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Going to the Cities: The Strategic Roles of Public Libraries in Promoting Sustainable Development Goals

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ABSTRACT

The public library serves as the point of convergence and the vector for information. However, the role of public libraries in promoting and contributing to the SDGs has been largely overlooked. This paper examines the strategic role public libraries can play in promoting SDGs and proffers key strategies for public libraries in promoting sustainable development. It is concluded in the paper that the public library that serves as the knowledge repository of the public owes the duty to ensure the dissemination of relevant information to educate, inform and mobilize the public toward collaborative efforts to save the growing cities.

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Introduction

Sustainable Development Goals are a set of 17 goals adopted by the United Nations (2015) to address global challenges such as poverty, hunger, inequality, climate change, and sustainable development (United Nations 2015). The United Nations (2015) identifies SDGs as a universal call to action to end poverty, protect the planet, and ensure that all people enjoy peace and prosperity. Achieving these goals requires collective action from governments, civil society, and the private sector. However, the role of public libraries in promoting and contributing to the SDGs has been largely overlooked.

Public libraries are community spaces that provide free access to information and knowledge, making them valuable resources for promoting sustainable development. They serve as hubs for learning, innovation, and collaboration, and can play a significant role in promoting awareness and understanding of the SDGs (Kosciejew 2020; Panda and Das 2022). Public libraries have a long history of supporting literacy, education, and access to information, and can leverage their expertise and resources to support the SDGs.

Several studies have shown that public libraries are well-positioned to support the SDGs (Omona 2020; Panda and Das 2022; Popoola 2019). For

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example, public libraries can provide access to information and resources related to the SDGs, promote education and awareness of the goals, and facilitate community engagement and collaboration. In addition, public libraries can support the SDGs through their programming, services, and partnerships with other stakeholders. This paper examines the strategic role public libraries can play in promoting SDGs and proffers key strategies for public libraries in promoting sustainable development. By adopting these strategies, public libraries can make a significant contribution to SDG implementation and help to create a more sustainable future for all.

Trend of urbanization and the strategic role of public libraries in promoting SDGs

The world is rapidly urbanizing, and the trend toward urbanization is expected to continue in the coming years. One study found that urbanization is expected to continue to increase rapidly in the coming years, with the majority of the world's population living in cities by 2050 (Buhaug and Urdal 2013; Goldstone 2010). According to the United Nations, more than half of the world's population now lives in urban areas, and this is expected to reach 68% by 2050 (United Nations 2018). As cities become the engines of economic growth and development, they also face numerous challenges related to sustainability, inequality, and social cohesion. In this context, public libraries can play a strategic role in promoting sustainable development goals (SDGs) in cities.

Urbanization brings numerous challenges that require innovative solutions. Cities are responsible for over 70% of global greenhouse gas emissions, which contribute to climate change and environmental degradation (United Nations 2018). They also face social and economic inequality, including issues related to poverty, health, and education. Furthermore, cities are vulnerable to natural disasters, such as floods and earthquakes, which can cause significant damage and loss of life.

As the SDG advocates strive to achieve the SDGs by 2030, public libraries can play a critical role in promoting sustainable development and contributing to the global efforts to build a better world (Panda and Das 2022). By leveraging their expertise, resources, and community networks, public libraries can help promote awareness, education, and action toward achieving the SDGs.

The public library and social responsibility

Public libraries have a long history of promoting social responsibility. According to Opara et al. (2021), public libraries are vital institutions of social responsibility. They provide a range of resources and services that support individuals and organizations in achieving social responsibility

goals. Kosciejew (2020) argues that the social responsibility of public libraries involves meeting the needs of diverse communities and empowering individuals through education and access to information. For example, they offer access to information on topics such as environmental sustainability, social justice, and human rights, which can help individuals and organizations make informed decisions about their actions. They also provide meeting spaces and resources for community groups and organizations working toward social responsibility goals.

Public libraries also engage in social responsibility initiatives themselves. For example, many libraries have implemented environmental sustainability programs, such as energy-efficient buildings, waste reduction and recycling programs, and community gardens. They also support local businesses and promote economic development through programs such as job training and support for small businesses.

In addition to these initiatives, public libraries have an important role to play in promoting social responsibility through their collections and services. Public libraries offer resources and programming that promote cultural diversity and social inclusion. Public libraries provide educational resources and services that help individuals develop critical thinking and problem-solving skills, which are essential for promoting social responsibility. Also in health related fields, examples of social responsibility activities abound among public libraries in the United States of America. For instance, to assist persons struggling with addiction, public library staff in Humboldt County California, 13 librarians enlisted for training on administering naloxone to reverse the effects of overdose among persons using opioid. In the same vein, public libraries in Boston and Hawaii have been reaching out to communities for corporate social responsibility through handing out needle collection containers and bandages for drug users (Philbin et al. 2019).

Public libraries also serve as centers for community dialogue and engagement around social responsibility issues. Dadlani (2016) notes that public libraries have a role in promoting social justice by providing access to information and resources for marginalized populations. For example, public libraries host community forums and discussions on topics such as environmental sustainability, social justice, and community development. Public libraries could partner with community groups and organizations to develop programs and initiatives that address social responsibility issues.

Overall, public libraries play an important role in promoting social responsibility. Through their resources, services, and initiatives, they support individuals and organizations in achieving social responsibility goals and contribute to the well-being of society as a whole.

Importance of information to SDGs attainment

One of the key areas where information is critical in achieving the SDGs is in monitoring progress toward the goals. As noted by Osman et al. (2021), monitoring and evaluation are essential for tracking progress toward the SDGs and identifying areas that require attention. National statistical offices and other organizations play a critical role in collecting and analyzing data for monitoring progress toward the goals (United Nations 2017).

Public participation and accountability are also essential to achieving the SDGs, and access to information is crucial in promoting these principles. As noted by Fox and Stoett (2016), public participation is important in ensuring that the goals reflect the needs and priorities of all sectors of society. Similarly, accountability is essential to ensure that progress is made toward the goals and that resources are being used effectively (United Nations 2015).

Innovation and creativity are also important for achieving the SDGs, and access to information can be a catalyst for these principles. As noted by Oliveira-Duarte et al. (2021), innovation is critical for addressing the complex social, economic, and environmental challenges that the SDGs aim to address. Information can provide the knowledge and resources needed to develop innovative solutions (United Nations 2019).

Information plays a critical role in achieving the SDGs. Public libraries can play an important role in promoting the attainment of the SDGs by providing access to information and resources that can support monitoring and evaluation, public participation and accountability, and innovation and creativity. Public libraries have a unique position to serve as a hub of information and knowledge for their communities, and can contribute to the achievement of the SDGs by providing access to information, building community partnerships, and supporting lifelong learning.

For instance, in the bid to support the SDGs, public libraries engaged in training of locals in Botswana on the use of computers to access information relating to farming, personal businesses, education and employment (IFLA 2013). In the same vein, staff of public libraries in Romania were able to train 100,000 farmers in Romania on how to use ICT services to apply for subsidies on agricultural products. This helped local communities to benefit from US$187 through the Biblionet programme and local government collaboration (IFLA 2013).

Strategic approaches for public libraries in promoting SDGs in cities

Public libraries are uniquely positioned to address these challenges and promote sustainable urban development. They serve as community spaces that can provide access to information, education, and resources that are essential for promoting sustainable development and achieving the SDGs. Public libraries also facilitate community engagement and collaboration, bringing

together stakeholders to share ideas, knowledge, and resources. According to Kosciejew (2020), public libraries can play a significant role in promoting sustainable development and achieving the SDGs. Public libraries can play a strategic role in promoting SDGs in cities by:

Providing access to information

One of the strategic approaches for public libraries in promoting SDGs is providing access to information. Public libraries have always been known for their vast collections of books, periodicals, and other resources that can educate people about various aspects of sustainable development. Public libraries are key institutions for providing access to information, which is critical for achieving the SDGs (Omona 2020). According to the United Nations, access to information is a fundamental human right that is essential for the realization of other rights, such as freedom of expression, education, and participation in decision-making (United Nations 2015). Public libraries can provide access to information and resources related to the SDGs, including government reports, academic articles, and community data that focus on climate change, renewable energy, and sustainable transportation. Public libraries are known for their vast collections of books, periodicals, and other resources that can educate people about various aspects of sustainable development. These resources can include books and materials on renewable energy, green architecture, and sustainable agriculture, among others. Furthermore, as noted by Adebayo, Ahmed, and Adeniran (2018) public libraries can provide access to digital resources, including databases, online courses, and webinars, which can further enhance the dissemination of knowledge about sustainable development. They also offer training and support for accessing and using these resources, especially for marginalized and vulnerable groups who may face barriers to information.

For example, the Toronto Public Library in Canada launched a "Welcome to Canada" program to support newcomers to the country, including refugees and immigrants (Toronto Public Library 2019). The program provides access to information and resources related to Canadian society, culture, and government, as well as language learning and employment support. This program supports SDG 10 (Reduced Inequalities) by promoting integration and inclusion of newcomers, and SDG 4 (Quality Education) by providing access to education and training.

In developing countries, libraries provide access to information and education about clean water and sanitation, affordable and clean energy, climate action, and sustainable cities and communities. Public libraries can collaborate with NGOs, governments, and other stakeholders to create educational programs and resources that promote sustainable development. By providing access to information and education, public libraries promote awareness and

understanding of the SDGs, encouraging people to take action toward achieving sustainable development.

Providing education and awareness

Public libraries have a long history of supporting literacy and education, and can play a significant role in promoting education and awareness of the SDGs (Islam, Sultana, and Widén 2022). They offer workshops, training, and events on SDG-related topics and practices, such as climate change, gender equality, poverty reduction, composting, recycling, and energy conservation. They also provide materials and resources for learning about the SDGs, such as books, videos, and online courses.

For example, the Liverpool Libraries in the United Kingdom launched a "Sustainable Schools" program to support schools in promoting sustainability and the SDGs (Liverpool Libraries 2019). The program offers workshops and resources for students and teachers, as well as a sustainability audit for schools to assess their environmental impact. This program supports SDG 4 (Quality Education) by promoting education for sustainable development, and SDG 13 (Climate Action) by promoting sustainable practices in schools.

Promoting community partnerships, engagement and collaboration

Public libraries serve as community spaces that can facilitate engagement and collaboration among community members and stakeholders (Yoshida 2016) and in achieving SDGs (Tbaishat 2021). Libraries can provide space for community members to collaborate on innovative projects that address urban sustainability challenges. These spaces can also serve as forums for community members to engage in discussions and debates about sustainable development issues. Post events, workshops, and discussions on SDG-related topics, bringing together individuals and organizations to share ideas, knowledge, and resources. It is also ideal for public libraries to also establish partnerships with local governments, NGOs, and other stakeholders to promote sustainable development and achieve the SDGs. By working together, these entities can pool their resources and expertise to address specific sustainability challenges in their communities.

For example, the Auckland Libraries in New Zealand established a "Sustainable Schools Network" to promote sustainability and the SDGs in schools (Libraries 2019). The network provides a platform for schools to share ideas, resources, and best practices on sustainability, and offers training and support for teachers and students. This program supports SDG 17 (Partnerships for the Goals) by establishing partnerships among stakeholders to achieve the SDGs. A library can create a community garden where community members can collaborate on growing crops and learning about

sustainable gardening practices. Such a project not only promotes sustainable practices but also creates a sense of community involvement and ownership in the sustainability initiative.

Partnership on technology between a public library and schools in region of central Missouri was achieved and it is running successfully. Technology that could be better used by schools were made available by librarians in the public library. Students were given opportunities to use copiers, computer labs, launchpads, and iPads. Teachers in return could be invited to tell stories and facilitate training (Moreland and Kammer 2020).

Supporting lifelong learning

The American Library Association (2019) highlights the role of public libraries in supporting lifelong learning, which is essential for achieving the SDGs. Libraries can offer a range of educational programs, including workshops, training sessions, and classes, that can help people acquire the knowledge and skills needed to address sustainability challenges.

For example, libraries can provide training on soft skills, basic information technologies, sustainable gardening, composting, and other sustainable practices. Public libraries could also organize workshops on renewable energy, energy efficiency, and waste reduction. By providing training and education on sustainable development, public libraries can help to build a more sustainable and equitable society.

Supporting innovation and creativity

Public libraries can support innovation and creativity by providing access to emerging technologies, such as 3D printers and virtual reality, which can be used to develop sustainable solutions (Ylipulli and Luusua 2019). It is also ideal for public libraries to provide spaces for community members to collaborate on innovative projects that address urban sustainability challenges.

Challenges faced by public libraries in promoting SDGs and potential solutions

While public libraries have the potential to play a significant role in promoting SDGs, they also face several challenges that can limit their effectiveness. This section will focus on some of the challenges that public libraries face in promoting SDGs and propose strategies to overcome these challenges.

Challenges faced by public libraries in promoting SDGs

Limited funding and staffing

One of the significant challenges that public libraries face in promoting SDGs is the limited funding and staffing. Many public libraries struggle to allocate the necessary resources to promote sustainable development effectively. In a study by Mansour (2020), the author found that limited funding and staffing could hinder the implementation of SDGs programs and initiatives in public libraries. In many cases, public libraries may have to prioritize other essential services such as basic literacy programs over promoting SDGs.

Moreover, public libraries are often viewed as nonessential services, leading to budget cuts and reduced funding. This reduction in funding has a significant impact on the resources that libraries can provide to promote SDGs. For example, public libraries may not have access to the latest information and resources needed to educate and engage the community on SDGs. Additionally, the staffing limitations may affect the capacity of libraries to undertake outreach programs and community engagement initiatives that promote SDGs. Many public libraries operate with limited staff, making it difficult to provide adequate support to the community. Limited staffing also affects the quality of services provided by the library, as staff may be spread thin across various services, including those related to promoting SDGs.

Limited awareness and engagement from the community

Another significant challenge faced by public libraries in promoting SDGs is the limited awareness and engagement from the community. In a study by Tbaishat (2021), the authors found that public libraries can play a crucial role in raising awareness of the SDGs. However, limited community engagement can hinder the effectiveness of SDG initiatives in public libraries. Many people may not be aware of the SDGs or the role of public libraries in promoting them. In addition, library staff may not have a deep understanding of the SDGs, making it challenging to create effective programs and resources to promote them.

Lack of relevant resources

Public libraries may face a lack of relevant resources, including materials and information related to SDGs. This challenge can occur due to various factors, such as limited funding, limited access to information, and a lack of trained staff to handle SDGs-related resources. According to Mansour (2020), public libraries may face difficulties in acquiring and providing relevant resources that support SDGs initiatives.

Proposed strategies in promoting SDGs

With the challenges identified, collaboration and partnership, outreach and education, and resource sharing and development were proposed as essential strategies for public libraries to overcome the challenges that public libraries face in promoting SDGs.

Collaboration and partnership

Collaboration and partnership were identified as essential strategies for public libraries to promote SDGs. Public libraries can collaborate with other organizations, such as community groups, nonprofit organizations, government agencies and other stakeholders, to share resources and expertise. For instance, Omona (2020) suggested that public libraries can collaborate with local NGOs, government agencies, and other institutions to provide information and training on SDGs. Such partnerships can help libraries to access additional funding and resources, as well as expand their capacity to promote SDGs (Mansour 2020). This approach can help public libraries to reach a wider audience and achieve greater impact in promoting sustainable development. Additionally, advocacy and lobbying efforts can help libraries to secure more funding and support from local and national governments.

Outreach and education

Outreach and education were also identified as critical strategies for public libraries to promote SDGs. Public libraries can undertake outreach initiatives that engage with communities and raise awareness about SDGs. Such initiatives can include public lectures, seminars, and workshops that aim to educate and raise awareness of SDGs among the community. For instance, Devine and Appleton (2023) suggested that public libraries can organize SDG-focused events such as book clubs, film screenings, and public lectures. These events can provide opportunities for communities to learn about SDGs, share knowledge, and discuss ways to promote sustainable development. By advocating for the importance of promoting SDGs, public libraries can raise awareness and understanding of the goals among the public and policymakers. This can help to increase funding and resources for SDG-related programs and services. Additionally, public libraries can partner with local schools, universities, and other educational institutions to incorporate SDGs education into their curricula. This approach can help to increase awareness and engagement among students and young people (Mawonde and Togo 2019).

Resource sharing and development

This involves sharing resources and developing new resources that support SDG implementation. Public libraries can develop collections of SDG-related materials, including books, journals, and online resources. Public libraries can also create toolkits and other resources that provide guidance on SDG implementation and support capacity building (Tbaishat 2021). Resource sharing and development can help to ensure that public libraries have the necessary resources and tools to support SDG implementation effectively.

Public libraries can partner with other libraries and institutions to share resources and information related to SDGs. For example, libraries can join consortia and networks to access shared resources and information. Additionally, public libraries can invest in staff training and development to build capacity in SDGs-related areas. By investing in training and professional development opportunities for library staff, public libraries can build the necessary skills and knowledge to create effective programs and resources to promote SDGs. This approach can help libraries to acquire the necessary skills and knowledge to handle SDGs-related resources effectively. Investing in technology and infrastructure can help public libraries provide better access to information and resources related to SDGs.

Case studies

There are several case studies of public libraries that have successfully implemented strategies to promote SDGs in urban areas. These case studies can serve as valuable resources for other public libraries looking to implement similar strategies and contribute to sustainable development in their own communities. By sharing best practices and lessons learned, these success stories can inspire collaboration and innovation among public libraries worldwide. One example is the Vaggeryd Public Library in Sweden.

The Vaggeryd Public Library in Sweden set up a Green Corner to promote sustainable development in the municipality. The Vaggeryd municipality is committed to promoting ecologically sustainable social development through its membership in the Association Sveriges Ekokommuner. To support this goal, Claesson (2018) notes the Vaggeryd library staff set up a Green Corner to provide information about sustainable development to local residents. The Green Corner is located at the entrance of the library premises, and the topics explored are preferably with a local connection and have a tangible connection to people's lives and finances. The Green Corner offers lectures and activities related to each topic as part of the library's programming activities, which are available to the public.

The library's staff and elected representatives are committed to following four environmental guidelines that promote sustainable behavior. These

guidelines apply to daily work and include efforts to save energy, minimize printing, prioritize ecologically sourced and packaged coffee and tea, and promote purchasing with environmental considerations. Employees and elected representatives also try to reduce traveling between units, with access to electric bicycles and electric cars available for use.

The library's efforts to promote sustainable development have attracted attention from schools, including upper secondary school students who participate as part of their curriculum or graduation essay. Some preschools have also made exhibitions on how they were certified for Green Flag, which is both an educational tool and certification program for schools that work actively and over time to promote sustainable development in teaching and daily activities. The exhibitions have attracted parents who were proud to see what their children had accomplished and hopefully became aware of the broader environmental values of the activities. The library's sustainable development initiatives have had a significant impact on the community, by increasing awareness and knowledge of sustainable development issues and promoting community engagement and action toward sustainability.

Replicating the green corner of Vaggeryd Public Library, Sweden

It is paramount to emulate positive decisions in public libraries around the world for development and consistent growth. The core of this paper is ensuring the multiplicity of actions that promote the SDGs in public libraries. It is obvious that the Vaggeryd Public Library adopted some strategic approaches that could aid this laudable project. Setting up the Green Library Corner requires strategic planning, space management, orientation programmes on sustainable environment, financial involvement and other factors that could aid promoting ecologically sustainable social development.

In order to ensure the success of implementing this idea in other public libraries, it is paramount to look at some strategic practical steps that could help public libraries in other parts of the world to achieve same result. It requires exposing librarians to the concept of sustainability, developing their interest by explaining the embedded benefits of adopting the green philosophy.

Strategic practical steps

Ensuring buy-in by public library staff

The **Vaggeryd** Public Library, Sweden could not have embarked on the green project without the initial explanation on the importance of the Sustainable Development Goals of the United Nations. As noted by Hubbart (2022),

stakeholders buy-in has been adjudged as one of the best approaches to ensure that employees contribute to the successful implementation of ideas and projects. Transparency, communication, training, promoting awareness, explaining the benefits and motivating staff encourage total buy-in (Mazzei and Michael Goodman 2014).

Since most change occurs to improve a process, a product, or an outcome, it is critical to identify the focus and to clarify goals. This also involves identifying the resources and individuals that will facilitate the process and lead the endeavor. Most change systems acknowledge that knowing what to improve creates a solid foundation for clarity, ease, and successful implementation.

Giving the roadmap

Understanding the roadmap in details could help library staff to know the demand of the project and prepare to learn, unlearn and relearn. A roadmap is essential due to the clarity and simplicity it gives to project. Staff can properly align with the vision, mission and strategic approaches to deliver on projects. It could improve communication, team work and eliminate assumptions (Schimpf 2020).

Readiness assessments

It is also pertinent to do readiness assessment, considering the staff, finance, facility and the end users which are the library clientele. Subjective and objective observation are considered in measuring readiness for change. What is said and what is not said are considered. Skills and capacity readiness, commitment readiness, resources readiness, and discomfort readiness are some of the critical elements to consider in introducing change. Burnes (2020) observed that key components that could drive change should be considered to have smooth sail in introducing new concepts which could be disruptive. Green corner in library could be disruptive, hence the need to do readiness assessment.

Training on new innovation

The major drivers of innovations are the workforce which include the highly skilled, semi-skilled and sometimes low skilled employees. Kim and Park (2020). At whatever level, employees require training and constant education. Furthermore, when new innovations are to be deployed, it is pertinent that staff members are taken through the learning process. It is highly essential to keep educating the staff on what, why, when, where and how of the project. When every member of staff in the library have full understanding of the green corner in the library or any other intended project, it becomes easy to follow through.

Resistance management

Innovations attract reactions as they change the previous approaches engaged by staff, hence the need to manage resistance. Resistance Management involves when library staff that are the foot soldiers for the achievement of the set objectives have properly aligned.

Practical steps toward helping communities

As the learning center for communities, the public library has the responsibility of ensuring that members of the public receive adequate assistance to understand the essence of SDG, participate and enjoy the dividends. Some of the ways to assist the communities are presented below:

Carrying out the community needs assessment

The Vaggeryd Public Library, Sweden must have done assessment of the needs of the community it serves before introducing the Green Corner to provide information about sustainable development to local residents. The intervention to be done for communities depend majorly on the core needs of communities, hence public libraries should carry out the needs assessments in the communities. This could be through observation, interview, focus group discussion, and in some occasion, the use of questionnaire. Some public libraries attend town hall meetings, visit heads of communities and sometimes watch documentaries made available by community development groups and associations.

Public libraries collaboration with other community development organizations

Public libraries, through collaboration with public and private organizations engaged in community development could aid sustainability. Library could also liaise with businesses to direct their corporate social responsibilities toward library goals to meet the identified needs of the communities.

Focusing on most pressing needs to design intervention programmes

Arranging intervention programmes according to order of priorities could help the public libraries to better meet community needs. It may be counter-productive for public libraries to want to focus on all the 17 goals of the Sustainable development Goals of the United Nations as most of them appear to be very important. It is however smart for public libraries to select the most needed. There are environments where the major need has to do with Goal 4

of the SDGs which is quality education while some may be Goal 1 which is No Poverty. When focus is given to the most prominent, it is easy to progress to the next in the order of priority.

Enlightenment programmes

It should not be assumed that the public understands and appreciate the efforts of the public libraries on several programmes embarked upon to solve issues relating to identified problems; they should be enlightened and also directed on how to access these benefits. It is possible that libraries have certain resources addressing some particular problem but if the members of the community do not know, such resources or intervention programmes are of no use. Public libraries in Romania did several enlightenment and awareness programmes before they could train 100,000 farmers in Romania on how to use computer to seek aid from government (IFLA 2013).

Engaging communities

It is pertinent to engage communities through their leaders, associations, clubs, age groups and other available means. In some situations, public libraries engage the use of radio, television, social media platforms and other media to ensure that library programmes are better communicated to the communities. Seminars, workshops and skills acquisition programmes amongst many others could be engaged to reach the potential beneficiaries of the intervention programmes from public libraries.

These are some of the approaches that could be engaged to ensure that communities benefit maximally from all laid down programmes under Sustainable Development Programmes by public libraries.

The Seattle Public Library is another example of a public library that has successfully implemented strategies to promote SDGs in urban areas. According to Luterek (2020), the library has developed several programs and services that support sustainable development, such as providing access to information and resources related to energy efficiency, green building, and environmental sustainability. The library has also established partnerships with local organizations and government agencies to promote sustainable development initiatives in the community, such as collaborating with the Seattle Office of Sustainability and Environment to develop a series of workshops and events on sustainable transportation options. These initiatives have had a positive impact on promoting behavior change toward sustainability and building partnerships and collaborations to advance sustainability initiatives in the city.

Overall, these case studies demonstrate the important role that public libraries can play in promoting SDGs in urban areas. By providing

access to information and resources, building community partnerships, and offering educational programs and workshops, public libraries can contribute to sustainable development and promote positive change in their communities.

Conclusion

As cities continue to grow and face numerous sustainability challenges, and SDGs advocates strive to achieve the SDGs by 2030, public libraries can play a critical role in promoting sustainable development and contributing to the global efforts to build a better world. Public library staff could leverage their expertise, resources, and community networks to support the SDGs, through access to information, education and awareness, and community engagement and collaboration. By providing access to information, building community partnerships, supporting lifelong learning, and creating community spaces for collaboration and engagement, public libraries can help create more sustainable and equitable communities. Policymakers should consider public libraries as essential partners in the global efforts to achieve the SDGs.

Despite the challenges, public libraries can play a strategic role in promoting SDGs by providing access to information, building community partnerships, and supporting lifelong learning. Collaboration and partnership, outreach and education, and resource sharing and development are key strategies for public libraries to overcome these challenges and promote sustainable development. By adopting these strategies, public libraries can make a significant contribution to SDG implementation and help to create a more sustainable future for all.

Disclosure statement

Researchers wish to confirm that there are no known conflicts of interest associated with this publication and there has been no financial support for this work that could have influenced its outcome.

It is confirmed by the researchers that the manuscript has been read and approved by all named authors and that there are no other persons who satisfied the criteria for authorship but are not listed. We further confirm that the order of authors listed in the manuscript has been approved by all of us.

It is also confirmed that due consideration has been given to the protection of intellectual property associated with this work and that there are no impediments to publication, including the timing of publication, with respect to intellectual property. In so doing we confirm that we have followed the regulations of our institutions concerning intellectual property.

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