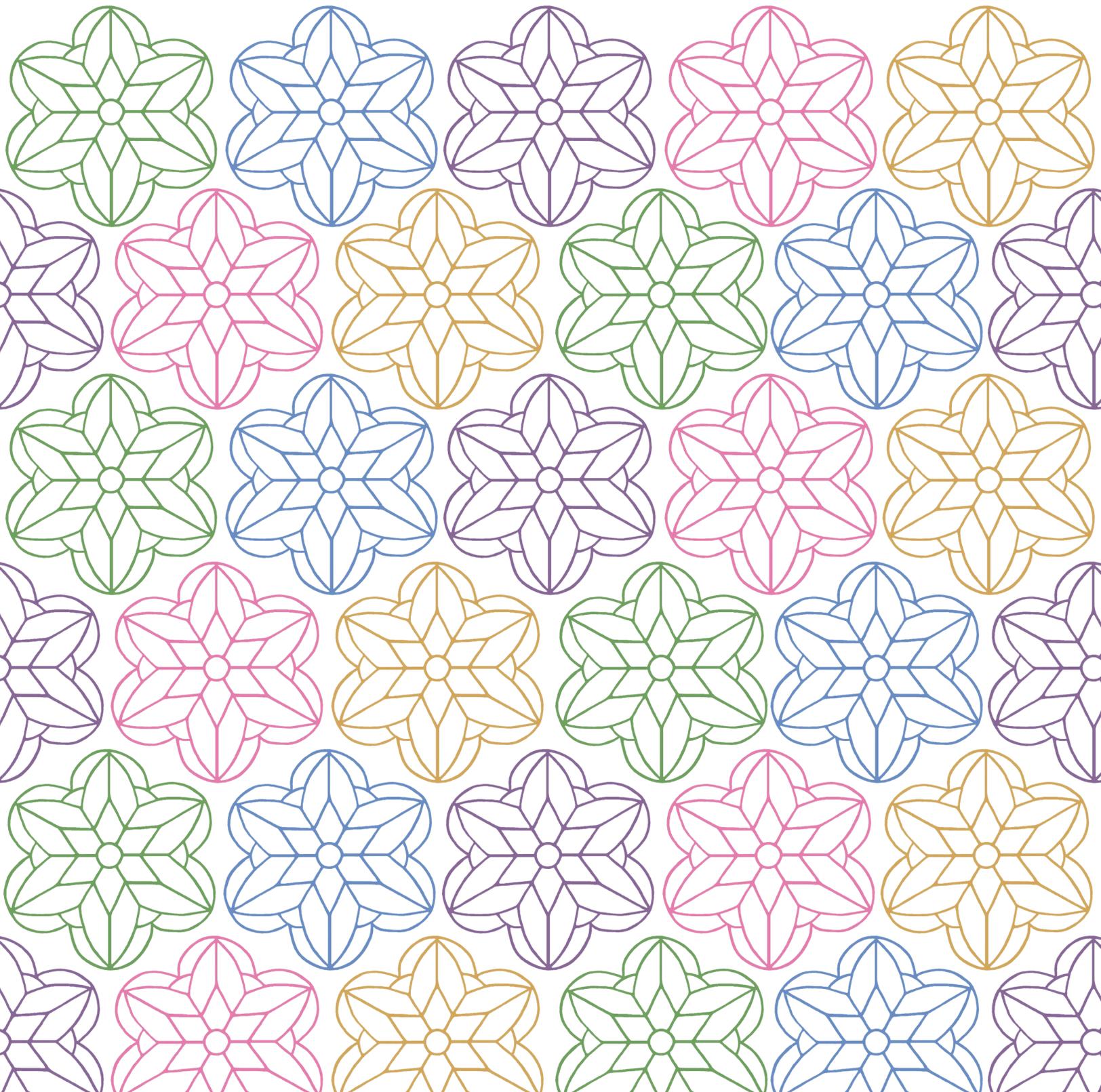


# RUSSELL LIBRARY

## JANUARY 2025 ANNUAL REPORT



Russell Library empowers people to **grow**, **connect**, **strive**, and **thrive**.

Our strategic goals are to:

**Strengthen community**

**Create a safe and welcoming destination**

**Foster a thriving economic ecosystem**

**Promote a lifelong love of learning**

We endeavor to:

**Be future-ready for Middletown**

# Strengthen Community

**55%**

## CIRCULATION INCREASE

of children's materials from 2018 to 2024

**573**

## YOUNG CHILDREN REGISTERED

to receive free age-appropriate books each month - that is **more than 28% of Middletown littles!**

**12,280**

## ACTIVE CARDHOLDERS

who reside in Middletown as of June 2024

**265,043**

## CHECKOUTS

of physical and downloadable materials between July 2023 - June 2024

**10,110**

## BLOG VIEWS

The Library Vault has had 5712 visitors since it launched in April 2023

**4,493**

## PODCAST DOWNLOADS

since Middletown Strong launched in February 2021



1



2

# Create a Safe and Welcoming Destination



**300+**

**GALLONS OF PAINT**

applied to spruce up this old library

*“The lobby looks SO amazing! I just kind of gasped in delight as I walked in...”*

**24%**

**PUBLIC HOURS INCREASE**

from 2,513 in 2018 to 3,122 in 2024

**175,662**

**LIBRARY VISITS**

in 2024, up from 130k in 2023, 107k in 2022, and 51k in 2021

**244%**

**VISITOR INCREASE**

since 2021

**11,435**

**YOUTH ATTENDANCE**

at **407 public programs** geared toward children and families in 12 months



# Foster a Thriving Economic Ecosystem

## 486,100+

### VIEWS ON TIKTOK

Our social media team often **features local businesses**. Their Perkatory video “went viral” in July 2024 with over 200K views in one month! The video for Al’s Ice Cream Shoppe and NORA cupcakes got 57.5K views.

## 63

### EPISODES (AND COUNTING)

Our podcast interviews proprietors such as Rachel of Cinder + Salt, Michael of Story & Soil, Yasemin of Reboot Eco, and Kristin of A Pocketful of Posies. It also shines a spotlight on artists and events like Pride and Juneteenth which **attract people to Middletown**.

## \$450,000+

### ARPA DOLLARS INVESTED

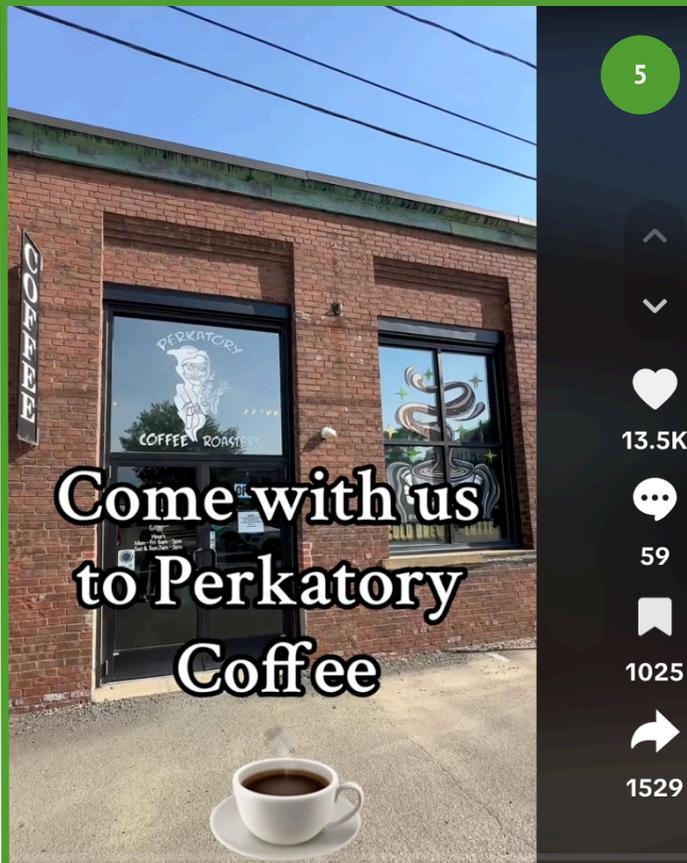
The American Rescue Plan Act funded multiple projects, including a new roof, lobby renovation, and staff office consolidation that created more usable public space

**“I feel like I just saw a show at the Goodspeed!”**

## 203

### ATTENDEES

at the Secrets of Russell Library in October 2024



What's Happening in Middletown (Connecticut)

A grateful audience member

Did anyone else attend the Secrets of the Russell Library this weekend? It was amazing! So many great stories about its history and all the hidden rooms. And the ghosts!



# Promote a Lifelong Love of Learning



**88,547**

**YOUTH BOOKS CHECKED OUT**

from July 2023 - June 2024

**10%**

**JUVENILE BOOK BUDGET INCREASE**

over last year, an upward trend we would like to expand upon in the next budget cycle

**61,833**

**ELECTRONIC CIRCULATION**

including e-books, e-magazines, e-audio, and e-video

***The proliferation of formats Russell Library carries has squeezed our collections budgets***

**21,573**

**TOTAL PROGRAM ATTENDANCE**

from July 2023 - June 2024

**35%**

**ATTENDANCE INCREASE**

over 2018, when attendance totaled 15,997



# Future-ready for Middletown

**41+**

**YEARS SINCE RUSSELL LIBRARY'S LAST MAJOR RENOVATION IN 1983**

which was intended to get us through to the year 2000 - that makes us **25 years overdue for a building project**

**73,000**

**GROSS SQUARE FEET**

minimum space needed for Russell Library to serve Middletown's growing population, per the Connecticut State Library Space Planning Guide's standards - our **current building has 45,000 GSF**

**690+**

**SURVEYS SUBMITTED**

during the first phase of Russell Library's feasibility study community input process, in addition to 2 open houses, 4 focus groups, 2 tabling sessions, and 2 workshops

## A 'future-ready' institution

City, public examining ways to bring deteriorating facility into 21st century



Russell Library staff, Board President Eamonn Wisneski and Middletown Mayor Ben Florsheim were among those who traveled to the Library Journal Design Institute conference at the New York Public Library June 9. The focus was ways make the institution "future-ready."

By Cassandra Day

MIDDLETOWN — The Russell Library is developing a vision for the future to include either a full renovation of its more than 100-year-old connected structures or an entirely new building integral to the city's long-term riverfront revitalization project.

"As charming and nostalgic as our old brownstone is, our recent facilities assessment made it clear that we need a new building," Brandie Doyle, Russell Library's assistant director of administrative services, said of the 123 Broad St. facility.

"Middletown residents need a public library that can accommodate their needs for safe, free and accessible spaces for youth activities; meeting rooms and gathering spaces; equitable access to technology; and much more. Our current facility, the oldest sections of which date back to 1834, is just not able to provide those," library Director

Ramona Burkey said.

A new library would make sense in terms of efficiency and costs, Burkey said. "A well-situated, well-appointed public library building with plenty of parking could also draw up to 1,000 visitors per day, adding greatly to the economic vibrancy around it."

"In fact, numerous studies have shown that for every dollar invested in public libraries, a return of \$4 to \$5 is realized in the community," she added.

Administrators outlined the options in detail in a five-year strategic operating plan. It was shared during the Library Journal Design Institute conference at the New York Public Library on June 9.

The Russell Library was selected to be a case study at the conference. Possible sites for the exercise included the current location, a mixed-use building at the old garage site off Dingwall Drive, the building abutting Washington Street close to

See Libr

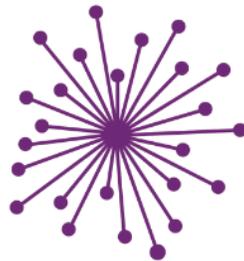
9



10

**Photo captions:**

1. Russell Library partnered with Dolly Parton's Imagination Library in 2024. The program offers free age-appropriate titles to registered Middletown children ages 0-5. Registration is open at <https://imaginationlibrary.com/usa/affiliate/CTMIDDLETOWN/>.
2. A patron is delighted to see her first language hand written on Russell Library's 'welcome' sign.
3. Our renovated lobby offers more public space and an undeniable ambiance.
4. Fun new furnishings and live animal visits such as Terry from Eleanor Buck Wolf Nature Center attract an increasing number of people to our Activity Room.
5. Our social media team often features Middletown businesses. This video went viral on TikTok!
6. The Secrets of Russell Library put on its third annual production in 2024. The show informs attendees about Russell Library's history, building, and "spirited" status.
7. Some of our youngest patrons engage in the work of childhood: play.
8. Local artist Robert Jefferson poses with Common Council Member Grady Faulkner during the course of his month-long exhibit on Russell Library's first floor.
9. An article entitled *A 'future-ready' institution* appeared in the Middletown Press in August 2022 describing early efforts to address Russell Library's long-term building plans.
10. Russell Library's building project timeline, as projected by our community input consultants at Margaret Sullivan Studios.



RUSSELL  
LIBRARY

grow connect strive thrive

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