

Forbush Memorial Library

Strategic Planning Focus Group



June 18, 2024

Westminster, Massachusetts

Library Director: Nick Langhart

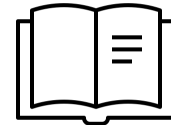
Trustee Strategic Planning Contact: Kim Samson

Facilitator: Michelle Eberle, Massachusetts Library System

Staff meeting 1.5 hours (9 participants)

Community focus group 1.5 hours (10 participants)

Describe the library in one word:



Staff

- Comfortable
- Welcoming
- Community
- Historic
- Community
- Lots of potential
- Community - information
- Divided
- Community

Community

- Resource
- Accessible
- Helpful
- Cool
- Knowledge
- Welcoming
- Available
- Soul of the community
- Accessible to all economic classes
- Fun

Vision Statements:



Participants were led through a brief mindfulness activity and then asked to complete the statement: “I dream of a community where...”

Staff

- There are lots of opportunities for all residents to come together in a positive way.
- A safe, welcoming town with good schools, services, etc.
- where people work together for the good of the community.
- All people feel welcome, where families feel supported and involved in the town.
- trees line the streets. People greet each other as friends. Division of thought/religion/politics doesn't exist except as a point of mutual discussion.
- Library keeps up with the changing times. People use libraries more.
- The community embraces diversity, promotes change, and encourages cooperative ventures.
- It embraces the future while honoring the past.
- Birds are singing. It's summer all year. So everyone gathers at the library for community events.

Community

- The town center has places to frequent and visit with friends, where the community can interact with one another.
- More people enjoy the rich resources of the public library, especially the economically disadvantaged who may not be aware of what is here.
- People are thriving, where there is still a sense of community even after a lot of growth.
- Everyone has a kind heart, and everyone has a friend.
- Information is shared in a collaborative and respectful way.
- we are interconnected and seamless in our knowledge of all town resources and events and everyone can access them regardless of race, class, or income.
- People continue to support the town's schools, fire and police departments, and senior center. Many people belong to different clubs.
- I can walk to many places to get a cup of coffee or baked item and sit and converse with friends. I hope there are many programs available for seniors and families.

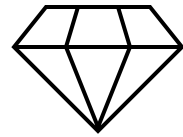
These statements are helpful for reviewing and updating your vision and mission statements.

Strengths: what we do best

What are the library's greatest strengths?

What do you value the most about the library?

What is the library's greatest achievement in the last year or two?



Staff

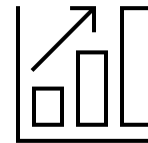
- Well-supported by the town - adequate budget for staff and programs, books*
- Diverse collection materials**
- Staff worked hard on the new website and Assabet - hard working and flexible staff
- Joyful, friendly, helpful staff
- Spaces - adult space - access to info
- Community space, children's programs, summer reading, museum passes
- New website
- Strong family and children's programming
- Welcoming, good service, helpful, friendly staff
- Customer service
- Amazing collections
- Children's room - strength - opens library to more people
- Opportunities from Nick to express creativity and innovate
- Small town - know patrons well - by name
- Summer reading - 425 participants - 200 for adults - record
- Good speaker program
- Location - center of town for adult population
- Close to senior center

Community

- Growing resources - specific interests - subject matter - AI, science, cancer studies, changing with the times
- Staff - friendly, welcoming, knowledgeable, kind
- Capture the old essence of Westminster - interconnects past and future
- Many programs
- Funding through town is strong - successful with partnership w/MLS/MBLC
- Staff is considerate - Reader's Advisory
- Easy - ILL - delivery - quick and easy
- More collaboration with elementary schools - no librarian there - partnership with schools - introduce summer reading programs

- Community gathering place
- Great meeting space
- Accessible for any meetings/activities, gardening classes, genealogy
- Children's programming is awesome! Children's room staff collaborates with parents.
- Catt's Taylor Swift party
- Technology in general
- Audiobooks
- Social media, modernization of library
- Christmas - Judy Barrett Photographer with Santa - Storytime
- Themed book displays each month
- Kid collection display
- Summer reading for adults with raffle tickets
- Music - Jeff Snow - Celtic

Opportunities: trends, circumstances, potential partnerships



What are the best opportunities for the library?

What trends could work in the library's favor?

What community partnerships would be beneficial for the library to consider?

Staff:

- Fundraising - grants - programming - state grants, private funds, foundations - federal
- Digital literacy for staff and public - many people only use Libby
- Trend - increased use of Libby - offer more e-books - start thinking about offering streaming service for music
- Tech based spaces - soundproof pods for interviews, testing, video editing for teens
- More for teenage kids - space to get together to talk about current issues - tweens (ex/Taylor Swift Album program)
- Library of Things
- Embedded librarianship - library card signups at senior center, Farmers Market, Middle school, elementary school
- MS and Elementary schools don't have librarians

- Little Free Libraries - donate weeded books
- Free book day for kids with weeded book - red box
- More with homeschoolers - offer programs - social programming
- Makerspace - Creation type space
- Fish & Game
- More guest speakers, outreach to guest speakers
- Ag heavy town - backyard growing - Agricultural Commission
- Passport Services
- Citizenship
- Education on Autism, Spectrum, Special needs
- Programming for Alzheimer's or dementia
- Westminster is getting older _ 65+ older is fastest growing group
- 30-40-year-olds - what would they like?
- 30-40-year-olds without kids
- Babysitting, peace and quiet
- Hobby groups - knitting, crochet, woodworking, boardgames, storytelling, painting, music, outdoors, gardening, hiking, cycling
- Cycle here - plan rides here
- Beautiful gardens on front lawn
- Serve LGBTQ community - youth group for teens and young adults, programs, don't be afraid to have a Pride / LGBTQ display

Community

- Host community for Haitian migrants - programming - language classes, Storytime, ask what they need
- Programming on Research skills at the middle school level
- Expand school/library partnership - get kids to the library - regular basis - getting library cards - Field trips -
- Programs for kids on Saturday
- Programs for older kids on Sat.
- Like in mini-golf program
- Friends - Museum passes
- Collaborate with Parks and Rec Summer Program for kids - talk to community service director - program play outside/ visit library -reading - across the street
- Cultural - need for discussion - adults with high schoolers - topics that may be controversial - Constitutional amendments - encourage dialogue - Freedom of Expression
- Education on book bans / intellectual freedom
- Staff prepared to respond to book challenges
- Partner with local non-profits - DEIA - Disabled, mental health, physical health, day programs - Fitchburg

- Use of meeting space at the library for community groups -publicize that
- Welcome back - open house about library services
- Website is fabulous
- Bookmark highlighting library services
- Town newsletter now includes info about the library
- Promote library resources at the senior center and schools, social media
- More active FB page
- Town signboard
- Online book club - at night - Zoom - Popular authors - vary theme
- More nighttime offering - like the Wed morning book group - craft/coffee hour for women/men - use kitchen
- Outdoor seating area
- More book clubs for young adults - teens
- Social media - education for parents
- Parent - child book group
- Program on recycling
- Magician
- High school seniors - voting education - history/importance
- National Honor Society - volunteer hours - help with shelving, cleaning books

Gaps in the library's capacity to address community needs

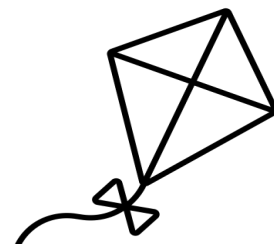
Identified by Staff

- Outdoor space is limited
- Parking
- Marketing - getting the word out - ex/Celtic Christmas concert - hit or miss - make publicity prominent
- Marketing - timing, responsive to community, scheduling - most people are on FB
- Funding to boost post on FB
- No followers on Instagram
- TikTok - videos
- Don't have a teen space
- Trustees and staff have a disconnect – when staff has consensus - result is opposite (nametags)
- Director could use more autonomy from Trustees over library operations

Aspirations: hopes and dreams for the library

What are your hopes and dreams for the future of the library?

What would you like the future to look like?



What projects, programs, resources, and services would support these dreams?

Staff

- Teen space** - for hanging out, modern, comfortable chairs, teen librarian, bean bags, video games
- Look at the Space Planning Report from Lauren Stara (2022?)
- Implement recommendations from the Space Planning Report
- Attic space could be the teen space
- Functional HVAC for entire building
- Buildup - new construction - parking garage on base level - build up
- Annex neighboring house :)
- Bridge across the street to Old Town Hall
- Remote library space - events room at Old Town Hall -
- Staff and Trustees reflect diversity of the community - specialized skills to respond to community needs
- Library with one voice - staff collaborations
- Regular staff meetings
- Improved communication
- Onboarding

Community

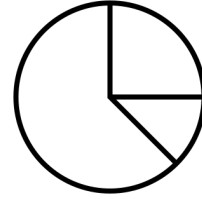
- More people to get involved with the library - more books, more programs -
- Current computer set up needs to be changed - too close -no privacy
- Need more computers
- Parking needs to be improved - too small - too narrow - property available for parking.
- More programs - on Thurs, Fri, Saturday
- More technology offerings - AI, Google, courses, hands-on help
- Bring in more popular authors - in-person on Zoom
- Q&A at programs - get feedback at programs - survey or discussion - in-person print
- Teen and tween space - current space is not comfortable
- There is currently no programs or staff for teens
- Previously was a teen programming
- We don't have a lot of room to expand.
- More online opportunities
- Space issue - library offers programs in community - use resources we have in town - senior center
- Interconnectedness with community

Results: measures of success

How will we know that the library is succeeding?

What measures will indicate the library is on track?

What will be different for stakeholders?



Staff:

- Increased circulation
- Attendance
- Usage of digital
- Study of diversity, the needs of patrons
- Improve ability to collect town needs
- Teen programs well attended
- People will say they are happy and having fun
- Stats on audio books, circulations
- Positive presence in the community - valued by the community

Community

- Circulation stats
- Program attendance
- Variety of program offerings
- Does library usage reflect the community? DEI? Program attendance?
- Stats on who we reach.
- Wider reach

What do we say “no? (staff)

- Study rooms - have to say no - don't have the space
- Computers - no computers with cameras to take exams
- Print from patron's laptops - sometimes works
- Need new public computers



Wave a Magic Wand

If you have one wish for the library, come true, what would that be?

Staff

- More programs for all ages

- Teen Room
- Communication
- Old Town Hall
- More programs for all ages
- Better use of physical space - teen room
- Better attendance at programs and usage of library
- Functional HVAC in every room
- Teen room with access to technology and pods

Community

- Better teen / tween program
- More educational opportunities for staff
- More online and night programs
- Meet the Candidates type program - meet the community partners program
- Utilize cable TV more - reach out to help others
- Westminster Crackers - research the history of the town - reflect on aspects of growing up and maturing - welcoming
- Programs for teens - life skills in general - find local experts with wide varieties of careers - ex/ financial management - learn how to balance a checkbook
- More programs with better hours for working parents
- Parking
- Author visit

Sticky note brainstorm: 5-7 ideas for services, resources, programs, partnership

For responses, please see the spreadsheet sent as a separate attachment.

Report submitted by Michelle Eberle, Consultant, Massachusetts Library System

6/21/24