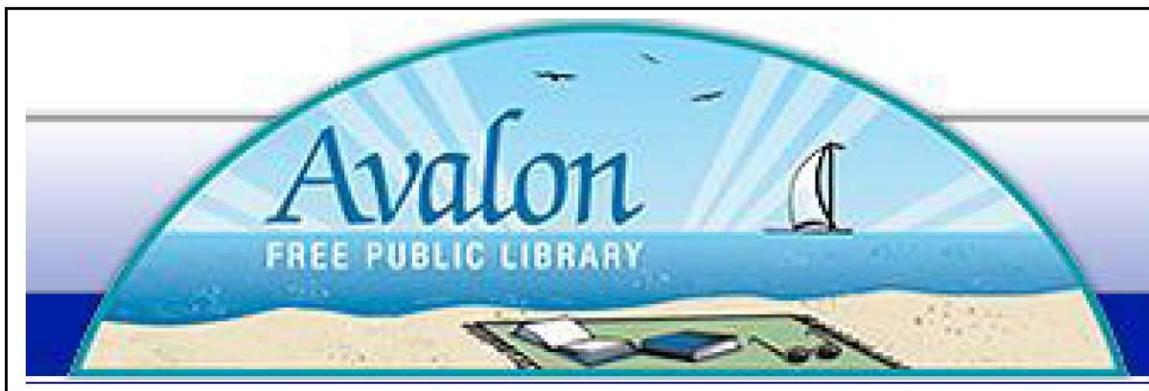


# The Gateway to Avalon

## Avalon Free Public Library Strategic Plan 2012 to 2015



Prepared by Avalon Free Public Library  
Planning Committee with Assistance from  
Library Development Solutions [www.librarydevelopment.com](http://www.librarydevelopment.com)

PLAN APPROVED BY THE AVALON FREE LIBRARY BOARD OF TRUSTEES AT THEIR MEETING OF MARCH 8, 2012,  
2011

NOTE THIS VERSION IS AN UPDATE OF THE INTRODUCTORY SECTION OF THE 2009-2012 PLAN. THE BALANCE OF  
THE PLAN IS UNCHANGED.

**AVALON FREE PUBLIC LIBRARY BOARD OF TRUSTEES**

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- Patricia Coyle, Norman Gluckman, Lynn Schwartz, James Thatcher

**PLANNING CONSULTANTS LIBRARY DEVELOPMENT SOLUTIONS**

- Alan Burger and Leslie Burger

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## **MESSAGE TO RESIDENTS**

The Gateway to Avalon, 2012, our third strategic plan since we opened in 2005 is the result of work on the part of staff and board members who refined the shared vision for our new library for the future.

Our community has changed in recent years. Citizens require electronic technology, new media formats and other non-traditional library services, as well as content delivered through traditional methods, like books.

Our new library continues to be a unique institution in Avalon. The Library serves as the place for residents to meet and share ideas, to be entertained, educated, and informed. It is the locus and focus of our entire community in all seasons of the year. The library is unique in that it was born out of an interlocal, collaborative agreement of the Borough, the Avalon Elementary School and the newly formed public library. On September 24, 2002 residents voted to approve this proposition that a new public library would be built in Avalon and would become a partner with the Borough and Avalon Elementary School in creating a new Avalon institution with local control. Mayor Pagliughi and the Borough council provided vision and leadership to lead to the creation of an independent Library Board of Trustees and the new Avalon Free Public Library.

This new strategic plan provides a roadmap for building upon and enhancing our first strategic plan in 2006 and the successful completion of our seventh full year of service to the community. This plan focuses on the resources and successes so that we can fully realize the potential value of the library to our community. As the library accomplishes this goal through 2015, it will continue its focus on cultural activity and lifelong learning for the community. We invite all of our neighbors to renew our commitment to bring first class library services to Avalon.

Jacqueline Ewing President, Board of Trustees, Norman Gluckman Library Director

## Executive Summary

In 2006, the Avalon Free Public Library began a Strategic Planning process to develop long and near term strategies for delivering and improving library services to all residents and visitors. The Board established a Planning Committee made up of Board members and library staff to work with planning consultants in developing the plan.

The Planning Committee met in a number of sessions to evaluate the results of the community focus groups, town meetings and survey that provided suggestions for delivering and improving services, to review information about initial library use statistics and determine how the Library Board and staff will respond to community needs in the future.

This new plan represents a renewed analysis of the current state of the library and the community. The plan describes a long term vision to guide the development of library services in Avalon

Avalon Free Public Library will serve as the informational and cultural Gateway to Avalon for all residents and visitors. The library will be a welcoming, warm and friendly gathering space for all.

The Plan also describes the library's mission

The Avalon Free Public Library encourages a literate and informed community by providing free and open access to first class collections, services and programs that inspire, inform and enrich our community.

This new plan continues to follow similar goals and objectives and outlines the strategies to guide their implementation. The goals are to:

1. Expand library collections to meet current needs in the most popular and current formats. This will be achieved by reviewing and expanding the current collection development policy, developing collections to meet specific community needs, increasing the collections of popular titles and materials and increasing the materials budget for needed resources.

2. Sustain and expand the library environment that allows a friendly, knowledgeable staff to provide responsive services. This includes assessing current hours and reviewing the existing space to create a more comfortable and easier to use destination for library users.

3. Expand services and programs for lifelong learning from toddlers to seniors. This will be achieved through the development of additional programs, services, cultural activities and staffing for children, teens, adults and seniors and through greater collaboration with other Avalon organizations.

4. Build a broad base of support and advocacy for the library by expanding community awareness of the library, its programs and services, through marketing, advocacy and increased user activities.

## ***THE AVALON FREE PUBLIC LIBRARY***

In 2001, Avalon's mayor, council and involved citizens discussed the possibility of an Avalon Free Public Library. The community had been served by a branch and the resources of the Cape May County Library System. In 2002, Avalon residents voted to leave the county system and establish the Avalon Free Public Library. They also voted at that time to renovate the existing school space and include the library as part of that renovated space.

## ACHIEVEMENTS

The Avalon Free Public Library can celebrate many accomplishments since its founding. Among the achievements that deserve attention is the award of Five Star Library Status for the third year in a row, among only a handful of New Jersey or national libraries.<sup>3</sup>

- Developed the inter-local agreement among the Borough, School Board and Library Board for building the library /school facility
- Hired and developed a professional and competent staff
- Increased local library card holders by 50%
- Provided 29 computers for public use plus comprehensive wifi service
- Developed popular adult and children's programs
- Increased popular community support for the library
- Appointed trustees who support the library and understand the importance of their role as library advocates
- 
- Served 33,000 people with diverse adult and children's programs
- Offered the Bay-Atlantic Symphony Concert Series, from 2007 to 2010.
- Developed a popular Books By Mail program, currently used by over three hundred people
- Successfully integrated the History Center into the operation and mission of the library
- Developed of a highly successful award winning email newsletter
- Created and participated in the establishment of reciprocal borrowing among other shore community libraries<sup>4</sup>

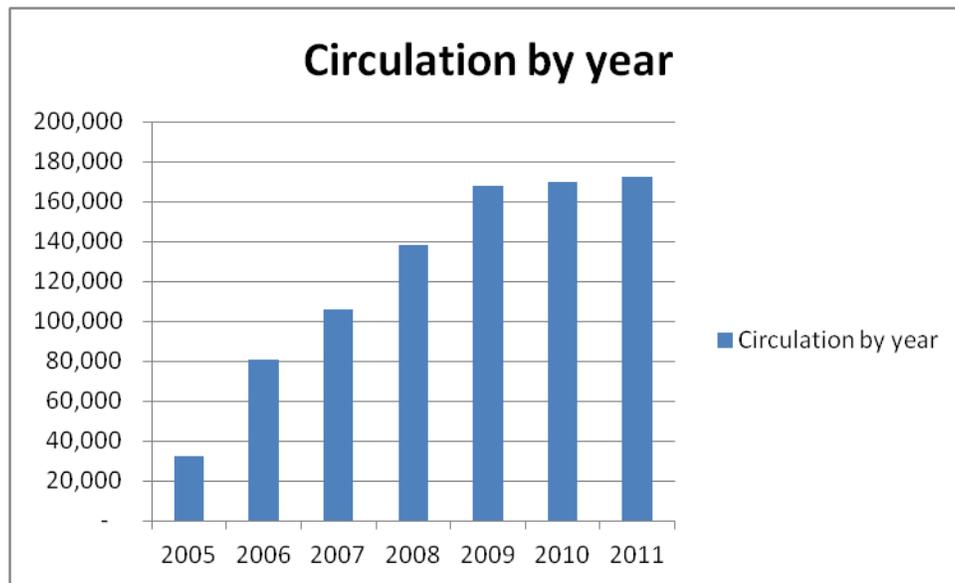
• 3. Awarded by Library Journal, based on circulation, visits, Internet use and program attendance per capita. 4. Others include Margate, Absecon, Ocean City, Northfield, Linwood and Atlantic City

## LIBRARY USE

Use of the library continues to grow every month since its opening. Despite the fear that the Internet, Google and Wikipedia would make libraries obsolete, the opposite has happened. People are coming to the library to use high speed connections that allow them to access information more quickly than at home; or as their only source of Internet access. And to the surprise of many, people still continue to read and use libraries to explore new avenues for learning.

The Avalon Free Public Library is a very busy library; it has become, as its vision states-the *Gateway to Avalon*. The interesting and amazing statistic is:

## CIRCULATION



Library use has grown at an incredible pace. The library has exceeded the 100,000 circulation mark for five years now and is just short of 170,000 at the end of 2010. The cost of the library's success has been at times a very noisy and very crowded library, especially at times in the summer. The Library now faces the following challenges:

1. In order for the growth in use of the library to continue, how does the Library provide an environment that is welcoming and easy to use for all ages and at all times of the year?
2. How does the Library use technology, digital formats and innovative methods for delivering content?
3. What additional space will be available for library-related use, both within the school structure and/or in other areas of the Borough, including the History Center?
4. If the above is not resolved, then what policy changes need to be made now to limit and restrict library visits and use and provide a more user friendly environment?

## ***GATEWAY TO AVALON: A STRATEGIC PLAN FOR THE AVALON FREE PUBLIC LIBRARY***

The vision and mission set the stage for the library to achieve its goals during each of the planning cycles. The goals and objectives provide a roadmap for the strategies that the Library Board and staff will use to achieve the vision.

### **Vision**

***The Avalon Free Public Library  
will serve as the informational and cultural Gateway to Avalon for all residents and visitors. The library will be a welcoming, warm and friendly gathering space for all.***

- As the library works to fulfill this vision, library users will experience the following as they use the library, its facility and services.
- The Library will:
  - Inspire people to read, learn and grow
  - Develop a first class offering of collections, services and programming
  - Create a library experience that brings people together in a sense of community, discovery and celebration
  - Offer an exciting, easy to use space that accommodates a variety of activities at the same time
  - Provide a library with digital resources available 24/7 through the library and the web site
  - Collaborate with other community organizations for the benefit of the community
  - Make Avalon an even better place to live and visit

### ***MISSION***

#### **THE AVALON FREE PUBLIC LIBRARY**

**ENCOURAGES A LITERATE AND INFORMED CITIZENRY BY PROVIDING FREE AND OPEN ACCESS TO COLLECTIONS, SERVICES AND PROGRAMS THAT INSPIRE, INFORM, EDUCATE AND ENRICH THE ENTIRE COMMUNITY.**

#### ***GOALS AND OBJECTIVES TO HELP ACHIEVE THE LIBRARY'S VISION***

**THE AVALON FREE PUBLIC LIBRARY DIRECTOR, BOARD OF TRUSTEES AND STAFF WILL FOCUS ON THESE KEY GOALS TO HELP ACHIEVE THE VISION. THE PLAN ACCOMPLISHMENTS WILL BE REVIEWED ANNUALLY.**

#### ***GOAL ONE: PATRON SERVICES***

- Avalon Free Public Library users will find easy access to 21<sup>st</sup> Century resources, services and tools that they need.

#### **OBJECTIVES:**

- 1.1. Provide an annual budget for library materials and technology. Develop separate technology development and replacement budgets
- 1.2 Increase the number of current and popular titles of books and DVD s to reduce wait time and satisfy needs
- 1.3 Establish computer instruction and add required staff or volunteers to assist, including instruction on email, databases, MSWord and Internet use
  - Provide a “gadget garage” space so customers can experience hands-on opportunities with new technology, such as iPods, MP3’s, palms, digital cameras, etc...
- 1.4 Continue to locate all digital resources on the library website to accommodate use from home and improve the website to be a 24/7 interactive branch
- 1.5 Review current usage and add 6 to 12 additional wireless notebooks for inside borrowing, especially in the summer

#### ***GOAL TWO: LIBRARY SPACE, COMFORT AND CONVENIENCE***

Avalon residents and all library users will be drawn to the Avalon Free Public Library as a welcoming destination of knowledgeable and innovative library services.

#### **OBJECTIVES:**

- 2.1 Review the configuration of library space to meet needs of users. Use trends and statistics to determine needs for technology, materials, furniture and space.
  - Review library space Requirements with a space analysis to identify the gap between existing and needed space.
  - Review school/library space for refinements and improvement and assemble a joint school/library task force to determine additional space for the library
  - Consider vending machines or vendor resources and locate a space for coffee, juice and snacks
  - Continue to review use of library space with a space planner and decide on a new configuration of shelves, displays and furniture within the next year
  - Increase functional staff work space by reworking the staff work area in back of the circulation desk before summer 2010
  - Expand the idea of the local and national history book collection now in the History Center with additional purchases and promotion of the collection. Review use of this room to provide easier access to Library users for this part of its collection.
  - Review use of this room with the space planner to determine optimum use of furniture and open space for browsers and readers
- 2.2 Review and change key aspects of the library to improve access and use:
  - Provide access to printers from all computers, including users own notebook computers
  - Due to increased usage and congestion at the circulation desk, install a self check-out circulation system
  - Create more space for books, new displays and current and popular materials
  - Examine and enhance the exterior of the library to be more welcoming and warmer, such as using banners, signage, menu-board of events
  - Provide a flexible signage package for inside the library for all shelves, and for directional purposes

- 2.3 Continue to use new and innovative technology to create a bridge to all Avalon supporters when they are away from Avalon
  - Develop “webinars” (online seminars) for customers away from the library
  - Maintain and expand the Books By Mail program to include more residents and Avalon guests
  - Consider newer methods of distribution of library content in newer digital formats and vending formats (such as Redbox or Brodart vending)
- 2.4 Respond to experiences of the first three years by providing staff development and organization to meet specific needs of Avalon residents and visitors:
  - Provide a staff blog or Intranet to communicate directly with all staff members
  - Create and implement a formal staff development plan to keep staff engaged and learning as they provide service. Consider reorganizing staff into public service and technical services/network groups. Organize staff teams for ease of hiring, training, staffing and scheduling
  - Retain an IT contractor staff employee to handle all issue relating to the automation system, catalog, web site, maintenance of hardware, instructional training and to develop and execute the library’s technology plan
  - Create a programming committee to manage all the aspects of the extensive community programming that the library sponsors
    - Review and rewrite all employee policies to be library specific in a new AFPL Employee Handbook

***GOAL THREE: COLLABORATION AND COMMUNITY RELATIONS***

- Develop strategic and principled partnerships with Avalon and County organizations and towns which will benefit the library, the organization and the community.

**OBJECTIVES:**

3.1 The Avalon Free Public Library has a cultural and learning mandate. A key element of the library’s identity is collaboration to advance the cultural mission of the library. Any proposal for collaboration has to clearly enhance the Library’s ability to provide those values to the community. The Library will identify a likely new collaborator each year of the plan.

3.2 Assist the History Center in meeting its mission with appropriate direction and strategic use of its space for joint Library/History Center collections and programs

3.3 Review and revise all policies concerning Cape May County residents’ use of the AFPL and AFPL residents’ use of the Cape May County Library and related fee structures to respond to the current environment of overcrowded AFPL summer use

*Goal Four: Governance, Library Management and Marketing*

**CONTINUE TO DEVELOP A RESPONSIVE AND RESPONSIBLE GOVERNANCE STRUCTURE AND MEASUREMENT TOOLS AND INSURE SUSTAINABLE FUNDING AND ADVOCACY**

**TO CONTINUE IMPROVEMENTS AND RESPOND TO COMMUNITY NEEDS:**

**OBJECTIVES:**

- 4.1 Continue to develop strong relationship between the Director and the Board
- 4.2 Continue to develop and manage the relationship among the inter-local agreement partners
- 4.3 Operate monthly Board meetings with transparency and concern for all Avalon residents' concerns
- 4.4 Hold a board retreat before the 4<sup>th</sup> quarter 2010 to develop a Board succession planning process in order to ensure ease of change in officers and mission
- 4.5 Continue to conduct a twice yearly statistical review of circulation, visits, programs and all other significant measures
- 4.6 Review the interlocal agreement annually to adjust for changes in the uses of resources and space
- 4.8 Implement a new AFPL Technology Plan 2012 using the Blyberg Report which is an appendix to this plan. Review report and allocate resources for each of the High Priority items
- 4.9 Consider the need to develop improvements to the ILS catalog through customization by contracting with an outsourced programmer
- 4.10 Investigate and consider an open source ILS system to replace the existing ILS. Create a timeline for meeting vendors and an initial discovery period
- 4.11 Maintain a furniture replacement plan and sufficient surplus in the budget to address needs as they arise due to damage, weather, use, expansion. Create additional seating space. Add at least one flat screen monitor for announcements and events.
- 4.12 Develop a professional identity, marketing and awareness campaign— allocate budget and staffing: hire a graphic designer to design icons, colors and images for the library
- 4.13 Continue to facilitate the mission and leadership of the Friends of the Library organization to focus on the appropriate level of advocacy, volunteerism, and support.
- 4.14 Market the library's identity in everything the library does