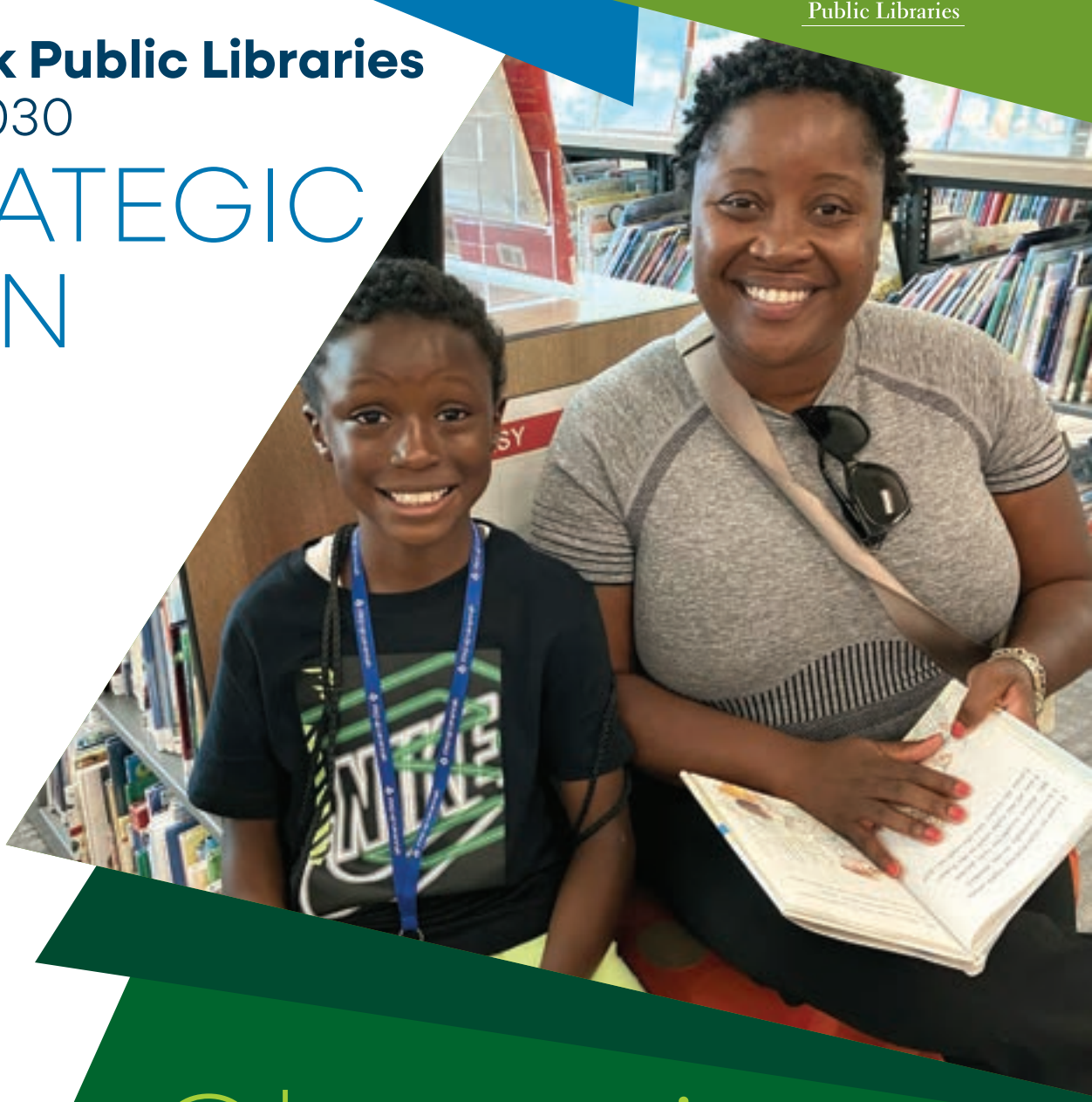
LIVE OAK
Public Libraries

Live Oak Public Libraries
2025-2030
STRATEGIC PLAN



Shaping Our Story

September 2024

DIRECTOR'S MESSAGE



We are delighted to present Live Oak Public Libraries' 2025 - 2030 Strategic Plan. It represents the first strategic planning process the system has undertaken in sixteen years.

During the nearly nine-month process, we heard from almost 1,500 community members. That exceptional number included library partners, government officials, board members, advisors and staff. We also took the opportunity to benchmark and examine the best practices of leading public library systems in our state and around the country.

People in our community care very much about Live Oak Public Libraries (LOPL). They enthusiastically weighed in on where they think we shine, and where they think we can do better.

We were grateful and invigorated to hear from so many diverse and candid voices. I am proud to say that we received strong satisfaction ratings across our three-county service area. Library branch staff is noted as delivering great customer service at every location and to all members of the community.

There are many reasons why people love LOPL. We heard consistent appreciation for our book collection, programs and the personal assistance our library staff provides. The strategic planning process has confirmed the community wants more from us! They'd like to see an increase in the volume and availability of circulating material, to enhance the number and diversity of programs and events, and to expand hours of operation.

Feedback from the community indicated that we can do a better job of getting the word out about all we have to offer. It's clear many people are unaware of the extensive services, programs and resources that are available to them as library card holders.

Additionally, we need to expand our physical footprint to align with local population growth. The Plan envisions the construction of updated, and expanded library facilities to replace aging infrastructure in Chatham and Effingham counties.



OUR MISSION

Inspiring the community to Grow, Create, Discover and Explore.

OUR VALUES

Literacy is an essential skill that improves the quality of life.

Access for everyone.

Freedom of thought and exploration is essential to a democratic society.

Responsive to the needs of our community and our colleagues.

At its core, the Plan addresses:

LITERACY: Supporting community efforts to increase literacy for all ages

ENGAGEMENT: Deepening and enhancing engagement between the libraries and our communities

SPACES: Providing inspiring, accessible and inviting spaces for our community

STAFF: Cultivating a workplace culture where staff thrives and is continually learning

STEWARDSHIP: Creating a legacy of growth and success for generations to come

This ambitious plan requires organizational and structural changes that will take time to implement, but ultimately positions LOPL to better serve the community in years ahead. We invite you to follow our progress as we imagine our future and shape a new story.

Sincerely,

Lola Shelton-Council
Executive Director

LIVE OAK Public Libraries

THE JOURNEY

WHAT WE LEARNED

- The Libraries' ability to serve as a cultural and community center is high. Patron satisfaction of the LOPL staff and materials and resources is strong across all demographic groups.
- Improving literacy rates are a top priority for LOPL stakeholders; library reading programs are highly regarded and appreciated.
- LOPL should prepare for continued rapid population growth in its service area with additional support for ESL readers.
- There is an opportunity to increase the availability and diversity of materials and collections. Printed materials remain important, but new digital resources are increasingly so. The challenge for LOPL is per capita spending, which is well below that of U.S. public libraries serving similarly sized populations.
- Patrons frequently asked for additional programs and for extended hours.
- While many utilize library resources as a critical component of their well-being, there are still community members that are unaware of all that LOPL has to offer. We see this an opportunity!

Who we engaged and what we learned over the past year...

1,300+
Community Surveys

Over 1,300 community members completed a survey to assess satisfaction with the library, prioritize desired changes, and identify preferred communication methods. The survey was available in English and Spanish and was promoted through library communications and partners.

128
Stakeholder, Partner & Staff Surveys

Library partners provided insights on behalf of the groups they serve and rated the library's service to various groups. They suggested ways to improve their partnerships with the library. Staff provided key insights on the library's culture.

47
Insights from Library Leaders, Users & Community Partners

Individuals took part in one-on-one interviews and focus groups. The first round, with library leaders and partners, aimed to understand the library's current state. The second round, with patrons and partners, explored key survey findings in greater depth.

10
Peer Library System Analyses

Multi-branch systems that serve similar-sized U.S. populations were asked to provide key performance metrics such as: circulation, program attendance, visits, and operating expenses. Directors from these high-performing libraries were surveyed to identify success factors and forecast future challenges and opportunities, offering valuable qualitative insights on service usage trends.

130,000
Library Cardholders: Geographic Analysis

A geographic analysis mapped active cardholder addresses, library locations, and new manufacturing facilities to identify areas that may need additional branches or services. Community plans, U.S. Census data, and IMLS national statistics added perspective.



Innovation Phase

Development & Planning

The Strategic Planning Committee (SPC), comprised of experienced staff, developed overarching themes to shape the plan by reviewing the collected data and insights. This process inspired new Mission and Value statements. The committee also established goals and Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) to measure progress.

The draft plan was then passed to LOPL's Leadership Team, who organized it into an actionable project roadmap with champions and timelines, setting 2025 KPI targets based on peer performance, past results, and projected impacts from ongoing and future projects.

FIVE STRATEGIC PRIORITIES

Five strategic priorities serve as our library system roadmap, driving our activities and resource allocation. While focusing on sustaining our strengths and encouraging innovation, the plan also allows flexibility to adapt to unforeseen changes, ensuring we are able to achieve our goals despite evolving conditions.



GOALS BY PRIORITY:

1 Literacy

To enrich our community by providing library collections, services, and programs that foster growth and discovery. We will align our collection materials and programming with community needs to improve literacy, support literacy initiatives, and offer resources for ESL populations. Ongoing measurement and a focus on outcomes will allow us to course-correct as required.

2 Community Engagement

As a community hub, the libraries will leverage the many resources and programs that are available to drive impact within our service area. We will collaborate with mission-aligned partners to connect the community with vital social services and enriching cultural and educational experiences. Using marketing and communication strategies, we will ensure residents are aware of library resources and its network of partners.

3 Library Spaces

Our spaces are intended to be inspiring, inviting and accessible, and designed to flex as community needs evolve. A comprehensive master plan and strategic capital investment will allow us to continue growing a system of libraries that are welcoming and safe, and offer a culture of learning, literacy and experience. Success will be measured by library visits, room reservations and increased utilization of materials.

4 Staff Culture & Development

To be recognized as a "Best Place to Work," we are creating a culture where staff thrives, encouraging and supporting lifelong learning, providing access to crucial development training and improving organizational processes. Success will be measured by staff satisfaction, internal promotions and higher participation in enrichment opportunities.

5 Stewardship

We will "future-proof" our library system by implementing equitable financial practices, expanding our funding base, and enhancing support through donations and grants. Success will be measured by budget growth, increased contributions, and a diversified revenue stream.

LITERACY

An essential skill for improving everyone's quality of life.



GOALS

- Create a library collection that our community wants and needs to grow, create, discover, and explore.
- Deliver programs that meet the educational, cultural, and recreational needs of our service area.
- Raise awareness of LOPL learning resources.

OBJECTIVES

- Provide the books and learning materials that our community wants and needs.
- Provide inclusive programming and materials for current and growing ESL populations.
- Provide training and resources for library staff to provide successful programs.
- Implement a culture of evaluation to measure outcomes.
- Narrow the digital divide in our service area.

STEPS WE CAN TAKE

- Conduct ongoing assessments to ensure actions are aligned with community needs.
- Hire bilingual staff.
- Promote programs through community channels.
- Facilitate peer learning and sharing.
- Align programming and staff training with relevant trends and tools.

OUTCOMES WE ENVISION

- Enhanced community literacy
- Increased inclusivity and accessibility
- Stronger community connections and social cohesion



COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

Connecting all residents to their library by connecting the library to the community.

GOALS

- Engage our community to achieve sustainable outcomes and deliver equitable outreach services.
- Deepen connection between the library and our communities.
- Leverage our footprint as community hubs.

OBJECTIVES

- Establish collaborative relationships with subject matter experts.
- Collaborate with mission-driven "partners" to enhance community services.
- Provide inclusive community access to library resources.
- Ensure all residents are aware of LOPL: spaces, programs, resources.

STEPS WE CAN TAKE

- Map community resources and service gaps.
- Launch a comprehensive marketing and outreach campaign.
- Develop joint programs and initiatives.
- Expand mobile and digital services.
- Offer programs tailored to diverse community needs.

OUTCOMES WE ENVISION

- Steadfast trust in the library being an inclusive resource for all residents.
- Sustainable and equitable delivery of services.
- Empowered and connected communities.
- Recognition as a core contributor to the wellbeing of our community.

STAFF CULTURE & DEVELOPMENT

An environment where everyone can deliver their best.

GOALS

+ Be recognized as a “best place to work.”
+ Establish a strong bench of future leaders.

OBJECTIVE

+ Cultivate a workplace culture where staff thrives and are encouraged to be lifelong learners.



STEPS WE CAN TAKE

→ Encourage cross-departmental learning.

→ Provide leadership training.

→ Establish a continuous learning culture.

→ Empower staff with autonomy and trust.

OUTCOMES WE ENVISION

→ Improved employee satisfaction and retention.

→ Enhanced staff performance and productivity.

→ Competitive advantages in recruitment to attract top talent.

→ Increased organizational resilience and growth.

LIBRARY SPACES

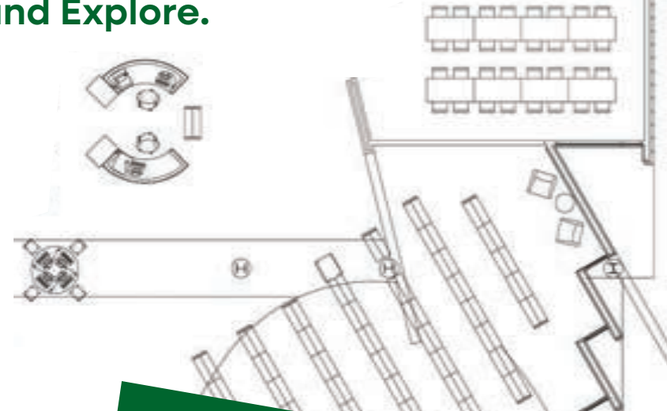
Creating environments that invite our community to Grow, Create, Discover and Explore.

GOAL

+ Provide inspiring, accessible and inviting spaces for our community.
+ Add new buildings and adapt existing spaces to meet the evolving needs of patrons.

OBJECTIVE

+ Ensure adequate spaces and state-of-the-art facilities for patrons to access library resources.



> “Libraries are one of the few remaining free ‘third spaces,’ in our society. LOPL needs to make our locations attractive for every demographic.”
>
> – Staff member

STEPS WE CAN TAKE

→ Conduct a space utilization study.

→ Design multi-functional spaces.

→ Improve wayfinding and signage.

→ Incorporate curated art and community displays.

→ Add mobile solutions for flexible service.

OUTCOMES WE ENVISION

→ Increased community engagement and library usage.

→ Expanded learning and research opportunities.

→ A future-proofed infrastructure for long-term sustainability and growth.

STEWARDSHIP

Providing lasting value for generations to come.



GOAL

+ Build a sustainable financial foundation that assures growth and success for generations of patrons yet to come.

OBJECTIVES

+ Use efficient financial and planning processes that reflect equity and community priorities.
+ Build a monetary resource base to provide services equal to public library peers.
+ Leverage philanthropic giving to amplify LOPL's offering.

STEPS WE CAN TAKE

→ Engage in community-centered planning.

→ Diversify funding sources.

→ Establish a library endowment fund.

→ Build and nurture relationships with donors and stakeholders.

OUTCOMES WE ENVISION

→ Achieving sustainable financial health and stability.

→ Expanding programs and services through philanthropy.

→ Ensuring access for future generations.

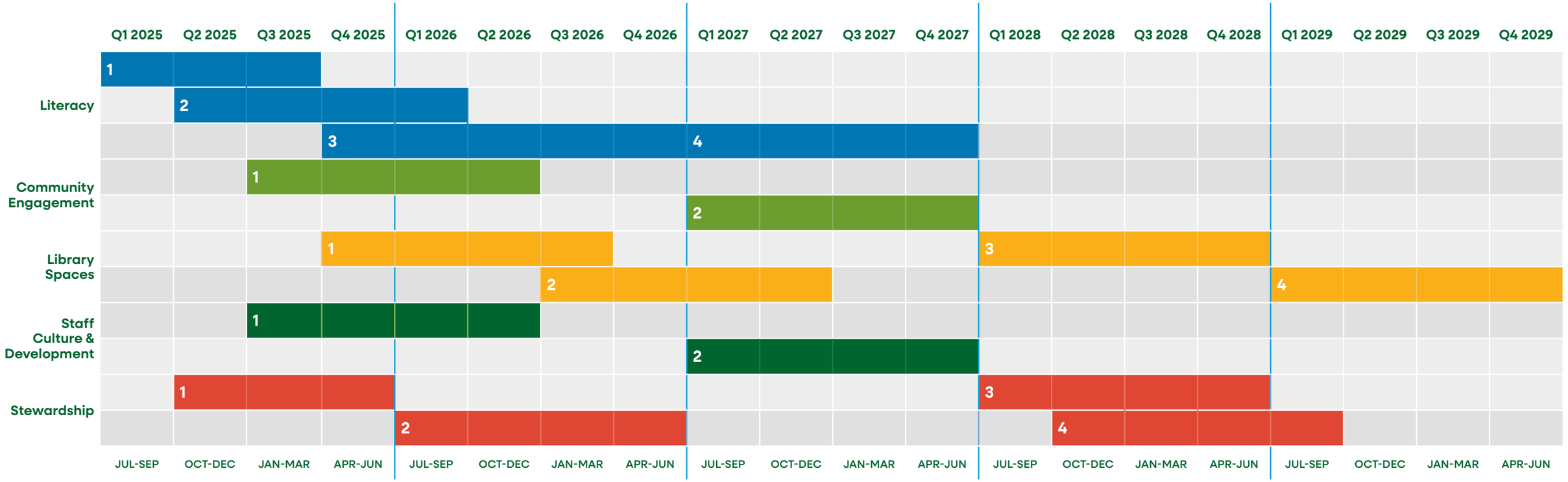




> "You do good work with the resources you have. I'm proud of our system but the county, cities and community need to give you the resources to be a palace."
>
> – Government leader

FIVE YEAR PATH

Major Systemwide Initiatives



Literacy	1 Integrate LETRS/LML best practices into staff training and programming system-wide.	2 Restructure homebound services to spread access equitably across service system.	3 Develop and implement standardized processes for print and digital promotions of programs and events in alignment with brand guidelines.	4 Launch “One Community, One Read” event
Community Engagement	1 Create proactive criteria and processes to select and build partnerships across the region and scale where possible.	2 Establish a readily accessible collection of training tools and resources for initial response, including Mental Health First Aid, SafePlace Training, ACES, and CRM.		
Library Spaces	1 Begin comprehensive master planning focused on expansion in the western area of our region.	2 Construction groundbreaking Oglethorpe Mall Library replacement. Mobile Library is established and making rounds in the community.	3 Western expansion begins with planning a second new library built in Effingham County.	4 Carnegie Library opens as an African American research center.
Staff Culture & Development	1 Asana project management system fully integrated among staff and used by management to assign work and track outcomes.	2 Create and solidify a culture of growth and development through best practices and formalized training.		
Stewardship	1 Reclaim 501(c)3 status.	2 Dedicate resources and planning to leverage philanthropic giving.	4 Libraries become fine-free.	4 Establishment of an endowment to supplement public funding sources.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS



LEADERSHIP

Lola Shelton-Council, Executive Director
Jen Baxter, Deputy Director
Doug Bailey, Director of Regional Operations
Mike Fullerton, Director of Information Technology
Ted Goudeau, Director of Facilities
Alissa Landram, Director of Public Services
Betsy McCullar, Director of Communications & Strategic Partnerships
Sarah Zeigler, Director of Collection Management

STAKEHOLDERS & PARTNERS

Live Oak Public Libraries Strategic Planning Team
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2023-2024 Regional Board of Trustees
Dr. Gordon Baker, Ambria Berksteiner, MaryBeth Dieters, Gabrielle Gardner, Hank Heller, Erin Lovejoy, Laura Nottingham, James Odum, Marie Rozman, Aminata Traore-Morris, Brienne Walsh, Jere Willams

2023-2024 Advisory Committee
Dr. Gordon Baker, Joseph Brown, Tim Callanan, Michael Kaigler, Lola Shelton-Council, Brienne Walsh

2023-2024 County Boards of Chatham, Effingham and Liberty Counties

Live Oak Public Libraries Foundation

Chatham, Effingham and Liberty County residents and library patrons







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Carey Schwartzburt

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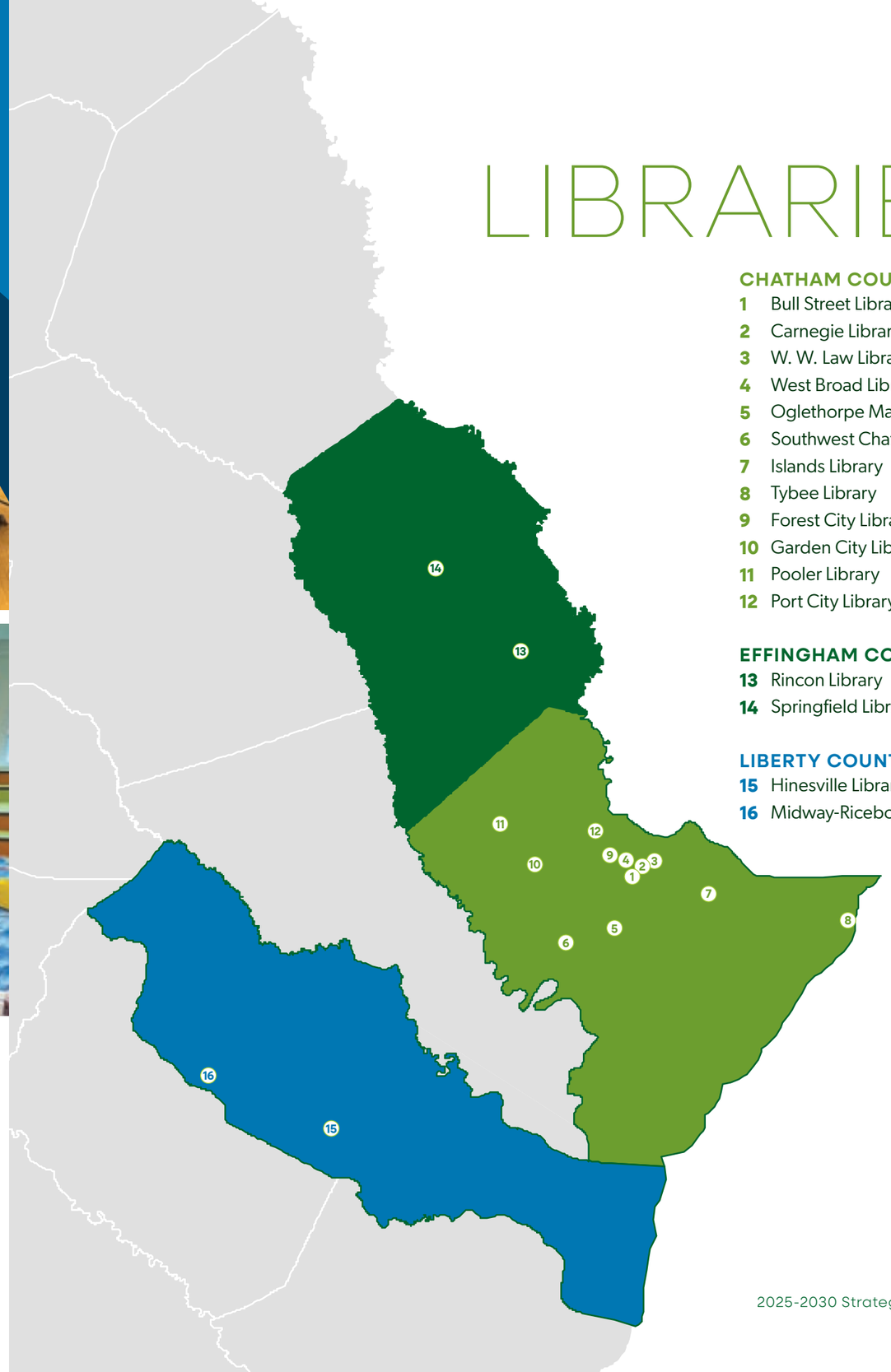








LIBRARIES



CHATHAM COUNTY

1 Bull Street Library
2 Carnegie Library
3 W. W. Law Library
4 West Broad Library
5 Oglethorpe Mall Library
6 Southwest Chatham Library
7 Islands Library
8 Tybee Library
9 Forest City Library
10 Garden City Library
11 Pooler Library
12 Port City Library

EFFINGHAM COUNTY

13 Rincon Library
14 Springfield Library

LIBERTY COUNTY

15 Hinesville Library
16 Midway-Riceboro Library

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