



SARGENT MEMORIAL LIBRARY

STRATEGIC PLAN FOR

FISCAL YEARS 2023–2027

Submitted by:



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TABLE OF CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION 3

COMMUNITY AND LIBRARY OVERVIEW 3

PLANNING PROCESS..... 3

KEY FINDINGS 3

THE PLAN 5

VISION STATEMENT 5

MISSION STATEMENT 5

GOALS AND OBJECTIVES 5

ANNUAL ACTION PLANS 6

PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT 6

BOARD OF TRUSTEES’ APPROVAL 6

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS 6

APPENDICES..... 7

INTRODUCTION

Sargent Memorial Library in Boxborough, MA, serves 5,500 residents and people from neighboring towns. Working closely with local organizations, the Library connects deeply with the community and proactively responds to its needs. For example, during COVID, the Library quickly transitioned to curbside pickup services, provided book bundles, helped with food pantry collections, and eventually became one of the first libraries to reopen with safety measures.

The development of this Strategic Plan allows the Library to do a comprehensive study of the community's evolving needs and methodically plan for the future to ensure the Library's resources are used effectively, with direction, and towards the most needed areas first.

This document describes the six-month planning process, summarizes the findings, and shares the final plan for fiscal years 2023-2027. The Plan is designed to be flexible but with clear directions for the Library to continue to provide outstanding services to the community.

Community and Library Overview

Boxborough is a small town with approximately 5,500 residents. The town has had a public library since 1890. Historical overviews of Boxborough and the Library were drafted for the Plan. Current information about the community and Library operations was also compiled. See *Appendix A – Sargent Memorial Library Community and Library Profile 2022* and *Appendix B – Community and Library Profile in Graphs 2022*.



PLANNING PROCESS

In October 2021, the Library solicited proposals from strategic planning consultants to assist us in developing the Strategic Plan. After carefully reviewing the candidates, the Library hired Barbara Alevras from Sage Consulting Services to guide us through the strategic planning process, assist in designing and executing information-gathering activities, analyze the collected data, and advise in drafting the Plan.

With the consultant's help, project tasks were identified, and timelines and milestones were established. A detailed process flowchart (*Appendix C - Sargent Memorial Library Strategic Planning Project Process Flowchart for 2021-22*) was created to serve as a blueprint for the process.

KEY FINDINGS

We wanted to involve as many community members as possible in the planning process. Library staff, the Board of Library Trustees, the Friends of the Boxborough Library, and the Sargent Memorial Library Foundation members all participated in the development of the plan. In addition, stakeholders and key community members were identified and invited to serve on the

Strategic Planning Advisory Committee. The committee helped identify potential community partners, conceptualized a community vision statement that describes an ideal Boxborough, and prioritized how the Library could best support the town. And finally, all community members were encouraged to participate by signing up to be in a focus group or completing a community survey.

Community feedback and insights about the Library were gathered through:

1. One (1) Community Visioning Exercise with the Strategic Plan Advisory Committee (results summarized in *Appendix D - Sargent Memorial Library Community Vision Statements 2022*).
2. Two (2) Strength-Opportunity-Aspirations-Results (S.O.A.R.) Exercises were conducted with 1) the staff and 2) the Library Board of Trustees, Friends of the Boxborough Library officers, and Sargent Memorial Library Foundation officers (results summarized in *Appendix E - Sargent Memorial Library S.O.A.R Exercise Summary Results Report 2022*).
3. Four (4) Focus Groups: three were conducted with the general public and one with children 12 years old and younger (results summarized in *Appendix F - Sargent Memorial Library Community Focus Groups Summary Report 2022* and *Appendix G - Sargent Memorial Library Youth Focus Group 2022*).
4. One (1) Community Survey yielded 285 responses. It was available online and in print at the Library and the Town Hall (results summarized in *Appendix H - Sargent Memorial Library Community Survey 2022 - Results Report*).



Through the data gathering activities, we received extensive, valuable feedback. The community views the Library as an essential part of the Town and values the services and resources that we provide. The community also provided suggestions related to the following categories:

- Building and Grounds
- Collections and Programming
- Community Connections
- Marketing

The results, combined with a survey of new and emerging local, state, and national library trends as well as relevant issues, formed the foundation for this Strategic Plan.

THE PLAN

Vision Statement

Sargent Memorial Library will promote community engagement and information access, and provide programs and resources that inform, inspire, enrich, and entertain.

Mission Statement

Sargent Memorial Library provides services and resources that encourage personal growth, enrich lives, foster social connections, and promote civic involvement.

Goals and Objectives

Goal 1. Provide a welcoming and accessible space that meets community needs.

- 1.1 Optimize indoor and outdoor spaces to meet community needs.
- 1.2 Provide a clean, comfortable, and functional space for staff and patrons.
- 1.3 Offer open hours that are convenient to the community and fiscally responsible.

Goal 2. Provide collections and programs that inspire the joy of reading, support lifelong learning, foster human connection, and enrich people's lives.

- 2.1 Create Library collections, policies, and services that reflect an awareness of events, issues, interests, and trends that are relevant to the Library.
- 2.2 Curate high-quality collections and resources that reflect community members' diverse backgrounds, interests, and needs.
- 2.3 Offer a diverse set of current, relevant programs that educate, inform, and entertain the community.

Goal 3. Continue to grow our role as an active, integral member of the community.

- 3.1 Establish, nurture, strengthen, and maintain community partnerships with Town boards, schools, community organizations, and other local groups.
- 3.2 Proactively reach out to and encourage all community members to enjoy the Library's diverse offerings.

Goal 4. Increase awareness and use of Library resources.

- 4.1 Maintain a comprehensive marketing plan encompassing messaging, outreach, communication channels, and performance measurement needs.
- 4.2 Continuously solicit and respond to community members' ideas and feedback.
- 4.3 Expand the Library's presence and visibility beyond its physical and digital footprint.
- 4.4 Cultivate advocacy for the Library and support for its initiatives.

Annual Action Plans

Each year, the Director will work with the staff to develop an Action Plan for the following fiscal year. The Action Plan consists of specific tasks and strategies that are measurable and would help the Library reach its strategic goals and objectives; it will not include routine operational tasks. While the Mission Statement, Goals, and Objectives will remain the same for 2023-2028, the Action Plan is a flexible, one-year document developed each year to capture new opportunities, respond to emerging issues, or address changing needs.

The Library's Action Plan will be presented to the Library Board of Trustees for approval before submitting it to the Massachusetts Board of Library Commissioners as a separate document.

Performance Management

The Director will evaluate the Strategic Plan twice a year to monitor the progress being made. The results will be shared with the staff and reported in the Library's Annual Report.

BOARD OF TRUSTEES' APPROVAL

The six members of the Library Board of Trustees unanimously approved this Strategic Plan on June 15, 2022.

BOARD OF TRUSTEES

- Mary Brolin, Chair
- Reeves Briggs
- Robert McNeece
- Nancy Settle-Murphy
- Sunitha Paravasthu
- Molly Wong

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

We would like to first thank the Sargent Memorial Library Foundation for funding the project and Barbara Alevras, PMP, of Sage Consulting Services, for guiding the Library through the process.

Heartfelt thanks to the Library staff, Library Board of Trustees, Sargent Memorial Library Foundation, the Friends of the Boxborough Library, and the Strategic Planning Advisory Board members for their time and effort.

Finally, thank you to everyone who participated in the focus groups, filled out a survey, or shared their thoughts and ideas with us. The Library belongs to the community. This Plan would not have been possible without the community's support and input. Thank you.



APPENDICES

Following is a list of Strategic Plan document appendices. They are available for download and review at the following link: <https://boxlib.org/about/strategic-plan>

Appendix A – Sargent Memorial Library Community and Library Profile 2022: An overview of Boxborough and Sargent Memorial Library’s history and current operations.

Appendix B – Community and Library Profile in Graphs 2022: This document presents key community demographic and statistical information.

Appendix C - Sargent Memorial Library Strategic Planning Project Process Flowchart for 2021-22: A visual depiction of the Library’s planning methodology, including the timeline, assessment mechanisms, and process participants.

Appendix D - Sargent Memorial Library Community Vision Statements 2022: The Strategic Planning Advisory Board, formed by a group of key stakeholders and community representatives, brainstormed a series of community vision statements reflecting the ideal Boxborough. The group identified and prioritized the vision statements that the Library can reasonably and positively impact. This report presents the top five, as prioritized by the community group.

Appendix E - Sargent Memorial Library S.O.A.R Exercise Summary Results Report 2022: This document reports the results of two environmental assessments of the Library’s strengths, opportunities, aspirations, and results. One session was with the Library staff and the Friends of the Boxborough Library officers. One session was with the Library Board of Trustees, which includes officers of the Sargent Memorial Library Foundation. Both sessions were conducted online.

Appendix F - Sargent Memorial Library Community Focus Groups Summary Report 2022: This report summarizes the comments and ideas about the Library’s collections, programs, services, and staff generated in three virtual focus groups conducted via Zoom. Each session was participated by a small group of community members.

Appendix G - Sargent Memorial Library Youth Focus Group 2022: This report summarizes the inputs about the Library’s services and resources collected from an in-person focus group conducted with a small group of youths aged 10 to 12.

Appendix H - Sargent Memorial Library Community Survey 2022: The report presents a summary of the survey conducted at the end of January 2022.