



BOLTON PUBLIC LIBRARY STRATEGIC PLAN FY2024 - FY2028

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*"I WOULD LOVE TO
SEE OUR LIBRARY
CONTINUE AS A
MEANS OF GUIDING
OUR COMMUNITY,
REALLY BEING A
FOCAL POINT THAT
DRIVES HOME THE
IDEA THAT WE ARE
INFORMED,
EDUCATED, AND
OPEN...CONNECTED
CLOSELY AS A
COMMUNITY."*

*"LIBRARY HAS
BECOME AN
ESSENTIAL PART
OF OUR
TOWN...FOCUSING
ON WAY MORE
THAN BOOKS."*





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Introduction

This is the Bolton Public Library's Strategic Plan for fiscal year 2024 through fiscal year 2028. This document outlines the new strategic priorities and goals the library wants to focus on during the next five years to help realize its mission and vision. This plan is in compliance with the Massachusetts Board of Library Commissioners (MBLC) requirements. By having this updated plan in place, the library will be eligible to apply for LSTA direct grants from the MBLC.

Acknowledgements

The Bolton Public Library Board of Trustees would like to thank Kelly Collins, Library Director for guiding this process with assistance from Consultant, Deb Hoadley from Hoadley Consulting. There was a Strategic Planning Steering Committee formed with all three of the Library Trustees, a former Library Trustee, the Library Director, and a Library Staff Representative. They would also like to thank the library staff and community members for their participation in the focus groups, and for all those who answered the library's survey. We would also like to acknowledge the community volunteers who met for six hours to discuss the community's needs and how the library can play a role in meeting those needs now and in the future.

Bolton Public Library Steering Committee 2023:

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Information and Highlights

The Bolton Public Library, like every public library in Massachusetts, faced challenges during the pandemic. The library building was closed from mid-March 2020 until June 15, 2021. During this time staff continued to offer materials and services contact-free and provided support by phone and email to patrons. Staff also participated in online continuing education opportunities and meetings. Circulation for print materials dipped 33% from June-December 2020, however online materials circulated 67% higher during this period. By the end of the year, curbside pickup (in-person) had almost reached pre-pandemic levels.

One of the highlights during the pandemic was the library's efforts to collect memories, documents, artifacts, and photographs about the community's experience living through a pandemic. The goal of this project is to get these digitized and preserve them for future historian's use.

The library's last long-range plan was in place from 2015-2022. Normally, a library would start the strategic planning process six to nine months before the plan expires. Due to the pandemic, this did not happen and the process began in January 2023. The library continued to work on goals from the previous plan, as some of them were on hold due to the restrictions and limitations of the library building being closed for almost eighteen months and patrons cautiously resuming normal activities during the later months of 2022.

The following are some statistics about the Town of Bolton and the Bolton Public Library. Statistics about the town were drawn from the 2020 Census and statistics for the library were part of the Annual Report Information Survey (ARIS).

Here are some demographics about Bolton, MA (based on the 2020 US Census):

- It is a residential suburb of Boston/Worcester
- Current population is 5,665, this is an increase of over 1% from the 2010 US Census
- Current population is 86.6% Caucasian/White; 4.2% are Asian and there are 6.5% that identify as 2 or more races
- Median annual income per person: \$167,708
- Median home value: \$578,100; 94.1% owner-occupied housing
- 14.9% of residents are age 65+ and there are 2.2% with disabilities in this age group
- 27% of residents are ages 18 or under
- Latest annual municipal revenue: \$26,979,442 of which 87.6% was derived from property taxes
- Virtually no industry or business in town
- Over 60% of the Town's annual budget goes to support the Nashoba Regional School District
- 97% of households have a computer and broadband

Here are some brief facts about the Bolton Public Library:

- The current building was constructed in 1901-03 and was gifted to the Town of Bolton by the Whitney family.
- In February 2010, the building renovation and expansion opened. Funding came from an MBLC grant (\$2.5M), local taxes (\$3.5M), and private donations (\$1M).

- The library is open 41 hours per week over 5 days (Tuesday-Saturday).
- There are currently 4 Full-time employees, 6 Part-time employees, 3 elected Trustees, and an active Friends group.
- The FY23 budget was \$551,903 (\$325,640 for salary and wages; balance for operations).

Here are some comparison statistics from FY22 and FY23 (please keep in mind, these statistics are showing comparisons during post-pandemic years:

Adult Print Book Circulation:

FY22: 13,098

FY23: 14,384

Adult eBook Circulation

FY22: 6237

FY23: 7691

Adult e-Audio Circulation:

FY22: 3420

FY23: 5828

Children's Print Book Circulation:

FY22: 16,212

FY23: 16,268

Children's eBook Circulation

FY22: 1658

FY23: 1154

Overall Circulation (all collections – print and electronic)

FY22: 54,519

FY23: 58,070

Programming (in person):

FY22: 123 programs, 1096 in attendance

FY23: 258 programs, 2293 in attendance

Planning and Methodology

Beginning in January 2023, the Strategic Steering Committee met with Deb Hoadley of Hoadley Consulting to discuss the planning process. One of the responsibilities of the committee was to seek volunteers to serve on the Community Planning Committee and to meet with the consultant for three meetings.

There was an all staff meeting held on March 10th and they did two brainstorming exercises. The first was the S.O.A.R (strengths, opportunities, aspirations and results) related to the library. The second exercise was related to the community. Issues and challenges were identified, and opportunities to change were discussed. One of the key topics was celebrating community and having a sense of connection.

The first meeting of the Community Planning Committee was held on March 2nd where they discussed the importance of the strategic plan for the library and went through the S.O.A.R. exercise. They talked about the library's strengths, opportunities, aspirations and how it would look if the library succeeded in reaching its aspirations. The second meeting was held on March 23rd where the group discussed community visions and what kind of community they wanted to live in. After the discussion related to the community's needs, everyone was given sticker dots to indicate their top three priorities for the town. Once the priorities were established, the group brainstormed how the library could play a role in meeting these priorities. The third and final meeting was held on April 27th. The purpose of this meeting was to review all the information gathered from the meetings, as well as look at the preliminary survey results. Each person was asked to look at the current mission statement and decide what words to keep, omit, and add to help create a new mission statement for this plan. They also each came up with a vision statement. The last part of the meeting was to discuss what the strategic goals should be based on all the feedback and information they received.

As mentioned previously, a survey was distributed online and in print, and was open for about a month. There were ten questions (excluding two demographic questions). A summary of the responses can be found in Appendix B.

On June 6th, the Steering Committee met again for a retreat session which lasted four hours. Deb Hoadley provided a working document of all the information, including possible mission and vision statements, strategic priorities, and some goals. There was a review of all the information gathered from the staff and community group, and a review of the survey results. The group then collaborated to come up with the new mission and vision statements. They also asked questions and worked on wording and clarification related to the strategic priorities and goals. Edits were made to the working document and sent out after the meeting for more feedback.

The final draft was reviewed by the Steering Committee and approved by the Library Trustees during their September meeting. The plan was then submitted by October 1, 2023 to the MBLC for approval.

Community Needs Assessment

The major part of any strategic plan is the information gathered from the community about what they need and want to enrich and support their daily lives. Since the Town of Bolton has also embarked on developing a 2035 Master Plan, the Library will want to review and align some of their goals to match what the town has outlined for their goals as they further develop their goals and activities each year of the plan. Some of the priorities already identified in the town's draft of the Bolton 2035 Master Plan are:

1. Climate Change and Sustainability
2. Cultural & Historical Resources
3. Economic Development
4. Housing
5. Land Use - open space and recreational needs
6. Municipal Services and Facilities
7. Schools

The strongest community needs that arose during the library's strategic planning process were:

1. Cohesion and a sense of community
2. Connections and purpose
3. Diversity and acceptance
4. Responsibility of growth and preservation of the small town feel

Through the library's continued efforts to build partnerships throughout the community, the hope is to further integrate communication channels and also build a stronger civic engagement among residents in innovative ways to increase library use.

A summary of all the focus group meetings can be found in Appendix A. This summary reflects the highlights and future priorities for the library, and the community. As mentioned previously, there was a survey done and a summary of responses can be found in Appendix B.

Strategic Plan FY2024-FY2028

Mission Statement:

The Bolton Public Library helps enrich patrons' lives by providing opportunities and resources for personal growth, life-long learning, and community engagement.

Vision Statement:

The Bolton Public Library will be a vibrant library of experiences and resources that is welcoming, trusted, and accessible to all.

Strategic Priorities:

1. People & Place: Create a welcoming, accessible, and safe place for all.
2. Collections & Programs: Provide opportunities for learning, literacy, and enrichment to meet the diverse needs of patrons.
3. Awareness: Establish consistent, centralized, and coordinated communication strategy.
4. Outreach: Increase engagement by building stronger and more varied community partnerships.

Goals:

People & Place

The library will be a welcoming, safe, and accessible place for patrons for learning, gathering, browsing, working, studying and engaging with others.

Physical Building & Grounds

- Evaluate current and future use of existing indoor and outdoor spaces in partnership with our patrons.
- Support and practice environmentally sustainable behaviors where appropriate.
- Evaluate the building to improve accessibility.
- Use data to assess open hours and service models to better meet the needs of residents.
- Create an ongoing maintenance plan.
- Engage all available funding sources for help.

Digital and Online Presence

- Evaluate website and library social media sites based on usability, best practices, and accessibility standards.
- Provide staff training on basic marketing skills, such as word choice, style, and consistency of brand.
- Cultivate consistent staff competence in all available print and digital information sources.

Services, Collections & Programs:

The Library will design and provide services, collections, and programs that are responsive to patron interests and needs.

- Seek new ways to leverage available development tools related to collection development.
- Investigate new items to include in our Library of Things.
- Evaluate services, especially emerging technology, to provide exceptional patron interaction.
- Continue to provide programs that meet the needs and interests of the community offering educational, recreational, and cultural opportunities.

Awareness:

The library will create a comprehensive marketing and public relations plan to raise the profile of the library in the community.

- Establish a communication strategy for press releases, library website, social media postings, flyers, online calendars, etc.
- Coordinate with other town departments and organizations to reach wider audiences.
- Increase awareness of the library's services, programs, and collection through print and online channels.
- Explore outside resources that may be available to help design and execute a plan.

Outreach:

- The library will strengthen existing partnerships and seek new ways to engage town departments, community organizations and individuals to provide innovative ways to increase library use.
- Increase and strengthen mutually beneficial partnerships with departments and community-based organizations.
- Equip staff with the knowledge, skills, and contacts needed to connect residents to basic needs information and resources.
- Amplify awareness of what the library's resources are, where to find information, and how the library can assist patrons with their needs and interests.
- Continue participating in community events.

Appendix A

This is the summary of the focus groups that were held with the library staff and volunteers on the Bolton Public Library Community Committee 2023. It reflects the compilation of the S.O.A.R. (Strengths, Opportunities, Aspirations and Results) related to the Bolton Public Library, a summary of the community needs and vision, and an overview of Bolton's 2035 Master Plan.

S.O.A.R. - Library

Strengths

- Staff
- Building
- Sense of community

Opportunities

- Partnerships/collaborations
- Building use
- Marketing

Aspirations

- Connections/engagement
- Accessibility
- Teen space
- Staff development

Results

- Library is more integrated into the community
- Multigenerational/cross-generation programs
- People think of the library first
- Increased use (online and in-person) by all ages in the community
- Marketing efforts result in more people using the library
- Energized and engaged staff – different roles to meet the needs of the community

Community Assessment

Needs

- Cohesion / sense of community
- Connection / purpose
- Diversity / acceptance / inclusion
- Responsible growth and preservation of small town

Priorities

- Integration
- Civic engagement
- Accepting diversity
- Intergenerational connections
- Communication
- Preservation

Top priorities from Town of Bolton Master Plan Draft

- Sustainability
- Cultural & Historic Resources
- Economic Development
- Land Use
- Municipal Services & Facilities

Appendix B

This is a summary of the survey results. There were 192 responses. 69% were women and 65% were between the ages of 41-70.

Q1: Do you use the library?

Yes	91.58%
No	8.42%

Q2: If you do visit the library, please rate your satisfaction with the following content provided by the library. If you choose "Not Satisfied," please explain why in the comment area.

Note: While some of these were in the less satisfied category, they had a higher "Do not use or am not familiar with this" response. This may be due to the demographics of the respondents or that patrons are unaware of the service the library offers.

Category	Extremely Satisfied/Satisfied
Helpfulness and friendliness of library staff	92.31%
Ease of finding materials in the library	86.74%
Adult book collection (ages 18+)	82.42%
Availability of materials I want	71.50%
Downloadable eBooks, audiobooks, magazines, music and movies (Libby, hoopla, Flipster, Kanopy).	51.38%
Children's book collection (ages 0-10)*	46.93%
Teen book collection (ages 11-17)**	30.90%
DVD collection in the library	28.65%
Audiobook collection in the library***	19.34%
Online research collection (Gale, Britannica, The Boston Globe, The New York Times)****	18.89%
Books to Go program*****	12.78%

*50.90% answered do not use or not familiar with this

**68.07% answered do not use or not familiar with this

***72.02% answered do not use or not familiar with this

****79.04% answered do not use or not familiar with this

*****88.10% answered do not use or not familiar with this

Q3: If you do visit the library, how satisfied are you with the following services provided by the library. If you choose "Not Satisfied," please explain why in the comment area.

Note: General comments related to being dissatisfied were with the use and booking of the Program Room and programs for all ages.

Category	Extremely satisfied/Satisfied	Not Satisfied
Museum passes available for patrons to borrow to get a discounted price off admission	70.49%	2.94%
Use of the Program Room for community organizations and groups	51.65%	7.69%
Programs for adults (18+)	47.54%	5.29%

Use of a quiet study room	36.81%	0.59%
Reading challenges, like the Summer reading program	20.59%	1.18%
Programs for children (0-10)	29.12%	4.71%
Public computers*	24.18%	0.59%
Programs for tweens/teens (11-17)	16.02%	2.37%

*75.74% do not use or are not familiar with this service. The assumption is that most Bolton residents have their own computers/devices.

Q4: How useful are each of these to you for learning about library events and services?

Category	I rely on it	I use it occasionally	I didn't know about it
Library website	34.62%	53.30%	12.09%
Bolton community	30.73%	30.17%	39.11%
Word of mouth	27.49%	57.89%	14.62%
Local newspaper	19.43%	53.71%	26.86%
Library Facebook page	13.41%	26.26%	60.34%
Town website/calendar	13.48%	57.87%	28.65%
Library Newsletter (Wowbrary)	11.41%	19.02%	69.57%
Flyers in the library	11.30%	58.19%	30.51%
Library Instagram	5.71%	7.43%	86.86%

Q5: What local activities would you participate or attend, either at the library or in the community? (Check all the apply)

Community events/festivals	87.78%
Lectures or presentations on a topic	71.11%
Arts (learning techniques or more about music, art, etc.)	59.44%
Interest Groups (writing group, gaming, book club, knitting, investment club, etc.)	57.22%
Outdoor activities	52.22%
Volunteering	51.11%
Historical programs	50.56%
Educational opportunities (school or college type classes)	43.33%
Exercise/health activities	42.78%
Performing arts	38.33%
Sports	22.78%

Q6: What is most important to you when you think about the library and how it benefits you? Please move the most important to the top and the least important at the bottom.

These are in priority order:

1. Offering quiet space to read, work and study.
2. Providing space to hold organization/community meetings.
3. Implementing intergenerational programs for all ages.

Q7: When you think of the Bolton Public Library, what three characteristics would you use to describe the library in the future (5, 10, 25 years from now)?



Q8: When you think of the community of Bolton, what three characteristics would you use to describe Bolton in the future (5, 10, 25 years from now)?



Q9: What one thing would make you more likely to use the library?

Top responses (in no particular order):

1. Programs for all ages
2. Events to bring community together - build connections
3. Marketing and promotion of what library does and has to offer
4. Open more hours
5. Better selection of materials (books, DVDs)
6. More museum passes
7. Increased access to Program Room

Q10: Is there anything else you would like to share when thinking about the future of the Bolton Public Library?

Top responses (in no particular order):

1. Library is amazing; appreciate what they do; keep up the great work; love the librarians!
2. Like to see the library as the community hub and community space - building connections and partnerships to bring people together.
3. Reflect different cultures through activities and welcoming them to the community (being inclusive and celebrating diversity).
4. Support the community.
5. Innovate and update technology.