

# **Port Jervis Free Library**

## **Strategic Plan**

2026 - 2029

### **1. Planning Summary**

This plan was created by a team of dedicated community members and staff of the library including Trustees, library staff members, and a member of the Friends of the Library. The statements and values come from community input. This community input was gathered through months of interactions with various groups and community organizations. This plan will be in effect from 2026 through 2029. If anyone has any questions, comments, or concerns about this plan, please contact the library director.

### **2. The Library and The Port Jervis Community**

The Port Jervis Free Library was founded in 1892 with the current building being built through a Carnegie grant in 1903, and in that time, it has been a stalwart defender of reading, education, and the dissemination of information in the community. Through the promotion of education, community organization, and with a commitment to lifelong learning, the library has cemented itself as a permanent fixture in Port Jervis. With a multitude of programs and with the help of many different community organizations, the library continues to serve the community in many different ways.

The City of Port Jervis is home to roughly 8,700 residents and reflects a diverse and changing community. The median age is just under 40, with a mix of young families, long-time residents, and a growing Hispanic/Latino and multiracial population. About one in five residents lives below the poverty line, making the library's free access to learning, technology, and community resources especially important.

Recent library data also shows strong and increasing engagement. In 2023, the library offered more than 300 programs with over 2,600 attendees, nearly triple the number of sessions and participation from the previous year, as engagement across all age groups continues to grow. Circulation is rising as well with users borrowing over 30,000 items from the library's physical collection of 35,000 books and the Ramapo Catskill Library System's member library network. Users

checked out nearly 30,000 digital items from a shared collection of over 333,000 eBooks, audiobooks, and other electronic resources.

These trends highlight the essential role PJFL plays in supporting education, connection, and opportunity for all residents.

### 3. Mission Statement

The Port Jervis Free Library is dedicated to the development and promotion of collections, services, and programs which provide opportunities for educational, business, professional, and personal enrichment. The trustees, director, and staff together are committed to excellence and innovation in library services and operations as well as growth consistent with the community's ability to provide funding and support.

### 4. Core Values

- 4.1. Service - It is the duty of the library to help those who need it with all resources at our disposal. Kindness and empathy in service is key.
- 4.2. Inclusion - It is the duty of the library to represent all members of the community in the collection and programs we offer. We shall strive to be understanding of the needs of all those in the community.
- 4.3. Legacy - As we inherited the library from those who came before us, we shall pass on the library to the next generation in a better condition in which we received it.
- 4.4. Community Enrichment - Everything that is taken in shall eventually go towards the betterment of the community which we serve.

### 5. Plan

#### 5.1 **Theme:** Building Community & Communication

**Goal:** Strengthen community connections, improve communication channels, and position PJFL as a central hub for local information, partnerships, and civic engagement.

**Objective 5.1.1:** Improve community-wide communication and access to information.

**Actions:**

1. Reinstate the quarterly newsletter (print + email)
2. Expand social media use (Facebook, Instagram, website, Bluesky, Mastodon).
3. Improve exterior signage to highlight events, hours, and programs.
4. Create and maintain a coordinated community event calendar in partnership with local organizations (including exploring platforms like Burbio).
5. Increase advertising in surrounding communities through flyers, mailers, and postings at senior centers, firehouses, town halls, and churches.

**Objective 5.1.2: Serve as a facilitator for community dialogue and partnerships.**

**Actions:**

1. Host 2–3 community conversations per year involving City departments, schools, nonprofits, faith-based organizations, and service groups.
2. Hold an annual volunteer fair to connect residents with local organizations.
3. Host meet and greet with community organizations like first responders annually.
4. Host gatherings for local volunteer organizations to coordinate schedules and share resources.

**Indicators of Success:**

- Newsletter participation, open rates, distribution, and engagement
- Calendar usage and partner adoption
- Number of community events hosted
- Attendance at volunteer fairs and civic engagement programs

## 5.2 Theme: Programs, Lifelong Learning, & Outreach

**Goal:** Provide diverse, inclusive, and accessible programs that support lifelong learning for all ages, both in and beyond the library building.

**Objective 5.2.1:** Expand program diversity across age groups and interests.

**Actions:**

1. Develop programming for toddlers, school-aged children, teens, adults, seniors, and ENL (English as a New Language) learners.
2. Offer cross-cultural and intergenerational activities.
3. Partner with regional Head Start, early intervention agencies, county family services, Easter Seals, Cornell Cooperative Extension, and local daycares to provide early childhood education and family support services.

4. Provide civic learning opportunities covering community issues, disaster preparedness, pathways to citizenship, and local history.
5. Promote resume and job searching assistance.

**Objective 5.2.2:** Reduce barriers through expanded outreach and off-site programming.

**Actions:**

1. Provide off-site programs in senior centers, schools, parks, recreation spaces, and housing complexes.
2. Offer online or hybrid programs including outside online presenters.
3. In coordination with the Friends of the Library, develop rotating collections for senior housing and daycare centers.
4. Work with transportation stakeholders to explore better access to the library.

**Indicators of Success:**

- Feedback from Project Outcome, program evaluations, and community surveys to guide future programming
- Ongoing user requests for programming and services
- Number and diversity of programs offered
- Attendance and user satisfaction metrics
- Growth of off-site program participation

### 5.3 Theme: Inclusion & Access

**Goal:** Ensure that all members of the community, including vulnerable populations, can fully participate in library services and are represented in its collections & programs.

**Objective 5.3.1:** Build collections that represent all community members.

**Actions:**

1. Conduct a diversity audit of the entire collection by 2027.
2. Increase large print, multilingual materials, and accessible formats including Braille and talking books.
3. Promote statewide services such as Talking Books & Braille Library

**Objective 5.3.2:** Lower barriers to essential services and library participation.

**Actions:**

1. Offer free programs and events.

2. Strengthen support for seniors, young families, and unhoused or in-need residents through partnerships with social service organizations.
3. Maintain up-to-date community resource information for housing, transportation, and social services.
4. Partner with local social workers and other community organizers to offer aid to the unhoused and in-need population of our community.

**Indicators of Success:**

- Diversity audit results and improvements
- Increased engagement from underserved populations
- Awareness and use of accessibility services

## **5.4 Theme: Facilities, Safety, & the Library as a Community Hub**

**Goal:** Create a modern, flexible, safe, and welcoming environment that supports community gathering, creativity, and connection.

**Objective 5.4.1:** Improve interior space to enhance comfort and usability.

**Actions:**

1. Upgrade computer desks, furniture, carpeting, and paint using State Aid for Library Construction.
2. Evaluate and redesign spaces for multipurpose use and improved program delivery.
3. Create pods or partitioned areas for meetings, virtual calls, and private study.

**Objective 5.4.2:** Improve wayfinding, accessibility, and safety.

**Actions:**

1. Add clear signage for restrooms, computers, departments, and the elevator.
2. Improve outdoor lighting and camera coverage, especially in parking areas.
3. Implement recommendations from the 2025 Crime Prevention Site Assessment where feasible.

**Objective 5.4.3:** Strengthen the library's role as a cultural center.

**Actions:**

1. Work with the Minisink Historical Society to integrate local history displays and programs.
2. Consider relocating the Stephen Crane display to a more prominent area.
3. Engage with the Train Museum for cooperative events.

4. Explore space needs for the Historical Society within long-term planning.

**Indicators of Success:**

- Completion of construction and redesign projects
- User satisfaction regarding safety and facility usability
- Increased use of meeting and community spaces

## **5.5 Theme: Sustainability & Resiliency**

**Goal:** Position PJFL as a leader in environmental stewardship, disaster preparedness, and long-term resource management.

**Objective 5.5.1:** Participate in the Sustainable Libraries Initiative.

**Actions:**

1. Form a sustainability committee in 2026.
2. Work with RCLS consultants to meet certification requirements by 2028.

**Objective 5.5.2:** Build community resilience through education.

**Actions:**

1. Partner with regional environmental organizations to develop programs for our users and initiatives to help make the library more environmentally sustainable.
2. Host an annual disaster preparedness program with local emergency services.
3. Continue providing outdoor Wi-Fi access.

**Objective 5.5.3:** Maintain facilities with environmentally responsible practices.

**Actions:**

1. Adopt a long-term facilities maintenance plan, including preventative maintenance and sustainability-focused purchasing.
2. Prioritize environmentally responsible upgrades and repairs.

**Indicators of Success:**

- Progress toward SLI certification
- Number of sustainability-focused programs
- Completion of environmentally friendly building improvements

## 5.6 Theme: Digital Access & Technology

**Goal:** Expand access to digital tools, online collections, and technology resources that support learning, communication, and personal growth.

**Objective 5.6.1:** Strengthen digital collections and services.

**Actions:**

1. Explore expanding Libby, Kanopy, Mango, and other subscription services.
2. Promote digital collections through social media, outreach, and instruction sessions.
3. Ensure staff can help users access digital services through training and quarterly staff development meetings.

**Objective 5.6.2:** Expand public access to technology.

**Actions:**

1. Increase the number of public computers available.
2. Provide technology-training programs for all ages.

**Indicators of Success:**

- Increased circulation of digital materials
- Growth in computer and Wi-Fi usage
- Participation in digital literacy programs

## 6. Evaluation & Progress Reporting

**PJFL will monitor progress annually using:**

- Program attendance and satisfaction surveys
- Collection and circulation data
- Project Outcome results from programs
- Website, newsletter, and social media analytics
- Facilities improvement milestones
- Annual report to the board summarizing progress toward strategic goals

Regular reviews and amendments of the plan will allow for adjustments based on community needs, emerging trends, and resource availability.

# Port Jervis Free Library

## Turning Outward Community Report

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## INTRODUCTION

In 2025, the Port Jervis Free Library held a series of community conversations to better understand residents' aspirations for their community, the challenges they face, and the actions they believe could move Port Jervis forward. These insights shaped the library's 2026–2029 Strategic Plan and will guide its work over the next three years.

Residents shared a strong desire for a more connected, welcoming, and unified community—one with clear communication, a broader range of activities, improved access to information, and more opportunities for families, seniors, and youth. They also identified barriers such as transportation constraints, inconsistent communication, limited participation in civic life, and concerns about safety and inclusivity.

In response to what we heard, the Port Jervis Free Library is committed to strengthening communication, expanding inclusive programming, reaching beyond the physical building through outreach efforts, improving facility safety and accessibility, supporting digital and technological needs, and deepening partnerships across the city. The library will also participate in sustainability initiatives, enhance its collections, and take an active leadership role in community collaboration.

Through clear objectives, measurable actions, and ongoing evaluation, the library is working to ensure that every resident has access to the information, resources, and opportunities needed to learn, connect, and thrive.

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## COMMUNITY ASPIRATIONS

### What kind of community do people want Port Jervis to be?

#### **A More Unified & Connected Community**

People want Port Jervis to feel unified, a place where neighbors know one another, where the “city vs. outside the city” divide softens, and where all residents feel welcome. They hope for greater togetherness, more familiarity, and stronger relationships that build trust and resilience.

#### **Inclusive, Welcoming, and Diverse**

Residents envision a community that is welcoming to all ages, backgrounds, and viewpoints. Many said they want Port Jervis to be more diverse and more open-minded, with spaces and programs that bring people from different cultures and life experiences together.



### **A Community with More to Do**

Residents consistently said they want more activities, events, and gathering places including a community center, senior center, emergency shelter, and improved public facilities. People want more amenities, more things for kids and teens to do, and more high-quality community programming.

### **A Place with Strong Communication**

People want better communication across organizations, neighborhoods, and government. They want a community where information is easy to find, reliable, and consistent, and where everyone is kept informed about services, events, and opportunities.

### **A Community with Opportunity & Quality of Life**

Residents want Port Jervis to offer opportunities for personal growth, education, and involvement. They want a community that supports good schools, strong foundations, good leadership, and a high quality of life for every resident.

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## **COMMUNITY ISSUES**

### **What concerns are residents raising most?**

#### **Communication Gaps**

Across nearly every conversation, communication was named as the core issue. People described difficulty finding accurate information, a lack of centralized communication, and inconsistent outreach from organizations. Seniors, families, and people outside the city boundaries often miss out on information entirely.

#### **Not Enough to Do, Especially for Youth**

Many participants expressed concern that there are too few activities for children, teens, and families. Parents worry about safety, supervision, and lack of options. Some said youth spend more time on devices because there are limited community-based alternatives.

#### **Transportation & Access Barriers**

Residents outside the city struggle with transportation, limiting their ability to participate in programs and community life. They noted that services are often concentrated in the city, leaving outlying communities feeling disconnected.

#### **Declining Community Involvement**

Several people observed that community involvement has decreased over time: fewer volunteers, lower engagement, and more people “falling off” from social life. Busy schedules, economic pressures, and past negative experiences all contribute.

#### **Perceptions of Safety & Welcoming Spaces**

People shared concerns about pedestrian safety, lack of supervision for children, negative interactions in public spaces, and whether community institutions — including the library — feel fully welcoming and friendly.

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# WHAT'S HOLDING US BACK?

Residents identified a number of obstacles that make progress difficult:

- Communication that is hard to access or inconsistent
- Transportation challenges
- Limited time and capacity for involvement
- Public spaces that don't feel welcoming enough
- Economic pressures and financial stress
- A lack of shared plan or unified direction
- Too many negative responses to new ideas

Many felt that change is possible, but will require patience, collaboration, better information-sharing, and stronger relationships between organizations and neighborhoods.

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# WHAT COULD MAKE A DIFFERENCE?

When residents imagined practical steps forward, they suggested:

## **Reach People Where They Already Are**

Better outreach outside the city, grassroots communication, partnerships with trusted community organizations, and strategically placed bulletin boards and signage.

## **Stronger Cross-Organization Cooperation**

Residents want more communication and coordination between the library, schools, government, nonprofits, first responders, senior centers, and local businesses.

## **Consistent, Centralized Information**

People expressed strong interest in a central event calendar, a community newsletter, or a regular schedule of communication that reaches everyone — not just those online.

## **More Programs, More Variety**

Residents want programs that are diverse, enriching, useful, and accessible:

- Programs for all ages
- Daytime and evening meeting options
- Activities for youth
- Practical workshops, speakers, and community-building events

- More cultural and recreational opportunities

### **Make Spaces More Welcoming**

Residents asked for friendlier, more inviting public spaces that feel safe, updated, and comfortable.

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## **WHO DO PEOPLE TRUST?**

Residents identified groups and individuals they trust to move community goals forward.

### **Trusted Groups Include:**

- Local government
- Teachers and school administrators
- First responders
- Local nonprofits and faith-based organizations
- Community-minded individuals
- Senior centers
- Local businesses
- The library
- PTA/PTO and parent groups

They trust these groups because they are visible, invested in the community, and willing to listen.

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## **WHAT WOULD PROGRESS LOOK LIKE IN A YEAR?**

Residents said they would know things are improving if they saw:

- More welcoming and friendly community spaces
- More programs and higher attendance
- Better communication and easier access to information
- Improved facilities and more space
- A stronger sense of community involvement
- More people attending events — including people from outside the city
- Greater collaboration among local organizations

- A safer, more connected environment for families and children
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## WHAT CHANGES WOULD PEOPLE LIKE TO SEE AT THE LIBRARY?

Residents shared many ideas for how the library could become a stronger hub:

- A suggestion box to collect community input
  - More diverse, practical, and enriching programming
  - A more welcoming and friendly environment
  - Expanded hours or program times that work for families
  - Tutors, study rooms, and additional space
  - Outreach initiatives: bookmobile, pop-up libraries, Little Free Libraries
  - A quarterly newsletter
  - Museum passes, bus trips, silent book clubs, cookbook clubs
  - Becoming an information hub for the community
  - More storage and updated spaces
  - Balance between large events and small, intimate programs
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## WHAT WILL THE LIBRARY DO?

Based on what we heard from the community—and guided by the Port Jervis Free Library's 2026–2029 Strategic Plan—the library is committed to taking meaningful, measurable steps to strengthen connection, expand access, and support learning throughout Port Jervis.

### **Strengthen Communication & Access to Information**

The library will invest in clearer, more consistent communication so residents can easily stay informed. This includes a reinstated quarterly newsletter, expanded social media outreach, improved signage, and collaboration on a coordinated community event calendar. These efforts aim to make information more accessible to residents both inside and outside the city.

### **Build Stronger Connections Across the Community**

PJFL will host community conversations, volunteer fairs, and gatherings for local organizations. By bringing people and groups together, the library will help strengthen local partnerships, encourage civic participation, and serve as a reliable connector for the community.

### **Offer Programs Reflecting Community Needs & Interests**

The library will continue developing programs for all age groups—toddlers, school-aged children, teens, adults, seniors, and English-language learners. New offerings will include cross-cultural events, intergenerational activities, civic learning opportunities, and skills-based workshops. Partnerships with family services, early childhood agencies, emergency responders, and community organizations will support the library’s role in lifelong learning and community wellbeing.

### **Expand Outreach & Off-Site Services**

To reduce barriers to access, PJFL will expand outreach beyond the library building. Staff will bring programs and materials to senior centers, daycares, schools, parks, and housing complexes. The library will also explore transportation partnerships and work with the Friends of the Library on rotating collections for off-site locations.

### **Ensure Inclusion & Access for All Residents**

The library will strengthen its commitment to equity by auditing its collections for diversity, expanding multilingual and accessible materials, and working with social service agencies to support residents who are vulnerable, unhoused, or in need. PJFL will also maintain updated community resource information to help connect people with essential services.

### **Enhance Facilities, Safety & Welcoming Spaces**

The library will improve interior spaces, furniture, lighting, and overall building usability through State Aid for Library Construction. Clear signage, better outdoor lighting, expanded camera coverage, and crime-prevention recommendations will support a safe and welcoming environment. Partnerships with local historical and cultural organizations will help celebrate Port Jervis’s unique heritage.

### **Support Sustainability & Community Resilience**

PJFL will participate in the Sustainable Libraries Initiative, establish a sustainability committee, and offer environmental and disaster-preparedness programs. Long-term maintenance planning and environmentally conscious purchasing will help ensure responsible stewardship of the building and resources.

### **Expand Digital Access & Technology Support**

The library will promote and expand digital collections, invest in more public computers, and offer technology-training workshops for all ages. Staff development and training will ensure that everyone on staff can confidently assist patrons with digital tools and resources.

### **Demonstrate Progress & Remain Accountable**

PJFL will monitor progress through program attendance, circulation data, digital usage, facility improvements, community feedback, and annual reporting to the library board. These evaluations will help the library adapt to emerging community needs and keep residents informed about the work underway.

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We are grateful to every resident who participated in these conversations. Your voices are shaping the library’s future and helping build a stronger, more connected Port Jervis.

**Our doors remain open. The conversation continues.**



## Mission



The Port Jervis Free Library is dedicated to the development and promotion of collections, services, and programs which provide opportunities for educational, business, professional, and personal enrichment. The trustees, director, and staff together are committed to excellence and innovation in library services and operations as well as growth consistent with the community's ability to provide funding and support.



## Service

It is the duty of the library to help those who need it with all resources at our disposal. Kindness and empathy in service is key.



## Inclusion

It is the duty of the library to represent all members of the community in the collection and programs we offer. We shall strive to be understanding of the needs of all those in the community.



## Legacy

As we inherited the library from those who came before us, we shall pass on the library to the next generation in a better condition in which we received it.



## Community Enrichment

Everything that is taken in shall eventually go towards the betterment of the community which we serve.

## Community Aspirations, Themes, & Goals

**Building Community & Communication** - Strengthen community connections, improve communication channels, and position PJFL as a central hub for local information, partnerships, and civic engagement.

**Programs, Lifelong Learning, & Outreach** - Provide diverse, inclusive, and accessible programs that support lifelong learning for all ages, both in and beyond the library building.

**Inclusion & Access** - Ensure that all members of the community, including vulnerable populations, can fully participate in library services and are represented in its collections & programs.

**Facilities, Safety, & the Library as a Community Hub** - Create a modern, flexible, safe, and welcoming environment that supports community gathering, creativity, and connection.

**Sustainability & Resiliency** - Position the library as a leader in environmental stewardship, disaster preparedness, and long-term resource management.

**Digital Access & Technology** - Expand access to digital tools, online collections, and technology resources that support learning, communication, and personal growth.