

MEMORIAL HALL LIBRARY



*Memorial Hall Library
Andover, MA*



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STRATEGIC PLAN FOR FISCAL YEARS 2024–2028

*Memorial Hall Library
2 North Main Street
Andover, MA 01810*



Memorial Hall Library

Strategic Plan for Fiscal Years 2024–2028

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INTRODUCTION

Located in the heart of downtown, Memorial Hall Library is Andover's center of learning, creativity, collaboration, and community.

In March 2020, when the COVID-19 pandemic forced us to close our building to the public, the staff turned their attention to reimagining services to continue supporting and connecting residents of all ages in both traditional and innovative ways.

As the pandemic continued into 2021 and 2022, the Library undertook a comprehensive strategic planning process that included reviewing pre-pandemic operations and examining the state of current Library services.

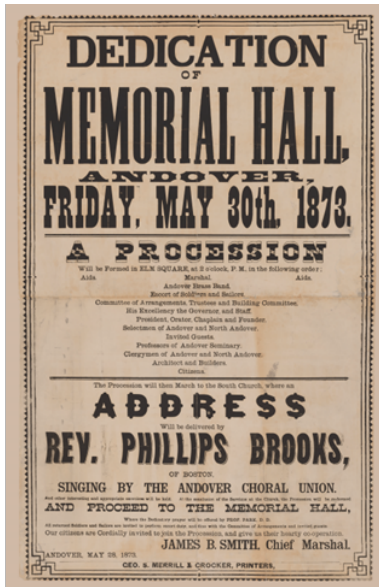
The Massachusetts Board of Library Commissioners (MBLC) recommends that every library maintain an up-to-date strategic plan to enable the library to assess itself and determine how best to serve the community's evolving needs. After reviewing how people use the Library's offerings, analyzing community data, and soliciting stakeholders' feedback, a strategic plan with effective goals and objectives acts as the blueprint for realizing community members' needs and wants.

Memorial Hall Library (MHL) began serving the town of Andover on Memorial Day, 1873. Since then, the Library has experienced four building additions, including the 1987 addition, which doubled its size to 55,000 square feet of ADA-compliant, accessible space on four levels. The building is open 68 hours per week and offers ample seating, public computers, and a makerspace. Free Wi-Fi is available throughout the building and around its exterior, including the back patio, parking lot, and nearby Essex Street.

During the past decade, staff focused on freeing up space to accommodate and encourage people of all ages to use the Library for a variety of purposes. Significant progress was made to create attractive spaces for patrons to come together and build community, support healthy living, promote knowledge, engage with each other, and borrow materials in a wide range of formats.

The team continually explores creative ways to use space to maintain the Library as both a resource for information and a community place. Moving forward, the staff will also evaluate and balance the physical and digital/downloadable collections, enhance our social media presence, and grow the resources and accessibility of the website as a virtual branch of the Library.





*Library Dedication Broadside
printed by Merrill & Crocker
Memorial Hall Library Collections*

The Library will celebrate its 150th anniversary in May 2023. The Trustees, Friends, and Library staff will be working collaboratively to determine how best to celebrate this momentous occasion.

Andover is in Essex County in northeastern Massachusetts, approximately 23 miles north of Boston. Andover has approximately 32 square miles of land area, 235 miles of roadways, and is bisected by two major highway systems, Interstates 93 and 495.

With a population of 36,921, Andover is known for its forward-thinking government and commitment to quality, responsiveness, and service.

Historically, the town's support of the Library has been strong, enabling partnerships with other municipal departments and community organizations that enrich our offerings and enhance our public presence. MHL is also a

part of the 36-member Merrimack Valley Library Consortium (MVLC) and our patrons greatly benefit from sharing the resources of our neighboring library communities.

OUR PLANNING PROCESS

In September 2021, MHL hired Barbara Alevras of Sage Consulting Services to guide us through the planning process, facilitate meetings and focus groups, and conduct community surveys.

After establishing our project goals, the staff brainstormed questions and challenges to address, identified stakeholders to engage, and created a detailed planning process (see *Appendix A—Strategic Planning Process Flowchart*). We also compiled important background information about the Library and the Andover community (see *Appendix B—Community and Library Profile 2022*).

In October 2021, a 12-member Strategic Planning Advisory Committee (SPAC) was formed with Library staff and nine community members representing various constituencies. They were formally appointed by the Andover Select Board on October 25, 2021, to serve a term that expired on June 30, 2022.

Barbara McNamara, Library Director, served as chair of the SPAC. Additional committee members included:

- Lisa Casio, Andover Commission on Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion
- Clare Curran-Ball, Library Staff
- Kathryn Forina, Executive Assistant to the Andover Town Manager

- Karen Herman, Chair, MHL Board of Trustees
- Kim Lynn, Library Staff
- Susan McKelliget, President, The Friends of Memorial Hall Library
- Janet Nicosia, Andover Director of Facilities
- Kevin O’Handley, Andover Finance Committee
- Austin Simko, Community Member
- Carly Stabile, Community Member
- Bonnie Zahorik, Community Member

During its eight-month tenure, the SPAC met twice to:

- Learn about the strategic planning process, review current library trends, and brainstorm community engagement ideas.
- Develop community vision statements describing the ideal Andover.
- Identify and prioritize the community vision statements MHL could best support.

During the winter of 2021-2022, the Library solicited community feedback using a variety of methods, including:

- Two staff SOAR exercises (strengths, opportunities, aspirations, and results)
- One SOAR exercise with the Trustees and The Friends of Memorial Hall Library Executive Board
- A town-wide survey that collected 1,089 responses
- A teen survey with 360 responses
- Three focus groups with 27 total community members

Summary reports that highlight trends and ideas derived from each feedback activity are available for review as appendices to this document.

WHAT WE LEARNED

The SPAC identified MHL as an organization that can help cultivate local volunteerism, citizen awareness, civic engagement, community pride, and lifelong learning for both new and long-term residents.

Library staff and trustees updated our vision, mission, and values statements that reflect everything we have learned about diversity, equity, inclusion, sustainability, and democracy in recent history.

Reviewing the SOAR exercise, survey, and focus group results demonstrated how important and integral the Library is to the community, with comments like:

- “It is a fluid and amazingly effective institution,”

- “The Library is the anchor of the community,” and
- “The Library is the best resource in town.”

These results also reminded us of the vital role the Library played in times of crisis, such as the Halloween Storm of 2011, the gas explosion of 2018, and, most recently, the COVID-19 pandemic.

Based on feedback regarding how our resources, services, programs, staff, facility, and outreach make the Library an outstanding institution, we identified six areas of focus:

- Collections (physical and digital)
- Services (technology, policies, and continuity of operations)
- Programs (in-person, virtual, and collaborative)
- Staff (continuing education and training)
- Facility (accessible and sustainable)
- Marketing (outreach, communications, and branding)

The past two years have taught us that change is inevitable and often happens in the most unexpected ways. It is for this reason the goals and underlying objectives we developed are very broad.

OUR PLAN

Community Vision Statements

- Andover engages new and long-term residents in inclusive initiatives that expand, diversify, and strengthen local volunteerism, citizen awareness, civic engagement, and community pride.
- Andover values and provides lifelong learning opportunities, including quality public education K-12 and a diverse assortment of inclusive academic, vocational/hands-on, recreational, and cultural learning opportunities that enrich residents’ lives at all ages.
- Andover offers multi-use spaces and places for community gatherings that are welcoming, accessible, and appealing to all ages.

Vision Statement

Memorial Hall Library aspires to be an active community partner that fosters a thirst for knowledge, creativity, resilience, civic engagement, and community connection in a just, equitable, sustainable, and evolving world.

Mission Statement

Memorial Hall Library provides free and equitable access to resources, staff, and spaces in a welcoming environment where all can connect to each other and to the world.

Core Value Statements

- **EQUALITY:** MHL strives to provide free and fair access by actively working to make our collections, programs, policies, virtual and physical spaces welcoming and accessible to all people regardless of their race, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, religion, income, or disability status. Read our full statement on Inclusivity at MHL here => <https://mhl.org/inclusivity-mhl>.
- **RESPECT:** MHL staff strives to respect all people and their privacy, our institutional history, and the materials, space, and funds entrusted to us.
- **JOY:** MHL seeks to cultivate and celebrate the joy of reading and learning.
- **COMMUNITY:** MHL supports a culture of community and belonging for our staff and our community at all stages of their lives.
- **INTELLECTUAL FREEDOM:** MHL supports and upholds the rights of library users to read, seek information, and speak freely, as guaranteed by the First Amendment.
- **SUSTAINABILITY:** MHL considers our role in and response to the ongoing climate crisis in an attempt to invest in the future of the community. We embrace our location in the Merrimack Valley and consider its fragile natural resources to be an essential lens for collections and programming.
- **DEMOCRACY:** MHL supports the free exchange of ideas and information, which is essential to the function of American democracy. We provide opportunities for all patrons to learn about the functions of government, the importance of free and fair elections, and the preservation of democratic institutions.

Strategic Goals and Supporting Objectives

GOAL 1: Lifelong Learning: Provide access to high-quality resources that allow and encourage everyone to explore topics of personal interest.

- 1.1 **Nurture Collections:** Maintain and expand comprehensive, relevant, diverse collections in a variety of formats for every reader, viewer, and listener.
- 1.2 **Deliver Services:** Maximize access to the wide variety of services offered.
- 1.3 **Implement Programming:** Provide engaging, educational, and enriching programs for all ages.

1.4 Support Staff: Maximize the potential of each employee to develop and enhance professional and personal skills and knowledge.

GOAL 2: Community Connection: Develop a comprehensive, consistent presence in the community.

2.1 Community Outreach: Engage with the community in formal and informal ways.

2.2 Community Partnerships: Cultivate collaborative community partnerships.

2.3 Community Engagement: Provide opportunities for civic engagement.

GOAL 3: User-Friendly Facilities: Create a space that is welcoming, comfortable, and in step with changes in demographics, climate, and community needs.

3.1 Space Planning: Optimize the building's physical space.

3.2 Sustainability: Minimize the Library's impact on the environment without compromising service.

3.3 Accessibility: Provide equal access to the building, programs, services, and technology.

GOAL 4: Meaningful Marketing: Increase public awareness about the Library's collections, programs, and services.

4.1 Awareness: Heighten awareness of the Library's vast resources and services by developing a comprehensive communications campaign.

4.2 Brand: Ensure the Library's brand is widely and consistently recognized.

Annual Action Plans

Memorial Hall Library develops an annual Action Plan that lists specific activities and strategies designed to help the Library achieve its strategic goals. The Action Plan incorporates new initiatives and tasks designed to support the Library's specific objectives and address its changing needs. Our Action Plan is updated annually and kept on file at the MBLC. To view the Action Plan, see *Appendix D—MHL Action Plan Fiscal Year 2024*.

Measuring and Communicating Progress

The Library Director will report on the progress of the annual Action Plan to the Library's Board of Trustees at its monthly meetings.

BOARD OF TRUSTEES' APPROVAL

On September 14, 2022, the Library's seven-person Board of Trustees unanimously approved this Strategic Plan.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Memorial Hall Library wishes to recognize the support and encouragement it received from the Strategic Planning Advisory Committee, the Library Board of Trustees, The Friends of Memorial Hall Library, and the entire MHL staff.

MHL is especially grateful for the feedback received from the Andover community. The community's willingness to provide feedback enabled the Library to develop a strategic plan that will serve the community's evolving needs.

FINAL THOUGHTS

The best plans are dynamic, flexible tools for continuous improvement. With the Library's mission as its primary rationale, its vision as the ideal, and its core values as guides to decision making, Memorial Hall Library endeavors to be an exceptional and innovative public library and active community partner dedicated to helping all individuals realize their full potential.

BOARD OF TRUSTEES

- Karen M. Herman, Chair
- Laurence J. Lamagna, Treasurer
- Carolyn A. Fantini, Secretary
- John P. Hess
- Anthony Straceski
- Mark Yanowitz
- Marilyn Santagati



APPENDICES

The following is a list of Strategic Plan document appendices. They are available for download and review at the following link: <https://mhl.org/strategic-plan-fy24-28>

Appendix A—MHL Strategic Planning Project Process Flowchart: The flowchart presents the Library’s planning methodology, including the timeline, assessment mechanisms, and process participants.

Appendix B—MHL Community and Library Profile 2022: This document presents an infographic with key Andover community statistics, an infographic with Memorial Hall Library 2021 statistics, information related to the Library’s services, programs, and governance, and an overview of the Library’s history.

Appendix C—MHL Community Vision Statement Results Report 2022: The Library’s strategic planning advisory committee brainstormed a series of vision statements reflecting the ideal Andover and prioritized the vision statements the Library can best support and positively impact. This report presents the results of the committee’s activities.

Appendix D—MHL Action Plan Fiscal Year 2024: The Library’s Action Plan presents specific tasks for completion during the first year of the Strategic Plan.

Appendix E—MHL Community Survey Results Summary Report 2021: In December 2021, we conducted a community survey. A summary of the results is presented in addition to graphs and charts.

Appendix F—MHL Focus Group Summary Report 2022: 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 27 community members.

Appendix G—MHL SOAR Exercise Summary Results Report 2021: 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 the other was conducted with the Friends of the Memorial Hall Library officers and the Library Board of Trustees.

Appendix H—MHL Youth Survey Results Summary Report 2022: In January and February 2022, a youth survey was conducted with students in grades 6-12. A summary of the results is presented in addition to graphs and charts.

