LONG-RANGE PLAN
FIVE YEAR
JULY 2019-JUNE 2024
A MESSAGE FROM THE DIRECTOR

When I was hired by our Library Trustees back in 2016, I sought to learn about our Library’s past, delve into the present and decide about the future. I quickly realized the great need for change that would move the Library on a path forward and upward. I knew that I had to give every effort to help give our City of Lawrence the public library it deserves. It was time to move forward.

The Long-Range Plan is the result of many voices, conversations, relationships, questions, and solutions that I have had the opportunity to document and take seriously. You will find in this document five goals, broken down into objectives, and then further into sample activities we will aim to accomplish. It is a living document so please engage with it, with us, as a community member, patron, parent, student, artist, or however you identify.

Jessica Vilas Novas
Director, Lawrence Public Library

A MESSAGE FROM THE BOARD OF TRUSTEES

John Palfrey wrote a book about libraries in 2015 called Bibliotech. Trustee John Dello Russo, OSA saw it as a must-read for his colleagues on the Board. We assigned the book as professional development and addressed a chapter in each of our monthly meetings. It helped that the Trustees knew Mr. Palfrey. We first met him when we began rethinking our library’s future a few years ago. At the time Mr. Palfrey chaired the board of the Boston Public Library. He is better known in the Merrimack Valley as the Headmaster at Phillips Academy in Andover. He gave us good advice. It was to listen. Listen first to your residents and Library patrons to find out what they want from their public library. Boston had done so, so he was speaking from experience. As an author, he was speaking globally as an expert on the subject of modern libraries. Mr. Palfrey reminded us first to consider our past.

All of us on the Board grew up thinking of the Library as a repository of books. It was where we went to research a term paper, read a city newspaper or find a new paperback book. It was all about paper and print. Finding what we wanted was on a card, in a catalogue, and the librarian was there to help with the search. Palfrey points out there is some resemblance to that old library today, but much of the paper is now stored in electronic files. Books are easily found on Amazon and mailed home. On-line ordering from a larger "regional" library saves us from call numbers and browsing the stacks. And we don’t have to keep “Quiet Please” in the process.

We asked our fellow citizens for advice. We listened carefully and they told us one way or another that the Library must remain true to its mission, that it “exists to preserve the free development and expression of ideas essential for an informed citizenry.” It is paramount that a librarian be present as a guide through the technological “stacks” and help us sort non-fiction from fiction. The library building is a place, cool in summer and warm in winter, for us to hear a lecture or listen to music. It must provide the means to view artwork of the masters and a gallery to celebrate artwork of our neighbors. It has to be a place to find medical, legal, educational and recreational advice to live life fully in the modern world.

You will see in the pages that follow an outline for a more modern library than the one we knew. It is based on the ideas shared by the citizens of Lawrence and what we learned from our reading. We will strive to meet our patrons’ needs in this digital age. The library will remain a repository of books and paper but it will be a lot more too.

James P. Dowd
Vice Chair, Board of Trustees
ABOUT THE LAWRENCE PUBLIC LIBRARY

The 2019 version of the Lawrence Public Library is as important an institution in Lawrence today as it has been in the past. It is the hub of information and resources for the community. In a traditional sense, it maintains a diverse selection of reading, listening, and viewing materials to borrow.

Today, it lends itself to the community as a space for discussions, study, meetings, and presentations for patrons of all ages. The facilities have undergone recent improvements including new carpeting, upgraded lighting, and modernized doors equipped with handicap buttons that addresses the need to be inclusive of all patrons. We have also made our circulation desk ADA accessible to better promote inclusivity. Recent capital improvement projects include movable windows and a new HVAC system. Library improvements extend to the technological infrastructure; all public computers in both branches have been replaced for the first time in 15 years. Upgraded A/V systems are now in use at the main branch.

Dozens of new programs have also been developed, reaching patrons of all ages. From story times and homework help, to resume assistance and the launch of a Teen Corner, the Library is committed to providing a variety of resources to the community. The Library’s team has also seen changes over the years due to a fiscal downturn Lawrence experienced over a decade ago. The budget cuts, seen throughout city departments, resulted in the elimination of library positions, effectively cutting the personnel in half. It also restricted the hours of operation for both branches. As part of our Long-Range Plan, we aim to restore our budget and staffing levels to an acceptable level that allows us to provide more than the minimum for services and resources. In FY20, the Library will see its first major increase in staffing in over a decade, bringing the staff count to 26. Additionally, the Main library, which has not opened on the weekends for over 20 years, will once again open to the public.

These changes and those noted in this plan, are made with great effort, careful thought, and sincere appreciation of the community’s feedback over the years. We received a lot of help from the community. We look forward to accomplishing the goals outlined in this plan over the next five years and welcome you to be a part of the change.

Will you join us?
“The library is the most important institution in any community. It improves literacy and the ability for even the poor to obtain education and better job prospects. It cultivates a love of learning and books for our children. It is a space where people can come together as a community for experiences and programs, especially those who might not be able to afford other forms of entertainment or to buy books and on their own. It also provides computer / Internet access for those who might not have access from home or work. This greatly helps those who are searching for work, or are exploring a new career. It provides a way for everyone to gain knowledge, grow and learn. A library is the first place that I turn when I need to learn something new, in all facets of my life, from professional learning, enhancing my computer skills, gardening, hobbies, cooking, etc. It is all there and must grow and be supported by the city and community for the good of all. Libraries are key!”

- Library Survey Response
LONG-RANGE PLAN PROCESS

The Lawrence Public Library announced a "Listening Tour" in April of 2017 to begin the research to develop a Long-Range Plan. This series of engagement sessions served as an opportunity for the community to provide feedback, share ideas, and participate in a SOAR exercise. The participants discussed the Strengths, areas of Opportunity, and their Aspirations for the Library. Finally, Results were defined as what accomplished goals would look like. We launched a bilingual survey both in print and online, resulting in the collection of 224 surveys capturing the voices of community members from all ages and walks of life.

During the summer of 2018, two small groups of Library stakeholders participated in the SOAR exercise. The Library administration sent invitations to community members who represent different Library user groups that would bring varying perspectives on the Library. These groups represented the areas of workforce development, job opportunities, the public schools, parents, youth, arts and culture, adult literacy, special needs populations, senior citizens, and homelessness. Along with their professional opinions came their wide range of personal perspectives based on their own experiences with the Library.

The results of these areas of informative feedback from the community are the following five goals which the Lawrence Public Library aims to achieve in the next five years:

LONG-RANGE GOALS

To serve as a center for up-to-date information, materials, resources, and services that meets the community’s needs.

To foster lifelong learning in the community with a focus on the development of literacy skills.

To serve as a hub for the arts, culture, and creativity.

To foster an inclusive environment.

To strengthen the library’s financial status.
TO SERVE AS A CENTER FOR UP-TO-DATE INFORMATION, MATERIALS, RESOURCES, AND SERVICES THAT MEETS THE COMMUNITY’S NEEDS

The Lawrence Public Library aims to provide the community with information and resources that are responsive. When we think about information that meets the community's needs, we must address the population of Lawrence today and pay close attention to what patrons are looking for. We acknowledge that we must provide information and resources in multiple languages in addition to English with a focus on Spanish, as well as materials that are available in a variety of formats to meet the needs of our diverse library patrons.

The Library's collection underwent an assessment of age and relevance and determined that there is much room for acquiring new materials that supersede the ones we have. We decided to "weed" out the materials in poor physical condition and those that meet the criteria for withdrawal. The Library has adopted the CREW method, a model practice used in public libraries to properly weed and withdraw materials. We will also undergo an extensive acquisition process over the next five years to replenish the shelves with resources that are up-to-date and will bring the knowledge and entertainment the community hopes to find in its public library.

Our staff is also committed to providing a rich menu of programming, acknowledging that we serve the whole family. Our children and teen calendars continue to be strengthened and in this plan, we will focus new programs to fit the needs of adults seeking learning opportunities. Additionally, with the increase of staffing, the Library will be able to position itself for more intentional outreach to the community and also offer more specialized services in-house.

Finally, the Library recognizes not only the need to bring the facilities to date to meet our community’s needs but also to invoke a sense of pride. Safe, clean, attractive and well equipped facilities with upgraded equipment appeared throughout our assessment and we aim to touch on a variety of areas of the Library to reach this goal. We believe that when we provide the best equipment available to patrons, we prepare them to participate in a competitive world with access to the tools needed to be successful.
OBJECTIVES

1. Develop a new collection development policy that is responsive to the community and the consortium it serves.

2. Provide a variety of community programs to engage the community with the resources and services offered.

3. Broaden the scope of outreach in the community.

4. Increase staffing to provide more specialized services and keep up with the needs of the community.

5. Provide safe, clean, and attractive facilities and up-to-date equipment.

KEY ACTIVITIES

- Weed and replenish the library materials collection
- Develop a homebound delivery program
- Develop a marketing plan
- Replace elevators
- Increase technology options
TO FOSTER LIFELONG LEARNING IN THE COMMUNITY WITH A FOCUS ON THE DEVELOPMENT OF LITERACY SKILLS

The Lawrence Public Library fosters an environment of lifelong learning and encourages the community to engage with our resources in order to improve their skills and be equipped as global members of society. Through our resources and partnerships, we aim to provide opportunities for people of all ages to come and enhance their literacy skills. Early literacy will be a focus in this plan as well as the development of various literacies in the areas of health, computers, and finance. A recent grant award with the National Network of Libraries of Medicine has afforded us the opportunity to focus on health literacy. This is an area that will help to improve the community’s health information seeking and knowledge. In the Spring of 2019, we acquired technology in the form of several health kiosks and two interactive flat screens that we load with credible health information and tools for patrons to interact with either privately or with the help of a staff member.

As our partnerships with various community organizations and companies expand, we aim to continue to strengthen our partnerships with Lawrence schools to offer an exchange of resources to reach our larger school and youth community. Most recently, our summer reading program has seen improvements with summer reading books coordinated with proper time in advance to ensure that books are available for students and parents to find at the Library when school gets out. Through a marketing plan, we aim to position ourselves to reach the school community with better timing and a wider reach to ensure the resources and programs we plan are being met with the intended audience.

“...It provides access to information and keys to knowledge that people may not have the resources to acquire themselves.”

- Library Survey Response
OBJECTIVES

1. Provide learning opportunities in various forms for all ages.

2. Provide learning opportunities and supportive materials for the Lawrence school community.

3. Provide learning opportunities and develop a collection that supports literacy development for all.

KEY ACTIVITIES

- Revamp the Citizenship Corner
- Offer ESOL courses
- Expand on health literacy program
- Expand on conversation circles
- Expand on summer reading program
TO SERVE AS A HUB FOR THE ARTS, CULTURE, AND CREATIVITY

The Lawrence Public Library is a cultural heritage and humanities institution which aims to provide equitable space for all to learn and enjoy new experiences. Arts and culture are two important elements in this discovery of knowledge made possible at the Library with the right resources and programming. For many years, the White Fund supported this endeavor by providing funding for guest speakers and concerts. Recently, the Library has engaged in city-wide projects with a focus on art and culture, a public art project culminating in a mural on the library and architectural creative lighting. Our art gallery, which launched in June 2018, has welcomed four exhibits and continues to gain attention from local artists and art enthusiasts.

We recognize that space needs are a common issue throughout ours and other communities. The Library welcomes individuals and groups focused on providing arts and cultural programming to engage with the Library by either exhibiting in our art gallery or hosting a program for the community to enjoy. Our auditorium seats over 300 and is equipped with AV equipment to meet the needs of individuals and organizations willing to hold talks, performances, and demonstrations for all to enjoy. Our commitment to playing an integral role in arts and culture in our community will result in a Library that serves as a hub for the arts and culture for the benefit and enjoyment of all.

Our collection will also play an important role in this area as we intentionally acquire materials and resources that will both educate and entertain our community on arts and culture. This includes bringing two of our gems, the Irish collection at the Branch Library and the collections in our Local History Room in the Main Library, to the forefront. We aim to highlight these collections and resources to enhance and bring new attention to them.

“IT'S GREAT TO COME AND EXPLORE AND LEARN A LOT ABOUT CULTURES AND HISTORY.”

-Library Survey Response
OBJECTIVES

1. Provide a culturally responsive space for creativity and expression.
2. Provide culturally responsive materials for learning and enjoyment.
3. Provide arts and cultural programming.

KEY ACTIVITIES

- Complete public mural project
- Complete architectural lighting project
- Increase arts and cultural programming
- Acquire arts and cultural library materials for the collection
- Formalize art gallery exhibit process
One of the core values of a public library is equitable access. In order to provide such access, we have to ensure that our services, resources, and approach to programming is inclusive. Our materials and programming should also be responsive.

In the Spring of 2019, the Library made strides in working towards this goal in the area of facilities improvements long before officially launching the long-range plan. The Main Library’s circulation desk, in place since 1973, was replaced with one that ADA accessible. Now, anyone in a wheelchair or who could not otherwise reach the previously high counter, can engage with the circulation staff in a dignified way by using the lower counter. The Main Library’s front entrance doors were also replaced to include handicap access.

In this plan, we aim to continue to assess our facilities, equipment, and programming approach to broaden access to our diverse community. This includes acquiring translation devices as well as providing translators and sign language interpreters at major events. Our computer lab will also expand to be an inclusive lab equipped with a braille printer and visual and audio aid equipment. Our collection will include materials for the visually impaired that can be borrowed through a partnership with the Perkins School of the Blind.

Accomplishing this goal is important to our Library as we want to live out the value of inclusivity in all we do. It will, however, take a lot of intentional actions and work towards providing space and resources that truly meet the needs of the diverse populations we serve. With that said, we intend to actively engage with individuals and organizations directly affected by these decisions to ensure that we act appropriately and will be well received by the communities for whom the changes are intended.
OBJECTIVES

1. Provide materials and resources in multiple formats.

2. Provide facilities and equipment to meet users’ diverse needs.

3. Provide library personnel with professional development opportunities to better serve the community.

KEY ACTIVITIES

- Offer more inclusive technology
- Acquire translation devices
- Provide translation services during major events
- Develop library materials collection to include a variety of languages and formats
- Develop library materials collection to include a focus on the blind and hearing impaired
TO STRENGTH THE LIBRARY’S FINANCIAL STATUS

The Lawrence Public Library budget largely consists of its municipal appropriation of slightly over $1M. Additionally, the Library applies annually for a State Aid Grant which when awarded, is granted in the amount of $160,000, on average. The remaining budget is a combination of a small library programs revolving account and various grant funding.

Our long-term goals aim to strengthen the area of finance for the purposes of growing the Library department and sustaining it. The FY20 budget includes the addition of 7 new members to our team, bringing our total employee count to 26. The increase in staffing will not only allow us to both operate more smoothly and effectively throughout the week at both libraries but also open the Main library on the weekends. A larger team will equip us to serve the community in a more comprehensive way. We will be able to do more community outreach events including hosting resource tables as well as visit organizations and schools. Our new teen corner will also have the chance to develop with the support of a larger team. We will be able to offer more specialized services in-house such as computer classes and document assistance.

Our goals in this plan include a focus on working closer with the Friends of the Lawrence Public Library group as well as establishing a Library foundation. Working with the already established Friends group lends us the opportunity to work towards growing its membership.

Supported by the Library Board of Trustees, the Library will make the effort to establish a foundation. Differentiated from a Friends of the Library organization, the foundation will aim to seek financial gifts and will not engage in programming or memberships as do the Friends group. Building a foundation will be a learning process but the Library is committed to researching it and making the effort to achieve this goal within the five-year plan. Not only will a foundation seek financial gifts that can be accessed for large projects, but also it will serve as a public relations tool to position the Library in the community and other networks as a Library that is committed to growth, sustainability, and excellence.
OBJECTIVES

1. Work closely with the Friends of the Lawrence Public Library on projects and fundraising efforts.

2. Establish a Lawrence Public Library foundation.

KEY ACTIVITIES

- Establish shared goals with the Friends of the Lawrence Public Library
- Research Library foundations
- Establish Library foundation
- Continue to seek diverse grant funding opportunities
- Continue to closely manage the Library’s budget for optimal benefit to the community
GET INVOLVED!

Want to help the Library reach its goals? Become a Volunteer in one of our many departments. Call us at 978-620-3600 to learn more or visit our website for an application. You can also get more information by visiting our Reference desk located on the 2nd floor of our Main library.

LAWRENCE PUBLIC LIBRARY

MAIN
51 Lawrence Street
Lawrence, MA 01841
978-620-3600

BRANCH
135 Parker Street
Lawrence, MA 01843
978-620-3650

lawrencefreelibrary.org
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