Argyle Free Library

Strategic Plan

2025-2030

July 14, 2025

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The world is changing rapidly, and the Argyle Free Library is committed to evolving alongside it. To stay relevant and continue serving our community effectively, we have developed a Five-Year Strategic Plan. This plan will guide decisions about programming, material selection, new services, and more.

The introduction outlines the methods we used to gather input for the plan.

Next, we offer a brief history of the Argyle Free Library, highlighting the dedication of past residents who, often with limited resources, worked tirelessly to create and sustain a library for the community.

We also present local demographic data to illustrate the diverse groups we serve.

Finally, the Mission, Vision, and Value Statements are included to show how they align with and inform the direction of this Strategic Plan.

The heart of the Strategic Plan is the four goals for the library, which library stakeholders have targeted as priorities to focus on throughout the next five years. Each goal is supported by action steps, timelines, and measurements of success. These goals have been chosen to help the library work as a community hub and resource, as well as to support life-long learning.

· Goal One is to invest in Staff Development and Support

· Goal Two is to Obtain Sustainable Funding

· Goal Three is to Create New Space and Update Infrastructure

· Goal Four is to Meet Argyle's 21st Century Technology Needs

By adopting this plan, the Board of the Argyle Free Library is committing to follow this plan. A new plan will be written in five years which will build off the successes and failures of the plan presented here.

PLANNING SUMMARY

A Strategic Planning Committee was formed consisting of the Library Director and three members of the Board of Trustees. The committee began by creating a community survey to identify the current and future needs and desires of library patrons, community stakeholders, and other interested parties.

Once the survey responses were collected, the committee met to analyze the results and identify goals for the next five years that will allow the library to meet the growing needs of the community. As the committee began to flesh out the goals, a meeting with Erica Freudenberger of Southern Adirondack Library System (SALS) was held. The discussion and work session with Erica helped the committee to solidify and expand the identified goals into a workable format. Two more committee meetings were held to populate the template, which was then presented to the Board members and library staff for their input. Upon completion, the Strategic Plan was made available to the public on the library's website.

HISTORY OF ARGYLE FREE LIBRARY

The story of the Argyle Free Library begins in the early 19th century, rooted in a shared love of reading among the village and town residents. In 1805, the first effort to create a public library took shape with plans to house it in the home and tavern of Pelag Bragg, located at the corner of Main and Sheridan Streets, now the site of Stewart's. By 1823, the Argyle Social Library was incorporated and operated out of Joseph Rouse's inn, once located where the former IGA store and parking lot now sit.

As the town grew, informal reading circles became popular, with books being kept in private homes like that of Dr. Stillman on East Street. By 1920, the Village Improvement Association helped transform these grassroots efforts into a formal library.

The East Street office of the late Dr. Stillman became the first home of the Argyle Free Library. The provisional charter issued at that time became a permanent charter in 1974.

In 1927, sisters Cora Breason Mott and Anna Breason Gilchrist donated the current library building, one of the oldest in the village. The library continued to grow with community support. In the 1950s, a TV appearance by Mrs. Ralph McGeoch on Queen for a Day brought attention and improvements, and the library joined the Southern Adirondack Library System (SALS) in 1958.

By the 1990s, it was clear that more space was needed at the library. Construction on the new wing started in 1994 and was finished in 1995. The dedication of this new wing was held on June 11, 1995.

Over the decades, the library has transformed from a single-room space with a wood stove and kerosene lamp to a fully modern facility with children's programs, public computers, and access to thousands of digital resources.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, the Argyle Free Library responded swiftly, offering virtual programs, curbside pickup, and public Wi-Fi at the Cossayuna Fire House to serve those without internet access. Since then, the library has continued to evolve, with updated furnishings, expanded programming, and a stronger digital presence. Today's libraries are more than book repositories, they are dynamic community hubs offering internet access, learning opportunities, and makerspaces. To meet the changing needs of the 21st century, the Argyle Free Library is once again planning to grow. The library's foundation is its history of service; its future depends on you.

DEMOGRAPHICS

Understanding our community is key to providing relevant materials and meaningful programs. By knowing who we serve, the library can better meet the needs of all residents. The demographic data below, sourced from the 2020 U.S. Census and the Southern Adirondack Library System's 2024 report, helps guide our planning and services.

- Argyle population (ZIP code of 12809): 59,839
- Persons under 5 years of age: 4.6%
- Persons under 18 years of age: 8.3%
- Adult (18-64): 54.6%
- Persons 65 years and over: 22.5%
- Hours Open/Week: 28
- Visits to the Library: 5412
- Library materials circulated in 2024: 4046 items
- Interlibrary Loan uses in 2024: 2548 items
- Digital Circulation: 2095 digital items borrowed
- Technology Services:
  - 231 computer uses
  - 2707 Wi-Fi uses
- Programs Held: 579

Funding for the Argyle Free Library in 2024:

Total	$111,579.00
Town	$14,000.00
Village	$1,000.00
School District	$69,245.00
Donations	$20,098.00
State/Federal/Grants	$7,236.00

VISION STATEMENT

To be the primary resource for enhancing the quality of life for the community, its organizations, and all its residents.

The Argyle Free Library (AFL) is committed to enriching the community by serving as a hub for connection and engagement. Through a wide range of services, AFL fosters relationships, partnerships, and collaboration among individuals and groups. The library offers a welcoming physical space for gatherings and engages with the community in off-site seasonal events. With diverse offerings—books, DVDs, programs, and more—AFL strives to meet the needs of all community members, including people of all ages, life stages, and backgrounds, from long-term residents to newcomers and seasonal visitors.

MISSION STATEMENT

To build the personnel, financial, and technological capacity necessary to realize the library's long-term vision.

This goal encompasses the ongoing development and maintenance of the library's facilities, resources, and services to support individuals, groups, and organizations within the community. It includes providing access to books, multimedia materials, internet services, and public computers—adapting continuously to meet the evolving educational, recreational, and personal enrichment needs of all patrons.

VALUES STATEMENT

We believe in lifelong learning as a foundation for personal growth and community well-being. We are committed to enhancing quality of life through opportunities for learning, sharing, connection, and new experiences. We also uphold the fundamental freedom to read and access information.

GOALS

Goal 1: Invest in Staff Development and Support

To offer competitive wages, benefits, and professional development opportunities to retain skilled staff and support their continued growth and learning.

ACTION STEPS	TIMELINE	RESPONSIBLE	RESOURCES	MEASUREMENT
Support professional development & conference attendance for staff	2025-2030	Library Board & Director	SALS CDLC ESLN NYLA ARSL OCLC Web Junction	Director reports to Board about staff professional development & conference attendance
Provide Membership to Professional Organizations	2025-2030	Library Board & Director	NYLA ARSL	Board will maintain a line in the budget to support professional memberships
Provide Medical Stipend for Staff	2027	Library Board	Additional Funding (Be specific re amount)	Board will pursue budget referendums to create benefits budget line for staff
Increase Staffing Level & Hours	2026	Library Board & Director	Additional Funding	Increase staff hours

Goal 2: Obtain Sustainable Funding

To ensure the ongoing success of the library as a valued community institution and secure funding to support services that meet the evolving needs of the Argyle community.

ACTION STEPS	TIMELINE	RESPONSIBLE	RESOURCES	MEASUREMENT
Form Grant Writing Committee	2025	Library Board	Handbook for Library Trustees	Committee formed
Pursue Education to Support Grant Writing Efforts	2025-2026	Grant Writing Committee	SALS CDLC ARSL	Attendance at three or more educational programs annually
Research available & applicable grants & funding opportunities	2025-2030	Grant Writing Committee	SALS CDLC ARSL	At least 10 grant applications submitted
Sustain & Nurture Relationships with Community Stakeholders	2025-2030	Library Director & Staff	Updated list of community stakeholders	Host one stakeholder event annually.
Pursue Regular, Reasonable Funding Increases Through Public Referendum	2020-2030	Library Board	SALS	Yearly increases
Explore the benefits of creating a Library Endowment	2029-2030	Library Board	SALS	Create a document to present to the board explaining the benefit of an endowment
Support Friends of the Library fundraising efforts	2025-2030	Library Board & Director	Monthly report from the Friend's representative to the board.	Friends present annual report to Library Board At least one trustee attends each Friends event

Goal 3: Create New Space and Update Infrastructure

To assess, enhance, and expand the library facility in order to broaden the scope of programs and services, support Argyle's cultural and educational development, and encourage greater community use.

ACTION STEPS	TIMELINE	RESPONSIBLE	RESOURCES	MEASUREMENT
Retain architect to explore possibility of internal & external Expansion	2025-2026	Library Board & Director	Architectural firm with library experience	Meeting with architect
Visit other recently renovated or newly built libraries	2025	Library Board, Direct (or representative)	Galway Library Stillwater Library Cambridge Public Library Schuylerville Public Library	Number of visits made Positive input received
Research Options: Adjacent Property Old IGA Other Possibilities	2025-2026	Library Board & Director	AIA Village Board	Information leading to decisions
Create a Library capital fund	2025-2026	Library Board	SALS Stakeholders Patrons	Create a capital fund
Create timeline for decision-making	2025-2029	Library Board, Director	Grant timeline, Architects Report	Timeline established
Decide to build, renovate, or expand library	2025-2026	Library Board, Director	Architects Report	Decision made

Goal 4: Meet Argyle's 21st Century Technology Needs

To ensure ongoing access to reliable internet, up-to-date technology, and user support to meet the workforce, educational, and entertainment needs of the Argyle community and to incorporate advanced, state-of-the-art tools as funding allows.

ACTION STEPS	TIMELINE	RESPONSIBLE	RESOURCES	MEASUREMENT
Increase staff hours to support ongoing technology training for patrons	2026-2030	Library Board & Director	Funding	Increase hours
Replace outdated technology	2025-2030	Library Director & Staff	Joint Automation Project	Library computers & devices will be less than four years old
Research & determine necessary emerging technology purchases	2025-2030	Library Director & Staff	Joint Automation Project SALS (Jack Scott)	Director's annual technology report
Pursue grants to purchase new technology	2025-2030	Grant Writing Committee & Library Director	Online grant listings ALA, NYLA, SALS	Applied for 2 or more technology specific grants annually

LIST OF ACRONYMS

ACS - Argyle Central School

AFL - Argyle Free Library

AIA – Argyle Improvement Association

ALA – American Library Association

ARSL – Association for Rural and Small Libraries

CDLC – Capital District Library Council

ESLN – Empire State Library Network

LD - Library Director

NYLA – New York Library Association

OCLC – WorldCat (Online Computer Library Center)

SALS - Southern Adirondack Library System