

# Public Library of Brookline Strategic Plan: FY 23-27

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## **Vision Statement**

Inspiring Ideas, Enriching Lives, Creating  
Community

## **Mission Statement**

The Public Library of Brookline promotes discovery, connection, and opportunity for all residents. Through our diverse resources and innovative programs, we aim to enrich the lives of our citizens through free access to information in many different media and formats. We are a cultural destination and a site for learning and recreation, as well as a place where people come together to exchange ideas. We strive to be both a cornerstone of our community and a gateway to explorations of a wider world.

## **Core Values**

### **The Public Library of Brookline is committed to:**

- Provide free access to information to all members of our community
- Serve the needs and interests of our residents through our collections, technologies, programming, and services
- Cultivate learning, literacy, and intellectual and cultural enrichment
- Provide a forum for lively and open exchange of ideas
- Collaborate with other Town institutions and organizations, as well as other libraries, to responsibly and efficiently serve our patrons, enrich our collections, and maintain our facilities

## **Executive Summary**

The Library continues to thrive on the heels of a more than two year long pandemic. The combination of the pandemic and the burgeoning social justice revolution led the staff and Trustees to examine our policies and procedures in an effort to make sure we are engaging in best practices with regards to equity, diversity and inclusion. As we all try to embrace, understand, and accept the new world we live in, with COVID reaching endemic status, and the world waking up to the need to work harder to serve all citizens with parity, we have examined our previous strategic plan in an effort to move more swiftly and efficiently towards our new reality. Brookline, as a community, has always led its civic cohort through exemplary practices concerning the environment, financial management and practices, education, and library services. In creating the next Strategic Plan, we knew we had to take some giant steps forward in all those areas, and to add a more intense focus on racial equity, diversity, and inclusion.

We are proud to present the Public Library of Brookline Strategic Plan: FY2023-FY2027.

**Sara Slymon**

**Library Director**

## **Key Themes & Strategic Principles**

### **User Experience**

**The Library strives to meet you where you are. Through welcoming and comfortable public spaces and an engaging digital environment, we provide access to a broad spectrum of resources. We provide friendly service and personal support for our patrons as they search for information, literature, and entertainment.**

- **Priority:** Create a culture of exemplary customer service, where all patrons are given the same quality of helpful attention in person, by phone, or online.

- **Priority:** Take Library services and collections out into the community through attendance at community events and programs, visits to local organizations, and home delivery.

**Priority:** Provide the latest in virtual services, online resources, and digitized local history collections, maximizing the universal availability of as many Library collections and services as possible.

- **Priority:** Evaluate and improve the current facilities to meet the needs and wants of the community through opportunities for hands-on enjoyment, comfortable gathering spaces, small group and study rooms, labs for digital instruction, all in a clean, bright environment with clear wayfinding tools. Creatively re-purpose spaces to meet these needs.

### **Collections**

**We are committed to traditional formats and future innovations. We hold intellectual freedom, access to diverse perspectives, and materials which support the interests and needs of the community among our highest values.**

- **Priority:** Provide access to traditional and innovative formats to meet users needs both in and out of the library through book groups, author talks, film festivals, readers advisory, and book displays.

- **Priority:** Coordinate ease of access to and preservation of the art, artifacts, manuscripts, and other unique historical content in our collections, sometimes known as “hidden collections”. Highlight resources that illuminate the uniqueness of Brookline’s history.

- **Priority:** Constantly assess current digital content models and engage in horizon scanning for the next best content provider. Adapt to ever changing methods of access and content delivery to make materials available to patrons.

- **Priority:** Facilitate access to robust world language, career, English Language Learning (ELL), citizenship, and literacy collections

## **Community Connections**

**We invite the community to educate us about their needs and interests, and in response, we strive to provide services and opportunities to learn, enjoy, and collaborate.**

- **Priority:** Utilize strong, modern, and effective marketing and promotional tools to advertise the wealth of library services to current users and non-users. Fully express what the library has and what the library does in a way that can be heard and understood.
- **Priority:** Connect patrons to resources through innovative approaches online and in person.
- **Priority:** Aggregate community information from town and local agencies, and partner creatively with those agencies to provide the greatest depth of service to our patrons.
- **Priority:** Promote civic involvement and discussion

## **Learning and Culture**

**We nurture the love of learning, literacy, and intellectual curiosity. We cultivate opportunities for individuals to fulfill their personal needs and goals.**

- **Priority:** Provide and promote multicultural and multigenerational programming ·

**Priority:** Encourage the dissemination and enjoyment of arts and culture · **Priority:**

Develop educational programming and resources to help patrons learn. · **Priority:**

Emphasize and highlight specialty staff skills through diverse services

## **Innovation & Technology**

**We are responsive to the ongoing changes in information services. We are committed to assisting people in using and exploring new technologies. We strive to keep pace with advancements in technology-based user services.**

- **Priority:** Continually strive to provide access to the most useful and innovative, technology, equipment, and tools

- **Priority:** Improve and stabilize WiFi and Broadband Internet access throughout the Town
- **Priority:** Develop technology training , basic and advanced computer skills, mobile device training, online ELL & citizenship skills, job skills/career development, and micro-credentialing

### **Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Justice**

**Priority:** Ensure that Library buildings, services, programs, and collections meet the highest levels of accessibility.

- **Priority:** Develop outreach to serve the underserved, including, but not limited to, patrons living with mobility, language, or socio-economic difficulties.
- **Priority: Ensure Library staff and affiliated boards have access to information related to, and regularly complete training on, Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) priorities and initiatives**

**Priority: Build, support, and retain a diverse Library staff and affiliated boards**

**Priority: Ensure collections/services represent the diverse identities/perspectives of our community and the world at large.**

Priority: Review and amend library policy and protocols to align with best practices of inclusion and equity for all library patrons. Actively seek to change practices that are exclusionary.

### **Trustee Committee**

Matthew Shakespeare, Chair

Karen Livingston

Kristin Hung

Sassan Zelkha

### **Steering Committee**

Sara Slymon, Library Director

Roy MacKenzie, Reference Supervisor

## **Staff Committee**

Ricky Sirois, Coolidge Corner Supervisor

Lily Weitzman , Reference Librarian II

Sebastien Sulser, Library Assistant III

Percival Salazar, Library Assistant II

Adrian Ortega, Library Assistant I

Macy Davis, Library Assistant I

Rhonda Mah, Chinese Language Librarian

## **About the Public Library of Brookline:**

### **Brookline Public Library Brookline, Massachusetts**

#### **Organization of the library as an entity, notable advocates**

The Library was the first to be organized in Massachusetts under May 1851 state legislation allowing communities to tax themselves for such purposes. In a vote at the March 30, 1857 Town Meeting, the citizens of Brookline established a free library. Among the prominent patrons and advocates of this institution at the time were William I. Bowditch, an abolitionist and Underground Railroad conductor; Frederick Hedge, a Unitarian minister; Edward Atkinson, businessman, abolitionist and inventor of the Aladdin oven; James S. Whitney, president of Metro Steamship Company; and Amos A. Lawrence, abolitionist and industrialist. In honor of benefactor John L. Gardner, the Art and Music Room was named Gardner Hall.

#### **Building Improvements Over the Years/ Branches**

The Library currently has three locations: Brookline Village, Coolidge Corner, and Putterham. All three locations have had renovations and improvements made over the years. The main branch of the Library was dedicated on November 17, 1910 and is the second on the site replacing an 1869 mansard roofed building. Significant remodeling happened in 1970 and again in 2003. The latter renovation was partially funded by a Massachusetts Board of Library Commissioners grant. Notable improvements during that work include refurbishing the oak-paneled reading room and marble columned entryway and restoring the balustraded terrace. The wings, which had been closed stacks, opened up 18,000 square feet of public space and corrected oversights in mobility access. The third floor added staff offices, break areas, and retained Hunneman Hall for community use. The Brookline Preservation Commission presented the Library with a Preservation Award and usage increased over 20% helping to make the Public Library of Brookline the third most heavily used public library in Massachusetts.



Putterham, located in Chestnut Hill, was established in a storefront in 1948 until its current building was constructed in 1961. It's our first branch to have solar panels, which were installed in 2011. The whole library was refurbished in 2009-2010. In 2018, the Putterham Branch renovated its grounds and garden in accordance with the Preservation Department requirements for an historic site. Brookline artist Jeremy Kindall designed and installed a concrete statue at this time, which was dedicated to Barbara Warner, Putterham Branch Librarian from 2002 to 2013.

Coolidge Corner, established in 1903, had several locations until 1927. The current location at 31 Pleasant Street was purchased by the Town for the Library. The interior remained as in its original format until the Library planned the current facility in 1956 and had modern renovations in 2018. Notable foreign language collections, particularly Russian and Chinese titles, books, magazines, and AV media. Coolidge Corner features a triptych painting by street artist, Caleb Neelon, donated by Library Director, Sara Slymon in 2016.

### **Programming and Departments**

Since its inception, the Brookline Public Library has been a center of the social and cultural life of Brookline. In addition to the services provided in the Library, it also established school and social welfare libraries, outreach programs in the public school, deposit branches, book delivery to servicemen during the wars, and services to the homebound.

Brookline Village's dedication to youth service space started in 1890 when a separate reading room exclusively for children was established and expanded to include a reference room with a dedicated librarian in 1899. With the 2003 renovation, the space doubled in size, a child-sized door was added at the entrance to the new children's room, and a large multi-purpose room (The Rabbit Hole) created for story hours and other activities. In 2018, the adult collection was consolidated on the first floor so that the whole ground floor could be used for Youth Services. The decision hinged on giving younger patrons the space for browsing, reading, and activities while ensuring quieter adult-centric spaces as well.

The Library Trustees started a Programming Committee in 2012 to support library activities that will engage Brookline's many different populations, ages and interest groups and foster a sense of community. Some successful programs have been Brookline Reads, the annual community reads program featuring authors William Landay, Celeste Ng, and Colson Whitehead. Trustee special events have included "An Evening With ..." featuring Dan Brown, Dennis Lehane; Jeremy Sewall, Jessica Shattuck. Recurring events developed and maintained primarily by library staff have been the miniature golf Tee Off and Harry Potter celebrations- both take over the whole library for the event; marching in the Boston Pride Parade; Ongoing programs such as English Language Learning, technology tutoring, and a maker's space (ideaSPACE). In 2017 Liz Nofziger was the inaugural Artist in Residence, sponsored by Friends of the Library. At the end of her five month residency her project produced 16 temporary and one semi-permanent public arts work throughout the main branch. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, many programs that had been in person moved to virtual in 2020 and the budding ideaSPACE programming has expanded to include take home craft kits; virtual storytime and exercise classes (Tai Chi, yoga, QiGong), and book groups.

### **Associated Groups**

The Library has been the home to many Brookline organizations: the Brookline Library Music Association; the Brookline Bird Club; the Brookline Art Association; the Brookline Education Society and the Brookline Civic Association. The Brookline Historical Collection, with photographs and archival material, was established in 1894. Friends of the Brookline Public Library, established in 1981, run book sales and sponsor programs for the community and staff enrichment. Incorporated in 1999, the Brookline Library Foundation carries on fundraising to support Brookline libraries.

### **Notable Community Members**

Over its lifetime, the Brookline Public Library has encouraged, molded, inspired, and nurtured many important icons of local, regional, and national culture. These people have not only played a role in the community, but have also contributed to our nation's history. They include landscape architects Charles Sprague Sargent and Frederick Law Olmsted, Senior and Junior; art world patron Isabella Stewart Gardner and sculptor Theo Ruggles Kitson; abolitionists William I. Bowditch and Edward Atkinson; film-makers William A. Wellman and the Maysles brothers; musicians Arthur Fielder and Roland Hayes; social activists Minna Hall and Harriet Lawrence Hemenway (founders of the Massachusetts Audubon Society); politicians John F., Robert F., and Edward M. Kennedy; scientist Percival Lowell; Nobel winners George Minot, William Murphy, and Norman F. Ramsay; personalities Mike Wallace and Conan O'Brien; writers Olive Prouty, Amy Lowell, Jane Holtz Kay, Ellen Goodman and Arthur Golden; actress Jane Alexander, vaudevillian B.F. Keith; and sports executives Theo Epstein and Bob Kraft.

### **Partnerships**

The Brookline Public Library joined the Minuteman Library Network in 1997, providing access to the collections of 41 area libraries. It houses historical Brookline collections including photographs, manuscripts, books, and artifacts, and offers programs for residents of all ages. In 2007, the library was one of the founding members of the Digital Commonwealth, a consortium of cultural heritage institutions dedicated to sharing archival material on a free, digital platform. The Special Collections continues to prioritize digitizing otherwise inaccessible records of the community's history. High school yearbooks, street listings, a selection of photographs and manuscripts were first to be added. A recent project has been scanning Brookline-specific newspapers in a fully searchable database, accessible through the Library's website or directly from a search engine. As a vital community center, the Library has continued to provide excellent service while maintaining the delicate balance of preserving its rich history and embracing new technologies of the future.

Prepared by Brookline Library History Committee  
January 2006, updated 2021

## About Brookline:

The Town of Brookline, Massachusetts is a suburban community completely surrounded by the City of Boston. Founded in the 17<sup>th</sup> century, Brookline has a rich history with cultural, military, and intellectual depth, and was originally known as Muddy River, a fact still reflected in the Town Seal. Through the centuries, Brookline continued to grow and thrive.

*As of the census of 2020, there were 63,191 people, 24,436 households, and 12,233 families residing in the town. The population density was 8,754.4 people per square mile (3,247.3/km<sup>2</sup>).*

*There were 25,963 housing units at an average density of 3,889.6 per square mile (1,501.9/km<sup>2</sup>). The racial makeup of the town was 72.0% White, 68% white not hispanic or latino, 3.2% Black or African American, 0.2% Native American, 17.3% Asian (6.7% Chinese, 2.6% Indian, 2.3% Korean, 1.8% Japanese), 0.0% Pacific Islander, 1.01% from other races, and 5.1% from two or more races. Hispanic or Latino of any race were 6.8% of the population (0.9% Mexican, 0.8% Puerto Rican). (Source: 2010 Census Quickfacts)*

*There were 24,436 households out of which 21.9% had children under the age of 18, living with them, 56% were married couples living together, 8% had a female householder with no husband present, and 33% were non-families. 36.7% of all households were made up of individuals and 10.1% had someone living alone who was 65 years of age or older. The average household size was 2.4 and the average family size was 2.86.*

*In the town the population was spread out with 19% under the age of 18, 11.7%, from 18 to 24, 37.3% from 25 to 44, 21.9% from 45 to 64, and 16% who were 65 years of age or older. The median age was 33.7 years. For every 100 females there were 82.6 males. For every 100 females age 18 and over, there were 79.1 males.*

*The median income for a household in the town was \$117,326, and the median income for a family was \$92,993. Males had a median income of \$56,861 versus \$43,436 for females. The per capita income for the town was \$71,536. About 4.5% of families and 12.3% of the population were below the poverty line, including 5.3% of those under the age of 18 and 7.5% of those ages 65 and older.*

*Serving as a residential zone for nearby academic and medical institutes such as Harvard Medical School and Boston University, the town of Brookline was reported as the city with the most doctoral degree holders (14.0% of total population) in the United States.” –Wikipedia Brookline prides itself on its status as a Town and the vitality of its citizen led representative government.*