit organizations, Town of Basalt, Pitkin and Eagles Counties, Chamber of Commerce, other libraries, etc.
- Increase in number of Library-driven funding initiatives (e.g., grants pursued, fund-raising events, mail and email solicitations)

2) Outcome measures of success (Library will track results, i.e. impact on Library usage, benefits to community members, funding raised, etc.), e.g.:

- Increase in use of library by 1) all segments of the community and 2) where possible, by specific demographics with larger growth potential (e.g. Latinx, teens, millennials, young adults, seniors, etc.).
 - door counts
 - event and program attendance
 - circulation (digital and physical)
 - web-based usage of Library resources
 - number of people accessing Library resources using new outreach initiatives (buses, pop-ups)
 - number of patrons using Library in new extended hours
- Anecdotal evidence of patron satisfaction, impact, benefits to the community
- Increase in benefits to the community which were driven by the Library's community partnering initiatives
- Increase in \$\$ received by the Library via diversified funding initiatives

CONCLUSION

Deep appreciation goes to the community, Library staff, advisors and members of the Strategic Planning Committee for their participation and support of this large effort to gather community input and determine Library priorities.

A derivative of this strategic plan will be a more discrete annual set of objectives and action plans, distilled from the broad three-year plan and calibrated to available resources. Thus anchored, the Library's goals will continue to evolve and grow to serve the community's changing needs and aspirations.

Members of the 2018-19 Basalt Regional Library Strategic Planning Committee:

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Note that all detailed input from the community focus groups is available to the public. Contact the Library Director or Committee Chair for this information.