

Beverly Public Library

Strategic Plan

FY2019 – FY2024

Approved by the Board of Library Trustees September 19, 2017

Beverly Public Library

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Library History

The Beverly Public Library was established in 1855, three years after the Massachusetts Legislature became the first in the nation to authorize cities and towns to expend tax funds to support free public libraries. The library was the successor to the Social Library, a private subscription library which traced its founding to a collection of books seized by Beverly privateers from a British merchantman during the Revolutionary War. Elizabeth P. Sohier, a trustee of the Beverly Public Library, led the fight to establish the first state library agency in the country, and served as the State Library Commission's first secretary.

The library first operated from rooms in City Hall. In 1913, the library moved to its current building on Essex Street. The building was designed by architect Cass Gilbert in the Beaux Arts style. Gilbert was also the architect of the Minnesota State Capitol, the Woolworth Building in New York City and the United States Supreme Court. In 1993 the library was renovated and enlarged. In 2015 the main library underwent major repairs to the Essex Street entrance, including completely removing the stairs, cleaning and replacing its historic marble and installing new brick on the lower level. The library's historic skylights, as well as those in the newer addition, were repaired and a new roof was put on the building.

The Beverly Farms Branch was established in 1886 and moved into its current building in 1916. In 2004 it was renovated and enlarged with funding from the City, private donations and fundraising.

Bookmobile service was established in the 1950s. Following a three year fundraising campaign, a new Bookmobile was purchased in 2012. It is on the road four days a week, making deliveries to assisted living centers, daycare centers, elementary schools, the middle school, and many of the City's outlying neighborhoods.

In 1981 the Beverly Public Library joined four other communities in establishing the first shared library computer system in Massachusetts.

Today the library loans over 367,000 items annually, to almost 33,000 regular borrowers. The library collection consists of over 207,000 materials including books, magazines, audiobooks, music CDs, movies, and admission passes to Boston area museums.

The library's catalog and most of its databases are available online to homes, businesses and schools throughout the City. Patrons may request items from other libraries either directly, through the NOBLE catalog, Commonwealth Catalog, or by making a request to the Reference Desk. Patrons also have access to an increasing collection of digital ebooks and audiobooks. The library further enriches the life of the Beverly community with its art gallery, lectures,

concerts, story hours, book discussion groups, summer reading programs, and exhibits.

The City of Beverly has seen a revitalization of its downtown area over the past five years. This downtown area, of which the library is a part, has seen a resurgence of economic and cultural activity. With its new restaurants, boutique shops, performing arts spaces and art galleries, the library sits squarely in the center of the Beverly Arts district, an official designation of the Massachusetts Cultural Council. The Strategic Planning Committee identified the important role of the library in the Beverly arts community as part of the committee's community visioning exercise.

Methodology

The Beverly Public Library began its strategic planning process in April 2017. This was a time of transition at the library because Library Director Patricia Cirone retired in March after 10 years of service, and Anna Langstaff, a long-time employee of the Beverly Public Library, was hired as the new library director in April.

In March 2017 Anna Langstaff attended a strategic planning workshop provided by MLS (Massachusetts Library System). In April 2017, the library trustees' long range planning committee met to discuss plans for the library's strategic planning process. The Committee agreed to form a strategic planning committee to be made up of community members who "wear multiple hats in the community."

Mary Behrle, library trustee and professional facilitator, agreed to act as facilitator for the two strategic planning meetings.

The strategic planning committee, comprised of 13 community members, met on May 16, 2017. Following introductions, Mary Behrle explained the reason for strategic planning and Anna Langstaff reviewed library and community statistics and reported on library trends. Mary Behrle also led the SOAR (Strengths, Opportunities, Aspirations, Results) exercise.

Library staff members---professionals, paraprofessionals, pages and custodians---participated in a SOAR exercise led by Anna Langstaff on June 2 and June 13.

The strategic planning committee met again on June 13, 2017. Anna Langstaff reviewed SOAR notes from the May 16 meeting and SOAR notes from staff meetings. Anna Langstaff reported on the progress of the community survey. Mary Behrle led a community visioning exercise, reviewed ideas and consolidated similar vision statements. Committee members voted on statements that were most important to them and that the library can impact.

Anna Langstaff and several key staff members prepared a community survey as part of the planning process. The survey was conducted in July 2017. Copies of the questionnaire were made available in the main library, the Farms branch, on the Bookmobile, on the library's website, via social media, and at both City Hall and the Beverly Senior Center. There were 807 responses submitted, of which 697 were online and 110 on paper.

Survey results were analyzed using Survey Monkey. Comments were entered into a spreadsheet and looked at separately. The Library Director and Assistant Library Director reviewed the results and a

draft plan was prepared based on those discussions and input from the strategic planning committee. The library trustees' long range planning committee reviewed the proposed draft.

Assessment of User Needs

Beverly, population 41,081, is an historic seaside community known for its thriving businesses, downtown arts district, recreational amenities, and fine educational institutions. Settled in 1626, Beverly began as a colonial farming and fishing village and grew to include maritime industries and manufacturing. Known as the birthplace of the American Navy, the site of the first cotton mill, and President William Howard Taft's vacation destination, Beverly has a rich and notable history. Today, Beverly maintains a unique personality – small town charm coupled with a city identity. From beautiful historic homes on the Gold Coast to urban condos and affordable housing, Beverly is truly a city with a distinct and varied population.

Demographics from the United States Census (Quick Facts Table 2011-2015) show that Beverly is a rather homogeneous community (93% white), especially compared to the state of Massachusetts (84% white). This is evident too in the percentage of foreign born persons that live in Beverly (5.8%) compared to Massachusetts (15.5%) and the percentage of language other than English spoken at home in Beverly (7.6%) compared to Massachusetts (22.5%). 60% of housing units in Beverly are owner occupied, with a median value of \$369,600. The median value is considerably higher than the state median of \$333,100. The median household income for Beverly is \$72,837, considerably higher than the state average of \$68,563. Beverly is a highly educated community, with over 45% of persons age 25 years and over having a bachelor's degree or higher.

It was evident from the community survey and the discussions at the strategic planning committee meetings that the Beverly Public Library is perceived as a vital part of the community and plays an important role in what makes Beverly a desirable place to live. The SOAR exercises conducted by the strategic planning committee members and library employees often highlighted the same Strengths, Opportunities, Aspirations and Results.

The strengths of the library lie in its versatile collection, a staff with a strong customer service ethic, a wide variety of programming, collaboration with other community groups and promotion of arts and culture. Strategic planning committee members, library staff, and survey respondents all point to the strength and depth of the library's collection. Despite this, there does seem to be a need for more book-related services. The survey revealed that patrons typically visit the library to browse (42%) or borrow materials (83%), and that most patrons (83%) use the library's website to look for materials in the catalog. Library users are looking for more book suggestions, book lists and user friendly purchase suggestion forms.

Many survey respondents and strategic planning committee members mentioned that the staff is very helpful. While we pride ourselves on providing excellent customer service, there is always room for improvement. There is a need to institute a formal program of customer service training so that library employees know what the expectations are and can develop better customer service skills.

The library has an active programming schedule. Over 15,000 people attended 675 programs at the library in FY2017. From story hours for infants, a weekly lecture series geared to senior citizens, and a

wide variety of programming for many different ages, the library is known for its fun, educational, creative and sometimes quirky programs. Library employees are proud of the programs that they themselves offer while at the same time being impressed by programs offered by other staff members. After browsing or borrowing library materials, 31% of respondents identified attending a library program as the purpose of a typical visit. Some respondents are looking for more programming, and others are seeking more children’s programming at times when working parents can attend. In this regard, the challenge for the library is that there is no line item in the library’s city budget for programming. Without the support of the Friends of the Beverly Public Library, we would not be able to offer such wonderful programs.

The strategic planning committee identified the community and arts/culture as the two most important visions for the city where the library could have an impact. The library will continue to collaborate with other community groups but will also seek ways to expand its outreach into the community, such as the Healthy Beverly initiative. Beverly has a vibrant arts community and the strategic planning committee acknowledged the library’s role in impacting the arts and culture in Beverly. The committee identified the library as a “conduit for the expansion of arts and literacy in Beverly.” The library will continue to promote the arts, literature and music in its programming and services, while at the same time looking for new opportunities to engage community members who may not have discovered our offerings.

Beverly Library Number of FTE	20.5
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Holdings by Material Type	Total Holdings	Total Circulation
Books	165,962	236,374
Print periodicals, newspapers and other print serials	216	3,218
Audio (compact discs, cassettes, etc.)	9,189	25,770
Video (VHS/Discs/DVDs, etc.)	11,819	77,809
Ebooks	12,446	14,796
Digital audiobooks	3,380	6,766
Streaming video	9,615	419
Materials in microforms (fiche, rolls, etc.)	4,747	-

Services at Main Library & All Outlets	Totals
Nonresident circulation transactions	55,721
Total attendance in library system	234,584
Total number of reference transactions in library system	31,451
Total number of library programs	675
Total attendance at library programs	15,018

Our Mission & Vision

Mission Statement

The Beverly Public Library provides services, programs and materials that enrich people's lives, foster a love of reading and provide access to information. These services may be provided by our own resources, by networking with other libraries or by providing gateway access to the world of information resources beyond our walls. The library advocates for access to the world of ideas and information unrestricted by fees, censorship, language or differences in abilities.

The library is a forum for all points of view and adheres to the principles of intellectual freedom as expressed in the Library Bill of Rights formulated by the American Library Association.

Vision Statement

The Beverly Public Library:

is a safe and welcoming space, inviting community engagement, learning, creativity and innovation.

is a gathering place for civic engagement, encouraging dialogue and connections among residents.

is a center for arts and culture.

is age friendly, providing materials, services and programs to residents of all ages.

Goal #1

To continue to establish and maintain a collection of books and materials, in a variety of formats, to meet the informational and recreational needs of the community.

Although the printed book continues to be the primary medium for recreational reading, society is rapidly adapting to digital media for information needs. While the internet is a valuable resource, the library needs to be in the forefront in providing the public with reliable, authenticated sources of information. The library also needs to be aware of, and adapt their collection development policy to include new technologies and methods of delivering recreational and informational content.

Objectives

- Continue to work with NOBLE's planned weeding schedule and Collection Assessment reports in addition to local weeding and collection development initiatives.
- Continue to explore cooperative contracts with vendors for new products, such as digital video, audio and language programs.
- Continue to evaluate reference and informational needs and to explore how this content is best provided to and used by patrons.
- Establish and maintain the tracking of circulation and usage figures.
- Maintain a program of book repair and rebinding materials that are vital to the collection and cannot be replaced.
- Provide patrons with materials in a timely manner.
- Display items attractively in appropriate locations.
- Connect patrons with materials that meet their needs.
- Be open to non-traditional collections.

Goal #2

To promote literacy and the joy of reading.

No matter what age you are, nothing compares to the experience of finding a book that transports you to another place or time. It is vital to spread awareness of the library as a central clearinghouse for everything related to reading and literacy and to encourage and support readers as they explore new reading opportunities.

Objectives

- Enhance programming and services that promote reading.
- Participate in reading celebrations.
- Partner with community groups that support literacy.
- Continue to offer early literacy programs in the Children's Room.

Goal #3

To deliver exceptional customer service.

It is essential that everyone who uses the library has a positive experience. The library staff must be helpful, positive, informative and always go “above and beyond” in their interactions with library users. Developing and maintaining exceptional customer service skills requires the support of a strong program of staff development and training.

Objectives

- Institute a program of on-going customer service training.
- Develop staff skills to provide better service and better job satisfaction.
- Ensure that all levels of staff are involved in staff development.

Goal #4

To keep staff members well informed of changing technology, community needs and ways of finding and providing information.

Library services are changing at a more rapid pace than ever before. Much of this is technology driven. Other changes involve dealing with shifting demographics, changing models of usage, altering philosophies regarding a library's place in a community and devising new models of funding library services. In order to keep informed about such changes, library staff need to have access to both formal and informal training.

Objectives

- Seek funding for staff development and training.
- Continue to foster staff development through attendance at library association meetings, NOBLE workshops, collection development meetings and other educational meetings.
- Encourage staff to disseminate information and training to other staff members.
- Provide in-house support and training for staff members seeking to understand and/or implement new technologies, through formal training from other staff members, outside consultants, or other means at our disposal.

Goal #5

To stay at the forefront of changing technology in the provision of materials, information and patron access.

Rapid changes in technology continue to drive patron expectations. The library needs to be aware of how such changes impact library services in the provision of materials in different formats, in providing access to information and library materials, and in communicating with the residents of the community.

Objectives

- Continue to support and promote electronic remote accessing of library resources.
- Explore new ways of providing patrons with information about library services.
- Work with NOBLE, the City's Information Systems Department, and Beverly's School department to disperse the library's information resources to schools, homes and businesses and the rest of City Government.
- Explore new ways to assist library patrons in utilizing library services and technology.

Goal #6

To make library services accessible to all members of the community.

The Beverly Public Library realizes that not all residents are served equally by providing access to materials in a set location. Physical disabilities, transportation issues, language or literacy difficulties can all impose barriers on either getting to the library or accessing materials at the facility.

Since 1959 the Bookmobile serves several assisted living centers, the City's senior center, several day-care centers, most of the elementary schools, the middle school, and neighborhoods that have been identified as needing service, either because of geography or special needs. Thus, the Bookmobile provides access to materials to citizens whose access might otherwise be impaired by geography, age, or physical constraints.

Objectives

- Research technology, equipment, materials and programs to meet the needs of people with a broad range of disabilities.
- Maintain Bookmobile and home delivery services to the community.
- Explore ways of exporting library programming.
- Remove barriers to obtaining a library card.
- Continue to offer off-site programming and services.

Goal #7

To continue to be aware of, and responsive to community needs.

A library's role is to support a community's literacy, informational, social and recreational needs. Therefore the library must keep informed about changing needs and trends within our community.

Objectives

- Maintain awareness of literacy needs, and provide space and support for literacy programs.
- Track changes in demographics in order to provide access to materials that meet the needs of all members of the community.
- Seek ways to strengthen the library's connection to the community.
- Continue to collaborate with all levels of Beverly schools, both public and private, from preschools to colleges.
- Communicate with community groups to collaborate on mutually beneficial initiatives.
- Seek input from residents, both library users and non-users, on a regular basis.

Goal #8

To maintain an environment that is safe and welcoming for library patrons and staff.

Libraries today are more than just warehouses for books, and facility needs have changed as a result. The concept of the library as a community center is increasingly appropriate for the Beverly Public Library. Our six meeting rooms (four at the Main facility, two at the Farms) provide venues for library programs and are in great demand by community groups. Our public computers are in constant use, and after school, the library serves as a center for youth. Reliable high speed wireless internet access is key to providing community members, especially business people and students, a place to work or study. Our reading rooms provide comfortable furnishings in which to browse and read.

Providing such facilities brings with it the responsibility to maintain them for both safety and comfort, and to adapt them as different needs arise.

Objectives

- Continue to explore ways to make the library safe and secure for both staff and patrons, through technology and planning.
- Continue to work toward increasing the repair budget to provide us with sufficient funds to maintain the building and facilities, including service contracts for preventative maintenance.
- Explore ways of rearranging areas of the library to better meet the competing needs for their use.
- Continue to advocate for the Teen Renovation and Expansion Project.
- Develop strategies to make the library feel more welcoming.
- Emphasize customer service throughout the library.
- Increase signage and other finding aids for patrons.
- Maintain communication with the Mayor and the City Government regarding the library's long and short term capital needs.
- Work with both the Custodial Staff and the Department of Public Services to prepare a maintenance schedule for buildings and equipment.
- Work with both the Custodial Staff and the Department of Public Services to develop an adequate grounds maintenance program.
- Seek annual funding for furniture and equipment.
- Explore ways to improve parking availability.

Goal #9

To provide programs that enrich the cultural and educational life of the community.

During the planning process for the renovated library building, the Beverly Public Library was envisioned as a community cultural center. The library has since sponsored an ambitious schedule of programs and made the building available to other community agencies to sponsor their own programs. Activities sponsored by the library include author lectures, genealogy workshops, poetry readings, Monday Morning lecture series, music concerts, art contests and poetry contests for teenagers, gallery exhibits, movies, storytellers and a venue for New Year's Eve performances. These programs have been received very well by the community, and the library should continue to look for ways to expand on these activities.

The library provides most, if not all, of the free space in the community for arts activities. Many individuals and groups with modest budgets depend on library space to present their work to the community. The proximity of the library to Montserrat College of Art (across the street), the Common with its concerts, galleries on Cabot Street, and the refurbished Cabot Performing Arts Center one block away from the library make the library a prime location for arts programs.

Objectives

- Seek City funding for library programming needs.
- Continue to work with the Friends of the Library to provide additional funds for programming needs.
- Seek alternative methods for obtaining programming funds, such as grants and community involvement.
- Continue to provide an enriching mix of library programs.
- Encourage all staff to be involved in programming.

Goal #10

To increase community awareness of library services.

The library has a lot to offer the community but often it seems that people are unaware of all the programs, services and materials the library provides. The library needs to move beyond traditional methods of publicizing its services and programs and explore ways to use more effective marketing strategies.

Objectives

- Continue to revise and maintain the library's website to provide easy access to library materials and services and to function as a marketing tool for the library.
- Continue to explore ways to promote library services, materials and programs.
- Continue to build and maintain relationships with local media to ensure coverage of library events and needs.
- Improve community awareness of both the Bookmobile and the library's home delivery service to reach those who might benefit from them.
- Promote specific segments of the collection, such as large print books, digital audiobooks or access to foreign language materials, to ensure that borrowers with specific needs are aware of the library's offerings.
- Increase the library's social media presence.

Goal #11

To work toward establishing greater financial stability for the library.

It has become evident, both through the Beverly Public Library's experience, and through that of surrounding communities, that relying on public funds for the library budget can be problematic. Short-term fluctuations can have an enormous impact on library services, resulting in needed maintenance or equipment expenditures being postponed or eliminated until crises demand them. Cutbacks in materials budgets result in collection gaps that never get filled even when budgets increase. As a result, it behooves libraries to explore additional revenue streams to maintain services to the public.

Objectives

- Promote long-term gift giving to the library.
- Seek ways to create alternate revenue streams for the library.
- Continue to work with the City on managing the library's current trust funds.
- Educate the community and City leaders as to the need for additional funding.
- Work with the Friends of the Library to increase fundraising.

Goal #12

To offer free and equal access services.

Free public library service has a long standing tradition in this country, which stands in contrast to the many fee-based services in today's society. Such costs can have a detrimental impact on the lives of low-income individuals and families.

Objectives

- Help bridge the digital divide between information haves and have nots.
- Analyze ways to eliminate overdue fines.
- Evaluate library programs and services for any potential barriers to access.

Appendix 1

Strategic Planning Committee

Jo Broderick, Dean of College Relations, Montserrat College of Art
Aaron Clausen, Director of Planning, City of Beverly
Bruce Doig, Director of Community Services, City of Beverly
Natalie Eberhardt, Student, Beverly High School
Barb Fecteau, Librarian, Beverly High School
Marshall Handly, Library Trustee
MaryAnn Holak, Director, Beverly Council on Aging
Joan Johnson, Beverly Farms resident
Myron Schirer-Suter, Library Trustee
D. Wesley Slate, Jr., City Clerk, City of Beverly
Sarah Weiss, President, Friends of the Beverly Public Library

Anna Langstaff, Library Director, Beverly Public Library
Allison Babin, Assistant Library Director, Beverly Public Library
Mary Behrle, Facilitator