

A Strategic Plan for Library Service



Fiscal Year 2023 – Fiscal Year 2027



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NOTE: To reduce the file size, the appendices are not included in this version, but can be made available on request.

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This plan was approved by vote of the Billerica Public Library Board of Trustees at their September 12, 2022 meeting.

Introduction and Methodology

The following pages document the strategic goals and actions that the Billerica Public Library envisions will be key to accomplishing its mission over the course of the next five years. It centers on seven areas of focus that emerged from the planning process: collections, services, programs, spaces, technology, promotion & outreach, and fundraising & advocacy. This plan also includes updated mission, vision, and values statements that reflect the library's roles, shared beliefs, and aspirations.

The plan has been developed to meet the requirements of the Massachusetts Board of Library Commissioners. The creation of this plan was overseen by a Planning Committee formed in January 2022 comprising the following staff:

- Joe St. Germain, Library Director
- Kathleen Kenny, Assistant Library Director
- Henry Barker, Community Services & Adult Programming Librarian
- Lisa Botte, Supervisor of Technical Services
- Lisa Gadbois, Supervisor of Youth Services
- Sharon Lomison, Supervisor of Circulation Services & Homebound Delivery Coordinator
- Abby Sheikh, Supervisor of Technology Services

Step 1: Gathering Data

To start, the Committee worked to develop a plan and timeline for gathering relevant data. First, a Community Survey was designed based on the last plan's survey and incorporating aspects of surveys done by nearby libraries in Andover, Westford, and Carlisle. The survey was offered both online through SurveyMonkey and on paper from May 1, 2022 through June 15, 2022. The survey link was shared on social media, the library's website, the online catalog, at a display in the entry way, at all service desks, at the Billerica Council on Aging and Recreation Departments, on checkout receipts, and in e-newsletters. We also promoted the survey at two scheduled visits each to two town Market Basket grocery stores on May 28, 2022 and June 3, 2022 as well as at our local Farmer's Market on June 13, 2022. Results can be found in Appendix A.

Second, an anonymous staff survey was designed based on the last plan's staff survey. This survey, launched on May 1, 2022, asked staff to share their perspective on what the library's current strengths and opportunities are, what they would like to see the library aspire to, and what they think it will take to remain successful over the next five years. We had strong participation in this survey, which closed on May 31, 2022. Staff were also given the option to participate in a survey to share their input on the library's vision and mission statements from the last plan and what changes (if any) they would like to see. Results can be found in Appendix B and Appendix C.

Third, a focus group facilitated by Massachusetts Library System Consultant Kristi Chadwick was held on May 9, 2022. This focus group included 15 participants representing staff, patrons, the Family Friends of the Billerica Public Library, the Billerica Public Library Foundation, and the Library Board of Trustees. During the focus group, participants brainstormed the library's strengths, opportunities, aspirations, and results. Results can be found in Appendix D.

Fourth, Kathleen Kenny conducted an environmental scan using data collected in FY19 and reported in the FY20 ARIS and Financial Reports, the last fiscal year before the pandemic impacted library services differently in every community. This scan examined how the Billerica Public Library compared to 12 other libraries of similar population size that only had one library branch. Results can be found in Appendix E.

Additionally, data was gathered from two program surveys run in 2022. An Adult Program Survey run in January 2022 gave insight as to what types of programs adults were looking to see at the library. A Teen Program Survey run in April 2022 gave insight into the kinds of programs teens were hoping to see offered at the library. Results can be found in Appendix F and Appendix G.

Step 2: User Needs Assessment & Vision/Mission

Once this data was collected, the Planning Committee took time near the end of June 2022 to review the gathered data and develop a User Needs Assessment. The User Needs Assessment, included in this plan, revealed key areas of focus:

- Collections
- Services
- Programs
- Spaces
- Technology
- Promotion & Outreach
- Fundraising & Advocacy

The Planning Committee also used gathered data, the User Needs Assessment, and the identified areas of focus to develop vision, mission, and values statements.

Step 3: Goals and Activities

Gathered data, the User Needs Assessment, the areas of focus, and the vision, mission, and values statements were shared with all staff. Department Heads were tasked with meeting with their staff to develop goals and actions their department may wish to undertake in the next 5 years within the areas of focus. This work was done over the course of July 2022.

Following those meetings, Department Heads met with the Library Director to review identified goals and actions. The Library Director then worked to create a list of goals and actions for the plan, which were then reviewed by the Planning Committee in August 2022. The final document was presented to and approved by the Library Board of Trustees at their September 12, 2022 meeting.

Acknowledgements

This plan was truly a team and community effort. I would like to thank the Planning Committee members: Kathleen Kenny, Assistant Library Director; Henry Barker, Community Services & Adult Programming Librarian; Lisa Botte, Supervisor of Technical Services; Lisa Gadbois, Supervisor of Youth Services; Sharon Lomison, Supervisor of Circulation Services & Homebound Delivery Coordinator; and Abby Sheikh, Supervisor of Technology Services, for all their thoughtful insight and assistance.

I would also like to thank our focus group participants, which included the Planning Committee as well as Jessica Burwood, library patron; Lori Femia, library patron; Elizabeth Gottmann-Hanrahan, President of the Family Friends of the Billerica Public Library, Board Member of the Billerica Public Library Foundation, and member of the Library Board of Trustees; Kara Kent, library patron; Kathy Kilroy, library patron; Michelle Ovalle, member of the Library Board of Trustees; Katelyn Palomaki, library patron; and Ellen Rawlings, Chair of the Library Board of Trustees and Board Member of the Billerica Public Library Foundation. Their contributions were very helpful in formulating this plan. I also wish to thank Kristi Chadwick, Consultant for the Massachusetts Library System, for facilitating the focus group.

My sincere appreciation is also extended to the staff of the library who contributed their thoughts and ideas, and to our patrons for their honest assessment of our collections, programs, and services.

Joe St. Germain
Library Director

Community Profile

Billerica is a suburban community in Middlesex County located approximately 20 miles north of Boston and 6 miles south of Lowell. The town is directly accessible to Route 3 as well as in close proximity to Interstates 495 and 95. The US Census Bureau estimates that the town has a population of nearly 42,000 residents.¹ Billerica is just over 26 square miles and is comprised of several sections such as East Billerica, North Billerica, Nutting Lake, Pinehurst, Rio Vista, River Pines, Riverdale, and Riverside.²

Historical Background

Billerica was founded in 1655 and has a cherished history as a contributor to the American Revolution, which is still celebrated every year at the annual Yankee Doodle Homecoming Parade. For much of its early history Billerica was a farming town, though some mills were established along the town's water sources during the 19th century. In the early 20th century, summer cottages were popular in the areas of Pinehurst and Nutting Lake and a number of these cottages became permanent residences during the Great Depression.³

Between 1971 and 2005, Billerica underwent substantial residential, commercial, and industrial development, expanding from 5,290 developed acres to 9,832.⁴ During nearly the same time period, 1960-2010, Billerica's population rose almost 125%, expanding from 17,867 to 40,243.⁵

Population Characteristics

Billerica's current population is estimated to be 41,453 based on the 2021 Census Bureau's Population Estimates Program.⁶ According to projections by the UMass Donahue Institute, Billerica should see a slight decline in population of about .04% from 2020-2030.⁷

The 2020 America Community Survey 5-Year Estimates indicates that the median age of residents is 41.5, with over 81% being 18 or older and nearly 16% of the population

¹ "QuickFacts Billerica town, Middlesex County, Massachusetts," United States Census Bureau, accessed June 23, 2022,

<https://www.census.gov/quickfacts/fact/table/billericatownmiddlesexcountymassachusetts/PST045221>.

² Northern Middlesex Council of Governments, *Town of Billerica Housing Production Plan 2015-2019*, v.

³ Billerica Historical Society, *Images of America Billerica* (Great Britain: Arcadia Publishing, 2003), 8.

⁴ Northern, *Housing Production Plan 2015-2019*, 48.

⁵ Northern, *Housing Production Plan 2015-2019*, 5.

⁶ "QuickFacts Billerica town, Middlesex County, Massachusetts."

⁷ Northern Middlesex Council of Governments, *Town of Billerica Housing Production Plan 2021-2025*, 7.

being at or over the age of 65.⁸ US Census data indicates that 81.7% of the population self-identifies as White, 7.2% of the population self-identifies as Asian, 5.3% of the population self-identifies as Hispanic or Latino, 5% of the population self-identifies as Black or African American, and 2.8% of the population self-identifies as Two or More Races. Additionally, US Census data estimates that 94.2% of residents 25 or older have at least a high school diploma and 37.9% have at least a bachelor's degree.⁹

Public Education

Billerica's Public School System comprises 5 elementary schools, 2 middle schools, and 1 high school. In the 2021-2022 school year, 4,734 students enrolled in these schools along with 271 students enrolled in kindergarten.¹⁰ Spending per pupil in 2020 was \$17,743.36 based on a budget of \$89,412,353.¹¹ The average teacher's salary in that year was \$84,589.¹² The Shawsheen Valley Technical High School, a regional vocational school, is located in Billerica and serves the town and four surrounding communities. In the 2021-2022 school year, it enrolled 1,317 students.¹³

Economics

According to the America Community Survey 2016-2020, there are 15,499 households in Billerica, with an average of 2.71 persons per household.¹⁴ The average single family home value in FY2022 was \$469,999, which equates to an average residential tax bill of \$5,941 for a single family home.¹⁵ The current residential tax rate (FY2022) is \$12.64 and the current commercial tax rate (FY2022) is \$28.78.¹⁶ By the most recent available

⁸ "Billerica town, Middlesex County, Massachusetts," United States Census Bureau, accessed June 23, 2022, <https://data.census.gov/cedsci/profile?g=0600000US2501705805>.

⁹ "QuickFacts Billerica town, Middlesex County, Massachusetts."

¹⁰ "Billerica: Enrollment Data," MA Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (MDESE), accessed June 23, 2022,

<https://profiles.doe.mass.edu/profiles/student.aspx?orgcode=00310000&orgtypecode=5&>

¹¹ "Billerica: Per Pupil Expenditures," MDESE, accessed June 23, 2022,

<http://profiles.doe.mass.edu/profiles/finance.aspx?orgcode=00310000&orgtypecode=5&>

¹² "Billerica: Teacher Salaries, 2019-20," MDESE, accessed June 23, 2022,

<http://profiles.doe.mass.edu/profiles/teacher.aspx?orgcode=00310000&orgtypecode=5&leftNavId=815&>

¹³ "Shawsheen Valley Regional Vocational Technical: Enrollment Data," MDESE, accessed June 23, 2022, <http://profiles.doe.mass.edu/profiles/student.aspx?orgcode=08710000&orgtypecode=5&>

¹⁴ "QuickFacts Billerica town, Middlesex County, Massachusetts."

¹⁵ "Average Single Family Tax Bill," Division of Local Services MA Department of Revenue, accessed June 23, 2022,

https://dlsgateway.dor.state.ma.us/reports/rdPage.aspx?rdReport=AverageSingleTaxBill.SingleFamTaxBill_wRange.

¹⁶ "The Town of Billerica, Massachusetts," Patriot Properties Billerica, accessed June 23, 2022, <http://billerica.patriotproperties.com/default.asp>.

estimates, 23,000 people work in Billerica for companies such as Parexel, EMD, ClearMotion, Curriculum Associates, and E-Ink.¹⁷

Government

The Executive powers of the Town are vested in the 5 member Select Board. The Town Manager is the Chief Operations Officer of the Town and is responsible to the Select Board. There is a Representative Town Meeting form of government with 240 elected Town Meeting representatives.

¹⁷ "Billerica is the Place to Be," Town of Billerica, accessed June 23, 2022, <https://town.billerica.ma.us/35/For-Businesses>.

Library Profile

Library service in Billerica has a long heritage. A library known as the Social Library was formed in town in 1772 and a second one was incorporated in 1809. However, neither of these libraries was truly successful in meeting the needs of the town. In 1880, town resident Eleanor Bennett and her daughters had a library built as a gift to the town. This high Victorian building is still located across from the town common, next to the Unitarian Church. Town meeting refused the gift of the library, so Mrs. Bennett and other citizens formed a private corporation and elected officers “to secure to the citizens of Billerica.... the establishment of a public library.” Mrs. Bennett’s gift served the town well for 100 years.

The library outgrew the space and by 1970 a library building committee was formed and began a 10-year battle of securing funds for a new facility. In 1980, a new 12,000 square foot building, just 100 yards from the old site, was opened. Under a new town charter, it became the Billerica Public Library. Although the new facility seemed palatial by comparison to its predecessor, in reality, it was only approximately one third the size actually needed to provide for the community at that time.

In 1986, the library became a member of the Merrimack Valley Library Consortium (M VLC), a resource sharing cooperative that has grown to comprise 36 libraries. Daily delivery provided through state funding allows access to over one million titles owned collectively by the member libraries of M VLC and throughout Massachusetts. In FY22, 30,742 items were borrowed from other libraries.

May 2000 saw the opening of the “bigger and better” Billerica Public Library. A new 40,000 square foot building was constructed at the site of the former Town Hall facility. Renovating and utilizing the Old Town Hall together with the construction of a large addition to the rear preserved a historic landmark as well as secured the future of library service to the community.

After 22 years at its new location, the Billerica Public Library continues to serve the community well. From mid-September through mid-June, the library is typically open 68 hours a week: Monday-Thursday 9am-9pm, Friday-Saturday 9am-5pm, and Sunday 1pm-5pm. From mid-June through mid-September, the library is typically open 60 hours, with a change in hours on Saturday to 9am-1pm and a change to being closed on Sunday. The library has ample parking in a dedicated lot as well as around the building, and the building is fully handicap accessible. In addition, the library is always open at billericalibrary.org, a robust website redesigned in 2017 and regularly updated with content to facilitate easy access to library’s extensive e-resource offerings.

The current library facility houses:

- A Children's Room on the lower level that serves children from infancy to age 10 and includes extensive collections for borrowing, computers for internet access, and a Discovery Center to promote imaginative play. The Children's Room regularly hosts a wide array of programs throughout the year focusing on reading, music, drama, art, nature, and STEM-related topics.
- A Teen Area located on the main floor that provides teens age 11 through 18 with age appropriate collections for borrowing, comfortable seating, and dedicated computers and workspaces. The full-time Teen Librarian works closely with this population by offering engaging on-site and off-site programs, activities, and volunteer opportunities.
- An inviting main floor filled with popular borrowing materials in a variety of formats, ample seating, a fax machine, and a full-service Circulation department that supports card registration, borrowing, and interlibrary loan.
- A second floor that is home to the Reference and Technology departments, which provide instruction and support in the use of library resources and technology as well as adult programming, and the Technical Services department, which facilitates collection maintenance, development, and organization. The second floor includes adult non-fiction collections, a Local History Room, and public computers with productivity software and useful hardware.
- A Conference Room with a capacity for 12, a Meeting Room with a capacity for over 100, and three study rooms that can accommodate up to 4 people each. These rooms are available for library and public use.

In conjunction with the Town of Billerica and the Billerica Public Library Foundation, many investments have been made in library facility over the last five years, including:

- Replacing the library roof
- Replacing the library's boiler
- Installing new automatic doors at the library's main entrance
- Installing a water filtration system
- Repairing multiple exterior library stairwells
- Upgrading exterior lighting
- Purchasing furniture for the Children's Room and second floor

In addition, in part due to the pandemic beginning in March 2020, the library has expanded its resource, program, and service offerings to increase their convenience. Improvements have included:

- Providing virtual, call-in, and recorded programming for patrons of all ages

- Eliminating fines for all library materials
- Growing e-resource offerings to include Hoopla, Kanopy, and Creativebug
- Expanding reference to include chat and text/SMS
- Expanding our Library of Things collection to include Chromebooks, additional Wi-Fi hotspots, and more
- Permanently offering curbside pickup
- Introducing online library card registration
- Promoting collections with improved display furniture in the library and virtual displays online

The library is a department of the Town of Billerica. The Library Director reports to the Town Manger. The Town Manager appoints a nine-member Library Board of Trustees charged with overseeing the policies governing the use of the library in conjunction with the Library Director.

Vision Statement:

The Billerica Public Library will be a vital and welcoming community resource for borrowing, technology, information, instruction, engagement, and activities, where the community wants to gather, learn, work, and play.

Mission Statement:

The Billerica Public Library educates, entertains, and enriches the Billerica community by providing relevant collections, inviting spaces, engaging programs, and responsive services for all.

Our Values:

- The Billerica Public Library is for everyone in the community, and all who enter deserve to be treated with respect and dignity.
- We provide free and equitable access to quality resources, services, technology, and programs to all.
- We uphold users' rights to intellectual freedom, privacy, and reliable information through policy and practice.
- We recognize that reading, technology, and information literacy skills are vital to a functioning democracy, and we embrace our role in helping users build those skills.
- All users deserve and can expect to receive knowledgeable, personalized, quality, and responsive public service from staff in-person, remotely, and through community outreach initiatives.

User Needs Assessment

Community Survey Data

Community survey data indicates that the majority of respondents visit the library for the following reasons: borrowing books/passes, downloading e-content, attending children's programs or studying. These usage patterns largely match the things respondents indicated were most important: physical collections, digital resources, help from a librarian, and children's programs. Comments on these topics suggest that respondents would like to see more copies of popular collection items (both in print and electronic), more children's programs with more variation in the time they are offered, and more building hours for use.

In recent years, the library has increased its e-resource collections, instituted a collection maintenance program to improve existing print collections, and increased its budget for collections. Data suggests the library should now explore how to best allocate funds to meet community demand. Similarly, the library has experimented with offering programs in various formats and at various times. Data suggests that we must continue to do so to meet the needs of the community.

The biggest obstacles to using the library more frequently were changes in behavior patterns due to the pandemic and a lack of time. While usage numbers in the areas of attendance and borrowing show large increases in usage following the lifting of COVID-related restrictions, this feedback suggests that marketing our in-person and remote services would help reach this segment of the population that are former users. Related to marketing, survey data suggested that respondents primarily learn about library services through the website, social media, and flyers, so this information will help the library prioritize usage of marketing platforms.

In terms of rating current library services, respondents rated the library's customer service and collections highest and the library's computers and programs lowest. The library's customer service has traditionally received high rankings, and efforts should be made to continue its excellence. The low rating for computers is likely related to software performance issues that the library's vendors have yet to resolve, so the library will have to be proactive in exploring ways to improve the user experience with computers. Similarly, program rankings are likely related to requests for more offerings, better variety of topics, and more variation in times offered. Data gathered from the adult program survey in January 2022 and the teen program survey in April 2022 can be used to help inform improvements for programs for these age groups.

When asked how the library benefits the community, popular responses included staff, collections, a welcoming atmosphere, and the value provided by the fact that what we offer is free. This feedback is in line with responses in other areas, including our high-

ranking customer service and the high value respondents gave to using the library's collections and services. Overall, the survey data provides us a useful picture of our strengths and weaknesses.

Environmental Scan Data

An environmental scan was done by comparing us to the 13 other libraries closest in population that did not have branches. We chose to look at FY19 data reported on MBLC's website, since that data captures the last time libraries operated under normal conditions before the pandemic. Data shows that our print holdings, operating income, staff numbers, circulation, interlibrary loan, visits, and reference transactions were all above the average. We were below average in the number of programs offered and the number of electronic holdings. This data correlates to the community survey data in suggesting that we have room to improve our program offerings and electronic collections.

SOAR Data

Data from the SOAR exercise focus group also correlated with community survey data. Areas of strength included the staff, customer service, and collections. Similarly, areas of opportunity identified included additional programming, expanded marketing, and reaching non-users, which survey results also reflected. Identified aspirations focused on improving library spaces, hours, and technology offerings, which again are areas for improvement reflected in the community survey.

In terms of results, the group envisioned seeing increases in usage, funding, awareness, and support. Community survey data provides for some ways we might be able to improve usage, awareness, and support through making strategic improvements in our collections, marketing, advocacy, and technology.

Conclusions

An assessment of gathered data suggests that the library should focus its strategic plan in seven keys areas in order to improve our existing offerings, expand our user base, and realize our aspirations:

- Collections
- Services
- Programs
- Spaces
- Technology
- Promotion & Outreach
- Fundraising & Advocacy

Goals and Actions

Goal I: Collections:

The library will build and maintain print, electronic, and object collections that both serve the intellectual, recreational, and practical needs of the community as well as represent the varied interests and diverse backgrounds of the community.

Objective 1: Keep materials budget allocations aligned to patron usage, current interest, and format popularity.

Action 1: Review materials budget allocations prior to the start of each fiscal year and make changes as warranted.

Action 2: Have selectors purchase additional copies of high-demand items to meet demand.

Action 3: Regularly evaluate e-resource offerings based on cost and usage and replace unpopular e-resources with new offerings.

Objective 2: Continue implementation of the library-wide collection maintenance schedule, ensuring that all of the library's collections are evaluated, weeded, and updated on an annual basis.

Action 1: Continue practice of having Technical Services staff provide curated shelf lists to relevant selectors on a monthly basis according to the collection maintenance schedule.

Action 2: Have selectors evaluate, weed, and update the collections they are responsible for according to the collection maintenance schedule.

Action 3: Regularly evaluate the condition of borrowed materials and notify relevant selectors of items that are in need of discard or replacement.

Action 4: Devise and implement a method to efficiently inventory our current holdings using mobile technology.

Action 5: Continue efforts to properly house and preserve the rare and irreplaceable items in the library's Local History collection.

Objective 3: Purposefully develop library collections that are relevant, useful, accurate, and matched to the community's interests and needs in accordance with the Material Selection Policy and the Local History Room Policy.

Action 1: Regularly monitor professional journals, authoritative reviewing media, reference question data, and holds lists to make informed purchasing decisions.

Action 2: Welcome and consider patron requests in accordance with the Material Selection Policy.

Action 3: Assess materials being made available in new formats and add them to the collection as appropriate in accordance with the Material Selection Policy.

Action 4: Reintroduce literacy kits in the Children's Room and maintain a collection of 10-15 kits.

Action 5: Continue curating the print and digital Local History collections in accordance with the Local History Room Policy.

Objective 4: Increase awareness and use of the library's collections through merchandizing, book lists, and series labeling.

Action 1: Continue to create eye-catching, timely displays that tie into upcoming library programs, national and local awareness campaigns, staff recommendations, popular authors, bestsellers, and/or current events.

Action 2: Identify and label materials that comprise popular series to improve browsing and discovery.

Action 3: Continue and expand the practice of adding read-alike bookmarks to be placed in books.

Action 4: Create and distribute book lists based on popular series, themes, or topics.

Action 5: Increase awareness and use of the library's circulating Kindles through program tie-ins, marketing, and displays.

Objective 5: Explore new ways to expand access and discovery of library collection materials.

Action 1: Improve children's and teen non-fiction discoverability by adding shelf signage to highlight specific topics.

Action 2: Work with Technical Services to adjust call numbers to consolidate non-fiction topics as needed.

Action 3: Facilitate access to materials on sensitive topics with discrete shelf markers, bookmarks, and similar methods.

Action 4: Identify genres with local demand (i.e., horror) and determine how to best identify them so they are easily discovered.

Action 5: Add and maintain OPAC links to existing digitized copies for titles in the public domain, especially Local History titles.

Action 6: Design and implement “See Also” placards in the book stacks for topics that may span Dewey ranges (i.e., Wedding Planning: see Cakes, Photography, Flowers, Etiquette...).

Action 7: Coordinate how best to promote crossover titles, such as parenting non-fiction titles, through signage, duplication, displays, or location changes.

Goal II: Services

The library will provide friendly, convenient, and responsive instructional, reference, readers’ advisory, and borrowing services, while ensuring staff receive proper training to provide these services and while working with the Library Board of Trustees to develop and refine policies for these services.

Objective 1: Develop opportunities for meaningful staff development, engagement, and evaluation.

Action 1: Provide one or more staff development training opportunities each year, either through synchronous or asynchronous sessions.

Action 2: Continue to build collaboration among staff utilizing staff meetings, brainstorming sessions, electronic surveys, and electronic exchanges.

Action 3: Work with Department Heads to develop annual department goals to guide their department’s collective work and measure their progress.

Action 4: Have designated staff attend MVLC meetings relevant to their department to exchange ideas and best practices with other libraries and then share those with their department.

Action 5: Identify professional development opportunities, including webinars and conferences, that staff can attend, and adjust schedules and/or workloads to accommodate their attendance.

Objective 2: Provide excellent, knowledgeable, and unbiased borrowing, readers’ advisory, and reference services to patrons.

Action 1: Make sure that staff are well-trained in library policies and procedures surrounding borrowing, readers’ advisory, and reference services to ensure a consistent provision of service.

Action 2: Encourage staff to make use of their expertise in reading trends, the library’s collections, and NoveList to provide thoughtful and relevant reading suggestions.

Action 3: Encourage staff to identify, request, and receive training they feel is needed to improve job performance and patron services.

Action 4: Continue to improve internal awareness of staff and department expertise to allow staff to make informed referrals.

Objective 3: Consider new services to increase convenience and access.

Action 1: Explore the possibility of offering self-pickup hold options for patrons, either in the building or through the implementation of outdoor lockers.

Action 2: Make sure staff at all service points are trained to provide basic circulation and account maintenance services to minimize patrons having to visit multiple service points.

Action 3: Trial and possibly implement a new service in which patrons can request materials on the shelf over the phone and have them ready in 1-2 hours for pickup.

Action 4: Investigate the feasibility of locating and maintaining a return box somewhere else in town, such as North Billerica or Pinehurst.

Action 5: Investigate the community's preference for the library to adjust hours and work to secure adequate funding and staffing to implement adjustments if warranted.

Objective 4: Work with the Library Board of Trustees to develop new library policies and refine existing library policies as needed.

Action 1: Regularly make the Board aware of the need for new policies or existing policies that need updating.

Action 2: Work with the Board to create or update identified policies.

Goal III: Programs

The library will offer programs for patrons of all ages that support literacy, education, creativity, and entertainment.

Objective 1: Offer children's programs that foster imagination, creativity, mindfulness, STEM/STEAM, and literacy.

Action 1: Continue offering and developing innovative programs that foster literacy and a love of reading, including book groups, summer reading, and weekly storytimes.

Action 2: Create story trees in the hallway outside of children's that highlight various books and authors with creative displays and activities.

Action 3: Promote STEM/STEAM with the continuation of popular science, magic, and animal programs for kids and families.

Action 4: Encourage engineering enrichment by developing and offering programs such as Lego Club and hosting makerspace events.

Action 5: Support creative play and imagination through drama, art, music, dance, and dramatic yoga programming.

Objective 2: Offer teen programs that foster imagination, creativity, mindfulness, STEM/STEAM, and literacy.

Action 1: Develop and offer programs that promote STEM/STEAM, including programs on coding.

Action 2: Continue to offer cooking, art, gardening, sewing and other hands-on learning programming.

Action 3: Continue offering and developing innovative programs that foster literacy and a love of reading, including book groups and summer reading.

Action 4: Develop and host programs on the use of library e-resources for leisure and research.

Action 5: Offer teens opportunities to collaborate on youth programming.

Objective 3: Offer adult programs that are engaging, informative, creative, and celebrate reading.

Action 1: Partner with community organizations and town departments to offer programs that are of particular interest to Billerica residents.

Action 2: Explore and develop craft-based programs that are both active and passive.

Action 3: Continue offering and adapting book clubs and reading programs/challenges, like author talks and Book Buzz, which cater to various reading interests.

Action 4: Identify and host programs on topics that appeal to a variety of interests, including current events, hobbies, travel, history, art, and genealogy.

Objective 4: Experiment with offering programs at different times and in different formats to accommodate patrons varying schedules.

Action 1: Schedule programs on days, evenings, weekdays, and weekends based on demonstrated interest.

Action 2: Continue to offer limited virtual, recorded, and call-in programs to expand accessibility of library programming.

Action 3: Look for opportunities to present programs in high-visibility locations, especially outside the general vicinity of the library.

Action 4: Continue exploring opportunities for collaborating with neighboring libraries on virtual programs.

Goal IV: Spaces

The library building and grounds will be welcoming, useful, and accessible to the community and provide adequate spaces conducive to work, study, collaboration, gathering, and play.

Objective 1: Collaborate with relevant town departments on keeping up with building and grounds maintenance requirements.

Action 1: Foster strong communication between administration/staff and the Facilities Department through consistent use of the ticketing system, ensuring Facilities is aware of building issues and concerns in a timely manner.

Action 2: Keep the Department of Public Works informed about issues pertaining to the library grounds so they can keep them accessible and appealing.

Action 3: Work the Facilities Department to identify and act on opportunities for making cosmetic improvements to the building.

Objective 2: Reconfigure existing spaces in the Children’s Room and Teen Area for new uses.

Action 1: Explore the possibility of removing some shelving to expand the Discovery Center footprint.

Action 2: Look into securing funding to create a permanent “tree” feature in the center of the Children’s Room.

Action 3: Regularly offer puzzles, iPads, manipulatives, puppets, and enrichment activities throughout available spaces and in the Discovery Center.

Action 4: Investigate opportunities to expand space for shelving, seating, and displays in the Teen Area.

Objective 3: Explore the possibility of expanding outdoor seating options, either year-round or seasonally.

Action 1: Identify outside areas best suited for accommodating seating, including the story garden and open lawn areas.

Action 2: Research suitable seating options and identify funding sources.

Action 3: Purchase and promote outdoor seating.

Goal V: Technology

The library will provide access to a variety of technological devices for browsing, productivity, collaboration, research, and entertainment as well as training on how to use those devices.

Objective 1: Improve the library's technology infrastructure to offer enhanced services and support.

Action 1: Replace the current software vendor for patron reservation, login, in-house and mobile print release and payment technology with advanced and up-to-date software and server from a different vendor (TBS).

Action 2: Research new advancements in library network management (Unifi tech) and develop a plan for implementation.

Action 3: Explore best practices for using technology to facilitate hybrid programs and meetings and develop a plan for applying these practices.

Action 4: Research and implement a cloud-based system for managing in-house and lendable tablets, laptops, and devices.

Action 5: Work with Stirling Technology and staff to ensure the library's website remains current, secure, and easy to use across all device types.

Objective 2: Evaluate and support the community's technology literacy needs and provide both group and one-on-one training in the use of technology to patrons and staff.

Action 1: Provide staff and the public with written guides and video tutorials (in print and online) on how to use technological and electronic resources available through the library.

Action 2: Offer group and one-on-one public technology training sessions on-site and off-site that focus on using technological devices and electronic resources available through the library.

Action 3: Provide group and one-on-one technology training sessions to staff as needed/requested and when new hardware, software, or services are introduced.

Objective 3: Ensure that library hardware and software is current, useful, and accessible to meet the community's needs.

Action 1: Replace, update, and maintain the library's public PCs, public iPads, peripherals, software, and lendable technology devices according to the library's replacement schedule and vendor recommendations.

Action 2: Research adding in-house hardware and software to support creative activities such as media creation and video editing.

Action 3: Identify and implement accessibility tools on public PCs, public iPads, and loanable devices.

Action 4: Regularly research and recommend technology devices to be added to the Library of Things collection and/or the library's in-house technology offerings in order to meet the community's evolving technology needs and interests.

Objective 4: Explore and implement new ways to make library technology more convenient for patrons.

Action 1: Work with vendors to add credit card and mobile payment options to the public printers and copiers.

Action 2: Research, evaluate, and implement ways to simplify the technology borrowing experience through possible methods such as kiosks, deliveries, pop-up libraries, etc.

Action 3: Investigate options for a computer/iPad-based fax service that is reliable and user-friendly.

Goal VI: Promotion & Outreach

The library will work to extend its presence in and value to the community by keeping the community informed about our offerings through creative and engaging marketing content and by regularly engaging in off-site programs and community activities.

Objective 1: Foster a strong relationship with the schools.

Action 1: Re-establish Parker School kindergarten class visits to the Children's Room.

Action 2: Revive elementary school nights to partner with the schools and engage with families.

Action 3: Implement off-site storytime in Project Support classes.

Action 4: Continue to promote library events and activities through the schools via email notices, sharing of summer reading promotional videos, etc.

Action 5: Promote collaboration with teachers on research assignments through the assignment alert form.

Action 6: Support the schools' summer reading programs for students by making lists and activities available, creating relevant displays, and purchasing suggested titles as the budget allows.

Objective 2: Keep the community aware of upcoming events, activities, services, and resources through the creation of engaging and informative marketing content.

Action 1: Programmers will keep the library's website and online calendar current with listings for upcoming events and activities.

Action 2: Departments will continue to create flyers, listings of events, digital slides, promotional videos, and similar media to inform the community.

Action 3: Continue to offer engaging and informative e-newsletters for adults, teens, and families.

Objective 3: Offer pop-up libraries throughout the town to extend the library's presence.

Action 1: Offer pop-ups targeted at the teen population by hosting regular pop-ups in the schools, at the Boys and Girls Club, and at BATV.

Action 2: Offer pop-ups targeted at children and families by hosting regular pop-ups at school events, at community events like the Farmer's Market, and in local parks.

Action 3: Offer pop-ups targeted at adults by hosting regular pop-ups at the Billerica Council on Aging and community events like National Night Out.

Action 4: Explore the possibility of purchasing a library vehicle to operate as a bookmobile to facilitate pop-up library activities.

Objective 4: Cultivate long-lasting relationships with assistive and affordable living facilities in town to serve residents in those facilities.

Action 1: Promote and expand homebound delivery services to residents in these communities.

Action 2: Provide engaging and enriching programs that utilize and promote library resources.

Objective 5: Create a general marketing/branding style guide to be utilized by all library departments that produce marketing content.

Action 1: Create a guide that builds on the one developed by Stirling with input from relevant staff.

Action 2: Finalize the guide and present it to library staff.

Objective 6: Explore and develop new ways to increase social media engagement with the current audience and grow our social media audience across platforms.

Action 1: Identify successful strategies used by other libraries and brainstorm ideas with staff.

Action 2: Implement, test, and refine identified strategies for effectiveness and impact.

GOAL VII: Fundraising & Advocacy

The library will work with Town Administration to secure adequate municipal funding for library operations and with fundraising and grant organizations to supplement municipal appropriations.

Objective 1: Work with fundraising support organizations to continue to innovate established fundraisers and develop new ones.

Action 1: Work with the Family Friends of the Billerica Public Library and the Billerica Public Library Foundation to evaluate the effectiveness and sustainability of existing fundraisers.

Action 2: Identify successful fundraising initiatives at other libraries and work with the Family Friends of the Billerica Public Library and the Billerica Public Library Foundation to determine feasibility for replicating them in Billerica.

Objective 2: Strengthen the community's appreciation for how the library benefits the community and advocate for financial support to make continual improvements.

Action 1: Produce a quarterly infographic/report demonstrating the library's achievements for the Town Manager, Library Board of Trustees, and public.

Action 2: Develop a capital needs report to present to the administration to advocate for funding long-term facility and service improvements.

Action 3: Work to increase the library's materials and technology budget lines to keep up with state funding requirements and keep resource offerings current and useful.

Objective 3: Seek funding support from local, state, and federal businesses and grant organizations.

Action 1: Continue applying for Community Fund and Local Cultural Council grants to obtain financial support for library programming and services.

Action 2: Build local business partnerships similar to the ones we have with the Cabot Corporation and Salem Five Bank to fund specific library programs.

Action 3: Explore LSTA grant opportunities and apply for a grant if funding need and priorities match grant opportunities.

Action 4: Children's staff will continue their relationship with CTI/Family Foundations to obtain funding for library programs and services.