

KEENE PUBLIC LIBRARY

***A storied past,
a future anticipated.***

***Strategic Plan
FY 2024–2029***



A REVISED MISSION

Keene Public Library is your place for community and learning.

STRATEGIC PROCESS

Planning Committee reviewed services, demographics & statistics

Community conversations for large groups

Staff in-service conversation & brainstorming service responses

Individual & small group interviews

Service responses chosen from information gathered

Plan drafted

Review by Library Staff

Review by Planning Committee

Presentation to Library Board of Trustees



COMMUNITY CONVERSATIONS

Approximately 120 community members of diverse backgrounds were asked questions based on the Harwood Institute approach for strategic planning. The questions focus on the community's needs and aspirations so the Library can focus on the services that are relevant to the residents. The Harwood Institute's method has been recommended for strategic planning by the American Library Association (ALA) since 2013.

Tell us about yourself.

Who were/are the people who most influenced your life?

If you were to make a t-shirt that described your motto for life, what would it say?

The future

Imagine Keene ten years from now. What would you want to see, hear and feel when you travel throughout the future Keene?

Values

Why are these things in that future important to you?

Challenges and Opportunities

What challenges might Keene face in reaching the future you want? What strengths and opportunities does Keene have that could make this future more likely?

A Way Forward

If you had the power to make any changes, at any level, what would you do to make a successful future for Keene?

WHAT WE HEARD

What Keene residents hope for ten years from now

Inclusive and diverse community

- ◆ A welcoming place where everyone feels they belong, no matter their race, ethnicity, gender, age or abilities.
- ◆ More involvement from everyone; collaboration, and support across generations.

Affordable housing

- ◆ The creation and maintenance of housing that's affordable for all income levels in order to attract and keep a diverse population that includes young people, and support those in need.
- ◆ More small homes and revamped downtown apartments.

Vibrant and sustainable economy

- ◆ A lively downtown area with successful businesses, especially locally owned ones.
- ◆ Opportunities for young people, entrepreneurs, and diverse groups.
- ◆ Focus on green energy, conservation, and climate action.

Accessible resources and infrastructure

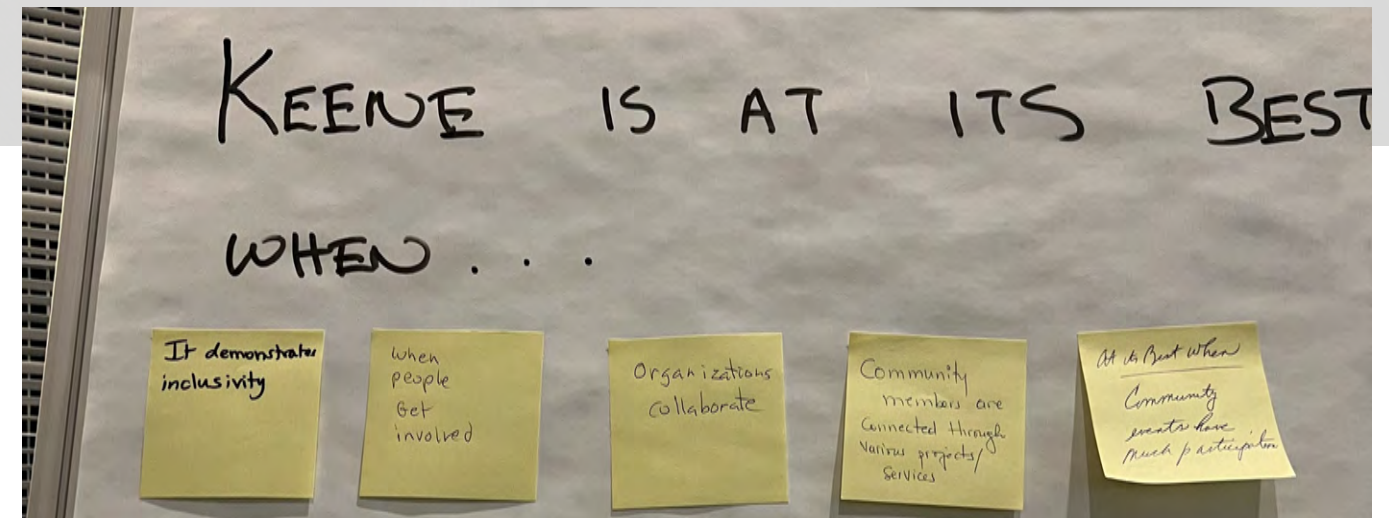
- ◆ Improved access to healthcare, childcare, addiction treatment, and mental health services.
- ◆ Improved public transportation.
- ◆ Improved infrastructure for gathering and relaxing, like sidewalks, bike paths, and public spaces.

Arts, culture, and social events

- ◆ More arts, cultural events, and community gatherings that celebrate diversity and bring people together, including public art, music, and festivals.

Education, career opportunities, and support for vulnerable populations

- ◆ Better access to and support for quality education, from public schools to colleges.
- ◆ More career options for good-paying jobs, especially in education, human services, trades and blue-collar jobs.
- ◆ Improved ways to address homelessness, addiction, mental health challenges, and support for those who need it.



WHAT WE HEARD

Challenges identified

Divisiveness and polarization

- ◆ Close-mindedness, and a lack of respectful discussions are big challenges.
- ◆ Political, economic, and cultural differences, as well as fear, contribute to this divide.

Funding and financial constraints

- ◆ Worries about enough money for public infrastructure, education, human services, and affordable housing.
- ◆ Budget limits and the current state and local tax structures play a role in these financial concerns.

Resistance to change

- ◆ Some people in the community resist change, while others encourage change to seek improvements.
- ◆ Concerns that personal goals or traditions will be put above the common good of the community.
- ◆ Resistance can slow down progress in areas like sustainability, inclusivity, and community development.

Housing and affordability

- ◆ Lack of affordable and accessible housing options for everyone, including immigrants, non-neurotypical individuals, and older people.
- ◆ Personal and governmental funding and economic challenges.

Addiction and mental health

- ◆ Addiction and mental health are problems for the community as a whole.
- ◆ Addiction and mental health issues increase homelessness in the community.
- ◆ Difficulties navigating through the available social services options.
- ◆ The lack of support beyond emergency-level resources makes reaching self-sufficiency more difficult.

Communication and community engagement

- ◆ A need to break down silos to improve local information sharing and collaboration.
- ◆ A need for increased community interest and involvement.
- ◆ Keene residents experience generational divides, with some younger adults feeling that the community doesn't offer the services and experiences they would like to have, while some older adults are concerned about the future they would like for the community.

HOW CAN THE LIBRARY HELP?

While not all of the topics brought up by residents easily translate to library services, there are opportunities for the Library to assist.

For example: Concerns about **transportation**

Direct services

Provide space for public meetings and work groups on the topic.
Gather resources for citizens to more easily access information.
Have copies of plans for transportation projects available for review.
Distributing and posting bus schedules.
Purchase general books on transportation and environmental conservation.

Partnerships

Invite community organizations to present information on their transportation programs.

Share information

Share interview responses with other governmental departments and non-governmental agencies for their planning purposes (Planning/Zoning, Public Works, City Council, Planning Board, Southwest Regional Planning, Home Healthcare Hospice and Community Services, etc.)



OUR FOCUS FOR THE NEXT FIVE YEARS



Outgoing materials for curbside service in the months we were closed during the pandemic

Provide a **COMMONS ENVIRONMENT** to help address people's need to meet and interact in the community and participate in public discourse about community issues.

- ◆ Promote interaction and communication in a way that makes people feel connected, relaxed, and supported in the community and within the library building.
- ◆ Provide information that better connects residents to the community.
- ◆ Be creative with partnerships, programming and outreach.
- ◆ Find ways to engage new adults (20s-30s) in the library and community.
- ◆ Seek opportunities to assist local businesses, remote workers and job hunters.
- ◆ Think outside of traditional services in order to meet the needs of residents as the community changes.

Provide **COMMUNITY REFERRALS** to address the need for information related to services provided by community agencies and organizations.

- ◆ Expand partnerships with nonprofits, individuals, area businesses, and governmental agencies.
- ◆ Develop staff education on issues that affect patrons and community members (mental health, bias, economic stability, etc.).
- ◆ Gear programs to a wide variety of interests and ages and expand those which are the most well received.
- ◆ Improve marketing of Library events and services to all members of the community and community organizations
- ◆ Highlight local organizations and their missions in library communications, including the website and social media.
- ◆ Seek ways for community organizations to advertise library services and programs where appropriate for their clients.

Help residents gain **CULTURAL AWARENESS** of their own heritage and the cultural heritage of others.

- ◆ Engage a broad coalition of multicultural resources to help educate staff and provide programs.
- ◆ Provide a safe and welcoming environment that supports patrons of all types in ways that supplements and adapts traditional services to better meet, invite and include all individuals.
- ◆ Curate collections which recognize and educate about cultural awareness, biases, and minority perspectives.
- ◆ Continue programming that supports marginalized people, aids our community in open communication and discussion and offers opportunities to reflect and honor diverse voices and cultural histories.
- ◆ Offer opportunities for people of various backgrounds and opinions to interact and learn from each other.



Help residents achieve **LIFELONG LEARNING** through self-directed personal growth and development opportunities.

- ◆ Continually review and improve in-house and remote access collections to ensure that they are up to date, meet community needs and interests, and are the best use of funds.
- ◆ Increase educational programs for residents' personal learning and/or economic growth.
- ◆ Offer library meeting rooms for private or library-sponsored class series taught by community leaders, local organizations, and educators.
- ◆ Use displays to highlight educational resources throughout the library.
- ◆ Offer books and other technical materials that support certificate programs and other professional continuing education.

Implementation

Residents expressed interest in continuing community conversations on a variety of topics, including being a focus group for implementation of specific services related to this strategic plan.

Further community recommendations, along with staff-generated ideas will be considered for potential development and implementation. This plan will be continually reviewed by staff and Trustees and implementation will be adjusted based on community response and changing conditions.

The community interviews summary is available upon request. If you have additional questions, comment, or ideas please share them with us at <https://www.keeneh.gov/contact-keene>.

THANK YOU

We thank the community for their continued support of the Keene Public Library.

This community-based plan could not have been done without the help of those who gave time to be interviewed, attend meetings, and provide a wealth of information.

In particular, we wish to thank the following people:

Long Range Planning Committee:

Jennifer Alexander -Trustee
Susan Bloom–Assistant Director
Ritu Budakoti -Trustee
Kathleen Kennedy Burke–Trustee
Marti Fiske -Director
Yves Gakunde–Trustee
Jenna Henderson - Librarian
Susan Matthews–Community member
Leatrice Oram–Community member

Facilitator: Steve Brown-- The Futures Collaborative, LLC

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