



Marlborough  
PUBLIC LIBRARY

2025  
2029

# Strategic Plan

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Approved by the Board of Library Trustees on  
September 10, 2024

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# Note from the Director

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The last time the library embarked on the strategic planning process was 2017. When the plan was published, we had received word that we were on the waiting list for the Massachusetts Public Library Construction Program grant. The focus was on planning for the future with or without a new library. Of course, no one could have predicted that before a new strategic plan was written we would experience a worldwide pandemic that deeply affected our community and changed library services forever. Through those challenges we also received the gift of the community coming together in support of the library construction project. I'm thrilled to be presenting this new 5-year strategic plan with a new building.

In 2023, we opened the new library with almost an entirely new staff. We focused on rebuilding our core services to bring them back to the level they were pre-pandemic and construction. I'm proud to present this new 5-year strategic plan that focuses on building on our foundation of core services. We'll be looking at ways to expand our reach and provide more of what you love about the library. We'll find ways to be creative and innovate. We want to be proactive and responsive to the changing needs of our community and of course provide the best library service we can to the community that supported and invested so much in this new building.

Warmly,



**Sara Belisle**  
Library Director



# Note from the Trustee President

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The new Marlborough Public Library culminated a magnificent commitment to both the city and its citizens. The new facility serves as the first great symbol of an ongoing Main Street revitalization effort, providing a central hub for our community. In rebuilding our public library, Marlborough made a major investment in a public good to serve the citizens of our city and commonwealth. For public libraries provide so much more than a building of books, they are institutions of welcome and wisdom.

New leadership now greets all patrons in our beautiful public space. Opening the doors, sparked this new strategic plan that aims to expand public offerings, services, connections, and community. Our library celebrates of civic engagement, development, and safety. With this plan we hope to inspire our institution and meet the moment for Marlborough and beyond.

Regards,

*Alfred K. Haas III*  
Alfred K. Haas, III

Marlborough Public Library, Board of Library Trustees President



# Our History

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The Marlborough Public Library was established in 1870 with a collection of 2,170 volumes located in City Hall. By 1900 the Trustees wrote that they had been “appealing for more space for ten years, to no avail”. On December 25, 1902, city hall burned to the ground which included the library and the majority of the collection. Fortunately, before that happened the city secured a donation from Andrew Carnegie for \$30,000 to build a new library and the location was secured by a generous donation of land from S. H. Howe, John A Frye, and Dennis and Sophia Witherbee. In the fall of 1904, the new library opened.

In July of 1967, an arsonist set fire to the building and several of the library rooms and their contents were ruined. A rebuilt and expanded library re-opened on April 30, 1969. These renovations included separate art and music, and business rooms, open stacks and an auditorium. The library remained largely unchanged for the next 43 years until a small renovation of the children’s room was completed in 2012 to better meet the needs of Marlborough families. In 2014 a Teen space was created and then enlarged in early 2017.

It was clear that Marlborough needed a bigger, more modern library. In 2017 the city was awarded a grant of \$10,186,626, from the Massachusetts Public Library Construction Program administered by the Massachusetts Board of Library Commissioners. That grant along with the city contributing \$14,594,276 and generous donations totaling almost \$2,000,000 made this new library possible. It was decided that to preserve Marlborough history, the Carnegie portion of the library was to be retained and restored and the library would remain at 35 West Main Street. The city acquired 4 residential properties to allow for this expansion and additional parking.

In 2021 the library moved to a temporary space in the Walker Building to allow construction to begin. Construction began in September 2022 and the new library was opened and dedicated on October 2, 2023. This new library increased in size from 22,300 square feet to 37,967 square feet and increased parking from 23 spaces to 70.



# Vision, Mission, and Values



## Vision:

The Marlborough Public Library will be a central part of what makes Marlborough a great place to live, work, and play.

## Mission:

The Marlborough Public Library provides a welcoming, inclusive space to inform, enrich, and empower people of all ages. The library freely provides a broad spectrum of resources, information, and experiences that encourages personal growth and celebrates our diverse community.

## Values:

We affirm the ALA [Core Values of Librarianship](#), which includes access, equity, intellectual freedom and privacy, public good, and sustainability.

We are also guided by the following values, which help us understand our identity and frame our work:

- We provide a safe space where everyone is respected and valued,
- We prioritize equitable access and ease of access,
- We make intentional and informed decisions,
- We center our decisions around what's best for our community,
- We strive to be trendsetters by being proactive and innovative with our services.

# Planning Process

The Board of Library Trustees and Library Administration agreed to embark on the strategic planning process shortly after the new library opened in October 2023 and concluded August 2024.

The process involved soliciting community feedback via a survey in April 2024 and staff feedback which included a values exercise and a S.O.A.R Analysis (strengths, opportunities, aspirations, results). Using this information along with community demographic data, the following priorities were identified to help guide decision making and ensure the library continues to improve and innovate over the next 5 years.

To keep us on track, yearly Action Plans will be written to ensure we are meeting these priorities.

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# Our Priorities



## Community Connections

We will create a stronger community by meeting our patrons where they are and how they need us in the Library and beyond:

- Expand and enhance relationships with local groups and community partners,
- Seek opportunities to bring library services to the broader community,
- Develop new experiences that reflect and appeal to our diverse community.

“I don't feel judged when I walk through the entrance doors, I feel valued and embraced by a community that values each individual regardless of their backgrounds” - 2024 Scholarship Winner

# Enhance Core Services

We will build on our core services that define us as a trusted community resource dedicated to the public good:

- Build a collection that supports our function as a trusted source for information, reflects the diversity of Marlborough, and meets the educational and recreational interests of the community,
- Connect and educate our community with current and upcoming technology,
- Build on our current electronic collection and improve ease of access.

“A few core services delivered with great care & excellence is the absolute most important thing to me as a community member. So far, the staff is doing a great job in the new location! Thank you!”



# Community Space

We will provide a safe, welcoming and free third place\* for our community where people can learn, play, gather, or simply be:



- Respond to feedback to ensure the library building meets the needs of all members of the community regardless of age, ability or background,
- Collaborate with other city services to promote public safety and welfare,
- Provide opportunities for the community to connect with one another and learn from each other's experiences,
- Celebrate local history and provide opportunities for our patrons to explore Marlborough's rich heritage.

\*A third place is defined as a community outside of your home or workplace.  
<https://www.wbur.org/onpoint/2023/07/26/third-places-strengthen-community-heres-how-we-can-rebuild-them>

“I want to express my gratitude to the librarian working the desk on 08/01/24. She was incredibly kind and helpful to me as I tried to navigate to update my resume. She not only told me about great options, but showed me how to save and pull my docs in a manner different than I was accustomed to. In addition to her shared professional knowledge she was kind, thoughtful, informative, and a gentle guide.”

## Engaged Staff

We recognize Library staff are integral to our success and will foster an internal culture of growth that influences how we learn from and serve the community:

- Support a diverse and enriched staff through professional development and training,
- Leverage staff talents, interests, and skills in innovation and improvement of library programs, services, and outreach.



# Resilience

We will seek opportunities to remain resilient, promote our values, prepare for the unexpected, and grow with the changing needs of the diverse Marlborough community:

- Increase our financial resources by advocating for more funding with the City, pursuing grant opportunities with state and local agencies and foundations,
- Strengthen community ties via partnerships with Marlborough-based companies,
- Promote the value of our collections, space, and services to improve awareness of what the library offers,
- Develop our partnerships with the Marlborough Public Library Foundation and Friends of the Marlborough Public Library.

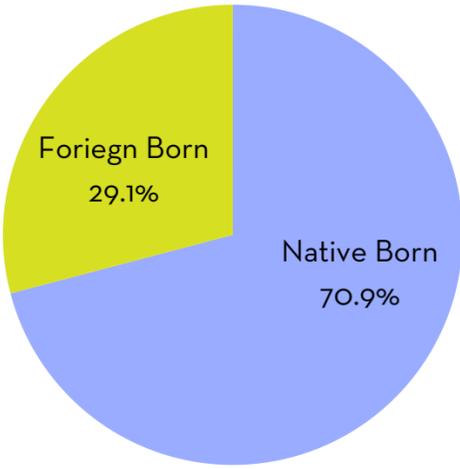


# Community and Library Data

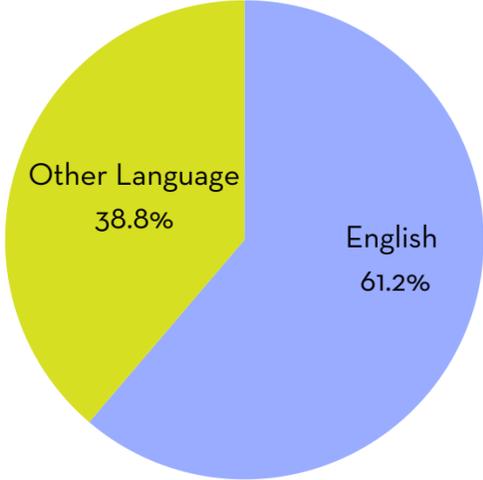
The American Community Survey is showing a growing population along with growing diversity.

Marlborough Population	2018	2022	% Change	2018 % of population	2022 % of population
Total Population	39,776	41,391	+4%		
White	31,389	26,801	-17%	78.9%	64.8%
African American	1,195	1,418	+16%	3%	3.4%
Asian American	2,344	2,138	-10%	5.9%	5.2%
Hispanic/Latino	5,568	7,010	+21%	14%	16.9%
Native American/Alaska Native	45	100	+55%	.1%	.2%
Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander	35	53	+34%	.1%	.1%
Other one race	2,921	5,970	+51%	7.3%	14.4%
Multiracial	1,847	4,911	+62%	4.6%	11.9%

Place of Birth



Primary Language spoken at home



The number of children under the age of 10 is increasing along with ages 20-44 and 75 and older.



Marlborough Population	2018	2022	% Change	2018 % of population	2022 % of population
Total Population	39,776	41,391	+4%		
Under 5 years	2,275	3,126	+27%	5.7%	7.6%
5 to 9 years	1,985	2,287	+13%	5%	5.5%
10 to 14 years	2,197	1,984	-11%	5.5%	4.8%
15 to 19 years	2,414	2,007	-20%	6.1%	4.8%
20 to 24 years	2,225	2,414	+8%	5.6%	5.8%
25 to 34 years	5,955	6,797	+12%	15%	16.4%
35 to 44 years	5,445	5,912	+8%	13.7%	14.3%
45 to 54 years	6,328	5,468	-16%	15.9%	13.2%
55 to 64 years	5,353	5,372	0%	13.5%	13%
65 to 74 years	3,518	3,440	-2%	8.8%	8.3%
75 to 84 years	1,513	1,816	+17%	3.8%	4.4%
85 years and over	568	768	+26%	1.4%	1.9%

**75%**  
of school age children were enrolled in Marlborough Public Schools in 2023-2024

## Library Circulation

Physical Digital



In the last 5 years Ebook borrowing has more than doubled. FY24 circulation numbers included a 6 week period where the library was closed for moving to the new building.

Marlborough Public Library	FY24
Residents with a Marlborough Public Library card	14,631
Number of Staff	19.9 FTE
Library holdings	82,986
Foot traffic	111,981
Average library visits per day	504
Programs	787
Program attendance	8,070
Computer use	9,118
Wi-Fi sessions	15,382

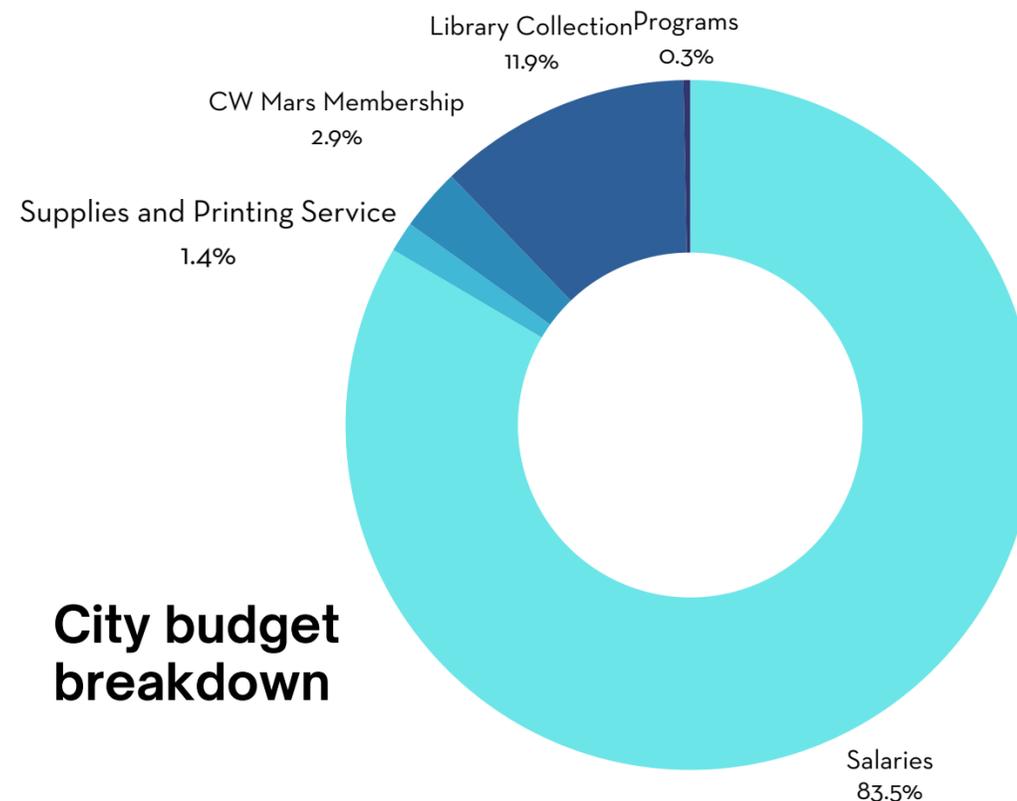
“I am in love with the new architecture design and with the way the staff treats everyone. It’s a pleasure to go to library now.”





The library's operating expenses come from the city property tax, state aid, and trust funds managed by the Board of Library Trustees.

Additional funds for programming and building improvements come from the Friends of the Marlborough Public Library and the Marlborough Public Library Foundation.



The FY25 city budget is \$195,893,154. The library received \$1,263,587 which is .64%

State Aid and Trust Funds are used to supplement the library collection to meet the state required minimum spending, programming, and software support and licensing.

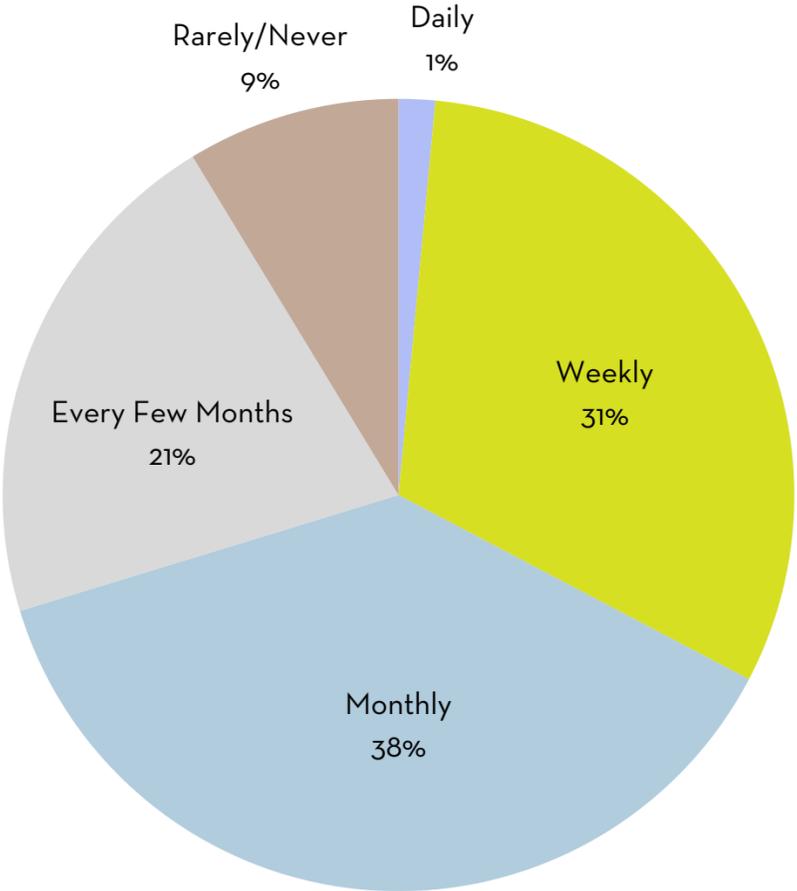
# Community Survey Responses

These pages share some of the data from our community survey. 471 people responded. Percentages for each response are percentages of people who answered the question—not percentage of all survey respondents.

**71%**  
of respondents would use the library if it was open on Sunday.

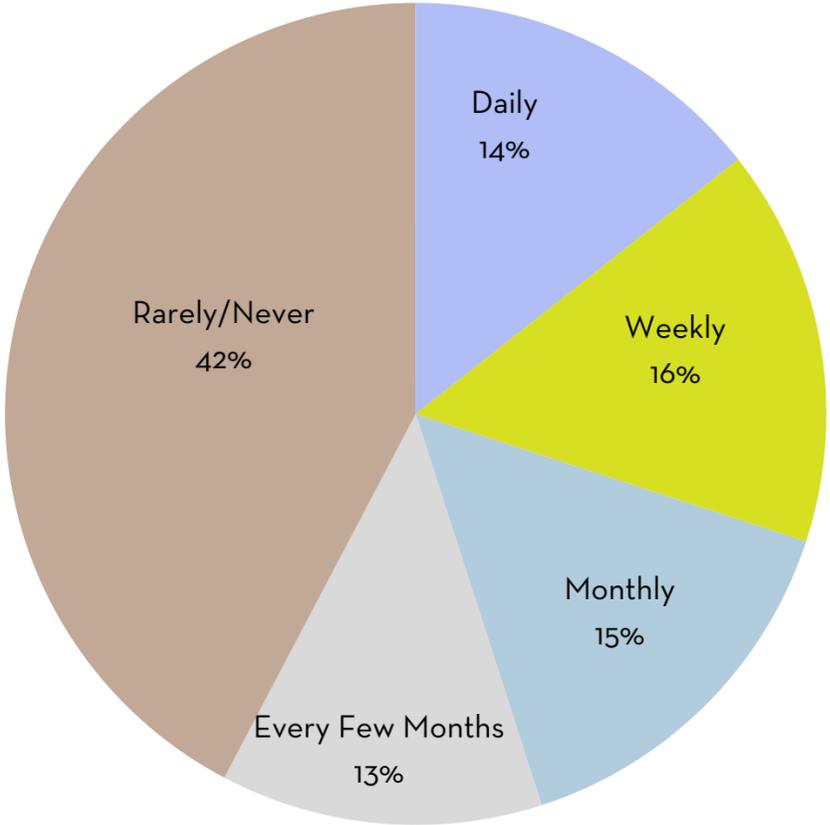


How often do you visit the library?



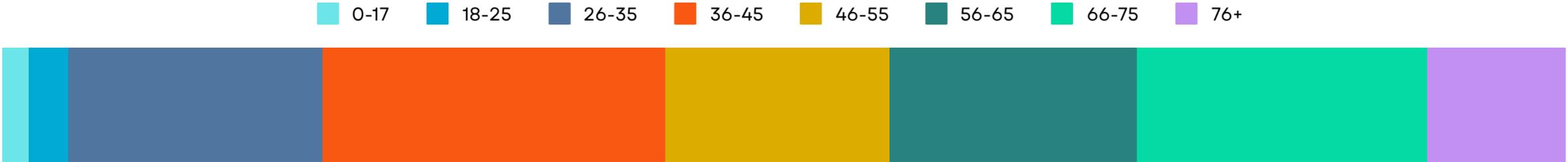
We found that 50% of respondents that don't visit library more than every few months use the digital services on a regular basis.

How often do you use the libraries digital services?



41% of respondents who don't use digital services indicated they don't know what the library offers.

How old are you?



“The updated library is beautiful. I like the monthly newsletter. It is great to see the many activities being offered through the library. Suggestion: Maybe the newsletter could provide more details each month explaining services the library provides.”



When asked what you wish you could borrow from the library, the top answers were tools, puzzles/games/toys, crafting/baking equipment, and technology.

When asked what hobbies or interests the library could support, the top answers were crafts, writing, gardening, and music.

We learned that you're satisfied with most of our services, but we have some room for improvement with our website, adult programming, and various areas of the collection.

Those that filled out the survey overwhelmingly said the most important service the library offers is borrowing physical material.

Finally, we learned that quite a lot of people who filled out the survey don't know all the services that we offer which speaks to the needed improvement in our marketing and communication.

# Thank You!

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Sara Belisle, Library Director  
Morgan Manzella, Assistant Director

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