

# NEWBURYPORT PUBLIC LIBRARY

*Preserving the Past—Shaping the Present—Inspiring the Future*



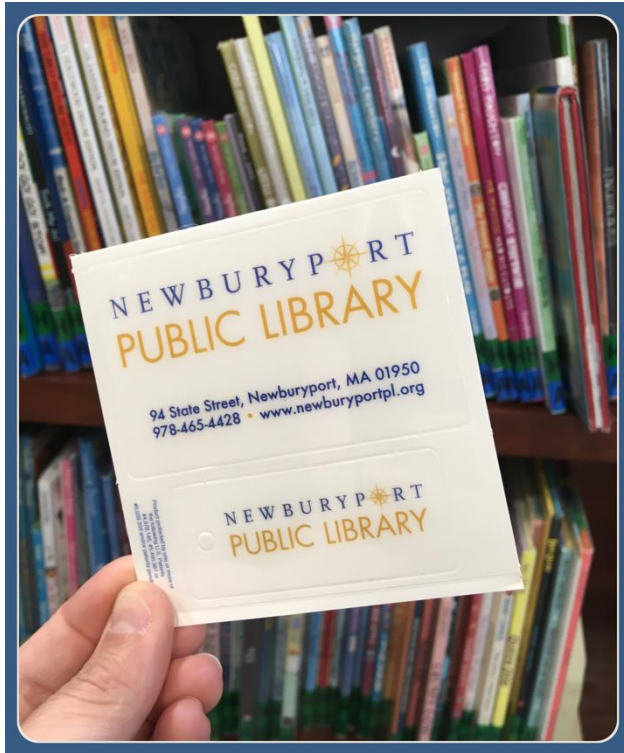
## STRATEGIC PLAN FOR FISCAL YEARS 2026–2029

**Submitted by:**

NEWBURYPORT  
PUBLIC LIBRARY

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# Newburyport Public Library Strategic Plan for Fiscal Years 2026–2029

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## INTRODUCTION

One of the 10 oldest libraries in Massachusetts, the Newburyport Public Library (NPL) serves a small city of around 18,000 people. The Library is a popular local resource that strives to deliver high-quality, high-value programs and services to its community.

While the NPL respects and honors residents' interest in traditional library offerings (e.g., books), it recognizes that libraries are transforming into community spaces—places where people gather to read, work, study, and socialize. Public libraries are evolving learning and entertainment centers that provide access to a diverse array of innovative resources and services.

To position itself as a dynamic, thriving, and valued community asset, the NPL spent the winter and spring of 2024 assessing its status and soliciting community input regarding potential new and improved programs and services. A strategic plan was developed that identifies how the NPL will allocate its resources over the next four years to meet community needs.

The *Newburyport Public Library Strategic Plan for Fiscal Years 2026–2029* is an aspirational and flexible guide to the Library's continued organizational success. The *Strategic Plan* details the planning process and identifies what the Library wants to accomplish. The Strategic Plan is designed to accommodate and adapt to changes that will occur during the four-year term.

Proactively pursuing the *Strategic Plan's* innovative initiatives that expand and enhance its offerings will ensure that the NPL offers interesting and accessible programs, services, and resources well into the future.

Meeting these strategic goals will enable the Library to exceed expectations, expand its user base, and most importantly, remain relevant—to add value—to the lives of the community members it serves.

## THE PLANNING PROCESS

In January 2024, the NPL hired strategic planning consultant Barbara Alevras of Sage Consulting Services to be a guide through the planning process, to facilitate a series of planning exercises, to oversee the collection and analysis of performance data and community feedback, and to assist with drafting the strategic plan document.

After establishing the planning project goals, major activities, key stakeholders, and timeline, the Library developed a detailed planning process (see *Appendix A—Strategic Planning Process Flowchart*).

Throughout the spring of 2024, the Library solicited community feedback via a series of exercises designed to assess its performance and identify future needs. These activities included the following:

- **Two Strengths-Opportunities-Aspirations-Results (SOAR) exercises**
- **Two surveys** (teens and adults)
- **Four focus groups** (parents, Friends of the Newburyport Public Library, social services organizations, and seniors)

In addition to the feedback collected, the Library compiled and reviewed city demographics and NPL statistics. This data enabled the Library to identify trends, summarize the information collected, and incorporate the results into a document that offers a profile of the community and the Library (see *Appendix B–Community and Library Profile*).

The feedback and data were analyzed, synthesized, and summarized. Together they provide the basis for the mission statement, goals, objectives, and tactics (specific tasks) included in this *Strategic Plan*.

## **THE RESULTS**

More than 820 people contributed feedback.

A detailed review and analysis of the feedback received throughout the planning process resulted in the identification of the following seven focus areas:

- **Management & Operations** (staff, policies, procedures, relationships with community partners)
- **Collections** (books, media, digital materials, etc.)
- **Facility** (physical space, furniture, aesthetics, layout, parking)
- **Marketing** (branding, communications, outreach)
- **Programs** (activities, events)
- **Services** (reference, business services, museum passes, etc.)
- **Technology** (devices, tutorials, operational applications)

Numerous creative ideas were received in each planning activity. Where possible, these ideas were incorporated into the Library's *Strategic Plan* and its subsequent *Action Plans*.

Summary reports highlighting trends and ideas derived from each feedback activity are available for review as appendixes to this document (see *Appendixes* on page 7). The target audience(s) and number of participants per feedback mechanism are presented in *Appendix A–Strategic Planning Process Flowchart*.

## **THE PLAN**

### **Community Vision Statements**

The NPL's *Strategic Plan* supports the following prioritized community vision statements:

- Newburyport offers a wide variety of academic, vocational, and life skills–related lifelong learning opportunities.
- Newburyport encourages respectful, strong citizen involvement in the community.
- Newburyport values and promotes local cultural institutions and programs that appeal to all ages.
- Newburyport supports programs and resources that serve all segments of the community.

## NPL Mission Statement

The Newburyport Public Library is a community hub that inspires and empowers all to access knowledge, culture, and social connections.



## Goals and Objectives

Using the community vision statements and mission statement as guiding principles, the NPL developed an ambitious list of strategic goals and supporting objectives. The following goals address needs expressed by both members of the community and the Library staff in the SOARs, focus groups, and surveys. These goals and objectives will enable the NPL to effectively prioritize and allocate its resources (funds, staff time, etc.) during the next four years.

### Goal 1. Provide a safe, welcoming, and accessible space for individuals and families from all segments of the community

- 1.1 Maintain and modify the Library's physical and virtual space to meet the needs of the community
- 1.2 Enable the Library's staff to continually grow in their ability to meet patron needs
- 1.3 Provide spaces for the community to gather, connect, and exchange ideas

### Goal 2. Serve as an information portal to all

- 2.1 Cultivate and maintain a collection of resources that support the informational, cultural, and recreational needs of the community
- 2.2 Provide programs that inform, inspire, and entertain the community
- 2.3 Provide up-to-date and accessible technology for patrons and staff

### Goal 3. Be a visible community partner

- 3.1 Cultivate and maintain collaborative partnerships with local nonprofits, city departments, and cultural institutions
- 3.2 Participate in community festivals, celebrations, and initiatives
- 3.3 Connect the Library to segments of the community that are not able to visit its physical location

## Action Plans

The NPL develops an annual *Action Plan* made up of specific activities and strategies designed to help the Library achieve its strategic goals. The Action Plan captures new initiatives and tasks designed to support the NPL's specific objectives and to address changing needs.

## Evaluation

The Head Librarian will report on progress made toward achieving the *Strategic Plan's* goals and objectives to the Library's Board of Directors at their monthly meetings.

## BOARD OF DIRECTORS' APPROVAL

On September, 18, 2024, the Newburyport Public Library's Board of Directors unanimously approved this *Strategic Plan*. Directors in attendance:

Sean Reardon, Mayor  
James Connolly  
Karen Cullinane  
Gary Gorski  
Christian Hansen

Sarah Holden  
Caroline McCarthy  
Sarah Spalding  
Madeleine Whitten  
Kevin Bourque, *Recording Secretary*

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The NPL *Strategic Plan for Fiscal Years 2026–2029* marks the culmination of eight months of work by the NPL staff and numerous members of the Newburyport community.

The time and support received from the Strategic Planning Advisory Group, the Board of Directors, the Friends of the Newburyport Public Library Board, and the NPL staff is greatly appreciated. The NPL is especially grateful for the detailed feedback provided by the Newburyport community. Their input played a critical role in the process of crafting a plan that addresses residents' evolving needs.

## FINAL THOUGHTS

The Newburyport Public Library is honored to be a place where tradition and innovation intersect. The Library, through its staff and Board of Directors, and with broad community support, remains committed to building community and enriching the lives of everyone it serves. The Library strives to meet patron needs by being an open, adaptable, inclusive, and collaborative institution that offers diverse, meaningful, and engaging programs, services, and collections. This *Strategic Plan* will guide the Library to ensure continued improvement and success in fulfilling its mission.

## **APPENDIXES**

***Appendix A—Strategic Planning Process Flowchart:*** This flowchart visually depicts the Library’s planning methodology, including the timeline, assessment mechanisms, and process participants.

***Appendix B—Community and Library Profile:*** This document presents a demographic profile of Newburyport, the Library’s history, and statistics related to the Library’s services and programs.

***Appendix C—SOAR Summary Results 2024:*** This report documents the results of an environmental assessment of the NPL’s strengths, opportunities, aspirations, and results.

***Appendix D—Community Survey Summary Results 2024:*** This community survey was conducted over three weeks in March 2024 via Survey Monkey. The raw data and narrative comments are presented in addition to summary graphs and charts.

***Appendix E—Focus Group-FONPL Summary Report 2024:*** In April 2024, a focus group with Friends of the NPL representatives was conducted. The report presented the questions posed and a summary of participants’ input.

***Appendix F—Focus Group-Parents Summary Report 2024:*** In April 2024, a focus group with Parents was conducted. The report presented the questions posed and a summary of participants’ input.

***Appendix G—Focus Group-Seniors Summary Report 2024:*** In April 2024, a focus group with Seniors was conducted. The report presented the questions posed and a summary of participants’ input.

***Appendix H—Focus Group-Social Services Organizations Summary Report 2024:*** In April 2024, a focus group with local Social Services Organizations representatives was conducted. The report presented the questions posed and a summary of participants’ input.