



Baker Free Library

STRATEGIC

Plan of Service

**2024
2028**

APPROVED 12/18/2023

by the Baker Free Library
Board of Trustees



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Letter from the Board



The next five years mark an exciting chapter in the history of Baker Free Library. It will be a time of intense development and growth—expanding the scope and relevancy of our programs and services. 110 years of facility improvements will culminate in a stunning exterior space that the whole community can enjoy. Baker Free Library will continue to provide Bow with all that is best in library resources; however, the library will also confirm its place as the hub of culture, arts, and lifelong learning in the community.

The Library Trustees would like to express their sincerest gratitude to all those who participated in our strategic plan focus groups, one-on-one conversations, and surveys.

The Library Trustees wish to thank Deb Hoadley, of Hoadley Consulting, for facilitating the trustee and staff strategic plan retreat.

Pictured Left to Right: Sheri Vincent-Crisp, Eric Anderson - *Treasurer*,
Bob Arnold - *Chair*, Matt Gatzke - *Secretary*

Not Pictured: Donna Deos

Photos on the following pages taken by Eric Anderson: Cover, 3, 5, 6, 7, 8, 17

History of the Library



In 1912, Congressman Henry M. Baker, cousin of Mary Baker Eddy, donated \$10,000 and the land next to his family home on South Street to the Town of Bow for the creation of a public library. William H. McLean and his associates built Baker Free Library in the neoclassical style—École des Beaux-Arts. This architectural firm built more than thirty libraries in the New England area between 1905 and 1915, including many beautiful libraries in New Hampshire. Baker Free Library was completed and dedicated at the present site in 1914. Among historical buildings in Bow, Baker Free Library holds a special place. The Library has been an important part of the community's cultural life for 110 years. With incredible support from the community, Baker Free Library has expanded into the exceptional facility that it is today.

In 1967, an addition was completed and served the needs of the growing Bow community for 30 additional years. In September 1999, the first floor of the 1967 addition was demolished to make way for the current addition and renovation of the original building. The Library's usable public space expanded by 5,200 square feet to a total of 9,333 square feet. On October 21, 2000, the new addition and renovated



original building were rededicated. The facility provides seating for groups and individual study, public access to the Internet, and a collection of over 45,000 items.

In 2008, the library trustees and staff made a concerted effort to obtain community feedback about the potential uses for the unfinished lower level space in the library building. After numerous surveys and focus groups, plans were developed for meeting space, technology space, and storage of historic Bow materials. The library trustees committed to raising half of the project costs, with the other half obtained through town warrant.

In 2015, Phase 1 of the project was completed (encompassing the 1967 Lower Level spaces) and in 2017 Phase II was completed (the 2000 addition Lower Level spaces). This project allowed approximately 6,900 square feet of basement space to be converted to usable community space. Averaging 40 rentals per month, the Lower Level rooms have become a popular resource within the Town of Bow.



The Library Today

Improvements to the facility during the last strategic plan period included:



01 A Revitalized Children's Section

The Children's Section features new furniture and interactive play spaces for our youngest patrons.

A New Art Gallery 02

The Art Gallery provides artists from all over the state the opportunity to showcase their talent to the community.



03 Installation of Generator

This project now establishes the Lower Level as an emergency shelter for the community.



In 2023, the library trustees approved a landscape plan to create beautiful, functional, and versatile outdoor spaces.

Over the past 110 years, Baker Free Library has preserved its architectural heritage while expanding its horizons.

The original 1914 building remains the cornerstone upon which Baker Free Library has built its exceptional facility. The history of the facility's development is echoed by the consistent expansion and improvement in the library's collection, services, and human resources. As we look forward to the 300th anniversary of the Town of Bow, the Baker Free Library of today is poised to deliver outstanding access to information, collections, and programs to the whole community.



Baker Free Library has reestablished itself as a community hub following the closure and limited services in 2020 due to COVID19.



The number of visitors to the library has doubled from 2020



Circulation of children's material has increased by 75%.



Participation in library programs has quadrupled over the last three years.



Adult circulation has increased by 50%

THE FOLLOWING 2023 METRICS HIGHLIGHT
BAKER FREE LIBRARY'S SUCCESS.

Access	Collection	Programs
<p>2,808</p> <p>The number of public service hours per year</p>	<p>47,404</p> <p>The number of items in the physical collection</p>	<p>263</p> <p>The number of programs offered for all ages</p>
<p>23,630</p> <p>The number of visits to the library website</p>	<p>177,842</p> <p>The number of electronic resources</p>	<p>5,395</p> <p>The number of participants in all our programs</p>
<p>43,562</p> <p>The number of visitors to the library</p>	<p>3,115</p> <p>The number of interlibrary loans</p>	<p>2,376</p> <p>The number of participants in our adult programs</p>
<p>14,924</p> <p>The number of hours the staff work per year</p>	<p>76,203</p> <p>The total circulation of items (physical and digital)</p>	<p>1,428</p> <p>The number of participants in our Summer Reading Program</p>

Determining Strategic Priorities for the Future

Following the recommendation of the New Hampshire State Library and Hoadley Consulting, Baker Free Library utilized Joy L. Fuller's *Strategic Planning for Public Libraries* to identify the best practices for conducting a data collection plan. In order to ensure that the future of the Library satisfies the needs of the community it serves, the Library conducted a Community Needs Survey during the months of February through May 2023 (240 respondents), a follow-up survey in July 2023 (126 respondents), and a variety of focus groups and one-on-one conversations throughout that same period.

The Strategic Plan Leadership Team consisting of the Library Director, the Trustee Chair, the Youth Services Librarian, and the Technical Services Librarian executed the data collection plan. The Leadership Team sought to define the current reality of Bow and the Library as well as create a vision for the future of both. The information gathered identified the following top five library services:



- Supporting early childhood literacy.
- Providing a comfortable and welcoming physical space.
- Supporting adult life-long learning.
- Supporting students with their learning.
- Supporting arts and culture in the community.

On July 28, 2023, the Library Trustees and the Library Staff met to review the recommendations of the Leadership Team and the Community Needs Survey. Deb Hoadley of Hoadley Consulting facilitated the meeting. The goal of this meeting was to establish the top strategic priorities, develop accompanying goals and objectives, and to create a new mission statement:

“Baker Free Library provides relevant and reliable resources to support educational, cultural, and information needs for the whole community.”

Additionally, Baker Free Library adopted a new tagline for its visual identity:



The Library Trustees and Staff feel confident that by focusing on the following four strategic priorities the desired outcome of a community-centered strategic plan for the Library will be achieved...

Strategic Priority:

Community Connections & Outreach

Objective Strengthen partnerships and collaborations across the community

Activities Baker Free Library will:

- host an annual Business Expo to support local businesses.*
- host the Energy Expo*
- provide library cards for all Bow kindergartners*
- collaborate with the Heritage Commission on the 300th Anniversary celebration*
- support Bow non-profits through collaborative programs and facility usage*

Objective Participate in community events

Activities Baker Free Library will:

- support the annual Town Concert series as part of the Summer Reading Program*
- develop a community event for the 2024 Solar Eclipse*



Baker Free Library will work as an active part of the community creating connections and partnerships and increasing awareness of what the library has to offer.

Objective Increase/enhance marketing of what the library does

Activities Baker Free Library will:

- publish an Information Brochure for new residents*
- establish a Community Information Center in the library foyer to highlight current events*
- create a video tutorial library in support of information literacy among patrons and within the community*
- distribute the monthly newsletter in both virtual and hard copy formats throughout the community*
- purchase an electronic display board to greet patrons with library happenings and event directions upon entering the main area of the library*

Objective Provide opportunities for engagement with the library

Activities Baker Free Library will:

- maintain a presence at all relevant community events*
- relaunch the annual book sale*

Strategic Priority:

*Innovation
& Creativity*

Objective Provide technology to support the needs of the community

Activities Baker Free Library will:

- upgrade the public information commons to include new computers and improved accessibility to the multi-function copier machine*
- purchase WiFi Hotspots for patron borrowing*
- maintain a new collection of audiobooks for children using the Vox Books format*
- offer live streaming technologies for community groups renting library rooms*
- upgrade the server room and technology infrastructure*

Objective Pilot innovative programs that support education, business, and cultural enrichment

Activities Baker Free Library will:

- develop a new program for babies and new caregivers*
- develop a Community Reads program*
- establish a Library of Things*
- host three musical/cultural events per year as part of Adult Programming*
- add traveling art exhibitions to its sequence of Art Gallery exhibits*
- offer adult programming at White Rock Senior Living*

Baker Free Library will provide state-of-the-art technology and innovative ways to foster imagination and creativity.

Objective Create opportunities for exploration and discovery of new technologies

Activities Baker Free Library will:

- include in its Library of Things new technologies in support of robotics, virtual reality, AI, and computer programming
- participate in New Hampshire State Library's Robotics Arm and AI initiatives



Strategic Priority:

*Welcoming
Place*

Objective Investigate new ways to best utilize indoor and outdoor spaces

Activities Baker Free Library will:

- complete all phases of the new landscape plan*
- enhance the Art Gallery with new lighting and furniture*
- revitalize the 1914 Reading Room*
- redesign the New Books area of the library*
- renovate the staff room and staff break area*
- redesign the circulation desk*
- finish the lower level "book sale" room*
- explore the possibility of a library cafe*

Objective Promote the use of the meeting rooms to organizations, community groups, and residents

Activities Baker Free Library will:

- improve the Welch Room to include audiovisual capabilities*
- explore potential uses of the finished "book sale" room as an additional meeting room*

Baker Free Library will be a welcoming, inclusive, accessible public space where the community can gather, read, work, and learn.

Objective Strengthen virtual presence by collaborating with other libraries and through community partnerships

Activities Baker Free Library will:

- partner with neighboring libraries in the promotion and delivery of library programs
- partner with larger New Hampshire libraries in virtual program offerings
- support Town of Bow public meeting live streaming initiatives



Strategic Priority:

Excellent Customer Experience

Objective Develop ways to extend library services to under-served populations

Activities Baker Free Library will:

- relaunch home-delivery service*
- explore multiple outreach options for residents with mobility challenges*

Objective Encourage staff to provide learning opportunities for other staff members

Activities Baker Free Library will:

- establish cross-training initiatives for staff to strengthen the breadth of their understanding of library operations*
- increase the professional development budget to support a staff person attending a major conference in the area of their job description on an annual rotation*
- increase the professional development budget to facilitate a quarterly speaker for staff development*



Baker Free Library will seek out ways to ensure a positive patron experience.

Objective Celebrate and recognize staff accomplishments related to customer experience

Activities Baker Free Library will:

- establish patron initiated staff appreciation through a physical "snap cup" or feedback box and an accompanying virtual alternative*

Objective Seek ways to receive and use feedback to improve patron experience

Activities Baker Free Library will:

- establish a patron feedback box at the circulation desk*
- develop a marketing strategy for ongoing virtual surveying of patron satisfaction*
- utilize current library calendaring software to solicit feedback from program participants and facility users*



Baker Free Library

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