

MANSFIELD PUBLIC LIBRARY STRATEGIC PLAN FOR FISCAL YEARS 2024–2028



Submitted by:



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Mansfield Public Library

Strategic Plan for Fiscal Years 2024–2028



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INTRODUCTION

The Mansfield Public Library in Mansfield, MA, serves a suburban community of roughly 23,823 residents. The Library is committed to providing outstanding library services to the community. To this end, the Library developed a strategic plan to guide the Library's success throughout the next five years. The Plan covers fiscal years 2024-28 and is designed to be flexible.

The Mansfield Public Library's staff and Board of Trustees are excited to present this dynamic Plan and look forward to meeting the ambitious goals it sets forth.

The Mansfield Public Library During COVID

Closed to the Public - March 14, 2020

Recurring programs for adults, teens, and children went virtual with the introduction of Zoom, including our Book Clubs. New virtual programs included digital book displays, a virtual Book Chat, virtual movie clubs, social media challenges, and a digital escape room. Teens could also participate in social media challenges, such as a Book Spine Poetry Contest, several art challenges, a Pumpkin Carving Contest, and a Gingerbread House Contest. The Library shifted to delivering children's programs online, including offering three online story times per week on Facebook and YouTube.



We converted many services to digital, including offering videos on how to access the Library's digital databases, personalized book recommendations, and phone calls to quarantined senior citizens.

Curbside Delivery - June 1, 2020

Patrons could place holds for pick up or request a Book Bundle. Patrons filled out a questionnaire about their reading preferences, and books were chosen by staff. These were very popular! Take and Make kits for varying ages were introduced, where patrons picked up supply bags and did the craft at home (with the directions provided or a link to the how-to video).

The Youth Room also instituted a "library of things" that patrons could check out and use some of the items they played with in the Library pre-COVID. These kits include plastic dinosaurs and other animals, code-apillars (introduction to coding ideas for young children), pretend play theme kits, alphabet transformers, beginning chess, and much more.

Limited Opening with Screening - September 29, 2020



Patrons were welcomed back into the Library after checking in with a COVID ambassador for screening. Masks were required, and the service desks had temporary plastic shields in place. Curbside delivery continued for those who preferred.

The Youth Room worked to provide story time crafts in hybrid formats to facilitate engagement with library programming in whichever settings felt safe and comfortable for individual participants. The Library hosted a weekly STEAM program for children ages 6-12, providing materials and instructions in a take-home format.

Resume Regular Hours - June 7, 2021

Ultimately, Mansfield was among the first Massachusetts libraries to resume in-person programming, commencing in June with twice-weekly outdoor story times.

OUR PROCESS

The Library began its strategic planning process in September 2022. The Board of Library Trustees hired Barbara Alevras of Sage Consulting Services to facilitate a series of planning exercises, oversee the collection and analysis of internal and community feedback, and assist with drafting the document.

To assess our current state and envision our future through an inclusive, transparent process, we identified specific activities and engaged key community stakeholders in gathering information for the Plan's creation.

The series of community feedback exercises included:

- 2 Strengths-Opportunities-Aspirations-Results (SOAR) Exercises (22 participants):
 - Board of Trustees
 - Staff
- 4 Focus Groups (19 participants):
 - Community Partners



- Parents
- Seniors
- Teens
- 3 Strategic Planning Surveys
 - Board of Trustees Survey (5 respondents)
 - Community Survey (597 respondents)
 - Staff Survey (17 respondents)

After collecting community feedback, we compiled objective data related to key Mansfield and Library statistics. These statistics and an overview of the Library's history are presented in *Appendix B—Community and Library Profiles 2023*.

A detailed process flowchart is attached as *Appendix A—MPL Strategic Planning Project Flowchart*.



WHAT WE LEARNED

Feedback received during the assessment phase of the strategic planning project offered insights regarding staff and community perceptions of the Library and expectations for its future. Analyzing the input helped us identify major strengths and challenges and provided numerous creative ideas for how the Library can meet the community's needs going forward.

We learned that the community of Mansfield is supportive of the Library and enjoys our diverse services and programs. Many noted that the Library is the center of the community and needs the space to expand and grow its services, collections, and community spaces into the future.



The Library's greatest strength was consistently identified as the Library's staff, which garnered extremely positive feedback (friendly, welcoming, knowledgeable, and helpful).

While the feedback was overwhelmingly positive, the most prevalent area cited for improvement was related to the facility.

- **FACILITY** (physical space, furniture, layout): Requests for additional physical space in the Library as well as requests for study/meeting rooms for small groups, space for tutors, private rooms for Zoom and meetings, more comfortable furniture, cozy reading spaces, updating the 1980s feel of the building, enhance/expand the children's space, a tween space, outdoor areas for patron use, and improved parking.
- **MARKETING** (branding, communications): Calls for more community outreach and increased communications of the Library's value and offerings.
- **PROGRAMS** (activities and events): Interest in more programming of all varieties for all ages, including life skills, body and mind, cooking and food, more tween programs, and ensuring there is children's programming for working parents.
- **COLLECTIONS** (print and non-print): Calls for more books, both physical and eBooks, add to the Library of Things, and consider new ways of organizing the collections.
- **TECHNOLOGY**: Requests for additional technical skills tutorials/classes and online resources.

OUR PLAN

After conducting our community assessment and identifying feedback highlights and data-based trends, we updated the Library's vision and mission statements to reflect the Library's general purpose and aspirations for its role in the community. Then, we developed goals and objectives to identify how the Library plans to support and positively impact the community during the Plan's five-year term.



Vision Statement

The Mansfield Public Library opens minds, connects the community, and satisfies curiosity.

Mission Statement

The Mansfield Public Library encourages thoughtful and engaging discourse, nurtures creativity and imagination, supports lifelong learning, and provides safe, comfortable, and welcoming spaces for all.



Strategic Goals and Supporting Objectives

GOAL 1: Maintain a safe, welcoming, comfortable facility and grounds.

- 1.1 Optimize the Library's interior and exterior spaces to meet evolving operational and community needs.
- 1.2 Provide comfortable furniture and fixtures to accommodate multiple needs (studying, reading, etc.).
- 1.3 Improve signage and wayfinding throughout the facility.
- 1.4 Grow advocacy and community support for library expansion and renovation opportunities.

GOAL 2: Increase community engagement and use of the Library.

- 2.1 Develop a comprehensive, consistent identity in the community.
- 2.2 Expand the Library's presence beyond its physical and digital footprint.
- 2.3 Maintain a comprehensive marketing plan encompassing messaging, outreach, communication channels, brand style standards, and performance measurement needs.
- 2.4 Cultivate advocacy for the Library and its initiatives.
- 2.5 Proactively reach out to and encourage all community members to enjoy the Library's diverse offerings.

GOAL 3: Continue to grow the Library's role as an active, integral community member.

- 3.1 Establish, strengthen, and maintain community partnerships with Town departments and boards, schools, community organizations, and other local groups.
- 3.2 Enhance support of and collaboration with The Friends of the Mansfield Public Library.
- 3.3 Leverage the knowledge and expertise of organizations, libraries, and individuals to strengthen Library programming and services.

GOAL 4: Inspire the joy of reading, support lifelong learning, foster human connection, and enrich people's lives.

- 4.1 Offer robust physical and digital collections and resources that reflect the interests of all ages of the community.
- 4.2 Create opportunities for members of the community to engage meaningfully with one another.
- 4.3 Offer dynamic and diverse programs that educate, inform, and entertain the community and reflect community members' diverse backgrounds, interests, and needs.
- 4.4 Offer the community access to technology devices, programs, services, and resources.

GOAL 5: Cultivate an organizational culture of continuous improvement.

- 5.1 Instill a learning culture by supporting the ongoing professional development of staff.
- 5.2 Attract and retain high-quality staff committed to providing exceptional customer service.
- 5.3 Support a positive, collaborative work environment.
- 5.4 Provide competitive compensation and benefits for Library staff.
- 5.5 Encourage staff to become involved in other local and professional organizations, groups, and boards.

Annual Action Plans

The Mansfield Public Library develops an annual *Action Plan* of specific activities and strategies designed to help the Library achieve its strategic goals. The Action Plan captures new initiatives and tasks designed to support the Library's specific objectives and to address changing needs. The *Action Plan* is updated annually and kept on file at the Massachusetts Board of Library Commissioners (MBLC).

Measuring and Communicating Our Progress

To ensure steady progress, the Library Director will report to the Board of Library Trustees on progress made toward achieving the Strategic Plan's goals and objectives, including identifying completed Action Plan tasks each month. The Director will share the Strategic Plan's review results with staff at monthly meetings. In addition, the Director will include strategic plan performance highlights from the calendar year in the annual Town Report.

To ensure convenient access, the Strategic Plan will be available on the Library's website.

PLAN APPROVAL

On June 14, 2023, the Library's five-person Board of Trustees unanimously approved this *Strategic Plan*.

Board of Trustees

Jean Mallon, Chairperson
Nancy Breef-Pilz, Treasurer
Leonard Epstein, Secretary
Debbie Gordy
Kimberly Usselman

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

We are grateful for the valuable feedback we received from almost 600 hundred members of our Library community over the course of this strategic planning project. Thank you to everyone who participated in the focus groups, completed a survey, or shared their thoughts and ideas with us. The Library belongs to the community. This Plan would not have been possible without the community's support and input.

We'd like to thank the Mansfield Public Library staff and Board of Library Trustees for their time, support, and insights they provided throughout our strategic planning process. A special thank you to Whitney Brown, Assistant Director, for her diligent assistance throughout the entire strategic planning process. Finally, we would like to thank Barbara Alevras, PMP, of Sage Consulting Services, for guiding the Library through the process. Thank you all.

FINAL THOUGHTS

The Library is excited to launch this Strategic Plan that will guide our organization to continued success over the next five years. We are committed to making the Mansfield Public Library the best resource for our community. We are grateful for the support of our community and will continue to be proactive in identifying and meeting their needs.



APPENDICES

Following is a list of Strategic Plan document appendices. They are available for download and review at the following link: www.mansfieldlibraryma.com/strategic-plan-fy24-28

Appendix A—MPL Strategic Planning Project Flowchart: The flowchart presents the Library's planning methodology, including the timeline, major project milestones, community needs assessment activities, and process participants.

Appendix B—Community and Library Profiles 2023: This document presents infographics with key Mansfield community statistics and Mansfield Public Library metrics related to its programs and services. It also includes an overview of the Library's history.

Appendix C—MPL Community Survey Highlights Report 2022: The community survey was conducted in December 2022. A summary of the results is presented in addition to graphs and charts.

Appendix D—MPL Focus Group Summary Report 2023: This report presents highlights of the feedback and ideas about the Library's collections, services, and staff generated in a series of three focus groups conducted with 19 community members.

Appendix E—MPL SOAR Exercise Summary Results Report 2022: This report documents the results of two environmental assessments of the Library's strengths, opportunities, aspirations, and results. One was conducted with the Library's staff, and a second session was conducted with the Library's Board of Trustees.

