

Snow Library Strategic Plan **2023-2027**



05.16.2022



MAVERICK &
BOUTIQUE

947 Apple Valley Rd.
Ashfield, MA 01330
(413) 687-4433

www.maverickandboutique.com

Contents

Snow Library	3
Board of Trustees	3
Strategic Planning Committee	3
Library Staff.....	3
Introduction.....	5
Governing Body Approval	5
Executive Summary.....	6
History and Environmental Scan.....	6
Vision, Mission, and Principles.....	9
The Anatomy of Our Strategic Plan	9
Goals and Strategies	10
User Needs Assessment.....	12
Planning Methodology.....	12
Summary of Findings	12
Survey.....	12
Focus Groups, Community Engagement Meetings, and Interviews.....	13
Summary of Interviews	14
Focus Group with Snow Library Staff.....	15
Focus Group with Snow Library Trustees	17
Community Engagement Meetings	18

Snow Library

67 Main Street
Orleans, MA 02653
(508) 240-3760
www.snowlibrary.org

Board of Trustees

- James Balliett
- Marilyn Bornemeier
- Janet Crabtree
- Joan Francolini
- Steven Gass, Chair
- Deirdre White
- Mark Ziomek

Strategic Planning Committee

- Mal Bornemeier, Trustee
- Nancy James, Orleans Community Member
- Kaimi Lum, Library staff
- Mary Mador, Friends of Snow Library
- Emma Menengas, NRHS student
- Sophia Prickitt, NRHS student
- Tavi Prugno, Library staff
- Tracey Salley, Friends of Snow Library
- Deirdre White, Trustee
- Kara Yuen, Orleans Elementary School Librarian
- Mark Ziomek, Trustee

Library Staff

- Tavi Prugno, Library Director
- Kaimi Lum, Assistant Director
- Theresa Pitta, Principal Clerk
- Galen Malicoat, Technical Services Librarian
- Ann Foster, Youth Services Librarian
- Betty Steele-Jeffers, Reference Services Librarian
- Jenny Fulcher, Circulation Services Librarian
- Penny Struzinski, Library Assistant
- Jean Valenti, Library Assistant
- Jane Ames, Substitute Reference Librarian
- Melody Gulow, Substitute Library Assistant
- Cindy Kadzik, Substitute Library Assistant
- Michelle Koch, Substitute Library Assistant
- Jamie Forster, Page

- Rosie Lenihan, Page
- Chris Kender, Library Custodian

Introduction

The Snow Library Strategic Plan for the years 2023-2027 is essential for the library's success. The plan addresses current and future needs and trends, and endeavors to answer the question: What is the role of the library in our community? Those with a hand in meeting these needs through implementation of the strategic plan include the library director, staff, trustees, friends, and community partners.

During the planning process, we engaged in extensive outreach to learn what community stakeholders want from the Snow Library. Participants included persons from youth to seniors, residents and non-residents, and library users and non-users. The goals and strategies included in the plan reflect the feedback we received.

The Massachusetts Board of Library Commissioners (MBLC) recommends that every library maintain an up-to-date strategic plan as a management best practice. In addition, to apply for a Library Services and Technology Act (LSTA) Grant or a Massachusetts Public Library Construction Grant (both of which are administered by the MBLC), libraries are required to have completed a planning process and have a current written plan on file.

It is with these reasons in mind—serving the community and complying with state library guidelines—that this strategic plan has been written. This thought-provoking and intensive process would have been impossible without the help of everyone who participated in taking the survey, attended community engagement sessions, and provided their thoughts in interviews.

We thank everyone who participated in developing this strategic plan including the library trustees, staff, the Strategic Planning Committee, the Friends of Snow Library, and most important, town residents who shared their views on the community and the library to contribute to this vital process.

Detailed notes from community meetings and the community survey are available as appendices in a separate document.

Governing Body Approval

This strategic plan was approved by the Snow Library Board of Trustees at its May 16, 2022 meeting.

Executive Summary

The Snow Library Strategic Planning Committee worked with community members, the Board of Trustees, library staff, and other stakeholders for six months to evaluate community needs and aspirations and develop this five-year strategic plan. We heard from hundreds of community members and stakeholders in phone calls, at in-person and virtual meetings, and in survey responses. We have endeavored to incorporate everyone's important feedback into the plan.

The Snow Library Response

We responded to community feedback with revised mission and vision statements to clarify our purpose and we established goals and principles to meet Orleans' needs over the next five years.

Traditional library services are valued by many, and the Snow Library is committed to maintaining a quality book collection and providing appealing spaces for reading and research, and for hosting public programs and educational presentations such as Lifetime Learning.

Mission:
We provide our community with the means to connect to ideas and inspiration, and to engage others.

The pandemic and recent publishing trends generated strong interest in online and virtual library services. The library will continue to look to the future in building eBook and other online collections. Virtual programming is a new staple of library services.

Our research pointed out the need to raise awareness in the community about library collections and services. Our goal is to ensure that the Snow Library is widely recognized as an asset vital to the Town of Orleans and the region.

It is clear that the library building needs improvement. We have established goals for both short- and long-term updates to the facility. Our vision is of a contemporary library building that is optimized to provide flexible multi-use space for quiet reading and study, collaboration among individuals and groups, presentations (both online and in-person), collections, modern technology, crafting, and more.

Thriving communities are innovative, inclusive, and accessible to everyone. The library supports this with programming and services available and designed for all age groups, population sectors, and interests. We envision the library as a community hub which inspires people and brings them together for learning, creativity, and joy. Intellectual freedom is our watchword, and everyone is free to explore any interest with assistance from our talented staff.

Library resources are limited, and change is needed to bring our vision to fruition. We will partner with the Town and local/regional organizations to expand capacity and develop and support the most desirable and useful services. Library staffing levels, roles, and skill sets will evolve to meet the ongoing library needs of Orleans' residents.

History and Environmental Scan

Our History

Snow Library was created in 1887 with a bequest from David Snow. His will donated "...To the Town of Orleans in the County of Barnstable in said Commonwealth, five thousand dollars for a public library, to be open to all people residing in said town at all proper hours and to be called 'Snow's Library'. But this bequest is made upon the express condition, to wit: That said town provide a suitable and permanent building for such library with proper convenience to accommodate the citizens who desire its benefits."

The original building, Gothic style of sandstone and brick, was built on the triangle at the intersection of Main Street and Route 28. Photographs of the building are found in the Henry K. Cummings collection of historic photographs which were donated to Snow Library in 1954.

This original library was destroyed in the blizzard of February 1952 due to an electrical fire. Although fire crews responded to the library, they were unable to save the building or any of its contents. Residents responded immediately to the need for a new library and the town appropriated funds for a new building in that same year. Dedication of the new Snow Library at its present location at the intersection of Main Street and Route 28 took place on July 4, 1954. A second addition, completed in 1977, added a children's room, a reading room, and a meeting room to the library.

The most recent addition to the library was completed in 1992 with financial assistance from a state library construction grant, the Friends of Snow Library fund-raising efforts, and a town appropriation.

Thirty years have elapsed since the last library addition, and this is apparent in the current state of the building. The structure itself is aging and nearing the end of its useful life, there are numerous ADA accessibility issues, and inadequate space for programs and parking. This strategic plan hopes to address these issues by working towards a new library facility to enhance the community—the way previous improvements did—while also supporting the development of Snow Library's activities in the meantime.

Environmental Scan

In 2021, Snow Library's annual budget was \$680,998 which was comprised of \$524,900 in salaries for a total of eighteen staff members and \$150,098 in appropriation expenses. Out of a total of 6,798 library card holders, 3,596 are Orleans residents. Throughout the year, 623 programs attended by 13,956 people were offered on a variety of topics for all ages. The current 16,568 square foot library holds 127,923 materials and circulated 107,368 of them in 2021. Print resources still comprise the majority of the collection with 61,801 of those items circulating in comparison with 45,567 electronic materials. Belonging to the CLAMS consortium is beneficial for all the library's patrons as it loaned out 19,579 items to other libraries and received 24,103 of items in 2021.

The Town of Orleans* has a total land area is 13.94 square miles. There are 54 miles of Town-maintained roads and 11 miles of State roads.

The year-round population numbers 6,307, and the summer population increases the count to approximately 22,000. Of the year-round population, 45.5 percent are persons 65 years of age or older, 40 percent are between the ages of 19 and 64, 12 percent are under 18 years of age, and 2.5 percent are under five years of age. 54.3 percent identify as female, and 45.7 percent identify as male.

94.7 percent of the population identify as Caucasian or White; 2.0 percent identify as African-American or Black; 1.9 percent identify as Hispanic or Latino, and 1.4 percent identify as Asian.

For educational attainment, 2.21 percent attended high school but did not graduate, 27.03 percent are high school graduates, 24.43 percent attended some college but did not graduate, 5.95 percent have an associate's degree, 21.14 percent have a bachelor's degree, and 19.24 percent have a graduate degree.

The median household income is \$54,750, the median income for families is \$84,500.

*Community data was taken from www.census.gov and www.worldpopulationreview.com

Vision, Mission, and Principles

Vision:

The Snow Library is for everyone: a hub of imagination that sparks learning, creativity, and joy.

Mission:

We provide the community connection to ideas, inspiration, and engagement with others.

Principles

- We embody the best of the traditional library by supporting reading with a wide variety of books and spaces to read, onsite programs, and resources.
- We meet the needs and interests of current and future generations with online resources, virtual programming, and by looking to the future for ideas and inspiration.
- We offer an inclusive, welcoming environment—at the library and virtually—with equitable access and accommodation for all to information, education, and programming, which represent diverse cultures, ethnicities, orientations, and abilities.
- We connect people and groups, helping them discover common goals and build an ever more thriving community.
- We continually re-envision spaces within and outside the walls to meet the changing needs of the community.
- We provide reliable sources of information and educate our community in navigating the myriad of information and misinformation.
- We believe in intellectual freedom—a pillar of democracy—and actively support our community in developing expanded horizons and enriched perspectives.
- We offer up-to-date technology for learning, entertainment, and growth, and provide education on how to use it effectively.
- We collaborate with Town of Orleans and other organizations to develop programs and services and plan for the future of the library and the community.
- Our staff are supported and challenged in their roles and responsibilities. Staffing levels and activities align with current and anticipated future needs of the library and its users.

The Anatomy of Our Strategic Plan

The Snow Library strategic plan is organized into six strategic goal areas or main areas of focus. Each goal area is accompanied by a goal statement expressing what success looks like in concrete terms. One or more strategies have been developed for each goal area describing plans for action to realize the goal.

A separate action plan will follow, outlining specific projects to support each strategy, and containing details pertinent to execution, including measures of success.

Goals and Strategies

1. Advocacy and PR

Snow Library is universally recognized as a vital asset to the Town of Orleans, and key to the well-being of the community.

- Develop a plan to raise awareness about the library and promote attendance and use of programs and services and to share information about the need for a new facility.

2. Short-term Facility Enhancements

The existing library facility is optimized to provide maximum value for the community.

- Consider options to improve use of the existing facility.
- Consult with experts to evaluate preservation and access options for archival materials.

3. Comprehensive Long-term Facility Improvements

The Orleans community is fully mobilized to plan and build the next generation of the Snow Library.

- Include facility needs in advocacy and public relations efforts.
- Explore options for funding and fundraising for a new or renovated facility.

4. Programs and Services

The library exceeds expectations with innovative and inclusive programs and services.

- Explore options to expand attendance and use of library programs and services, e.g., forge partnerships with local organizations/businesses, assist users with technology for virtual programming, build information literacy and diversity, equity, and inclusion training and resources, provide access to remote programs at the library, and expand use of outdoor spaces, Little Free Libraries, and Snowmobile services.
- Monitor use of current and new programs and services to focus on community needs.

5. Staffing and Staff Development

Library staffing levels are sufficient and library staff have the skills to realize organizational goals and provide exceptional value for the community.

- Monitor staffing level and training needs to meet needs of community.
- Evaluate staffing needs to implement new programs and services.

6. Community Collaboration and Partnerships

The library successfully collaborates with the Town of Orleans and other local organizations to provide an integrated approach to meeting community needs.

- Explore collaboration opportunities with the town and local organizations/businesses.
- Take action on most promising opportunities with mutual benefits.
- Work with the town to review/rewrite library job descriptions.

User Needs Assessment

Below, we outline the strategic planning process, including the objectives identified at the outset, activities engaged in, and summaries of data gathered and conversations that took place in the information-gathering phase.

Planning Methodology

The Snow Library Strategic Planning Committee (SPC) met in December of 2021 to kick off the project and discuss desired outcomes for the Strategic Plan. The group planned the following course of action for planning consultants:

- Work closely with the Director and SPC, including facilitation of six meetings with the Committee
- Gather, analyze, and present community data
- Develop, analyze, and present community survey results
- Facilitate community engagement with Trustees, staff, key stakeholders, library users, and community residents
- Create report of findings
- Develop strategic goals and strategies and review/revise vision and mission with Committee
- Document methodology of Strategic Plan development
- Prepare and present Strategic Plan to Board of Trustees

The information gathering process consisted of:

- Review of library and community data
- Community survey
- Five one-on-one interviews with key stakeholders
- Focus groups with Trustees and staff
- Four community engagement meetings

Summary of Findings

Survey

The 2022 strategic planning survey was open online for three weeks in February 2022. The survey was also distributed in a slightly abbreviated paper format at schools and the Senior Center.

346 responses were received of which about 60 (17%) were submitted in paper format and input by library staff. This is a good response in a community of about 6,300. We believe many responses were family-based to represent the needs and aspirations of more than a single individual.

The survey questions and detailed responses may be viewed in Appendix B.

Major Respondent Trends

The vast majority (76%) are year-round Orleans residents, while 14% are seasonal Orleans residents.

70% use the library regularly (monthly, weekly, or more frequently). 56% are aged 55-75 and 30% 75+.

Services deemed most important are customer service provided by library staff, the book collection, the ability to borrow materials from other libraries using CLAMS, Lifetime Learning, quiet place to read/study, adult programs, and the Friends of the Library book sale.

High priority for potential new services was given to streaming videos, more online programs, more programs for seniors, more programs for children, and more programs for young adults.

71% said current library hours are fine, while 32% indicated that Sunday hours would make library use more convenient.

The most important features for new facility consideration are parking, accessibility, restrooms, quiet reading/study areas, computer, and WiFi access. Many comments referred to the physical space. The vision of the library as a quiet space and, simultaneously, a community center is apparent from respondent comments. There is a desire for both. Calls for outdoor space and many facility updates were made with many seeking a community space. Several respondents commented about the need to keep costs down.

Many respondents also use the Senior Center.

Other Trends

Numerous positive comments about the library were made and one repeated sentiment was, I love the Snow Library! A mixture of comments and suggestions about the facilities and services were also made.

Some respondents suggested local collaborations, e.g., with the Senior Center, schools, and the Orleans Historical Society,

We attempted to learn from those who use the library infrequently or never and 25 respondents responded as such. We asked them why they used the library infrequently and the most frequent reason was that I have no need for the library's services. We followed up by asking what kinds of services would encourage library use. Programs were suggested by several respondents and several respondents requested more information about library programs. The library staff followed up on these requests.

Focus Groups, Community Engagement Meetings, and Interviews

We asked three questions of all participants in focus groups and community meetings. Summaries of collective responses from each activity appear below. A consolidated version of all community input may be found in the separate Appendix document.

Questions for Participants

1. **Current Situation:** What is happening in the world (globally, nationally, regionally, locally) that's having/will have a big effect on the Orleans community, the region, and the Snow Library?

This activity supports participants in thinking strategically and creates a shared context for envisioning and planning for the future.

2. **Our Best Future:** It's 2027. We've successfully addressed the opportunities and challenges identified in 2022. How have the community and region changed, how has the Snow Library changed? How has our thinking changed? What are we able to do we couldn't do before? How does this positively affect the people who use the library to work, study, and enrich their lives?

This activity encourages participants to imagine what is possible without the practical restraints that frequently compromise creativity and expansive thinking. When we do this, we are more able create impactful action today.

3. **The Future Is Now (KAIR):** Thinking about the future we imagine, what are folks doing at the Snow Library that we should KEEP? What no longer serves us that we should ABANDON? What might we INVENT or REINVENT that will help us create the best future for our library and our community?

This is a strategic analysis is similar to—but more action oriented than—the traditional SWOT (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats). Participants begin by acknowledging and appreciating what is working well, touch briefly on what no longer serves in any way, and then spend most of their time imagining innovative ways to address the challenges and opportunities they have identified and the future they would like to create.

Summary of Interviews

The consultants worked with the SPC to identify five individuals with a strong understanding of the community and the library who could contribute to strategic planning in an interview based on the above set of three questions. Content from these interviews is included below, consolidated under the themes of the three questions we posed.

Interviewees

- Andrea Reed, Select Board Member
- George Meservey, Town Planner
- Kevin Galligan, Select Board Member
- Mary Beth Fincke, former Library Trustee
- Tracy Murphy, Chair of Recreation Advisory Committee

Current Situation

Opportunities for the community and library include joint planning efforts among community departments and organizations to attain greater good for Orleans, e.g., a shared campus and coordinated planning and funding to meet community-wide needs. There is orientation for community volunteers, boards, and committees to share a comprehensive view of community needs. This would benefit library users with a deep look at facility needs such as parking, community meeting space, quiet space for individuals, outdoor and indoor space, shelter during emergencies, access to collections (physical and virtual) and adequate resource allocation for appropriate staffing to meet community needs.

Regional planning can be expanded. CLAMS provides a beloved service to many library users. Additional regional collaboration could be explored.

The library is one of the most heavily visited Orleans town facilities and expanding services to meet the needs of community members of all ages holds promise of expanding the concept of the library as a community center that is also a trusted source of unbiased quality information to support education, lifelong learning, and economic development.

Challenges facing Orleans include demographics, high cost of housing, limited access to commercial services in the off season, and recovering from COVID shutdowns.

Demographics are skewed toward older residents. A vibrant community must provide for residents and families of all ages. Housing costs make it challenging for younger families and individuals which affects the available workforce in town for year-round and seasonal employment. The limited commercial activities in the off season hinder vibrancy that might attract a diverse base of residents. COVID has affected many businesses and library services.

Our Best Future

The library is the heart of the community with programming and facilities to serve all ages on-site and virtually year-round and expanded opportunities to bring generations and other diverse residents together. Services and facilities to appeal to all, e.g., quiet space, collaboration space, up-to-date technology, maker space to support education and the creative economy, coffee, snacks, up-to-date collections stored efficiently, programming for all ages and to bring generations and diverse groups together, and sufficient staffing to expand services and hours in a walkable downtown.

All community facilities strengthen resilience with capability to serve as shelter in emergencies in an energy-efficient building.

We build on successful collaboration to capitalize on state grants to support new or renovated facilities, regionalization like CLAMS' shared library system, emulate best practices of successful neighboring libraries, e.g., story trail, expanded access to archives with Historical Society collaboration, joint projects with the Senior Center and schools.

Focus Group with Snow Library Staff

Attendees:

- Jane Ames
- Jamie Forster
- Anne Foster
- Jenny Fulcher
- Melody Gulow
- Betty Steele-Jeffers
- Kaimi Lum
- Tavi Prugno

Current Situation

COVID and its effects were top of mind for staff, including continuing to make sure everyone is safe. It was noted that many patrons have become used to online programming and curbside pickup, and the question asked what this will mean for physical use of the library moving forward. For example, with people using Zoom and digital media more often, will there be the same need for physical space as before? What are the ramifications for programming and for consideration of a new building?

It was agreed that, regardless of how people use the physical library space, more digital services and products will need to be provided, and staff will need to be skilled in facilitating access and supporting them (including training around discerning mis- and dis-information). While there is increasing demand for digital items, some people prefer print media (perhaps divided along generational lines). The question is, how best to use library space and how to create a welcoming environment that provides for everyone's needs?

While the 2021 tourist season brought many people to the library, it was acknowledged that it is increasingly difficult for younger families to afford to live in Orleans. This makes it hard to plan for the

future of the library and its programming. Still, there is a need to provide a welcoming environment for the young people who live in town now, where they can interact with each other, eat, and generally behave like themselves.

The need for more/better outdoor space came up as well. A Dig-in grant was suggested, perhaps in service to a pollinator garden, as well as multi-use open space -- perhaps partially sheltered -- that can accommodate a range of activities.

It was agreed that more overall community space is needed in Orleans, some of which the library might provide. And at a time when many municipal projects are planned or underway, there is concern about funding a new library. Some have suggested a combination library and community center. A question was raised about what this means for Snow Library and its identity as an institution.

Our Best Future

The library continues to provide an “enjoyable environment for learning”. People of all ages get the information they want and need. There are many opportunities to learn how to make and do things, including a maker space with 3D printer, LEGO table, and more. In addition to programs for specific age and interest groups, there are cross-generational activities, such as young people and elders working together in the garden, or middle and high schoolers doing projects together.

The physical library space is fresh and comfortable with plenty of natural light. There are dedicated spaces for many activities in a building that is sound, well cared for, and well-funded. Food and drink are served as well.

There is a full-time programming librarian who coordinates the many activities at Snow Library. Programs are broadcast so the widest possible audience can participate. The library itself is open a generous number of hours each week, allowing people to spend more time at their convenience.

The library and proponents of a community center have worked together for the best possible outcome, including the maintenance of Snow Library’s identity as a hub of learning for the people of Orleans.

The Future Is Now: KAIR (Keep, Abandon, Invent/Reinvent)

Snow Library staff value excellent relationships with patrons and appreciate being able to know people by name. They are proud of the service they provide, which combines wise use of technology with the best of human interaction. As one person put it, “Our interaction and personal relationship is priceless.”

The Friends of the Library and the Lifetime Learning program are representative of the excellent programming at Snow Library that staff want to bring into the future. The circulation of reference materials stood out as another example of how the library meets the needs of the community by “getting the information out however we can”.

Staff also mentioned the importance of the reading area where people “who do the circuit in town” stop to enjoy a rich collection of print materials. As people also engage in more ways with the digital world, it’s great to have staff who understand it and can address the “more interesting questions” that are now being asked, beyond the “how-to”.

There was a short list of items to abandon, including fines – which are seen as an impediment to some people’s use of the library – and “old ideas that inhibit our possibilities”. Participants spoke enthusiastically about items to invent or reinvent, including the creation of more flexible spaces to accommodate activities by the Friends and others, and updated technology, including more databases, supported by a full-time IT person and staff well versed in operating digital equipment. The need was also identified for a full-time children’s librarian.

It was suggested that the library might expand policies about who can do programs at the library to bring more of the community – and perhaps some more revenue – into the building. Programming suggestions included a seed library, a library of things, and even a “talent library” where patrons could spend time with knowledgeable volunteers, similar to Osterville’s “Check Out a Friend” program.

Focus Group with Snow Library Trustees

- James Balliett
- Marilyn Bornemeier
- Janet Crabtree
- Joan Francolini
- Steven Gass
- Deirdre White
- Mark Ziomek

Current Situation

Opportunities abound for the library to be a dynamic and resilient hub of the community and provide space and services for gathering, sharing, education, and lifelong learning to support current and future residents with up-to-date collections, technology, facilities, and responsive customer service for all.

Working together with the entire community, we can overcome the challenges created by pandemic shutdowns, difficulties in hiring skilled workers, housing affordability, capital needs, climate change, and political discord.

Our Best Future

The library is located on a walkable campus of popular shared facilities (community center and Senior Center) in the town center in a community that supports families and residents of all ages. As hub of the community, the library provides performances, lectures, art shows, in-person, and virtual services for all ages. There are comfortable areas for many activities such as quiet reading, collaboration in various-sized meeting rooms. Other activities include computer use, crafts, and creativity of many types. There is access to a diverse multifaceted collection of physical and electronic resources in a pleasant, updated facility which takes advantage of outdoor and indoor space with easy access and close parking.

Town residents recognize the value of library staff and services, and the community provides financial support sufficient for appropriate staffing, up-to-date technology, open hours appropriate for the season, collections, and the facility.

The library is a valued partner and the dynamic staff and engaged Trustees interface regularly and constructively with town government and local/regional organizations.

The Future Is Now: KAIR (Keep, Abandon, Invent/Reinvent)

The Snow Library Trustees see value in the library’s providing a wide range of physical materials, the programming and spaces for Lifetime Learning, entertainment, and art displays as well as small meeting rooms. The excellent customer service attitude and approach by staff are an asset as is the strong partnership with the Friends.

A few things need to be abandoned including “taking no for an answer” about the positive future for the library and not seeking visibility. There is also a need to do away with the sense of the library as “a stuffy place”, and to do something about “bad furniture.”

Positive change will result in inventing and reinventing many things such as strengthening the voice of the library in the community with Trustee advocates, ensuring that we have a dynamic creative staff who will also advocate to make the community aware of the library's benefits to the town and ensure that—through exceeding expectations—the Snow Library is appreciated and supported by the community.

The library must be prepared to meet change by pivoting when necessary, embracing its role as a 21st century library, seeking and supporting additional staff to meet community needs with technology. Let's get the town excited about a new library.

Facility improvements were also high on the list for invention/reinvention. The Trustees called for improved useable space for the future, e.g., more colorful, more fun. The library also needs more space, more varieties of space, and more activities in the space we have as well as more hours and Sunday hours.

Community Engagement Meetings

We held four community engagement meetings, which were open to all members of the Snow Library and local communities. Approximately 30 people attended. While it would have been good to hear from more voices, the quality of the conversation was high, and the meetings proved successful overall.

In each meeting, we considered the three questions common to all our community engagement endeavors. Participants' thoughts are summarized below. Notes from each meeting may be found in the separate Appendix document.

Current Situation

Orleans comprises the oldest demographic on the Cape with people living on fixed incomes, which makes the specter of rising taxes a worry. On the Cape and elsewhere, you see a lot of buildings going up outside of downtown. It's great for people of all ages to be able to walk to the center. Brewster and Eastham don't have village centers like we do in Orleans. People come to Orleans because there is a town center.

We need a more equitable way of planning the future of our town. Once an issue gets to the select board it is rare to have a different decision. The Community Forum is at the end of the process rather than the beginning. In other states/communities there is a deliberative process that includes voters prior to boards making decisions. If libraries could facilitate this process, we'd see a much fuller participation.

More people are moving to the Cape in general. Housing is highly priced in Orleans, making it hard to attract young working families. The hope is that, if more affordable housing is built, there will be more young families, so it is important to orient toward children and young people, in general and in the library.

Young people are growing up in a time with a lot of uncertainty. They are worried about many things, including what they can afford, where to live and existential crises about the future of the planet. There is a lot of cynicism about the ability of our governing system to solve these problems in a useful way, and a lot of anxiety.

People of all ages are feeling alienated, many living in bubbles of self-interest and not getting to know each other. The library, run the right way, can offer an opportunity to connect, like a pub, facilitating human contact that is the opposite of much digital engagement, a safe "Third Place" in the community. It can be a force for anti-loneliness and anti-depression. While technology has become part of the problem, we can also use it to our advantage with digital tools that connect people.

With so many people in discord, politically and socially, the library can be the “Switzerland of our town” and a “pillar of democracy”. Race and social justice are big issues everywhere today, as well as equity, not just economic, but historical as well. Inclusion is an umbrella trend. We need to reach out to include people of color, transgender people, everyone!

There is also a crisis of mis- and dis-information. Technology provides so much power to make or change history and present biased points of view and it’s only getting stronger with, for example, censorship in schools. Libraries can help people learn how to navigate the morass of information to make wise decisions and choices for their lives.

Big technological changes affect different generations differently. While there is a shift to the use of digital information and media, particularly among younger people, many others still want access to print media. Paper books you can hold in your hand. “They are a “long-term technology”.

There is also a shift in thinking from libraries as bricks and mortar to a series of connections. It may be challenging to get people back into the library after COVID. Many are used to doing things out of the library. We need to take all of this into consideration as we make our Strategic Plan. There are many libraries ahead of us in line for MBLC grants, so we need to strategize about what we can do with our current building to delight our community and engage people around the future of the library.

Our Best Future

The Snow Library is the natural place to be in Orleans and is truly the community center. It is centrally located, the social core of downtown Orleans with atrium and open-air spaces in addition to the internal spaces. You can’t go anywhere without touching the library.

People come to our town for the great school and the great library. Everybody in town and the region knows about what the library offers. In fact, Snow Library is the busiest place in Orleans. It is the intellectual and cultural center, open many hours, including Sundays to be optimally convenient for all. There are plenty of well-paid staff members ready to collaborate with patrons on whatever project they wish to undertake.

The library is known as a center of innovation and incubation of ideas. People get together to solve problems and generate solutions. There are programs for young people that are really compelling to them and helpful in terms of what they’re doing, the equivalent of the great Lifetime Learning offerings for adults. Every generation in Orleans has learned to channel their inner four-year-old, so they feel free to ask “why” and share their ideas freely with others.

There is state-of-the-art digital equipment and internet access in and around the library with tech-savvy staff who are ready and able to assist people with everything from the basics to the finer points of digital research and interaction. There is also plenty of room to run many programs simultaneously. The community enjoys different sized meeting spaces that are modern, well-ventilated, ready to use for a variety of activities. There is a Zen space, a garden rooftop deck with inside and outside views. The library also sports a cafe that serves, among other things, beer. There is also kitchen space for projects and events.

There is a tunnel to the middle school to connect it to the library, and vibrant partnerships with local schools. Library staff are working with them to coordinate activities and to make sure students have everything they need to learn and grow.

The library is a source for art-related activities, including poetry and music programs, especially featuring local talent. The auditorium is full and outdoor programs are well attended. There is a LEGO room/club, maker room, 3D printer and other activities where people can collaborate on making things. There is also

a library of things and people can reserve time with people who donate their time as expert advisors and creative companions.

In the afternoons, there is childcare in the library where there are continued learning and social opportunities. Mom and dad can pick kids up and know they're safe. High school students love collaborating in a teen room that they helped design, so it is just right for them. There are also spaces dedicated to quiet reading, research, or project-making.

There is plenty of convenient public transportation in Orleans, regular routes in and out of town that include the library complex. There are bike routes and enthusiastic support for alternative forms of transportation. Lots of people walk to the library and share rides for those who need them.

The library also travels to people out in the community with remote access to library materials, Zoom-based Lifetime Learning and other meetings and programs offered where people are. For example, there is a partnership with the Council on Aging and other organizations, such as the Historical Society, with open, managed outreach, inclusion, and interchange about what people can do together.

Separate projects in Orleans have been connected to create a community core that anchors the town. It is described as a cultural campus: walkable, bikeable, with convenient transportation of all kinds to multiple locations where people meet physically and electronically. A robust partnership with the Town of Orleans, includes a person whose job is to be the liaison between all the constituencies in town with the library as a hub.

The Future Is Now: KAIR (Keep, Abandon, Invent/Reinvent)

KEEP:

Participants value the congenial atmosphere in the Snow library and the "tradition of welcoming people, not judging and appreciating all views". The staff was praised highly for their helpfulness and friendliness. Among the programs people want to keep are Lifetime Learning and other Friends activities, such as the book sale and the middle school poetry contest, and children's programs overall.

Central to the rich environment at the library are the "strong book collection", art displays and programs, and display space for items of interest. Meeting space was also important to participants, as is promotion of the library as a gathering place.

ABANDON:

There were only a few suggestions for things to abandon altogether. These included fines, which is currently on the Trustees' agenda; siloed thinking, which prevents innovation and collaboration; and aspects of the physical space that don't work, such as having the children's area next to the quiet reading area.

INVENT/REINVENT:

In each meeting, conversation became animated when considering what we could invent or reinvent to improve the library and, as one person put it, "reinvent the library's relationship with the town". One person noted that the library is "not a priority with the Town [of Orleans] administration," but it should be. It is important that other parts of town talk about the library. For example, the town manager of Lincoln, MA sent a mailing around thanking the staff of the library for keeping the library open during COVID. It is critical for it not just to be the library talking about how wonderful the library is.

There are many municipal projects happening or being planned now, all of which require the focus of town officials. Participants in our meetings were clear that, to create a successful future for the town and its residents, it will be necessary to think systemically. How, for example, might the library and a community center be combined in such a way that the character and purpose of the library not only remain intact, but be enhanced? How might a "town campus" be created that could combine not only the

library and community center but affordable housing as well. The Governor Prence property was top of mind in this regard.

Participants acknowledged the tension between the need for improved library space and the current reality in town. That having been said, it was agreed there is much that can be done now to improve Snow Library that will lay the groundwork for a new building.

Collaboration was a central theme as we explored how the library might work in the short and long term with other groups and businesses in Orleans – and in the region – to create win-win-win outcomes. Participants mentioned the Historical Society, the Cultural Center, the bookstore, the Sparrow, the Cape Cod Times, local museums, and others as potential collaborators. There was also conspicuous interest in further collaboration between the library and local schools with a particular focus on making sure that young people feel welcome in and happy to engage with the library.

As an example of how different departments in a community might collaborate, one participant told the story of a school district in Minnesota that was trying to get their school buses under cover for the winter. They worked with the county fair organization who wanted new buildings for summer use. The two groups partnered to get state funding for buildings large enough for everyone to use in the appropriate season.

It was pointed out that there are many local issues around which the library could assist with information and resources, for example energy, public policy issues, housing, economic development. Public policy issues need a neutral forum, and the library can provide information from public documents, listening sessions or information sessions about a topic, so when town meetings come along people know the facts and can make more informed choices.

Along the same lines, one participant noted that the Orleans town government has a hard time making their information accessible to the community. Many people say they can't figure out how to get information from the town. Since information accessibility is a library specialty, a question was raised about how the library might partner with the town to provide critical information. "The public has a right and need for this information. Why not have this be a pilot project?"

It was acknowledged that the library would do well to create a short- and long-term public relations plan that includes strategies for raising awareness of what the library offers the community and for creating and promoting events. One person suggested an annual "I Love Snow Library" Day. Another spoke about recruiting a cadre of young person ambassadors who would be outfitted with materials they could use to talk about the library. It was also suggested that library activities could be expanded into the community more, by collaborating on events with other organizations, such as Nauset Neighbors or using the Snowmobile to deliver books and information to community members who need them.

To make this work, it will be necessary to examine our thinking, locating areas where our perspective might be updated to reflect the needs and interests of the community and to rethink what a library can be to the people it serves. Food in the library is one topic that participants suggested revisiting. It was pointed out that food plays a major role in connecting people and helping them feel welcome. The library might eventually have a cafe, and, in the meantime, it might not only allow food, but also offer programs such as the one in a neighboring town where a group read a cookbook and made recipes to share in a community meal.

Another idea was to reinvent the Friends book sale by offering secondhand books that people could buy any time using the honor system for payment. Yet another was to create a "library of things" and/or serve as a hub to connect people who have things to share with those who need them. A "talent library" or library of people was discussed as well, where volunteers could be "checked out" to share their expertise or companionship.