



THAYER PUBLIC LIBRARY

STRATEGIC PLAN FY24-FY28

Thayer Public Library
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Table of Contents

Introduction.....	3
Acknowledgements	3
Library Information and Highlights.....	4
Planning Process and Methodology	8
Assessment of Community Needs	10
Outcomes	11
Strategic Plan FY24 – FY28.....	12
Mission	12
Vision.....	12
Values.....	12
Strategic Priorities.....	12
Goals	12
Appendix A	15

Introduction

The Thayer Public Library will support the Town of Braintree to be a welcoming, healthy and family-centered community. The library has embarked on this journey to create a place that is dynamic, future-oriented and a place for all to create, connect and instill curiosity across generations. This is a five (5) year plan that sets the purpose and vision that will be adaptable to the ever-changing needs of the community.

Acknowledgements

On behalf of the Library Administration, we sincerely thank the many residents and community members for their participation in the development of Thayer Public Library's strong and relevant Strategic Plan FY2024-FY2028. The contribution of the staff and community members who participated in the meetings and took the time to answer the library's survey speaks to the strong commitment and support of the Braintree residents and cardholders of the Thayer Public Library. We want to thank the Board of Library Trustees for their valued contribution to the development of this plan. We especially wish to thank the Strategic Planning Committee volunteers who met for close to seven (7) hours on two Saturdays to discuss and formulate community needs, both now and in the future.

Strategic Planning Committee

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Library Information and Highlights

Like all public libraries, Thayer Public Library had its challenges during the pandemic, especially in reaching all of the projected goals and outcomes from the library's previous strategic plan (FY18-22). Over the past year, the library continued to evaluate, develop and implement policies and procedures for better customer service; focused on expanding library in-person programs; increased the foreign language collection and continued to purchase materials in both physical and digital formats that were current and relevant to meet the needs of the community. The library also continues to celebrate diversity and provide opportunities to build partnerships to strengthen community connections. The Library Board of Trustees is committed to reevaluating the library services, programs and space to meet the needs of Braintree residents now and in the future.

The library administration would like to thank the staff for its hard work and dedication during the COVID years of uncertainty. The library staff acknowledged the changes that needed to be made and like other libraries, began to pivot their services and navigate and reimagine programs and access for patrons. Despite the library closing its doors, temporarily like other town departments, the library was able to offer 24-hour service through its online catalog, virtual programming, access to eBooks, eAudiobooks, and many online databases. Early on the Thayer Public Library was one of the few OCLN (Old Colony Library Network) libraries that transitioned to curbside service and once open, transitioned to offering evening hours. It was with the support of the Library Board of Trustees and the loyalty of the staff that the library was there for Braintree residents.

Reflecting over the past five (5) years, the library finished a long-awaited renovation of the Children's Room in September 2018. This project fulfills the library's mission of being a "vibrant community space for all ages." Through this renovation, the town showed its commitment to children, families and the community, in understanding how important engaging children and families is to their success, not just for literacy, but also for school readiness and beyond.

In FY21 & FY22, in response to the change created by the pandemic the library responded by analyzing positions, tasks, and optimizing workflow to meet the modifications of the town budget that were affected by the pandemic. One of the positive impacts on the community was going fine free on May 1, 2022, which eliminated overdue fines for late returns of materials. Other highlights included: 1) Additional materials in digital format and a shift in the budget to accommodate the community's needs for reading material; 2) upgraded the shelf checkout machines

for quick and efficient service; 3) planned and implemented a publicity campaign for public awareness, including an e-newsletter, print newsletter, reading lists and YouTube videos to showcase the Library of Things collection; 4) partnered with outside organizations to offer multicultural programs; and 5) continued to investigate and implement programs offering an opportunity for people to feel less isolated and be able to socialize once it was safe to gather.

FACILITIES

- Open 6 days and 64 hours each week for most of the year; closed on Sundays.
- Three levels house Children's, Young Adult, Reference, Periodicals, and Adult Circulation departments. Entire facility fully accessible by elevator.
- Logan Auditorium program/meeting room, available for free to nonprofit groups, and to other organizations for a fee. Maximum capacity is 125.
- Two conference rooms, as well as a study room, available for patron use.
- Popular book sale area maintained by the Friends of Thayer Public Library
- Computers with Internet access and color printing available.
- Photocopiers, scanners, and fax service offered for public use.
- Reference staff provide one-on-one assistance to the public who need help with our technology, databases and use of digital services with mobile devices.
- Wireless Internet access throughout the building.
- Computers for online catalog and self-service checkout offered on each level.
- Local history collection, genealogy databases, and a FamilySearch affiliate library.
- Comfortable seating and quiet study areas are available throughout the building.
- Website includes links to subscription databases, a calendar of events, museum pass reservation page, a Teen Corner, librarian-curated book lists, and more. Website at www.thayerpubliclibrary.org

SERVICES

- 25 well-trained, welcoming staff members work hard to assist patrons with discovering and utilizing the resources we share, and to maintain our collection and facilities.
- Our highly trained professional librarians keep our collections fresh and vibrant. They instruct the public in the use of our online catalog, our print and online resources, and with readers' advisory. Our youth services librarians conduct book talks, story hours, and educational programs. Our reference librarians assist with information queries, research topics and more.

- We are a member of Old Colony Library Network (OCLN), a consortium of 28 libraries stretching south from Quincy to Sandwich and west to Walpole. An OCLN library card is necessary to borrow materials. This card is available for free to any resident of Massachusetts. Proper ID is required. A temporary e-card can be applied for and used immediately for many digital services.
- We provide circulation of materials borrowed directly from our library, and through interlibrary loan. If we do not own a copy of a title, we can order it for free from another OCLN member library, or through our participation in the Commonwealth Catalog, a statewide network of public and academic libraries. The item is then delivered, also for free, to our library, where the patron can pick it up. Returns of almost all materials may be made at any OCLN library. Patrons may place holds on materials online, 24/7, for pick-up at our library during library hours.
- In addition to the numerous digital resources provided to Thayer Public Library cardholders through the Massachusetts Board of Library Commissioners and the Old Colony Library Network, the library offers a large number of digital services to Thayer Public Library cardholders – not just e-books, downloadable audiobooks, and streaming movies, but also reference resources such as Consumer Reports, Ancestry, MorningStar, and ValueLine.
- The library conducts and hosts a growing number of performances, author talks and book signings, concerts, storytimes, arts & crafts programs, book clubs, and more every year.
- For all these services and more it costs a resident of Braintree an average of \$40 per year to support the Thayer Public Library.
- On average, library patrons check out 7 items per visit, for an average savings of \$100 dollars per cardholder by borrowing instead of purchasing.

Annual Statistics from the Annual Report Information Survey (ARIS) FY2023

- 100,000 estimated people annually walk through our library.
- Open 3,022 total hours, including 726 evening and 304 Saturday hours
- 350,876 total collection use in FY2023, included total circulation of 235,339 physical items (books, books on CD, magazines, DVDs, music CDs, video games, and items from our Library of Things collection); 47,221 downloadable content (ebooks, e-audiobooks, and music) used by library cardholders; and 68,316 uses of electronic collections including Hoopla, Ancestry, Consumer Reports, Morningstar, etc.
- Internet computers had a total of over 3500 uses.
- Over 6,000 patrons used free wireless Internet with personal devices.
- Over 500 total programs offered this year including in-person onsite, offsite, virtual, hybrid, and self-directed. Over 12,000 participated or attended.
- Thayer Public Library's Facebook page reached over 2,250 followers.

- 625 follow Thayer Public Library on Instagram.
- 36,814 items went through OCLN delivery system.
- 1,920 hours dedicated to shelving library items.
- 3,022 hours dedicated to 7,412 reference transactions by two Reference Librarians.
- 10,821 registered borrowers.
- 25 staff members, 8 with master's degrees in library science.
- Library Express delivery service for homebound residents (offered in partnership with the Department of Elder Affairs).
- 920 individuals and organizations used the private study room, conference rooms and Logan Auditorium.
- 78 electronic collections/databases with paid subscriptions for patrons to use for free, almost all with access from home, including Hoopla and Kanopy. 14 purchased by Thayer Public Library, 58 by the Commonwealth of Massachusetts, 6 by the OCLN consortium.
- 117 circulation transactions per hour; service desks handled an average of 1,400 items daily.

Planning Process and Methodology

As with all library strategic plans, community feedback is vital to creating a plan that is relevant and reflective of the community's needs. There was a call to action at the beginning of 2023, asking for volunteers to join the Strategic Planning Committee to help chart a path for the library's next five years. The commitment was to attend two meetings facilitated by an outside consultant. Almost twenty (20) answered the call.

Library Director Terese Stano, and Assistant Library Director Laurie Cavanaugh, spearheaded the planning process and led the efforts to convene meetings, prepare statistics and other background information and review feedback from the meetings and survey to provide insights for the new plan. One of the other things they did was to contract with an outside consultant, Deb Hoadley of Hoadley Consulting to help facilitate the meetings, analyze the data and work as a team until the Strategic Plan was completed. The initial meeting was held on January 11, 2023.

The first meeting held was with all library staff. This took place on February 13, 2023. Ms. Hoadley led them through two brainstorming exercises to gather information about the library and the community. The first was the S.O.A.R. (Strengths, Opportunities, Aspirations and Results). The second was a Community Visioning Exercise where they discussed challenges and issues in the community and how the library could play a role in potentially filling the gap. The Board of Library Trustees met the same night and went through the same exercises. Both groups were also asked to give "one word" for how they would want the Thayer Public Library and Braintree to be described 15-20 years from now.

On March 11, 2023, the Strategic Planning Committee met for the first time. There were introductions, and a review of why a library needs a strategic plan. There were a few items the committee was asked to read prior to the meeting. One was the library's current strategic plan, one was a fact sheet about the Thayer Public Library and the other two items were articles related to emerging trends in libraries and how public libraries responded to patrons' needs during the pandemic. The group was then led through the S.O.A.R. about the library and then the Community Visioning Exercise and how the library could play a role in helping the town meet some of the challenges and issues residents encounter now in Braintree. They were also asked to give "one word" they would like to hear people describe Braintree 15-20 years from now. With all three groups (Staff, Trustees and the Strategic Planning Committee), the number one word was "Welcoming". Other top words included: inclusive, equitable, accessible and community.

After these meetings were held, a survey was developed. There was a mix of satisfaction questions, top priorities of what people would like to do in general and at the library as well as open-ended questions about the library and the community. There were 835 responses to the survey. A complete summary of the survey can be found in Appendix A.

The second meeting of the Strategic Planning Committee was April 29, 2023. The purpose of this meeting was to review all the input that had been gathered during the previous meetings and the survey results. The group was also asked to look at the mission statement, vision statement and goals from the current strategic plan and brainstorm how they would improve or change these three things.

On June 7, 2023, there was a meeting with the Library Administration and Ms. Hoadley to review all the information and go over their thoughts on what they would like to see in the plan and any questions they had about the information gathered. Another meeting to review the working draft of the plan was held on July 10, 2023.

The Board of Library Trustees, on September 18, 2023, unanimously approved this plan. Terese Stano, Library Director, submitted the plan to the Massachusetts Board of Library Commissioners (MBLC) in compliance with the minimum standards and regulations for Massachusetts's libraries. Library Administration will report progress in the plan at Trustee Board meetings.

The information gathered from everyone is instrumental in creating a plan that has the community at the center and will guide library services and programs in the near future. The plan is intended to be a working document and be adaptable and flexible enough to withstand the ever-changing landscape of public libraries for years to come.

Assessment of Community Needs

As mentioned above, community members had a chance to volunteer and be part of the Community Planning Group, Library Staff and Trustees were part of the focus groups and there was a Strategic Planning Survey done. It is estimated that almost 1,000 people participated in total.

Based on the feedback gathered, here are the highlights of what people said about the library and what the needs of the community are currently and where the Braintree Master Plan is focusing their priorities for a community vision. A summary of the survey results can be found in Appendix A.

S.O.A.R. Exercise

Strengths

Building

Collection – physical & digital

Staff

Opportunities

Partnerships

Teen/tween space, programs & engagement

Outreach – embedded in community

New audiences – programs

Marketing

Aspirations

Outreach – building expansion, mobile

Space redesign

Broaden expertise and skills sets needed in the future

Results

Teen space

Connections with community and people involved in the library

Budget and money to support projects and staff development

Best library for its size

Increased community and library pride

Highlights:

“Innovative leader”

In time of disaster, library is seen as community leader

People with higher literacy skills have more opportunities, recognition and experience

Community Assessment

Needs

Access to resources

Older adults/marginalized populations need assistance

School/education support

Community Vision Exercise

Welcoming

Everyone has a voice

People have what they need/know where to find it – “Abundance of resources”

Support & value education for all ages

Everyone benefits in terms of mental health (peace, comfort, stability)

Braintree Master Plan – Community Vision

Vision – well-run, picturesque, welcoming, family-centered suburban community

Prioritizes and protects residential neighborhoods

High-quality and competitive public schools, recreation facilities, rich historic buildings, natural resources

Thriving squares and business districts

Community events that instill pride

Open space – programs to reduce carbon footprint

Encourage and value collaborative engagement

Economic growth and ensure fiscal health

Outcomes

The results and outcomes of the following strategic plan are to:

1. Raise the overall satisfaction of the library, especially in those areas identified by the survey as being lower.
2. See and build new connections with community partners (town, school, organizations and businesses).
3. Secure adequate funding to provide the collection, services and programs laid out in the strategic plan.
4. Increase literacy among all ages.
5. Improve staff competencies and knowledge so they can better serve the needs of the community.

Strategic Plan FY24 – FY28

Mission

The Thayer Public Library is an essential resource supporting life-long learning, providing quality services, and creating connections to the community in an accessible and equitable environment for all.

Vision

The Thayer Public Library will be an innovative leader encouraging collaborative engagement of community members where there is a dynamic exchange of resources, knowledge and information supporting growth and enrichment for everyone.

Values

The Thayer Public Library values and reflects the community's needs and will find ways to create, connect and instill curiosity for all.

Strategic Priorities

These priorities incorporate the values of diversity, inclusion, equity, and recognizes the rights of all individuals to have access to resources, services, programs and an exchange of ideas.

1. Welcoming and Sustainable Spaces for All
2. Community Engagement & Outreach
3. Expansion of Resources
4. Workforce and Staff Development

Goals

1. Welcoming and Sustainable Spaces for All

Goal 1.1: Provide modern, accessible and welcoming spaces for library users.

- Investigate space redesign of areas to create spaces where people can both gather and work independently
- Provide dedicated teen space that is safe and welcoming
- Coordinate with the town's findings on ADA compliance to support and implement accessibility for the library.

Goal 1.2: Implement sustainability measures where possible and operate in a fiscally responsible way.

- Explore environmentally sustainable alternatives
- Continue to maintain and utilize the outdoor, green space for library programs and activities
- Partner with organizations and groups whose priorities are aligned with sustainable efforts

2. Community Engagement & Outreach

Goal 2.1: Provide opportunities for collaborative partnerships with individuals and organizations to share their knowledge and expertise to a wider audience

- Actively seek out partnerships to provide diverse programs
- Identify opportunities for individuals to share talents and expand services
- Encourage teen involvement in program planning

Goal 2.2: Expand library's visible presence in the community

- Seek opportunities for staff to participate and promote library services and resources outside the library
- Strengthen connections with town departments, schools and organizations to partner on programs and events
- Continue to promote the library through physical and digital channels

Goal 2.3: Investigate opportunities for extended library service to reach underserved areas of Braintree

- Research areas of Braintree where residents are more isolated and underserved
- Seek possible grant opportunities for providing library resources to areas identified
- Expand homebound program and work with partners to provide the service

3. Expansion of Resources

Goal 3.1: Provide access to an evolving variety of collections, programs, services and technologies based on community needs.

- Provide a diverse, updated, and relevant collection, both in physical and digital formats
- Engage community members to lead diverse programs based on their culture and heritage
- Update and identify funding for existing and emerging technologies
- Review current library services to ensure equal access for all

Goal 3.2: Partner with town departments, schools, local organizations and businesses to broaden the scope of resources available to the community

- Convene a group of interested parties to investigate a centralized option to promote resources in a centralized, accessible way
- Develop intergenerational programs where information and knowledge is shared
- Create opportunities for creative and innovative educational experiences for students, especially tweens/teens

Goal 3.3: Support Braintree's efforts to create thriving businesses and economic growth

- Partner with business organizations to create stronger networks
- Seek ways to continue to demonstrate the value of the library to the business community

4. Staff Development

Goal 4.1: Develop an inclusive team culture

- Foster a culture where diversity and inclusion is expected and valued to provide exceptional customer service to all
- Evaluate organizational structures and workflows for efficiencies and best practices
- Recognize talents and strengths of staff to match future work expectations

Goal 4.2: Provide professional development opportunities

- Support learning and professional growth of all staff
- Empower staff to seek out trainings and opportunities to strengthen their capacity for leadership

Appendix A

These are the summary results of the survey. The survey was distributed in print and online. It was posted on the library's website, on Facebook, and mentioned in the library's email newsletter. There were bookmarks with a QR code for patrons and flyers with the QR code for easy access to it online. It was also emailed out to library cardholders. This email may have skewed some of the responses, as they all use the library.

Total responses: 835

Q1: Do you use the library?

Yes	96.98%
No	3.02%

Q2: If you do visit the library, please rate your satisfaction with the following services provided by the library.

Top 5 areas of high satisfaction were:

Helpfulness and friendliness of library staff	94.94%
Ease of finding materials in the library	88.70%
Availability of materials I want	79.33%
Adult print collection (ages 18+)	79.10%
Downloadable collection (eBooks and eAudiobooks)	51.25%

The top areas that had less satisfaction were programs for all ages, especially adult programs. People also wanted to see more newspapers and magazines in the library, as well as more items in the Library of Things.

Q3: How familiar are you with the following services?

Most people were not familiar with any of these services and need to be marketed and promoted more in the coming year(s).

1. Library of Things – Borrow items ranging from a light therapy lamp, blood pressure monitor, and VHS to DVD converter for adults to programmable robots, balance board, and “wobble seat” for kids. **(73.08% didn't know the library had this service)**
2. Gale Courses and The Great Courses – Go at your own pace with college-level courses and live or recorded instructors on 100+ subjects including writing and publishing, computer skills, and more. **(81.62% didn't know the library had this service)**

3. The New York Times – Free access codes to New York Times Digital Edition, New York Times Games, and New York Times Cooking to get 72-hour access any time you want. **(77.97% didn't know the library had this service)**

Q4: What local activities would you participate in or attend either at the library or in the community? (Check all that apply)

Community events/festivals	71.03%
Lectures or presentations on a topic	52.34%
Interest Groups (writing group, gaming, book club, knitting, investment club, etc.)	45.13%
Arts (learning techniques or more about music, art, etc.)	42.46%
Outdoor activities	41.39%
Exercise/health activities	41.12%
Historical programs	39.92%
Volunteering	38.99%
Performing Arts	36.18%
Educational opportunities (school or college type classes)	35.91%
Sports	20.43%

People mentioned cooking programs/classes and computer instruction the most in the comment section.

Q5: What is most important to you when you think about the library as a place to visit? (Please rank in order of importance 1 being most important.)

Quiet space to read	69.47%
Space to work or study	65.00%
Space to hold organization/community meeting	22.24%
Space to be creative or discover something new	18.82%
Space to gather and connect with people	17.24%
Space for tweens/teens	7.24%

Q8: When you think of the *community of Braintree*, what three words would you use to describe it *now*?

Braintree - NOW



Q9: When you think of the *community of Braintree*, what three words would you like to describe Braintree in the *future* (5, 10, 25 years from now)?

Braintree - FUTURE



Q10: Is there anything else you would like to share when thinking about the future of the Thayer Public Library?

- Generally everyone is positive about the library
- People value the library
- Need to work on teen/tween programs, space, collections
- Programs in general for all ages could be improved