

The image shows the interior of a grand library. The room features a high, vaulted ceiling with a series of windows along the top. The walls are adorned with large, colorful murals depicting various scenes. The room is furnished with several round wooden tables and matching chairs. Each table has a small lamp on it. The overall atmosphere is one of a quiet, scholarly environment.

Franklin Public Library

Strategic Plan 2021 - 2025

APPROVED
JANUARY 24, 2022



FRANKLIN PUBLIC LIBRARY

America's First Public Library

118 Main Street

Franklin, Massachusetts 02038-1992

Tel. (508) 520-4940

We are pleased to present to you the 2021-2025 Strategic Plan for the Franklin Public Library. This process which has been comprehensive and long, was initiated in 2019 but delayed by the Covid-19 pandemic, thus providing the Library an opportunity to engage the community anew. The plan and its findings reaffirm the library's commitment to public service and to providing the best possible service the community needs and deserves from its public library.

This plan is an exciting, aspirational, realistic and dynamic roadmap that aligns well with community needs, and the Town of Franklin's community vision. It positions the Library to be agile, able to respond quickly to the changing needs and expectations of an ever-evolving community and to be a uniting, and transformative force in the community. We are confident the strategic plan will provide a solid return on our investment and guide the Library in its quest to include residents of all backgrounds.

It has been a great honor working with the community and the staff on a project so significant and defining for the future of the Library and the town. The Strategic Plan will be treated as a living document that will regularly be referenced by Library leadership to guide decision-making. We would like to thank everyone who participated in the creation of the plan, the library staff for their deliberate approach to this project and the Library Board of Directors for their leadership and guidance.

To all the residents of Franklin, we thank you for your support and appreciation during these challenging and unprecedented times. We have been inspired and uplifted by your support and encouragement, and are grateful to be able to connect with you through our many resources, services and programs.

Sincerely,

Charleen Belcher, Chair
Board of Library Directors
Franklin Public Library

Felicia Oti, Library Director
Franklin Public Library

Creating our Plan

Methodology

The 2014-2019 Strategic Plan brought tremendous successes in the service and programming environment culminating in the renovation and restoration of the magnificent historic building and a modern 8,000 square foot addition. The ever-evolving environment, driven by growth and new and emerging technologies prompted us to engage our community and focus our resources anew.

In 2019, the Library Board of Directors initiated a review and update of the strategic plan. Starting from January 2019 and working through June 2019, the Library Board and staff elicited community input through surveys, staff-facilitated conversations, and a physical and virtual idea wall. The Board and staff reviewed past practices, investigated demographics, and community trends, and discussed the current strengths, aspirations and opportunities facing the community.

Specific objectives of the conversations and surveys included but were not limited to:

- Assessing library usage
- Exploring attitudes towards the Library
- Examining user satisfaction with customer service and overall library services, including collections, programs, computers, and Wi-Fi, remote/virtual services, information services, access to library facilities (e.g., study space/meeting rooms/exhibit space, parking) and open hours
- Gaging interest and awareness in specific services and Library offers
- Understanding areas of improvement
- Assessing new services

In total, 1,984 in all key demographics – parents, adults & seniors, middle scholars and teens – participated in the community engagement sessions and surveys.

Key Findings:

Overall satisfaction with the Franklin Public Library remains very high across many services. Highest satisfaction levels are for:

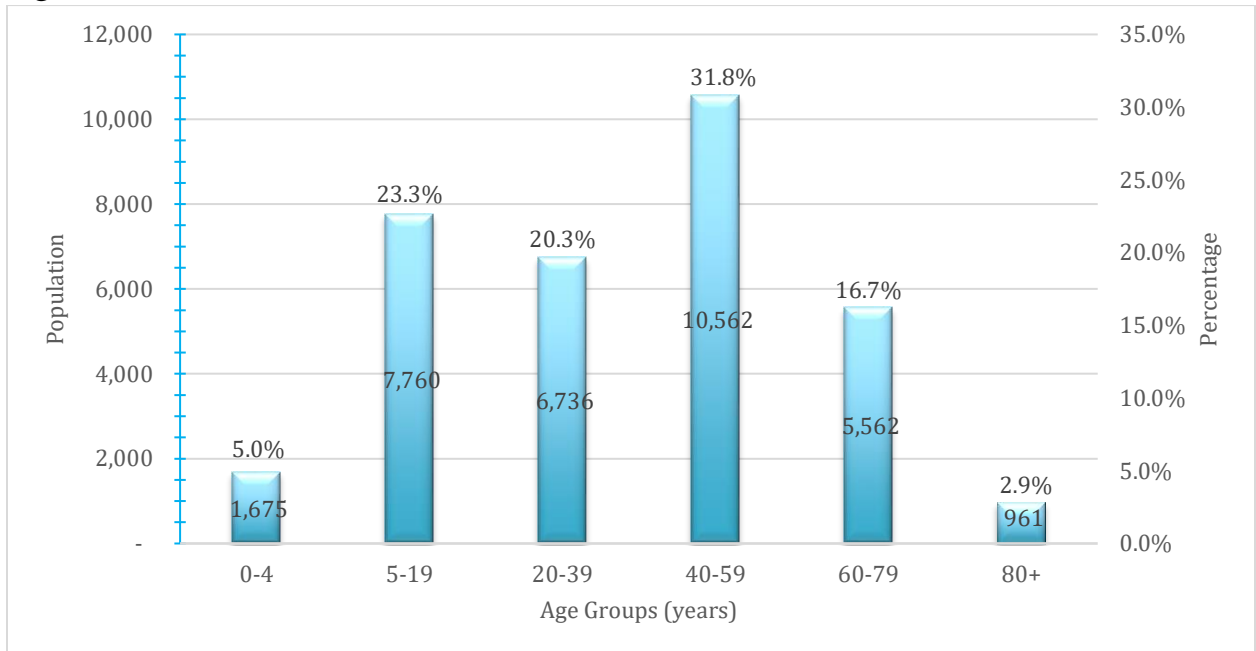
- Knowledge and helpfulness of staff
- The variety of programs
- The breadth and depth of the collection
- The magnificent building, unique history and the beautiful art and architecture
- Attractiveness and cleanliness of the library
- The varied, inviting spaces to study, meet and socialize

Franklin at a Glance — September 2021

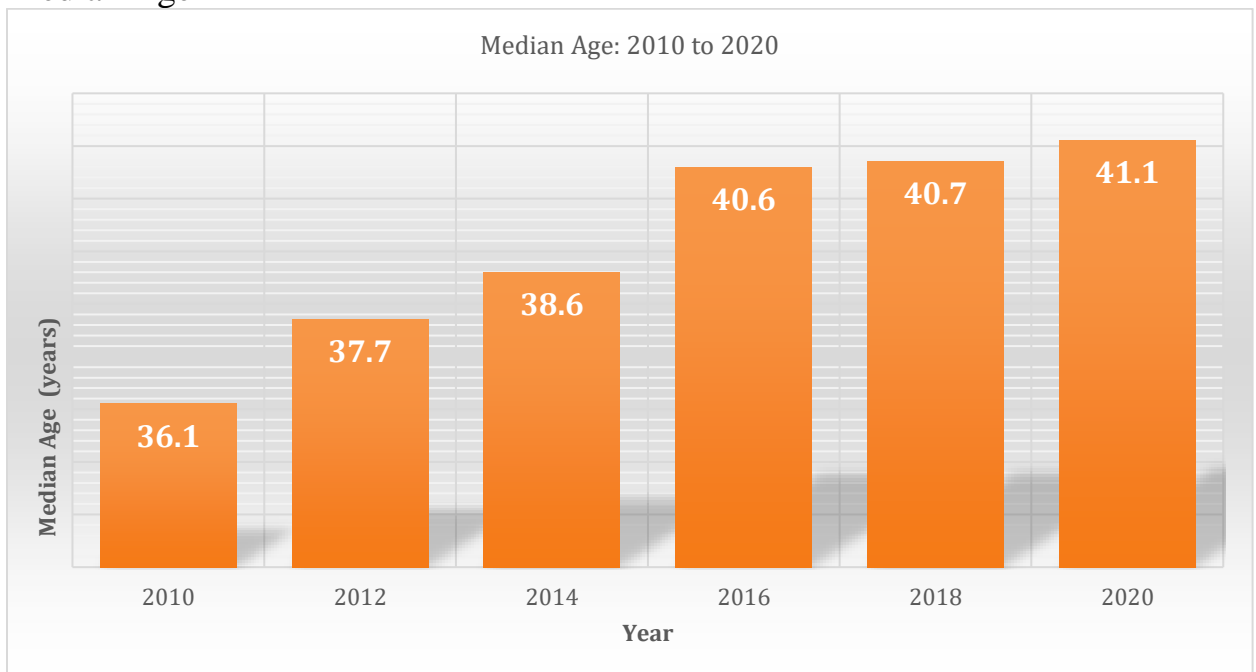
(United States Census Bureau, 2020 Census Data)

1. Total Population: **33,256**

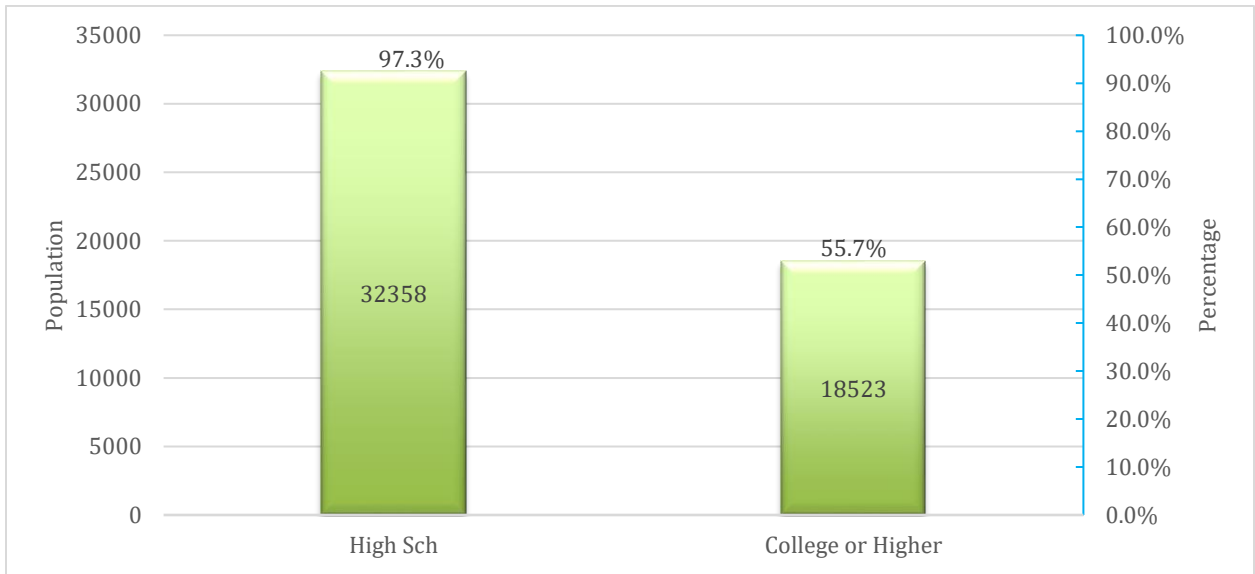
2. Age Distribution



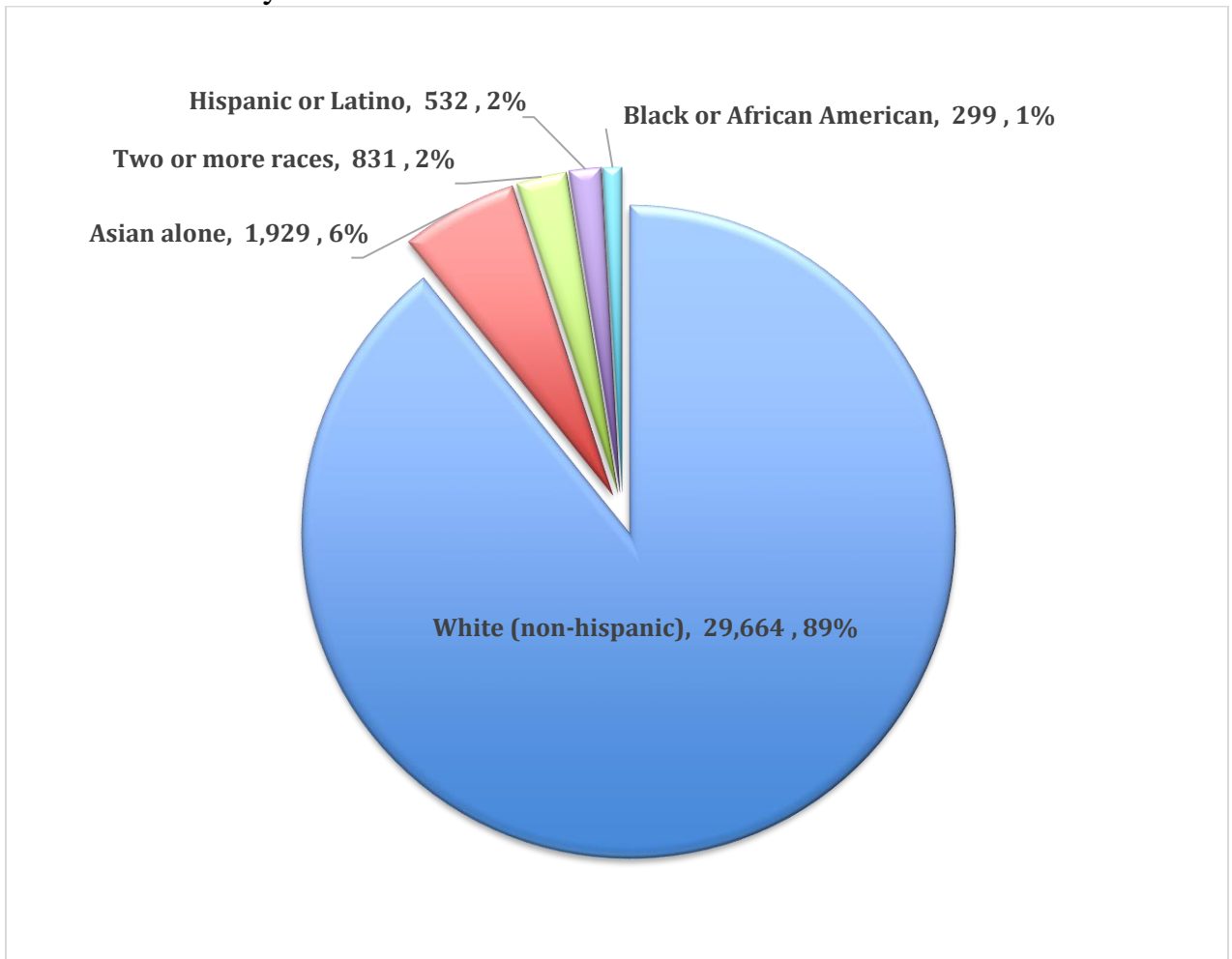
3. Median Age



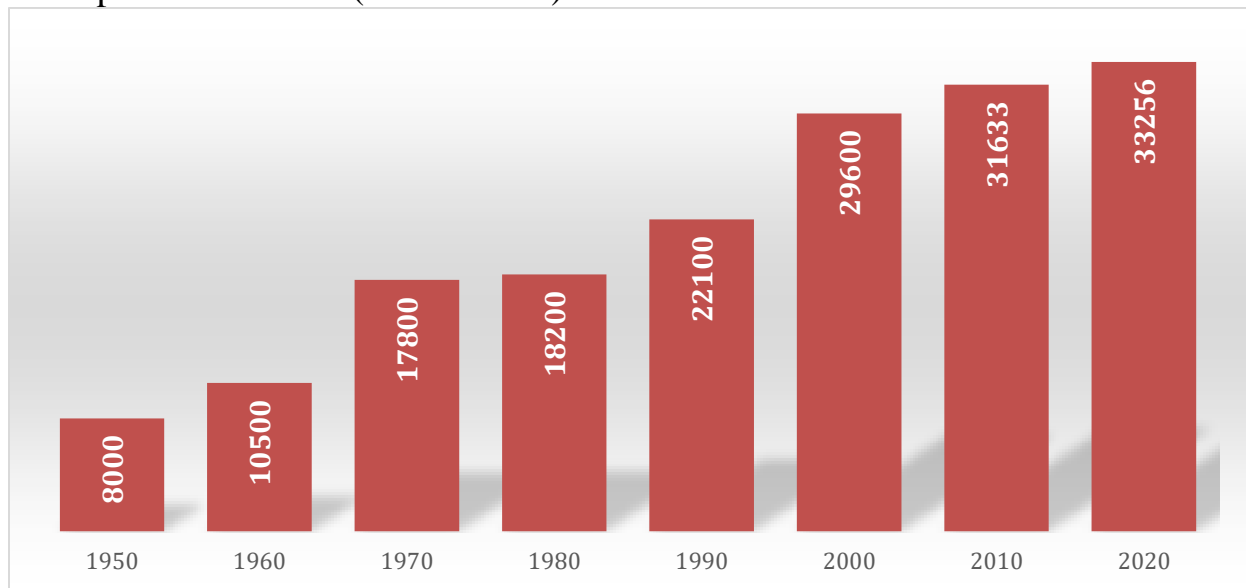
4. Education



5. Race and Ethnicity



6. Population Growth (1950 – 2020)



Needs Assessment:

Through the public input process, the community identified the following improvements.

- Integrate diversity, equity, inclusivity in library services
- Purchase multiple copies of popular books in large print and speed-read
- Expand weekly afternoon, evening, and weekend program offerings for school age children
- Increase the number of programs that encourage reading & creativity/STEAM/craft/painting
- Increase self-improvement programs that teach technology skills, financial literacy, information skills, English language skills, health and wellness, lectures and author talks.
- Add parking, stairs in new entrance and improve ramp railings
- Improve marketing, publicity and outreach.

Improve community engagement - Diversity, Equity and Inclusion

The town of Franklin has a population of 33,256 according to the April 2020 US Census. In the 10 years since the 2010 census, the population of Franklin increased by just 1,623 people - an average of 162 residents every year.

The median age of Franklin residents is now 41.1 years. In 2010, this was 36.1 years. The largest population group is those between the ages of 40 and 59 years old. This group makes up 31.8% of the town's population. Almost 3% of Franklin's residents are 80 years of age or older.

Over 55% of Franklin residents have a college degree or higher. Over 97% have a high school diploma or equivalent.

In terms of race and ethnicity, Franklin is not racial or culturally diverse. 89.2% of residents are white; 5.8% Asian, 2.5% mixed races, 1.6% Hispanic or Latino and 0.9% Black or African American.

Meeting the needs of this wide age range of residents, minority groups and highly educated adult populations are essential to the library's mission. The library will work hard to understand and find ways to offer residents of all backgrounds unique and meaningful services and programming. Given Franklin's lack of racial and language diversity, the Library needs to develop pathways to building stronger community engagements with minority groups, and explore novel approaches to promoting other cultures, races, and ethnicities.

Expand Collections

The Library has been able to sustain a balanced acquisitions program with excellent digital resources, a robust book collection and other distinctive collections such as the library of things, explorer packs, and resources for the home-schooled.

Building and maintaining a dynamic collection requires sustained, deliberate stewardship. It also requires a continuous program of collection assessment to identify and acquire sufficient quantities in multiple formats (large print, e-books, audio CDs, etc.)

Beyond questions of resource acquisition, the library must explore innovative approaches in managing the physical collection and making it more accessible. The continued growth in online information, e-content and self-service options has changed patterns of use and made library collections more accessible. Even so, an opportunity exists to promote the use of the website for accessing this content.

Increase Programming & Community Engagement

The Library offers an impressive number of monthly programming with about 80 offerings. While the community appreciates this, they would like to see more weekly reading and STEAM programs in the afternoons/early evenings and weekends for school age children. Adult patrons requested self-improvement workshops that advance the following: digital literacy, information & technology skills, financial literacy, online learning, English language learning, self-improvement, health & wellness, lectures and author talks and art.

The Library can also play a greater role in making Franklin more academically and culturally vibrant by forging stronger professional connections with K-12 education, Dean College, the Franklin Cultural District, the Franklin Downtown Partnership and other local cultural organizations.

Organizational Investment

The Library will become a more effective organization by ensuring that all staff have the training tools and support they require to make outstanding contributions to the Franklin community. Our ever-evolving environment, driven by new and emerging technologies, requires stable funding. Additional funding sources beyond the municipal budget will need to be added.

Improve Facilities

Library patrons are extremely happy with the cleanliness, furniture, lighting, and varied spaces. Parking is insufficient during periods of peak activity. Many respondents found the ramp entrance difficult to walk and requested stairs be added in the new entrance.

There is a strong patron desire for the Library to extend Sunday hours throughout the year. This would accommodate working parents, students and others who wish to access the Library but are currently unable due to scheduling constraints.

Tell the Library story

Although there has been growing awareness among library users of the wide range of services offered by the Library (e-books, WIFI, meeting/study rooms, museum passes, and library of things), awareness of the many databases available through the Library, the Minuteman Library Network and the state remain low. Increasing the variety of publicity, marketing and promotions is important to building awareness of these valuable resources.

Service Priorities

To achieve lasting community impacts, the Library will focus and invest in these service priorities over the next five years:

Be an informed citizen: Local, National, and World Affairs

Residents will have the information they need to support and to promote democracy, to fulfill their civic responsibilities at the local, state, and national levels, and to participate fully in community decision making.

Celebrate Diversity: Cultural Awareness

Residents will have programs and services that promote appreciation and understanding of their personal heritage and the heritage of others in the community.

Connect to the Online World: Public Internet Access

Residents will have high-speed access to the digital world with no unnecessary restrictions or fees to ensure that everyone can take advantage of the ever-growing resources and services available through the Internet.

Satisfy Curiosity: Lifelong Learning

Residents will have the resources they need to explore topics of personal interest and continue to learn throughout their lives.

Stimulate Imagination: Reading, Viewing, and Listening for Pleasure

Residents who want materials to enhance their leisure time will find what they want when and where they want them and will have the help they need to make choices from among the options.

Succeed in School: Homework Help

Students will have the resources they need to succeed in school.

Visit a Comfortable Place: Physical and Virtual Spaces

Residents will have safe and welcoming physical places to meet and to interact with others or sit quietly and read and will have open and accessible Virtual spaces that support networking.

Strategic Communications: The Library will market and promote the Library's services, programs and collections to ensure awareness and use, and to support the role and value of the Library to our community.

Franklin's Community Vision (From the Town of Franklin's master plan)

"To be a vibrant community that supports the arts, non-profit organizations, higher education and businesses in an atmosphere that allows growth and prosperity while at the same time conserving our heritage, natural resources, and history. We will build on and celebrate our uniqueness as a community and maintain the quality of life that is a strength and competitive advantage."

Franklin Public Library Vision

Franklin Public Library is the trusted source of information, inspiration, enrichment and opportunity.

Mission

The mission of the Franklin Public Library is to foster knowledge and engagement through education, enrichment, and technology.

Values & Guiding Principles

Access

The Franklin Public Library is open and free to all. We are steadfastly committed to providing access to information, resources, and programming.

Community and Diversity

We value individual needs, experiences, and differences and strive to provide a welcoming and inclusive library community.

Technology

We support creative ideas, encourage experimentation, and embrace advancing technology. We continue to expand opportunities for virtual community engagement in addition to our traditional formats.

Knowledge

We are inspired by the transformative power of information and facilitate the pursuit of education and discovery through diverse resources, programs, and assistance.

Service

We are committed to providing professional and responsive services to a wide range of patrons.

Stewardship

We are committed to the prudent management of our resources and welcome the participation of our community in decision-making and service development.

Preservation

We honor and preserve our unique history and traditions.

Goals, Objectives, Activities

Goal 1: Franklin Public Library serves as a vital community resource, a facilitator of public discourse and civic engagement, the place where ideas are created, discovered and shared.

Objective A:

Establish the library as a civic focal point, a cultural destination and community gathering place.

Actions:

- Convene at least four civic conversations annually where neighbors can discuss town, community, and national issues.
- Promote use of the meeting room for programs that are free and open to the public.
- Assess the merits of opening on Sundays during summer months. 2022

Goal 1: Indicators of success – outcomes and impacts:

1. Meet action deadlines & benchmarks.
2. The Library is seen as a vital democratic institution that provides access to a full range of information and ideas, and a platform for intellectual freedom, freedom of expression, a space for discussion and civic engagement.

Goal 2: The Library functions as a community advocate with engaging programs, collections and services that celebrate its unique history and heritage and promote an appreciation and understanding of the heritage of others.

Objective A:

Present events and exhibits focusing on Town of Franklin’s culture and history.

Actions:

- Connect our community with our diverse local culture and history through monthly exhibits/displays and programs that promote cultural understanding.
- Celebrate, uplift and elevate cultural traditions reflected in community demographics through compelling collections and expert assistance
- Promote local authors and artists in a variety of media, i.e. innovative programming such as festivals, showcases, author talks, and music performances.

Objective B:

Restore, preserve, digitize and promote physical and virtual collections and artifacts that showcase local history and achievements.

Actions:

- Develop a preservation and conservation plan for our special collections, murals and historic paintings. 2022

- Explore opportunities for grants to subsidize the costs of preservation, conservation and digitization. 2022 - 2023
- Digitize local history materials in partnership with municipal departments and organizations. 2022 - 2025
- Create a self-guided tour for patrons, to highlight the art, architecture and history. 2022

Objective C:

Build a broader spectrum of collaborations and non-traditional partnerships that feature community voices and reflect community needs and interests.

Actions:

- Collaborate with Municipal departments, and other cultural and regional assets to animate library spaces.
- Engage the creative community, colleges, the Franklin Cultural District and the Franklin Downtown Partnership to initiate at least three community-wide projects annually, and create flexible pathways to learning for children, youth and adults.
- Develop target programming to reach new audiences. Ongoing.

Goal 2: Indicators of success – outcomes and impacts:

1. Meet action deadlines and benchmarks.
2. The Library coordinates a continuum of monthly inclusive programs at the library and community venues.
3. The Library identifies annual priorities for shared initiatives and campaigns and develops strategic partnerships to meet those priorities.
4. Franklin residents are able to learn from different perspectives in positive, respectful and engaging ways.

Goal 3: The Library provides Franklin residents with state-of-the-art technology and high-speed access to the digital and online world and assistance navigating new technology, exploring new formats and experimenting with innovative devices.

Objective A:

Expand technology offerings to support the changing needs of patrons and provide greater accessibility to and interaction with the Library.

Actions:

- Monitor developments in delivery of e-books, digital magazines, audio and video, and other digital formats and constantly assess digital content models and content providers. Quarterly.
- Explore, adopt and evaluate virtual services to suit all work styles and personal abilities. Quarterly
- Create interactive learning spaces for adults and youth to facilitate growth in information and digital literacies.
- Work with the Town IT Department to facilitate best practices in providing places for Franklin's patrons to interact in digital spaces.
- Expand STEAM program initiatives to encourage excitement and support understanding of emerging technologies.
- Provide training and support as needed for basic technology - online catalog, Minuteman App, museum pass reservation system, public computers, databases, digital catalog, Internet, etc.
- Offer instruction opportunities to assist library patrons in developing their information and technology skills.

Objective B:

Improve library productivity by incorporating new tools and technology strategies for the most efficient and cost-effective delivery of library services.

Actions:

- Identify options to improve the technologies and processes used to locate and circulate materials in ways that make services and collections more accessible and intuitive to the public. Quarterly
- Evaluate and assess opportunities to include emerging technology into service delivery. Quarterly

Objective C:

Evaluate, identify and provide training opportunities in alternate formats to staff.

Actions:

- Focus on development of computer competencies for library staff so that staff will be prepared to educate for digital literacy. Ongoing.
- Provide training options using different media to all staff. (i.e., workshops, staff meetings & cross-training, webinars, job-relevant training offered through the Minuteman Library Network, Massachusetts Library System, Town of Franklin, educational institutions and conferences). Ongoing.

Goal 3: Indicators of success – outcomes and impacts:

1. Meet action deadlines, including periodic review of ongoing action items.
2. Residents can conveniently access and use library technology and digital literacy training.
3. All library staff know about and are able to access and use varied training tools and resources they need to deliver exceptional customer experiences.

Goal 4: Awaken and nurture the community's love of reading and passion for learning and personal growth.

Objective A:

Build community around books in all formats.

Actions:

- Employ a variety of initiatives to foster the love of reading and learning, connect readers to new books, and provide opportunities for people to connect and engage around a common love of books, literature, community and culture.
 - 1000 books before kindergarten
 - 500 books before high school
 - 100 books before graduation
 - Bookopoly
 - Annual reading challenges
 - Book discussion groups
 - Community wide reading programs (Franklin Reads), and readathons
 - Book displays

- Purchase multiple copies of new high - demand fiction and nonfiction in various formats. Monthly
- Maintain an up-to-date collection of technology related books in print and electronic formats.
- Expand community open houses with monthly book sales and a cultural component.
- Employ at least three different methods to highlight and promote library collections/materials beyond basic book displays and social media.

Objective B:

Develop relevant and inspiring collections that reflect the evolving and varied needs and interests of patrons.

Actions:

- Review the Franklin Public Library Collection Development Policy. Annually.
- Continue to use effective collection development tools, Minuteman Library Network circulation statistics reports and purchase alerts, inter - library loan requests of Franklin residents, Sunday Boston Globe and Herald to analyze collection use and trends and tailor purchases accordingly.
- Develop a regular schedule for replacing worn and outdated materials to keep the collections attractive and current. 2022
- Respond to the changing ways in which the community experience books, gather information and create content. Ongoing
- Budget for growth and the expansion of non-traditional collections. Annually.

Objective C:

Strengthen the Library's contribution to the education of Franklin's youth.

Actions:

- Develop resources that support school curriculum through collaborative relationships with educators.

- Establish a flexible space where teens can create content and learn how to use new and emerging technologies.
- Expand annual book tasting visits to all 6 elementary schools twice a year (prior to December school break and again prior to summer vacation) for the purposes of promoting new materials and library resources, summer reading programs and vacation events.
- Ensure every teacher and school administrator is aware of the Library's ability to provide students with homework resources, access to technology and diverse collections through school-wide library card drives, classroom card creation, and live tutorials.
- Ensure continued sustained success with the BLAST Initiative (Bringing Students and Libraries Together) in all middle schools across the district.
- Provide a supervised and supportive environment where students in first through eighth grade can benefit from free homework assistance. 2021

Objective D:

Develop a comprehensive approach to library programming for all ages.

Actions:

- Develop programming guidelines. 2021
- Evaluate and present a variety of adult programs on life skills, English as a second language, health and wellness, art, lectures, author talks, genealogy and other topics of specific interest.
- Engage all ages and abilities with hands-on interactive activities and learning opportunities. Monthly
- Maintain a successful series of programs for children and continually evaluate these programs to ensure a commitment to an enriching, welcoming and friendly environment for all families.
- Maintain our robust program offerings for babies and toddlers, to facilitate new parent engagement with the library and foster lifelong library usership for families starting at birth.
- Expand school-age program offerings, with a realistic assessment of scheduling and attendance at the forefront of all programming decisions.

- Expand monthly teen programming in conjunction with valuable input from the Teen Advisory Board, with a realistic assessment of the realities of scheduling and attendance at the forefront of all programming decisions.
- Continue to shape a flexible, successful model for our summer reading program that ensures an upward trajectory of both signups and program completions, factoring in ease of signups and reporting, and incentivizes active engagement and participation for all ages.
- Explore special programs for young adults such as mental wellness, stress reduction, financial literacy and other specific topics of interest.

Goal 4: Indicators of success – outcomes and impacts:

1. Meet action deadlines
2. The number of children, teens and adults participating in all programs increases steadily
3. Franklin residents know about and are conveniently accessing our tools and resources to meet their professional development goals.
4. Residents have opportunities to participate and engage virtually at library events & programs.
5. The library employs at least three new merchandising techniques to promote the collections, enrichment, support and opportunities for residents to develop new skills.
6. Seventy-five percent or more of survey respondents express satisfaction with library collections, programs and services. Annually.

Goal 5: Strengthen community awareness and engagement

Objective A:

The Library will find new ways to enhance its image and increase public familiarity with resources, services and programs.

Actions:

- Facilitate sign-ups for e-mail registration at all weekly programs & at community events to increase the reach of the monthly e-newsletter.
- Create a unique logo for the library. 2022

- Use technology/social media to disseminate information and promote access to information, library programs, materials and services.
- Train front line staff to promote library resources and programs. 2022
- Promote the library's mobile applications to enable patrons to engage with the library in new and creative ways.
- Update the library's web presence weekly to guide users to library resources, services, partner websites and complementary community resources
- Research the feasibility of exterior digital signage to alert residents of upcoming events. 2025

Goal 5: Indicators of success – outcomes and impacts:

1. Meet action deadlines
2. Continuing to collect patron input in a variety of ways to better understand and respond to community needs.
3. Seventy percent or more of survey respondents are aware of library services, resources and programs
4. The Library is highly valued as vital partner directly contributing to the physical, social, educational infrastructure and to the success, resilience and connectedness of the community.

Goal 6: Visitors to the Library will have meaningful experiences in a comfortable, functional, inviting and accessible facility.

Objective A:

Evaluate, update and improve our physical infrastructure to meet the needs of the community

Actions:

- Work with the Town Administrator, Director of Facilities and elected officials to address the following capital improvement needs by 2025.
 - More Parking
 - Add stairs in the new entrance
 - Extend ramp entrance safety rail

- Work with the facilities department to implement the library's plan for the new teen room. 2022

Objective B:

Improve clarity and safety in navigating the building.

Actions:

- Implement consistent interior signage throughout the building to improve clarity and wayfinding. June 2021.
- Review and update safety, disaster, emergency response plans. 2022

Objective C:

Adapt and energize library spaces for new uses in keeping with changing services, programs, interests, needs and the changing ways that patrons use the library.

Actions:

- Conduct functional assessments of Library spaces and the physical layout of furniture for optimal use and welcoming experience. Quarterly
- Review furniture for wear and develop a time table for repair/replacement. Annually.

Goal 6: Indicators of success – outcomes and impacts:

1. Meet action deadlines and benchmarks.
2. Franklin residents can conveniently access and use our physical and virtual spaces to adapt and thrive.
3. Ninety percent or more of survey respondents find our spaces accessible, clean, welcoming and inclusive.

Goal 7:

Increase customer satisfaction, fiscal stability and sustainability

Objective A:

Use assessment and survey tools to learn more about the community.

Action:

- Conduct an annual community needs assessment & patron satisfaction survey.
- Include feedback from survey in annual review of goals.

Objective B:

Explore new revenue opportunities.

Actions:

- Strategize with the Friends and other fundraising organizations to create new additional fundraising opportunities. Annually.
- Review grant opportunities annually and assign them to specific staff.
- Adopt policies that foster efficiency, cost-effectiveness and sustainability.

Objective C:

Strengthen the library's capacity to deliver on its mission

Actions:

- Maintain a diverse and active volunteer base through collaboration with the schools, Council on Aging and community groups. Ongoing.
- Work with the Union and Human Resources Department to use staff openings to reconfigure jobs, roles and responsibilities. Ongoing.
- Work with the Union and Human Resources Department to update job descriptions to reflect new areas of work and areas where additional support is required. 2022

Indications of success – outcomes and impacts:

1. Meet action bench marks and deadlines.
2. The Library has a collaborative, flexible, resilient, innovative, high-performing customer service culture that empowers staff and patrons to achieve their full potential.

3. The Library identifies and completes new process improvements annually to streamline or strengthen library operations.