



**Wilmington**  
MEMORIAL **Library**

*Community Starts Here*

# **STRATEGIC PLAN**

## **FISCAL YEARS 2021–2025**

*Wilmington Memorial Library, 175 Middlesex Avenue, Wilmington, MA 01887*

## INTRODUCTION

Every five years, the Wilmington Memorial Library (WML) undertakes a comprehensive strategic planning process that enables the Library to assess itself and determine how to best serve the community's evolving needs. This document shares details regarding specific planning activities, community feedback received, and the resulting strategy developed for fiscal years 2021-2025.

Given that 2019 marked the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the opening of the current library facility, it is timely and helpful to put this plan in the context of where we have been, where we are, and where we are going. The world in which we live has fundamentally changed over this time period. In response, library services have evolved from providing transactional exchanges to offering transformative experiences. For example, in September 2018, the Library offered "Revive Civility," an initiative designed to create an awareness of the importance of civil discourse in the current politically divisive landscape.

While the WML offers engaging programs, a welcoming atmosphere, and new initiatives that align with community needs and interests, it should be noted that the facility has not undergone a significant structural renovation since it opened in 1969. In 2018, the Town completed a *Facility Master Plan Report* that re-confirmed that the WML "needs to be significantly expanded." However, due to competing municipal and school priorities, building construction improvements for the Library are not scheduled to be addressed until 2034. Given this timeline, our planning strategies must continue to include ways to creatively maximize the building's limited space to support Library services and programs for the next 20 years.

The planning process has included a review of our mission and core values. In doing so, we confirmed the important role the WML plays in advancing knowledge and fostering community engagement. Thus, this *Strategic Plan* sets a course and a promise to provide services that focus on the kinds of engagement and critical literacies needed for a thriving community. Cognizant of the accelerated change in the world we live in, the WML will be nimble, flexible, and smart as it implements this *Strategic Plan* in the coming years.

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## **WHAT WE DID**

In January 2019, we hired strategic planning consultant Barbara Alevras of Sage Consulting Services to guide us through the planning process and to facilitate meetings and focus groups. We then established our key planning goals, which enabled us to create an inclusive, transparent, and detailed planning process. (see *Appendix A - Strategic Planning Process Flowchart*)

To support our efforts, we invited 12 community members representing diverse Wilmington constituencies to serve on a Strategic Planning Advisory Committee (SPAC). To provide important background information about the Library and the community to the SPAC, we created an orientation document that presented community demographic statistics and an overview of WML services and general library trends. (see *Appendix B – Community and Library Profile 2019*)

### **SPAC Meetings**

During its eight-month term, the SPAC met two times to assist with:

- Developing community vision statements that described the ideal Wilmington.
- Identifying and prioritizing the vision statements that the WML could best support.
- Reviewing the community input data and a presentation on the past, present, and future of the Library.

### **Internal Analysis**

We garnered internal feedback through the following activities:

- S.O.A.R. exercise (strengths, opportunities, aspirations, and results) with staff.
- S.O.A.R. exercise (strengths, opportunities, aspirations, and results) with Trustees, and the Friends of the Library Executive Board.
- A staff survey to assess employee satisfaction and receive feedback regarding potential operational improvements.

### **Community Feedback**

We garnered community feedback through the following activities:

- A focus group with 18 Library Ambassadors (patrons who use the library regularly and help promote our services and programs).
- A focus group with the Community Resources Roundtable (nine representatives from community organizations).
- A teen survey with 164 respondents.

- A town-wide survey that collected 605 responses—a significant (75%) increase in the number of responses received when compared to the 346 responses received five years ago.



Library Associate Lisa Crispin with Middle Grade Book Discussion Group.

## WHAT WE LEARNED

### Community Vision Statements

At its first meeting in January, the SPAC identified attributes of an ideal Wilmington and drafted community vision statements capturing these key features. Then, the committee prioritized the vision statements that the Library could best support and reaffirmed the Library’s mission to serve as an education and community center.

The WML was identified as an organization that can help cultivate a community that supports kindness, diversity, inclusion, and that offers a welcoming experience to all residents. Given changing demographics and the country’s current political landscape, more and more libraries are assuming a leadership role in this area.

## Top Three Community Vision Statements

## Areas of Focus

In reviewing the data gathered from the strategic planning process in the context of the library's mission, we identified two major areas of focus on which to develop our *Strategic Plan*: **Community** and **Knowledge**.

**Community:** WML is a catalyst for an engaged Community. Major engagement areas include:

- **Civic Engagement:** Focuses on providing residents with opportunities to learn about their community enabling them to more fully participate in civic life.
- **Social Engagement:** Focuses on creating a welcoming gathering place for individuals to meet creating a sense of belonging and inclusion.
- **Family Engagement:** Focuses on giving families opportunities to play and learn together.

**Knowledge:** WML provides resources and programs that support critical literacies that result in the accumulation of Knowledge. Critical literacies include:

- **Cultural Literacy:** Focuses on providing individuals with opportunities to learn about their own culture as well as others fostering a greater appreciation of the diverse world at large.
- **Digital Literacy:** Focuses on helping residents effectively navigate the digital world.
- **Life Skills:** Focuses on giving residents the necessary skills to support their health and personal wellbeing throughout their lives.
- **Reading:** Focuses on supporting a literate community by connecting residents of all ages with the joy and benefits of reading.

## Five Pillars of Operations

We identified five pillars critical to effective and efficient operations with plans to strengthen each based on feedback.

Tech Help with Technology Librarian Brad McKenna

The following graphic illustrates the Areas of Focus and the Five Pillars needed to support the effective implementation of the WML's *Strategic Plan*.

### **WHAT WE ARE GOING TO DO**

In reviewing WML's existing Vision and Mission Statements, we determined they remain true and are in line with this *Strategic Plan*. We reviewed and updated our core value statements which will guide us in how we operate daily with our co-workers, those we serve, and the resources for which we are responsible.

## Library Vision Statement

The Wilmington Memorial Library responds to the changing needs of the community, providing valued services and experiences in an inviting facility and connecting residents to their community and the world beyond.

## Library Mission Statement

Wilmington Memorial Library enriches the community by promoting the joy of reading, lifelong learning, and is a welcoming place for quiet reflection and community connection.

## Core Values

### Our Community

- We listen to our community and put the public first.
- We strive for an awareness of and respect for the diverse needs of our community.
- We celebrate the strengths of our community partners and thrive on collaboration.
- We actively seek ways to support an engaged community.

### Our Services

- We are a learning organization that supports creativity and innovation.
- We take pride in what we do and are committed to going the extra mile.
- We support the principles of intellectual freedom.
- We evaluate and assess library services regularly.

### Our Resources

- We strive for a welcoming environment that is openly accessible to all.
- We maintain an inspiring and evolving collection in relevant formats.
- We work to minimize our environmental impact.
- We are committed to making fiscally responsible decisions

## Goals and Objectives

The following list of strategic goals and supporting objectives indicates how the Library plans to support its Community Vision Statements and Mission Statement. Goals 1-3 relate to the Community Service Focus Area. Goals 4-7 address the Knowledge Service Focus Area.



Meeting these Goals and Objectives will enable the Library to effectively prioritize and allocate resources during the next five years.

1.1 Create local digital content and improve access to community information.

1.2 Provide program...

## Annual Action Plans

Each year, the Library Director and staff develop an Action Plan for the following fiscal year. The Action Plan presents a list of activities, which help the Library achieve its strategic goals and objectives. These activities represent new initiatives and/or tasks designed to support specific objectives and improve upon current offerings. While complementary, the Action Plan does not include ongoing operational or administrative activities.

To promote accountability and encourage progress, each activity is assigned to a staff member and includes a target date for completion. However, the Action Plan is flexible; it will accommodate revisions as needed to respond to evolving needs and resource fluctuations. To view the Action Plan for next fiscal year, see *Appendix I – Wilmington Memorial Library Action Plan Fiscal Year 2021*.

## Measuring and Communicating Our Progress

The Library Director will report quarterly on progress made towards achieving the Strategic Plan's goals and objectives to the Board of Library Trustees. In addition, the Library Director's Annual Report to the community will include a strategic plan performance "Report Card" with highlights from the calendar year.

To ensure easy public access, the *Strategic Plan* will be available on the Library's website.

## TRUSTEES' APPROVAL

On September 17, 2019, Wilmington Memorial Library's six-person Board of Trustees approved this *Strategic Plan* unanimously.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

We are grateful for the support we received from the Strategic Planning Advisory Committee, Board of Trustees, Friends of the Library Executive Board, and staff. In addition, we appreciate the feedback the community provided. Residents' input, from users and non-users alike, was invaluable



## APPENDICES

1. **Appendix A—Strategic Planning Process Flowchart:** The flowchart visually depicts the Library’s planning methodology, including the timeline, assessment mechanisms, and process participants.
2. **Appendix B—Community and Library Profile 2019:** This document served as an orientation resource for the Strategic Planning Advisory Committee (SPAC), including a demographic profile of Wilmington and a description of the Library’s services and programs.
3. **Appendix C—Community Vision Statements:** After the SPAC brainstormed a series of community vision statements reflecting the ideal Wilmington, it identified and prioritized the vision statements that the Library can reasonably and positively impact.
4. **Appendix D—SOAR Summary Results 2019:** This report documents the results of an environmental assessment of the WML’s strengths, opportunities, aspirations, and results.
5. **Appendix E—Focus Group Summary Results 2019:** The overview presents highlights of the feedback and program/service ideas generated in two focus groups. Feedback touches on the WML’s collections, services, staff, and includes opinions regarding Library’s value to the community.
6. **Appendix F—Community Survey Summary Results 2019:** The community survey was conducted in March 2019 via SurveyMonkey. The raw data and narrative comments are presented in addition to summary graphs and charts.
7. **Appendix G—Staff Survey Summary Results 2019:** The staff survey was conducted in April 2019 via SurveyMonkey. The raw data and narrative comments are presented in addition to summary graphs and charts.
8. **Appendix H—Teen Survey Summary Results 2019:** The community survey was conducted in March 2019 via SurveyMonkey. The raw data and narrative comments are presented in addition to summary graphs and charts.
9. **Appendix I—Wilmington Memorial Library Action Plan Fiscal Year 2021:** The Library’s *Action Plan* presents specific tasks for completion during the term of the *Strategic Plan*.