Comments from President, Board of Trustees

From the Desk of the Director

Mission and Vision Statements

Board of Trustees

Executive Summary

Strategic Planning Process

2022 – 2027 Strategic Plan Initiatives
Greetings,

I am elated to present the 2022-2027 Strategic Plan for the Augusta-Richmond County Public Library System (ARCPLS). This plan was the product of many hours of work on the part of a diverse group of individuals – staff, board members, and community representatives – who, working with our strategic planning consultant, forged a shared vision of the Augusta-Richmond County Public Library System for the future. Our library community has grown and changed in diversity over the recent years. Our growth, coupled with burgeoning citizens’ demand for electronic technology, new media, and another non-traditional library service, has served as key determinants of the directions recommended in this strategic plan.

The library will serve as the place for residents to meet, share ideas, be entertained, educated and informed. We already have a community library that provides enrichment – both educational and cultural – for our Augusta residents. However this plan will be our roadmap for building upon and enhancing those resources. It is our intent to fully realize the potential of the library in our community and to increase awareness of the resources and assistance we make available to each and every citizen. I believe our library system should pave the way for exploring and finding new ideas. Therefore it is our intent to cultivate lives and ensure libraries are helpful and relevant.

Moving forward, this strategic plan lays out the stepping stones for us to accomplish our mission and vision. We have identified initiatives, goals, and objectives and are committed to meeting the needs of our citizens not just with our catalog of reading materials, but also with our technology and other new and innovative resources.

I would like to offer you, the Augusta community, an opportunity to join together in the years to come as we bring our goals and objectives to fruition. The Augusta-Richmond County Board of Trustees are united and committed to the idea of reshaping and engaging with our community through this Strategic Plan. We pledge to strengthen and improve how we deliver our services while advancing our library system to the next level.

Very Respectfully,
Christopher Mulliens
Augusta-Richmond County Public Library Board Chair
Greetings,

I am pleased to present to you the 2022-2027 Strategic Plan for the Augusta-Richmond County Public Library System (ARCPLS). As Library Director, it has been a great honor for me to be a part of something as significant and defining the future of our library system. I am confident the strategic plan addresses the needs of Augusta-Richmond County citizens and staff. I’m committed to continue improving our system by using the technologies of today to meet and exceed the expectations of our community and organizational partners.

Every part of the new strategic plan supports our new mission statement and tagline “enriching the lives of the community” and “the first place for unlimited exploration.” We believe this plan will contribute to future improvements in our community with key initiatives, goals, and objectives that specifically address the needs of the people we serve.

The Strategic Plan is a living document that will be referenced regularly by Library leadership to guide decision making. The Library is positioning itself as a vital force in Augusta. The plan will help create and support an agile organization that is responsive to the growing needs and expectations of our customers.

I would like to thank everyone who dedicated so much of their time and talents to the creation of the plan, including our Augusta-Richmond County Public Library Board of Trustees, the Library staff, the Friends of the Augusta Library, and the citizens of Augusta who participated in the development of this plan.

We remain committed to our community and core services and are excited about the focus this plan will bring. It is my sincere hope that this plan will make ARCPLS a stronger community institution for you.

Kind Regards,

Mashell Y. Fashion
Augusta-Richmond County Public Library Director.
ABOUT THE AUGUSTA- RICHMOND COUNTY PUBLIC LIBRARY SYSTEM (ARCPLS)

MISSION:  
Enriching the lives of the community.

VISION:  
The first choice for unlimited exploration.
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<td>Ms. Catherine Smith McKnight</td>
<td>Commissioner</td>
<td>Ex-Officio</td>
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<td>Mr. Leon Maben</td>
<td>President, Friends of the Library</td>
<td>Ex-Officio</td>
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This Strategic Plan for the Augusta Richmond County Public Library System provides a cohesive vision and direction for the next five years and beyond. The Strategic Plan outlines steps for a customer focused delivery, and enhanced technologies to better serve the City of Augusta and the Richmond County community. It is designed to ensure the Library as a relevant, high achieving asset providing excellence and innovative service to our citizens.

The Strategic Plan seeks to expand and strengthen the Library’s role in supporting education and learning; supporting workforce and economic development; fostering stronger community connections and collaborations, and increasing public awareness of the Library’s vast resources and services. The Strategic Plan also includes internal strategies to create a culture of greater accountability and trust and improve working relationships.

With this Strategic Plan, the Library sets forth a new Mission Statement:

*Enriching the lives of the community!*

We are in an era of great change. Reinvention for libraries is essential. This Strategic Plan is designed to prepare and position the Library to adapt to changing conditions and meet the needs of our customers. The Augusta Richmond County Public Library System wants to continue to enjoy widespread use throughout its five branches and to embrace the opportunity to significantly change lives.

The Augusta Richmond County Public Library System’s Strategic Planning Team worked closely with the Strategic Planning Consultant to develop SMART initiatives and goals that are specific, measurable, achievable, relevant, and time-framed. The team drew feedback from a variety of sources, including focus groups, interviews, and analysis of peer-city libraries. A branch-by-branch facilities assessment was conducted to assist the Library in balancing management of its current assets with the need for expanded services in growing areas of the County.

From this process emerged 8 strategic areas of focus. Strategic initiatives and recommended actions are detailed in the plan that follows. Key areas in the plan include:

I. Engaging the community by providing a service and a place to connect people and bridge divides.
II. Connecting patrons to services, technology, and resources.
III. Fostering a love of reading and encouraging creative and critical thinking skills.
IV. Supporting Workforce and Economic Development
V. Enriching lives.
The Augusta Richmond County Public Library System is governed by a County Commissioned-appointed Board of Trustees. The Board of Trustees is responsible for providing oversight for the Library system, including the management, care, control, and maintenance of all system properties. Additionally, the Board of Trustees is charged with establishing an Endowment Fund, securing needed financial support, and ensuring funds are used responsibly and in support of maintaining a viable and relevant presence in the community. ARCPLS is not a City department; however, the City of Augusta recognizes the importance of the public library and provides funding in support of operational sustainment.

This Strategic Plan seeks to encourage an appreciation of diversity, inclusion, and cultural change by equipping the Board and Library senior management with guidance on how they can create a work environment that motivates and empowers staff to be creative and innovative. The plan also seeks to ensure accountability of key Library support groups and patrons to the Library Board of Trustees to achieve a unified focus on Library goals. The Library Board and its key support groups must develop a clear delineation of roles, responsibilities, and relationships, and a better understanding of how best to coordinate advocacy and deliver resources to, and for the Library System.

This plan attempts to reflects best practices and national trends in the delivery of public library service. The Strategic Plan’s flexibility allows the Library to evolve in an era of rapid technological change and tightening public budgets. It is understood that the recommendations in the Strategic Plan must be balanced with fiscal realities.

The goals in this plan are ambitious but attainable. The Strategic Plan seeks to set a versatile blueprint of the Library’s goals and initiatives to allow for the deployment of existing resources to address strategic priorities and support sound and defensible decisions. Implementation of the Strategic Plan is the responsibility of the Library staff and Library Board of Trustees and is subject to budget capacity, changing market conditions, and continued insight into the needs and preferences of current and future Library users and the greater community.

Respectfully submitted,
Mary G. Jones, Consultant
## Addressing Culture and Diversity

At the time ARCPLS's previous Strategic Plan was created, 51% of the population was African American. Today, that percentage has increased to 54.6%, with 33.1% white and 5.5% Hispanic. The median income of Augusta Richmond County households is $42,728 with 18.2% of families living in poverty. The median age of Augusta Richmond County residents is 34.1 years young. ARCPLS continues to offer services to citizens who may reside outside its borders in the surrounding River Region which includes other counties and residents of North Augusta and Aiken, South Carolina.

While ARCPLS leadership is keenly aware of the rich cultural context in which the Library provides service, it appreciates the unique subtleties involved in offering programs and services which are valued by and resonate with residents of the community.

ARCPLS recognizes the growing homeless population and wants to create strategies that are tailored to assist in improving the quality of life for all citizens.

To be more inclusive, the Library strategies must be tailored to address diversity and increasing outreach in our community. An aggressive marketing of available services, broadening access those services, and employing a caring and compassionate staff at all service points is essential to moving forward.

## Stepping Up to Educational Challenges

The Library intends to step up to the challenge of leveraging homework help programs, collections and quality services for youth and becoming a model as a literacy resource.

### Methodology

| Phase I: Initial Planning and Research | Review of existing data, assessment of community needs  
|                                       | Evaluation of library facilities  
|                                       | Research trends and explore best practices  
|                                       | Identify key concerns |
| Phase II: Library Leadership          | SWOT analysis  
|                                       | Developing new Mission, Vision Statement  
|                                       | Identify the need for Core Values statement |
| Phase III: Strategic Plan Development | Identified areas of focus  
|                                       | Establish core work group  
|                                       | Develop strategies, initiatives, and action plans  
|                                       | Writing strategic plan draft  
|                                       | Feedback and direction from Leadership |
| Phase IV: Plan Finalization           | Final plan approval, published and disseminated  
|                                       | Marketing strategy developed  
|                                       | Education and training strategy developed for staff |
DEVELOPING NEW LITERACIES

Information is changing and, along with it, our sense of what it means to be fully literate. The notion of contemporary literacy transcends reading and represents the essential skills involved in effectively accessing, processing, and communicating information. The Library is uniquely positioned to support the educational process by providing out-of-school learning opportunities that expose students and patrons to new literacies. Information literacy, digital literacy, and media literacy are emerging skills essential to academic and personal success.

To be more inclusive, the Library will strive to improve outreach to culturally diverse communities, aggressively market library services, refine the collection, and broaden access.
THE STRATEGIC PLAN INITIATIVES

Headquarters Branch

Appleby Branch
2260 Walton Way

Jeff Maxwell Branch
1927 Lumpkin Road

Friedman Branch
1447 Jackson Road

Diamond Lakes Branch
101 Diamond Lakes Way
Hephzibah, GA

Wallace Branch
1237 Laney-Walker Blvd
Goal 1: Establish Fund Development Program to ensure the financial stability of ARCPLS.

Actions:

1. Identify Board of Trustee member to serve as Vice President of Fund Development no later than March 2022. VP, Fund Development, will provide quarterly updates to Board on the financial health of the organization, the progress of the endowment, and the organization’s fundraising efforts.

2. Create an Endowment Task Force to educate the Board on endowments and ensure understanding. The Task Force will also identify avenues for raising needed funds for library services and sustainment. The Task Force may consist of Board of Trustee members and members of the Community such as a banker, financial planner, attorney, fundraising expert, etc.

3. Identify methods to generate economic opportunities within the community and create an action plan at least one year in advance. The first plan should be ready for budget planning for Fiscal Year 2023.

4. Identify and assist with securing grants and other funding mechanisms for FY 2022 and beyond.

Person(s) responsible:
- VP Fund Development
- President of Board of Trustees
- Members of Board of Trustees
- Assisted by the Director

Start date: March 2022 and ongoing

Evaluation: VP of Fund Development will provide monthly reports to the Board, ensuring that actions are tracked and evaluated for needed changes/updates.
Goal 2. Develop strategies to maintain and increase dollar allocations from the City of Augusta and the State of Georgia

Actions:
1. VP, Fund Development will work with Director in preparing the annual proposed budget. VP will ensure justifications for maintaining and improving/increasing funds are sound and legitimate.

2. Proposed budget request will be submitted for Board approval no later than one month prior to presentation to the city.

Start Date: January 2022 and ongoing
Evaluation: VP Development, President, Board of Trustees, Assisted by The Director

Goal 3: Establish Board Training Program to ensure operational excellence and strategies to improve Board effectiveness

Actions:
1. Develop a training program to educate Board members on today’s challenges and issues facing ARCPLS and general library services. Training to include guidance from the Georgia Public Library Trustee Handbook, nationwide best practices, and lessons learned.

2. Visit ARCPLS branches to become more familiar with their staff, facilities, and the unique aspects of the community they each serve.

3. Identify Board Training Officer to work with Director to create/develop an annual training program to develop Board member orientation program/briefing and identify funds needed for implementation and success no later than March 2022.

4. Identify skill needed to increase and strengthen Board effectiveness. Establish Board Nominating Committee to prepare for impending vacancies, identify persons for possible service, and to address needs. The Nominating Committee will assist the Board President and Library Director to provide recommendations to appointing authorities as vacancies arise. This will be an ongoing effort designed to strengthen Board effectiveness.
INITIATIVE 1

Increase the financial stability of ARCPLS

5. Create a feedback mechanism for Board use to help ensure Commissioners/Legislators are abreast of trends, patterns, issues, and needs of today’s libraries and patrons.

Person(s) responsible
Board Training Officer
President of Board of Trustees
Director provides guidance/recommendations and
Start date: January 2022
Evaluation: Board Training Officer

Goal 4. Establish Core Organizational Values to serve as guiding principles for ARCPLS.
Values are deeply held convictions, priorities, and underlying assumptions that influence attitudes and behaviors and with the mission and vision are part of our strategic foundation.

Actions
1. Establish a small group to explore those things that are most meaningful to ensuring the success of ARCPLS no later than March 2022. The group should include the Assistant Director and Public Relations (PR) Specialist. The use of experienced others may be helpful. Values may address librarianship, accountability, collaboration, customer commitment, diversity and inclusion, trust, teamwork, integrity, self-improvement, honesty, and innovation.

2. Develop training to ensure each employee is aware and knowledgeable of what each value means as it pertains to the mission and vision of ARCPLS. Each employee should be able to recite the Core Values and have a clear understanding of what they mean and how they will be upheld.

3. Public Relations Specialist will develop a marketing plan for public distribution and awareness. Core values will become part of the brand and be displayed in all branches to assure patrons of our commitment to serving and meeting community needs.

Responsible person(s)
Assistant Director
Director
Board President
Evaluation: Assistant Director to target June 2022 for presentation to Director for Board of Trustees approval.
INITIATIVE 2

Ensure Safety and Security of Patrons and Staff

Goal: To create and maintain an environment that supports the overall mission and vision of ARCPLS usage.

Actions:
Establish a safety panel for ARCPLS no later than February 2022. The Panel may consist of representatives of managers, employees, custodians, library security, patrons, public relations specialist, and community representative(s). The Board President/Director may invite representatives from the City’s Risk Management Office, Fire/Police personnel, and community to serve on the panel as well. The Director and Board President will appoint the Chair of the ARCPLS Safety Panel and the chain of supervision and reporting.

The chair of the Safety Panel will provide monthly reports to the Director regarding incidents at each Branch to examine patterns and to establish policies and practices to ensure safety. The Public Relations Assistant should be included to assist with needed strategies for addressing issues with the public on an as needs basis. Recommendations must be presented to the Director for Board approval.

Safety Panel should meet semi-annually, or as needs arise. The Safety Panel will identify, create and recommend policies/practices regarding COVID 19 and variant(s) using the guidance of the Center for Disease Control and common City practices.

Safety Panel will develop strategy and action plans for a quick and safe evacuation relevant to each branch and reporting mechanisms and timelines to notify appropriate leadership when needs arise.

Safety Panel will develop a strategy for addressing internal safety issues such as bathroom and floor checks at each branch.

Chair of ARCPLS safety panel, working with the Director, Public Relations, and Library Security, will develop annual training program and safety exercises for employees, volunteers, and interested patrons. Training to be implemented semi-annually at a minimum.

Responsible Person(s)
Chair, ARCPLS Safety Panel
Director
President, Board of Trustees

Start date: January 2022 and ongoing
Evaluation: Chair, Safety Panel
Goal 1: Improve employee morale

Action(s):
1. Improve/create an employee recognition program. The program may address time of service, good practices, and may include feedback from patrons regarding treatment/assistance from Library staff.

2. Create a safe mechanism for employee feedback regarding policies and procedures that affect their daily lives

3. Develop an annual training program for personal and professional development to include effective communication skills, team building, and growing in the organization.

4. Identify funds to support training and recognition programs

Responsible Person(s)
Director
President, Board of Trustees
Assistant Director
Managers

Start Date: January 2022 and ongoing
Evaluation: Assistant Director to work with Director regarding the semi-annual report to Board for funding approvals as needed.

Goal 2: Decrease actions that are not supportive of the organization’s mission, vision, and values and that disrupt good order and discipline within the organization.

Actions:
1. Re-engineer Incident Reporting Requirements program no later than December 2021. Incident reports may need to be simplified and/or redacted with the reporting chain clearly identified. Empower leaders by allowing corrective measures to be handled at the lowest possible level.

2. Ensure reports are shared on a “need to know” basis only and are properly redacted to ensure the least amount of disruption to the good order and discipline.
3. Ensure personnel actions, if any, remain private between leadership and staff person(s) involved.

Responsible Person(s)
Assistant Director to develop a revised incident report and make quarterly reports regarding incidents unless otherwise needed.
Director to recommend action to Board President for approval.

Start Date: Immediately
Evaluation: Assistant Director to provide a quarterly update to Director starting as soon as possible but no later than November 10, 2021. Quarterly reports will be provided to the Director for Board information.

Goal 2. Create a personal and professional development program for Library personnel.

Actions:

1. Identify person(s) to work with Assistant Director and Director on implementing training designed to improve the skills, knowledge, and abilities of Library personnel. Training may address a specific employee with all trainings to be progressive in nature such as training for managers/supervisors, employees (full and part-time), volunteers, and one-on-one.

   1. Training officer will prepare recommendations for Director for ongoing training to improve performance and employee morale. Recommendations should include any costs associated with training along with a proposed training schedule that will create the smallest disruption to service. Recommendations/plans should be presented to Director annually beginning in March 2022.

   2. Possible subjects are leadership and supervision, sexual harassment, how to deal with difficult people, overall customer service skills, and any training associated with recommendations from the Safety Panel.

   3. Schedule and status to be briefed to Board of Trustees quarterly

Responsible Person(s)
Training Officer
Assistant Director
Evaluation: Assistant Director
Goal 3. Create In-House Mentoring Program

Goal: To utilize more experience personnel to prepare those with less experience in a one-on-one environment. This program is voluntary with a “take you under my wing” approach with both parties in agreement. It is recommended the in-house mentoring program to start no later than March 2022.

Responsible Person(s) All
Evaluation: Self-managed
Goal 1: To create an ambitious awareness program to re-introduce and motivate the community to take full advantage of the wide range of resources and services available at the library.

Actions:

1. Establish an internal marketing task force headed by the Public Relations Assistant to serve as ambassadors for the library. Initial meeting January 2022.

2. Promote ARCPLS's new mission, vision, and values statements among staff.

3. Highlight “what’s new” services and resources and how they will benefit the community.

4. Develop a marketing plan that includes a brand promise, messaging, graphic standards. This may include developing a new logo.

5. Provide branding, marketing, and customer service training for staff and include marketing training and information in current staff/new employee orientation, position descriptions, and performance appraisals.

6. Secure appropriate financial resources for public awareness strategies

Goal 2: Establish a social media strategy by March 2022.

Actions:

1. Track usage and assess the quality

2. Redesign a navigable, visually appealing website that supports mobile access, social media, and other interactivity.

Responsible Person(s)
Public Relations
Outreach Coordinator/Manager
Branch Managers
Assistant Director
Evaluation: Assistant Director
Goal 3: Re-engineer marketing strategy to increase awareness of library services, resources, and events and raise awareness of ARCPLS Branches

Actions:

1. Identify the head of the Marketing Team no later than December 2021.

2. The Marketing Team will develop information and design the look that will best represent the ARCPLS brand.

1. The Marketing Team will develop strategies and costs for yearly plans no later than March 2022. The marketing Team will provide quarterly reports to the Director and Assistant Director thereafter.

Responsible Person(s)
Public Relations
Outreach Manager
Evaluation: Director and Assistant Director

Goal 4. Establish strategies to bring patrons into brick and mortar libraries

Actions:

1. Create a community feedback mechanism to properly assess community needs no later than March 2022.

2. Ensure feedback mechanism is available at each branch and that feedback is solicited by personnel as of 30 March 2022.

3. Increase usage and circulation by introducing/re-introducing new books, programs, services, and resources to the community.

Responsible Person(s)
Marketing Team Leader
Librarians at all branches

Evaluation: Quarterly reports to Director and Assistant Director beginning March 2022.
INITIATIVE 5

Enhancing Environments for Research, Learning, and Job Seekers

Goal: To provide learning opportunities in computers, health, finances, and adult early literacy that supports the City in building economic vitality, job seeker, and small business achievement.

Actions:

1. Explore creating an ARCPLS Jobs and Small Business Center in FY 2022.

2. Target neighborhoods and people that are most in need of these services

3. Explore emerging technologies as a prologue to developing a plan for improving access, productivity, customer service, staff mobility, and flexible times and spaces for patron use.

4. Establish a task force to collaborate with community and literacy agencies and track collaborative efforts.

5. Articulate ARCPLS’ role in adult literacy services with citizens and decision-makers.

6. Explore identifying a branch to serve as the Literacy Center to coordinate system-wide efforts to support 21st-century literacies and provide collections, technology, computer access, tutoring space, and possible partnership space.

7. Train staff

Person(s) Responsible
Outreach Coordinator
IT Specialist
Public Relations Specialist
Assistant Director

Evaluation:
Assistant Director
Goal: Meeting patrons “where they are”.

Actions:

1. Conduct market analysis to identify spaces, services, collections, and community needs in 2022.

2. Customize spaces, services, and collections to meet community needs. Explore space sharing with organizations that also serve in the community.

3. Create an action plan to re-orient branches as family-focused spaces for information, imagination, play, and fun.

4. Create flexible teen venues for creative play, content creations, new technologies, social media, and life skills building.

Responsible Person(s)
Outreach Coordinator/Manager, Branch Managers, Public Relations Specialist, Assistant Director

Evaluation: Assistant Director

Goal: Anticipate and respond to the evolving needs and expectations of patrons.

Actions:

1. Train all branch managers, librarians, and appropriate staff on branch-specific market data and its relevance to acquisitions, marketing, and collections management no later than April 2022.

2. Solicit patron and staff feedback to assess customer satisfaction starting in January 2022.

3. Create a “Suggest a Purchase Program” and develop methods to determine the needs and expectations of infrequent library users and non-users.

4. Implement a program or system to ensure the right materials are available at the proper locations to serve the populations that desire them.


Responsible Person(s)
Branch Managers, Librarians, Assistant Director

Evaluation: Assistant Director, Assistant Director
Goal: To leverage ARCPLS’ deep reach in the community and to build partnerships and collaborations.

Actions:

1. Assess current formal and informal partnerships and collaboration management

2. Seek partnerships and establish strategic alliances with other entities that help advance the Library’s mission such as colleges/universities, museums, etc.

3. Encourage joint advocacy on the basis of shared goals and projected outcomes.

Responsible Person(s)
Outreach Coordinator/Manager
Branch Managers

Evaluation: Assistant Director.
Goal 1. Ensure the use of IT products are safe and secure for patrons/staff. Validate cyber security measures to ensure personal and confidential information is properly safeguarded.

Actions:
1. Review the status of IT personnel to ensure they are current in certifications and requirements no later than January 2022.
2. Develop a training plan to bring everyone up to date if shortfalls are identified
3. Develop/maintain a life-cycle replacement schedule for library computers (hardware and software) to ensure the least impact on library usage for patrons and staff. Recommendations will be provided with prioritized replacements and actions. Report being delivered to Director no later than February 2022.
4. Ensure the Director/Assistant Director is fully aware of the costs so that appropriate dollars can be secured and allocated.
5. Identify shortfalls in the current system and implement corrective measures immediately but no later than February 2022.
6. Identify priorities and schedule for digitization
7. Systems Administrator will work with Assistant Director to develop quarterly reporting mechanism to keep Director abreast of the status of current equipment, software, and training needs.

Responsible Person(s)

Systems Administrator
Assistant Director

Evaluation: Director and Assistant Director
Goal 2: Research the feasibility of an ARCPLS mobile app for use by patrons no later than March 2022. The recommendation should include costs associated.

Actions:

Develop and implement ARCPL app for public use, if approved, no later than 90 days after approval.

Responsible Person(s)

Systems Administrator
Assistant Director

Evaluation: Assistant Director
Follow the Augusta Library on social media to view online programming and library resources.