ALDRICH
PUBLIC
LIBRARY
Barre, Vermont

Aldrich Public Library Strategic Plan

July 1, 2025 – June 30, 2028

Approved by Library Board of Trustees on July 14, 2025

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Introduction

The Aldrich Public Library's previous strategic plan expired in June 2020, just as the library was navigating the pandemic and the challenges that followed—including inflation, unstable funding, climate events, and increasing community needs. At the same time, Barre City and Barre Town have seen an influx of new residents, bringing fresh energy, new businesses, and opportunities to reimagine the library's role. As we face continued funding limitations and increasing demands, this plan lays the foundation for growth and positions the library as a stable community resource and a catalyst for progress.

Mission Statement

Our mission is to inspire the joy of reading, promote lifelong learning, and strengthen the community.

Vision Statement

Our vision is to be a bedrock for Barre, championing a sense of wonder by blending our rich history of public librarianship with responsive, modern services that meet today's needs — and lay the groundwork for tomorrow's growth.

Process

The Aldrich Public Library began its strategic planning process with a "free-thinking" activity displayed in the library, inviting patrons, staff, and board to share high-level ideas for the future of the library and the strategic plan. We then hosted a Community Stakeholders Meeting, designed to gather public input on the library's mission, future possibilities, and the needs of the community. This feedback, ranging from affirmations of current services to new ideas, played a key role in shaping the direction of this plan.

We then held additional sessions with the Board of Trustees and library staff, using similar prompts to gather internal perspectives. A working group made up of board members and library administration analyzed all the feedback to identify key themes, goals, and objectives.

To further inform the planning process, we also examined local data, including circulation statistics for both physical and digital materials, census trends, attendance figures, and computer usage, offering insight into how the library is currently being used.

Plan Review

Progress toward the strategic plan will be updated quarterly by the Library Director and the Board of Trustees with an annual review each July. This review will highlight the library's achievements over the past year and provide an opportunity to reflect on challenges, recalibrate priorities, and identify next steps. The annual review will also serve as a checkpoint to assess whether the strategic goals, objectives, strategies, and benchmarks remain relevant and responsive to the evolving needs of the library.

Goal #1 – Operations and Development

Foster a culture of excellence in library governance, stewardship, financial management, and operations to ensure the Aldrich's long-term success. The Aldrich will strive for financial resilience through economic uncertainty by maintaining strong relationships and diversified funding sources.

Objective 1.1: Formalize board and administrative roles by adopting updated operational policies, and setting shared annual goals.

Strategies	Key Performance Indicators (KPI)
Refine the board committee structure by reassessing existing committees for clarity of charge and function, and appoint a standing policy committee to manage the review and creation of board policies.	☐ Formalize list of committees ☐ Each board member sits on one board committee (minimum) ☐ Elect a chair for each committee ☐ Write a charge for each committee ☐ Establish meeting schedule for standing committees ☐ Policy committee reviews at least two existing policies per year
Develop a governance calendar that tracks all committee meetings, annual goals, board development activities, fundraising campaigns, major library events, and other relevant projects, providing a shared framework for coordinated action throughout the year.	☐ Map out yearly tasks categorized by board commitments, fundraising campaigns, financial obligations, library programming, Friends of the Library events, and other relevant tasks or events. ☐ Incorporate committee calendars ☐ Review and update yearly
Strengthen board and administrative leadership through ongoing training that reinforce responsibilities, support trustee engagement, and build a shared understanding of governance.	☐ Review Board of Trustee Manual yearly ☐ Host an annual board retreat ☐ Incorporate relevant trainings at board meetings ☐ Review Library Director job description ☐ Administrative leadership will attend at least three trainings yearly related to governance ☐ Administration will conduct annual reviews of library staff

Objective 1.2: Develop a sustainable financial foundation by formalizing core financial practices, expanding the library's donor base through relationship-based fundraising, and fostering shared responsibility for library support.

Strategies	Key Performance Indicators (KPI)
Create written procedures and/or policies for recurring financial tasks to ensure transparency and consistency across staff and board roles	☐ Write procedures and/or policies for deposits, invoices, donations, cash registers, acknowledgements, investment/endowment management, and budgetary practices ☐ Document bookkeeping deadlines and responsibilities ☐ Establish schedule for financial review and audits
Build trust with municipal partners by offering consistent financial reporting, highlighting the library's service to the community, and providing high-level updates on library operations and impact	☐ Library Director updates Town Selectboard and City Council four times per year ☐ Library Director conducts outreach to town and city departments (i.e. police and fire department, staff meetings, etc.) once per year ☐ Invite municipal partners to board meetings at least twice per year
Diversify fundraising efforts by planning a mix of campaigns, events, and appeals that align with the library's mission, grow our donor base, and build lasting donor relationships.	☐ Expand training with Little Green Light for administration to better utilize existing donor tracking tools and data ☐ Create annual grant schedule to be reviewed and updated yearly ☐ Increase attendance at fundraising events and returns to our annual appeal ☐ Increase business donations through new approaches and targeted appeals

Objective 1.3: Foster a positive organizational culture through collaboration between administration, trustees, staff, and volunteers.

Strategies	Key Performance Indicators (KPI)
Recognize the contributions of staff, volunteers, and partners through consistent appreciation efforts	☐ Host yearly volunteer appreciation event attended by library staff and Trustees ☐ Host an annual Trustee-Staff social ☐ Formalize procedure for acknowledgements
Promote respectful communication, cultural awareness, and a safe, inclusive environment for library staff and patrons	☐ Host training on unconscious bias for staff, board, and key volunteers yearly ☐ Develop and maintain clear safety policies and procedures for emergencies, including evacuation, medical incidents, and disruptive behavior ☐ Provide regular staff training on de-escalation techniques, emergency response, and safe building evacuation to promote a calm, coordinated approach during unexpected situations ☐ Review safety protocols yearly

Goal #2 – Building and Grounds

Ensure Aldrich Public Library is a vibrant, safe, resilient, and efficient community anchor by preserving its historic architectural integrity, optimizing all spaces for flexible public use, and investing in systems and renovations that support long-term sustainability, affordability, and adaptability.

Objective 2.1: Transform library spaces through targeted, affordable improvement to support increased programming and enhance community engagement.

Strategies	Key Performance Indicators (KPI)
Identify and reimagine low-traffic or cluttered areas to support a wider variety	☐ Conduct a room-by-room space audit to identify underused or

of library functions and user needs	☐ inefficient areas ☐ Evaluate furniture for placement and/or replacement ☐ Declutter and maintain storage areas and mechanical room yearly
Create a more inviting interior and exterior presence that reflects the library's role as a vibrant community hub	☐ Redesign the exterior garden beds, including updated plantings and improved layout ☐ Upgrade exterior lighting to improve visibility and safety during evening events or hours ☐ Improve interior Reading Room lighting to improve usability ☐ Develop and post clear interior wayfinding maps and directory signs, focusing on major program areas, collections, restrooms, and services ☐ Develop a plan for consistent interior signage ☐ Host 12 programs or events yearly on the library lawn
Renovate the Vermont Room into a dynamic, multi-purpose space that supports reading, gathering, art and cultural exhibits while preserving its core collection	☐ Remove excess furniture, weed the Vermont Collection, and relocate non-essential items to prepare the room for redesign ☐ Pursue a mixed funding strategy beginning with submitting at least two grant applications ☐ Obtain two written cost estimates for renovation and furnishing of the Vermont Room to support grant applications ☐ Complete and document all design and layout ☐ Establish guidelines for Vermont Room art exhibits and gallery use

Objective 2.2: Create a sustainable infrastructure roadmap that prioritizes historic preservation, accessibility, energy efficiency, and eco-focused improvements.

Strategies	Key Performance Indicators (KPI)
Review, update, and expand the Capital Improvement Plan	 ☐ Formalize maintenance and service contract schedule in central location ☐ Update schedule of major capital needs ☐ Include the York Branch in planning ☐ Gather estimates and create a budget for the Capital Improvement plan ☐ Increase membership on the Facilities Committee ☐ Create a plan and gather estimates for root removal from library plumbing
Improve the climate resilience of the library lawn by integrating sustainable landscaping practices	☐ Explore options for flood mitigation ☐ Research alternative lawn options

Goal #3 – Collection

The library collection will be a well-maintained, relevant, and inclusive collection—across formats and platforms—that reflects community voices and broadening perspectives, ensures access to timely and accurate information, and is discoverable through updated cataloging and digital tools and resources.

Objective 3.1: Maintain collection by routinely assessing evolving community needs and selecting materials that serve as both mirrors of lived experience and windows into new ideas.

Strategies	Key Performance Indicators (KPI)
Implement a rolling, long-term weeding plan	☐ Host staff training on weeding ☐ Formalize practices into written procedures

	☐ Develop a weeding schedule
Create an inclusive, dynamic collection	☐ Curate a materials selection toolkit ☐ Provide professional development opportunities yearly to ensure up-to-date practices ☐ Create a suggestion box for community input ☐ Pilot a "Staff Picks & Community Favorites" display that changes seasonally and features patron suggestions

Objective 3.2: Increase usage of the collection through an improved user-friendly search experience and cohesive cataloging practices.

Strategies	Key Performance Indicators (KPI)
Support effective discovery of library materials to ensure accurate records and a better patron experience	☐ Conduct an ongoing catalog cleanup project to address inconsistent records, duplicate entries, and outdated tags ☐ Administration and cataloging staff attend yearly catalog trainings to enhance accuracy, internal practices, and patron-facing tools ☐ Build a catalog "wishlist" based on staff and community input to inform future upgrades ☐ Update all Online Public Access Computers (OPAC) computers ☐ Develop a quick reference guide for patrons to better utilize the OPAC ☐ Improve signage and shelf labels throughout the collection to make browsing easier for all users ☐ Regularly provide themed catalog discovery tools through training and promotion

Objective 3.3: Balance preservation and innovation to expand the breadth and impact of the collection by developing a plan to grow digital and non-traditional resources.

Strategies	Key Performance Indicators (KPI)
Advance the library's digital infrastructure by expanding e-resources, preserving historical collections, and creating new online content that reflects community interests	☐ Increase e-book and audiobook acquisitions to reduce hold times and better meet patron demand ☐ Digitize local history collections ☐ Establish a formal digitization workflow and practices including scanning equipment and settings, storage practices, and priorities ☐ Develop non-traditional digital collections such as YouTube playlists, recommended podcasts, staff blog posts, and virtual programs
Broaden access to learning and leisure through nontraditional collections that encourage discovery	☐ Pilot a Library of Things at the York Branch, starting with high-demand, low-risk items like puzzles, outdoor recreation, gardening tools, or kitchen kits ☐ Purchase a locking display case to house rotating themed exhibits from community members or the library archives

Goal #4 – Community

Welcome and enrich our community by closing gaps—partnering widely, reaching underserved populations, and ensuring the library's programs, services, and spaces reflect the full range of lived experiences and voices in Barre.

Objective 4.1: Close access gaps by expanding technology tools, resources, and literacy supports for residents who face barriers to information and connectivity.

Strategies	Key Performance Indicators (KPI)

Advance digital literacy for patrons of all ages through regular tech help, targeted workshops, and staff training on essential tools and resources	☐ Offer drop-in tech help hours each week for basic device troubleshooting, eBooks, printing, and internet support ☐ Host at least 6 workshops each year, covering topics such as email, online job applications, and secure browsing ☐ Yearly staff trainings on our digital database offerings in order to better serve patrons ☐ Create schedule to replace twenty percent of public computers yearly
Ensure all library technology is accessible across all abilities	☐ Conduct a full accessibility audit of the library website, examining navigation, readability, screen reader compatibility, alt text, and color contrast ☐ Research assistive technology software on all public computers, such as screen magnifiers, text-to-speech programs, and on-screen keyboards for users with visual or physical impairments ☐ Stay up-to-date on available resources from Audio, Braille, Large Print, and Electronic books (ABLE) Library, including at least one training and establishing a contact ☐ Assess physical accessibility of all public-facing technology stations, including OPACs and printers, ensuring they meet ADA guidelines for reach, height, and mobility access

Objective 4.2: Build meaningful partnerships with local organizations, schools, businesses, and residents to co-create programs and outreach initiatives that reflect the community.

Strategies	Key Performance Indicators (KPI)

Create opportunities for collaboration with community partners to communicate the possibilities of what the library has to offer	☐ Create yearly outreach plan for trustees, administration, and staff to meet with service groups, local organizations, schools, and other partners ☐ Utilize the Community Partner's Desk—a space for local nonprofits, agencies, businesses, and individuals to maintain a public-facing presence in the library—with a goal of hosting at least three collaborators per week ☐ Include community stakeholders quarterly at staff meetings ☐ Increase Trustee presence at major library events (i.e. Rotary Breakfast, Friends of the Library events, etc.) ☐ Continue to design and maintain cohesive promotional materials, highlighting key library services, contact info, and ways to get involved
Align library outreach efforts with local events and school initiatives to increase visibility, promote library services, and foster deeper community connections	☐ Resume library card registration outreach visit at the Barre Unified Union School District ☐ Develop a list of community events to identify potential outreach opportunities ☐ Increase presence at community events by attending one additional Barre City event and one additional Barre Town event each year

Objective 4.3: Position the library as a vital social anchor in Barre where people of all ages, backgrounds, and abilities can build new skills, exchange ideas, and engage in meaningful connection through both active and informal experiences.

Strategies	Key Performance Indicators (KPI)
Actively promote the library's resources and services to ensure community	☐ Expand social media presence by highlighting services, programs,

members understand how the library can support their needs	collections, and community partnerships ☐ Develop and launch a library tour program, including a tour script and trained staff or volunteers, with at least one tour offered per month or by request ☐ Research and select a new integrated calendar system that allows for internal event booking and public display on the library website, with implementation and staff training completed ☐ Promote the library as a public meeting space by highlighting availability at least quarterly on social media and in newsletters ☐ Send an annual summer mailer to all Barre households by June each year, highlighting seasonal programs, museum and pool passes, and key library services
Develop and implement clear, supportive customer service standards to ensure all patrons receive equitable, respectful, and informed assistance	☐ Create a "Welcoming Library Practices" checklist to reinforce consistent and friendly interactions across all service areas ☐ Provide tools and talking points for staff to confidently navigate common service scenarios, including difficult interactions, accessibility needs, and language barriers ☐ Incorporate scenarios and role-playing into annual staff development that explore ways to make every patron feel seen, respected, and supported, especially during busy or stressful moments
Expand the library's reach by identifying who is not currently engaging with services and co-creating welcoming, responsive pathways to participation	☐ Partner with local organizations and trusted community leaders to learn about barriers to access and unmet needs, especially among populations who may not currently use library

	services ☐ Host at least two listening sessions or pop-up conversations to hear from voices not currently represented in library use ☐ Review and update informational and outreach materials to ensure inclusive language, representative imagery, and multilingual access where appropriate ☐ Conduct a targeted survey reaching 20- to 40-year-old community members for feedback to inform future efforts