ELDREDGE PUBLIC LIBRARY
CHATHAM, MA

STRATEGIC PLAN
2022-2026

Approved by the Board of Trustees
January 19, 2022
I am pleased to share the Eldredge Public Library Strategic Plan for 2022-2026. It’s an exciting and ambitious document that provides a framework for the library to meet the needs of our community and to deliver improved levels of service. The Plan was developed with input from Chatham residents who participated in our Community Forum and with community members and Library patrons who responded to our survey. We also spoke with local stakeholders regarding the anticipated challenges their organizations will face in the upcoming years and ways in which the library can help. Our strategic planning committee, which included library staff, Trustees and Friends Board members, worked together to identify the library’s strengths and to create goals to address areas needing improvement.

What we heard most often from everyone who contributed to this process was the need to raise awareness of the services that the library already offers. We also recognized the desire for additional services that are technology based and community focused. We aim to improve access to online resources as well as expand library services outside our walls and into the community. The library will continue to be a gathering space for community discourse and a place where information concerning vital services and community resources can be found. We want to ensure that everyone – children, teens and adults – has access to tools and programs that spark curiosity and nurture learning at all ages and stages of life. Providing books and information is an important part of our mission, but we also want to demonstrate how information can be used to explore, entertain and create. Through this Plan we will celebrate the writers, artists and makers in our community and provide individuals of all ages and interests with a place to connect, create and collaborate.

I would like to thank the following members of our Strategic Planning Committee for the time and expertise that went into developing this Plan.

Tamara DePasquale – Assistant Director and Head of Youth Services
Meghan Kemp – Youth Services Librarian
Gay Murdoch – Trustee Board President (Outgoing)
Kerry Brown – Trustee Board President (Incoming)
Michael Franco – Trustee Board Member
Paula Lofgren – Friends of the EPL Board Member

Thank you,
Amy Andreasson
Chair of the Strategic Planning Committee
January 2022
MISSION STATEMENT

The Eldredge Public Library strives to meet the informational, recreational, and cultural needs of Chatham residents and visitors, and it continues its historical tradition as a free public library, providing professional and exceptional customer service, exemplary materials, resources, and programs, current technologies, meeting space, academic support, and opportunities for community connection and public discourse in a safe, inclusive, and neutral setting.
The Eldredge Public Library, located in Chatham, MA opened in 1896, a gift from local benefactor Marcellus Eldredge who wished to build a public library for the citizens of Chatham. The three story brick building, which is on the Register of Historic Buildings, was designed by Albion M. Marble, a student of H.H. Richardson.

From the beginning, the EPL was built to be a community library. While the building was under construction, the Act of Incorporation was written and accepted by the Massachusetts State Legislature on June 5, 1896. Five men were named as Corporation Members, including Marcellus Eldredge and his brother, Heman Fisher Eldredge. These Members, which today we call Trustees, were and continue to be the governing body of the Library.

Edna May Hardy served as librarian from 1911 to 1954. During her tenure the library adopted the Dewey Decimal system, transitioned to modernized management practices, and experienced a notable growth in circulation and patronage. Along with the rest of the nation, the Library faced financial challenges in the 1930s and 1940s. The 1950s brought some modernization to the building, and the 1960s experienced an increase in circulation and community support. This led to the first building addition in 1969 that provided increased space, additional bookshelves, functional work areas, adequate restroom facilities, and a reading area for children – something that Marcellus Eldredge found particularly important, a special place for children at the EPL.

The Friends of the Eldredge Public Library formed in 1979. Since its inception, the Friends have worked tirelessly to support the Library and heighten community awareness of Library needs. In that same year, the EPL hired its first professional librarian, Irene Gillies. By the mid 1980s, it was clear that the Library’s most pressing problem was once again space. Under Irene’s leadership, the Library planned for an expansion project that came to fruition in 1992.
Throughout the past 125 years the Library has held steadfast to Marcellus Eldredge’s mission to bring education and knowledge to the citizens of Chatham, and we have expanded that mission to include exceptional and professional library services, both recreational and informational materials, cultural enrichment, and a gathering place for social interaction.

The early 2000s brought significant changes to both space and programming in the Youth Services department. These changes brought about significant increases in youth and family participation, and the formation of a tween/teen volunteer group transformed young adult services. More recent LSTA grant funding and support from the Friends further established a vibrant literacy-rich environment for both children and young adults.

The Library continues to grow and modernize as technology evolves. From the first ebooks that circulated in 2001 to the thousands of ebooks, audiobooks, magazines, newspapers, television shows, and movies that are downloaded daily for free, new formats and streaming services provide easier access and broader selection for Library patrons. With communication a primary objective, an active social media presence combined with regularly scheduled emails and online newsletters, patrons near and far remain informed of and connected to all Library business.

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Chatham is a small town that values its seaside heritage, historic buildings, and community spirit. The attractions of life here appeal to a growing, diverse population of year-round and seasonal residents and visitors comprised of business owners, laborers, professionals, retirees, students, and recent immigrants. Individuals aged fifty and older make up the largest age group of the population. Many have come to Chatham from around the country and are well-educated and notably civic minded. Young families who make their homes here work in various industries and find housing and sustainable employment the greatest challenge.

There is a strong desire to preserve Chatham’s quality of life. The Town’s current priorities include: green environmental initiatives, year-round jobs and economic opportunities; affordable housing; quality public services and facilities such as schools, libraries, and human services, all designed to retain a strong sense of community and encourage community service.
The Massachusetts Board of Library Commissioners (MBLC) requires libraries to complete and submit multi-year strategic plans if those libraries want to be eligible for direct grants from the MBLC under the Federal Library Services and Technology Act (LSTA) program or any state funded grants.

A Strategic Plan is also a great management tool for organizations. The planning process provided us with an opportunity to speak with members of our community about the Library. It assisted with identifying areas in which the library is already strong, as well as areas in which our services need to be expanded or improved.

The Strategic Plan will help us budget, prioritize activities, and continue to plan for the future. It presents a clear sense of purpose for the library staff, Trustees and Friends of the Eldredge Public Library.

WHY STRATEGIC PLANNING?
We embarked on a collaborative community and patron focused Strategic Plan in early 2021. The Strategic Planning Committee formed in March, and we secured Michelle Eberle, Consultant for the Massachusetts Library System (MLS), to assist us with the process. We held our first committee meeting in April via Zoom. Since we were in the midst of a national pandemic, we sent letters to targeted stakeholders in Town and invited a group of dedicated library patrons to our online community forum which was also facilitated by Michelle Eberle.

We created a Community Survey in a print and online format. This survey was distributed through our online newsletter and local newspaper, and it was available throughout the Library and at various local venues. We included input from both year-round and seasonal community members, as well as individuals who are not current Library patrons or frequent Library users.

After reviewing our Community Needs Assessment (community, patron and stakeholder input), we revised and updated the Library Mission Statement and created the resulting Strategic Plan. The Plan delivers a clear set of priorities for staff, community partners, patrons, Trustees, Friends and supporters while focusing on the needs of the community and capitalizing on the unique strengths of the Eldredge Public Library. The Strategic Plan is intended to be a living document, to be responsive to change as needs evolve, and to be a continuous benchmark for excellence in service to our community.
OUR GOALS

Promote Learning and Literacy
The Eldredge Public Library will provide opportunities beyond traditional reading and writing to include multiple literacies.

Serve as a Community Connector
The Eldredge Public Library will engage patrons by providing information for community resources and activities.

Champion Innovative Technology
The Eldredge Public library will provide patrons with technology resources that are relevant, diverse, cutting edge and accessible to all.

Spark Imagination, Joy and Enrichment
The Eldredge Public Library will enhance lives by providing recreational reading, free entertainment, access to the arts, and opportunities to create and have fun.

Focus on Library Operations
The Eldredge Public Library will commit to being fiscally prudent, environmentally responsible, and attentive to the maintenance of the building, grounds and equipment for the safety and enjoyment of all.
APPENDIX A:
EPL COMMUNITY SURVEY
RESULTS

Resident Status
- Year-Round Resident: 77%
- Seasonal Resident: 21%
- Visitor: 2%

Language Preference
- English: 99%
- Haitian: 1%

Age
- 65+: 69%
- 25-64: 30%
- 13-18: 1%

Employment Status
- Retired: 71.7%
- Employed or Self Employed: 26.3%
- Student/Unemployed: 2%

Language Preference
- English: 99%
- Haitian: 1%
How often do you use the Library?

- At least once a week: 44.4%
- At least once a month: 41.4%
- At least once a year: 12.1%
- Never: 2%
- Other: 34%

If you do not use the Eldredge Public Library, what reasons prevent you from using it?

- Inconvenient Parking: 29%
- I buy my own books/videos: 15%
- Inconvenient Hours: 10%
- Other Reasons*: 34%
- Library is too noisy for me: 3%
- I use another library: 9%

*Other reasons why people did not use the Eldredge Public Library:

- Disability or physical limitations
- Only download digital books
- Programs were not of interest
- Library is too busy or too noisy
- Library does not have the resources I need
- Covid-19 restrictions
How do you learn about library events, services and programs?

- Library eNewsletter: 30.3%
- Cape Cod Chronicle: 19.2%
- Library Website: 18.2%
- Other: 15.2%
- Flyers in the Library: 9.1%
- Library Staff: 8.1%
- Other*: 27%

What do you use the Library website for?

- Search the CLAMS catalog: 18%
- Renew my books and place holds: 17%
- Check the calendar of events: 14%
- Learn about programs and events for all ages: 15%
- Other*: 27%

*Additional reasons why people use the Eldredge Public Library website:

- Access electronic database 3%
- Ask a librarian a question 1%
- Hours/directions/general information 8%
- Connect to the Friends of the Eldredge Public Library 3%
- Reserve museum passes 3%
- Make a donation 5%
- Access resources such as ready reference sheets, readers advisory and digital newspapers 4%
Which items would be of value or interest to you and your family in the next few years?

- Digital Tools such as 3D printer
- Technology tools that can be checked out (ex: chromebook)
- Specialty library (ex. seed library)
- Items to borrow for home use (ex. tools, telescope, scrapbook tools)
- Programs to teach people how to use digital devices
- 24/7 Wi-Fi that reaches beyond the building
- Personalized reading recommendations via email
- More hands on craft classes (ex. scrapbooking)
- Art and cultural experiences for all ages such as art displays and concerts
- Bilingual programming

- Meeting space for study/discussion groups, community organizations and clubs
- English language and citizenship materials and classes
- Forums for public discussion and civic involvement
- Information about services, programs and activities happening in Chatham
- Small business support services

Program Suggestions

- After hours open mic
- Instructions for how to use eBooks*
- Local history programs*
- Outdoor programs*
- Author programs*
- Art History programs*
- Local industries such as fishing
- Civic discourse programs

*Program topics already covered on a regular basis
Which museum passes will you consider using in the next year?

- Boston Museum of Fine Arts 15%
- Isabella Stewart Gardner Museum 13%
- Heritage Museums and Gardens 12%
- Cape Cod Museum of Natural History 11%
- New England Aquarium 9%
- Whydah Pirate Museum 8%
- Museum of Science 8%
- Roger Williams Park Zoo 6%
- New Bedford Whaling Museum 7%
- Isabella Stewart Gardner Museum 13%

Thanks to the hard work and generosity of the Friends of the Eldredge Public Library for making these museum passes available for our patrons!

What new services would you like the EPL to offer in the next few years?

- English as a second language instructions/resources*
- Homebound delivery services*
- Library of things
- Information and instruction on online resources
- Reading suggestions for children and teens*
- Increased technology help and instruction
- Tax help
*Program topics already offered on a regular basis

Did you connect with us through Zoom during the Covid-19 Pandemic?

- Yes, and I would be open to attending Zoom programs in the future 43%
- Yes, but I have Zoom fatigue 16%
- No 41%
Do you participate in the annual summer reading program?

- Yes: 12.9%
- No: 87.1%

Would you like to receive our eNewsletter?

- Yes: 17%
- No: 7%
- I already receive the newsletter: 76%

Thank you to everyone who participated in our community survey!
Michele Eberle, a consultant for the Massachusetts Library System, facilitated our online Community Forum. Here are the summarized results from her SOAR exercise with the group.

**Strengths:** The Library’s strengths include the staff, the variety and abundance of programming offered for all ages, being a member of CLAMS and having accessibility to network resources, the Friends of the Eldredge Public Library, the special collections including genealogy, the children’s collection, and the variety of library book clubs. The library staff is organized, reliable, flexible, engaging and communicative. The Library does a great job of collaborating with other Town groups and organizations.

**Opportunities:** Emerging from a global pandemic, we recognize that the Library was able to pivot as needed to meet the immediate needs of the community. Opportunities for the future include thinking creatively and spontaneously when offering services and programs. Opportunities for the future also include lessons learned from doing business during a pandemic and partnering with other libraries and organizations.

**Aspirations:** The future hopes and dreams the participants saw for their library included collaboration with other nonprofit organizations, becoming a community hub, and offering a gathering place for public discourse for Chatham residents. They hoped for more opportunities for multigenerational programs and more support for the non-English speaking members of the community.

**Results:** Success could be measured in the number of people participating in our programs and events, in our number of successful community partnerships, increased financial support, and a rise in FEPL membership. Another measurement of success is generational retention: the privilege of welcoming and serving multiple generations within the same families.

*This portion of the SOAR exercise emphasized the need to raise public awareness of services and practices already in place and ongoing.*