

READING PUBLIC LIBRARY

STRATEGIC PLAN
FY26 - FY30

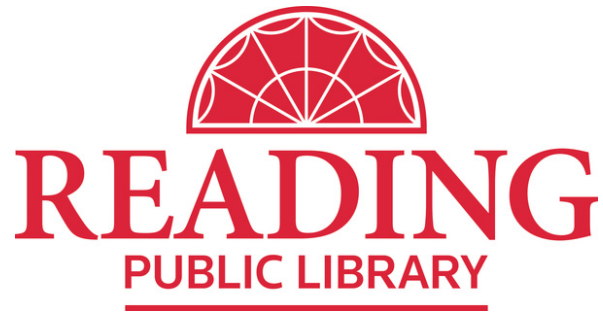


PLAN SUMMARY

Reading is facing the challenges of many communities in Massachusetts and beyond, with high-cost housing, an aging population, and divisive local politics. What sets Reading apart is active civic engagement, a community poised to embrace the challenges and welcome new residents, and a public library that models impactful municipal partnerships. Reading Public Library is a high performing organization, with established and refined core library services delivered by a professional and innovative staff. Reading Public Library serves a desirable and affluent community known for its good schools and proximity to both urban and green spaces. With its charm and amenities, Reading attracts newcomers, inspires community participation, and provides aspirations to age in place.

How does the library meet the needs of all community members, ensuring the core values are centered in decision making? How does the library continue to sustain and innovate core services, while expanding outreach and services to community members who are underserved by the library? How does the library plan for the future during uncertain times?

Through the planning process, community members and library staff engaged in deep thinking and thoughtful conversation. The result is a plan that builds on previous strategic priorities and includes a new mission statement that captures the essence of the work: Building Community, Creating Connections. These connections to each other, technology, information, and services are all essential for building community.



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Strategic Planning Committee

Michelle Filleul
Amy Fang Lannon
Olivia McElwain
Jamie Penney
Monette Verrier

Consultant

Maura Deedy, Local Librarian Consulting

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Reading Public Library Board of Trustees

MISSION

Building Community, Creating Connections.

Reading Public Library's mission is to connect all people with opportunities to grow and learn, and to provide resources to support a welcoming and engaged community.

VISION

Evolving together to strengthen communication, equity, collaboration, and learning.

CORE VALUES

Education
Equity
Accountability
Access



STRATEGIC AREA OF FOCUS: CUSTOMER CONVENIENCE AND PERSONALIZATION

Goal 1: Engage with the community as co-creators in library programs, services, and designs

- Accessibility assessment with direct involvement from patrons with disabilities to evaluate library programs, services, and technology
- Multi-language programs and services, organized with input from the community, town departments, partners, and schools about event specifics
- Translation of library publications, documents, and communications

Goal 2: Explore library service points outside the library building

- Develop pilot programs for satellite library services in various community locations, those already existing, and those being planned
- Investigate the feasibility of increasing user self-services, including library lockers, vending kiosks, and returns

Goal 3: Expand collections and access for multilingual residents

- Build robust collections of print and digital materials in languages spoken by Reading residents
- Advocate to the library network to improve integrated library system capabilities to support multilingual resources and findability
- Support English language learning goals with print and digital material and services at various proficiency levels

Goal 4: Continue to deliver, improve, and evaluate core library services

- Support lifelong learning for residents of all ages by providing collections that inspire, inform, and bring joy through personalized services
- Maintain a welcoming, fun, and engaging environment
- Continue to support non-traditional or low-literacy library users

STRATEGIC AREA OF FOCUS: COMMUNITY LEARNING AND ENGAGEMENT

Goal 1: Support the ESOL community with programs and services that build community connections

- Develop partnerships and programming with community organizations
- Explore other programmatic offerings relevant to ESOL learners

Goal 2: Position Reading Public Library as a space to address community needs and connect with other municipal services

- Strengthen existing relationships and partnerships with municipal departments and organizations
- Support municipal departments and initiatives with library staff participating in town-wide committees and task forces
- Grow the partnership with Reading Public Schools to support the curriculum, encourage routine use of library services, and foster a positive relationship with reading

Goal 3: Continue to offer programming to build new community connections across background, age, or identity

- Assess the impact of library programs through feedback and demographic studies to meet evolving community needs
- Explore a variety of programming formats including passive, meet-up, virtual, and hobby-based

Goal 4: Develop transition strategies for all ages to grow into library services

- Continue to foster relationships with tweens and caregivers through programming and enhancement of tween space
- Develop programs, services, and collections for post-secondary emerging adults.
- Assess the usability of existing teen room to meet the evolving needs of teens

STRATEGIC AREA OF FOCUS: LIBRARY AS SPACE AND PLACE

Goal 1: Adapt library spaces ensuring everyone can explore information and resources with ease.

- Assess the feasibility of broadening library meeting room policy outside of reservations and internal use
- Audit library spaces for library patron accessibility and implement improvements based on results

Goal 2: Implement strategies to increase diversity among library staff and volunteers

- Develop succession and hiring plans that include the strategic recruitment and retention of diverse staff members
- Develop a plan that includes a review and strategic recruitment of diverse volunteers at all levels

Goal 3: Plan for the future

- Position the library as a community resource that is open to all, with a commitment to inclusion and equity, meeting library users where they are
- Adapt and anticipate changes in community trends by reviewing library services to ensure RPL is proactive, flexible, and providing relevant services with appropriate funding
- Respond to and prepare for climate change and other environmental concerns
- Investigate the feasibility of completing the Sustainable Libraries Certification program

Goal 4: Continue enhancement of outdoor library spaces

- Investigate the feasibility of implementing the Ad Hoc Library Landscape Committee recommendations
- Continue to develop functional outdoor spaces that align with the mission and core values

METHODOLOGY

When it came time to start the strategic planning process for the next plan, library leadership reflected on the framework and structure of the FY21-25 plan. The strategic priorities were evergreen, and there were also opportunities to continue the work and develop new goals to meet the evolving needs of the Reading Community.

The planning process began in spring 2024 with a review of recent municipal surveys, including Town of Reading Community Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Needs Assessment, Youth Risk Behavior Survey 2023, ReImagine Reading Survey, RECALC Summary report, and various library related surveys including the work of the Library Landscape Project. The library was a full partner in the Town of Reading Community Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Needs Assessment and several of the recommendations in that report are reflected in the goals. These surveys provided rich insight into the aspirations and needs of Reading's residents pulling from various perspectives and community needs.

These insights provided the framework for community engagement sessions which were held with older adults, Partners and Allies for Inclusive Reading members (PAIR), multi-language learners, municipal stakeholders, trustees and library staff in the spring of 2024. Stakeholders were asked questions about the needs of Reading residents, and explored where the library could make an impact. Staff work groups worked on exercises to develop a new mission statement. They spent time thinking about the strategic priorities and what success would look like when the plan was realized. The Library steering committee finalized the documents.

Together, these insights brought forth the strategic goals to shape the focus of library staff in the next several years. This plan is the culmination of insights and thoughtful dialogue about the needs and aspirations of Reading's residents and the Reading Public Library's ability to make an impact.