

For Immediate Release

December 15th, 2021

Highland Public Library is Certified Sustainable

The Sustainable Libraries Initiative recognizes the Highland Public Library as a leader in sustainability.

Ulster County, New York - December 15th, 2021 - [Highland Public Library](#) in Highland, New York, has been certified as a “Sustainable Library” through the award-winning Sustainable Libraries Certification Program. This groundbreaking initiative guides libraries through a step-by-step process to infuse [triple bottom line](#) sustainable decision-making into their library’s policies and actions.

The opportunity to participate in the Sustainable Libraries Initiative Certification Program came about while Highland Public Library was involved in the construction of a new building. During the planning process they had already looked for ways to be environmentally conscious in their design and choice of materials. Joining the Sustainable Libraries Certification Program provided the library with a framework to expand on their environmental efforts with guided steps to build on relationships in the community during this process and tie in the concepts of social equity and financial viability to broaden their impact. Library Director, Julie Kelsall-Dempsey, stated:

“The process gave us the opportunity to really take a hard look at what we were doing and how it fit within our vision. The Sustainable Libraries Initiative provided us with excellent tools to evaluate our policies, programs, even job descriptions to make sure everything was in line with our vision and mission.”

Completing the reflective and flexible certification program has benefited the Highland Public Library and the community. Achieving certification validates the extensive efforts they have made to engage local residents through conversations and surveys while formalizing a comprehensive [Plan of Service](#). Actions such as assessing the diversity of their collection and expanding their partnerships with community organizations has increased their circulation of materials and participation in library programs. New building features including a water bottle filling station and bicycle repair tools have increased awareness of the library’s environmental efforts while sharing the knowledge and services for the benefit of the community.

International Impact

Highland Public Library is among the first libraries to participate in the Sustainable Libraries Certification Program, the first of its kind in the world. This benchmarking program was developed to assist libraries of all kinds - public, academic, and individual school librarians - to create opportunities to make better choices on behalf of the local and global community.

The program has been recognized by the International Federation of Library Associations at their 2019 World Congress in Athens, Greece, becoming the first program in the United States to be honored through their “Green Libraries” Award.

Comprehensive Approach

With categories of actions focusing on each of the three pillars of triple bottom line sustainability such as Energy, Indoor Spaces, Social Cohesion, and Resilience Planning, this comprehensive process leads a library toward institutional change that shifts the rationale for every decision to consider the local and global impacts. Through this program, libraries work with their communities to listen and learn, allowing local needs to be identified and addressed. Strengthening the relationship between the library and the community they serve builds resilience through stronger connections with many organizations and increased access to information.

The path to certification through the Sustainable Libraries Initiative is designed to be flexible for libraries of different types, sizes, and budgets and guided by the communities they serve. Each library that completes the program will select the benchmarks that best fit the needs of their library and community resulting in a uniquely sustainable organization. Find out more information through our website (<https://sustainablelibrariesinitiative.org>) or contact sliadmin@suffolknet.org.

The Sustainable Libraries Initiative is expanding to enroll libraries throughout the United States, with nearly fifty libraries currently enrolled in the Sustainable Libraries Certification program. Highland Public Library is the eighth library to be certified through this program and the first in the Mid-Hudson Library System.

For more information, please contact:

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