

**Cambridge Public Library  
Strategic Plan  
FY17-FY19**

**Vision**

Cambridge, a diverse city of active neighbors, proud of its past, hopeful of its future, envisions its public library as a doorway to opportunity, self-development, knowledge, and recreation used by all its residents, and as a forum where they share ideas, cultures, and resources among themselves and with people around the globe. The free availability of information, the lively interaction of people, and the open exchange of ideas animate and extend the democratic traditions from which our city, our country, and our people have so greatly benefited.

**Mission**

For all the people of our city, the Cambridge Public Library opens doors to the world's ideas, perspectives, arts, and occupations, and fosters a lifelong love of reading.

The Library actively promotes free and confidential access to its resources and programs in formats appropriate to the varied needs of its users.

The Library assures its patrons of a public space, both physical and virtual, for discourse and for their pursuit of learning and recreation.

**Library System Roles**

- ❖ Independent Learning: The library supports individuals of all ages pursuing a sustained program of learning independent of any educational provider.
- ❖ Child's Door to Learning: The library encourages children to develop reading and STEAM literacy skills and an interest in reading and learning through services for children and for parents and children together.
- ❖ Collection Development Strategy: The library provides popular materials, research materials and popular and recreational materials for youth.
- ❖ Information Center: The library provides timely, accurate, and useful information for community residents.
- ❖ Civic Engagement Center: The library provides opportunities for the community to come together to learn and to share knowledge.
- ❖ Research Center for Cambridge History: The library collects and provides access to selected city archives of general interest, genealogical resources, and books and other materials related to Cambridge history.
- ❖ Supporting Educators & Out-of-School Time: The library assists elementary and high school students in meeting educational objectives established during their formal courses of study

## Library Core Values

- Promoting the democratic values of a free public library
- Providing, supporting, and advocating for free and open access to all
- Protecting confidentiality
- Championing intellectual freedom
- Conforming to and defending the principles of the American Library Association's Library Bill of Rights
- Offering customer centered, excellent public service
- Fostering a lifelong love of reading
- Welcoming and serving all users with respect
- Facilitating discourse and community connections
- Bridging economic barriers to information and resources
- Preserving our local historical resources

## STRATEGIC PLANNING GOALS

### Resources

1. Offer welcoming, accessible, well-maintained, and easy-to-navigate facilities
  - a. Develop digital signage/communications and standardize signage across locations.
  - b. Streamline meeting room process for ease of access by implementing new system.
  - c. Merchandise the collections to promote the library as a source of "hot" materials, create excitement, and generate use
  - d. Ensure the highest level of cleanliness and presentation
  - e. Create additional seating at Main- seating in the connector, additional seating and change guidelines in the Silent Study Room, make Beech Room available for seating/workspace on weekends, consider adding Rindge Room as collaborative workspace
  - f. Consider adding booths to serve as space for conference calls or co-working space, smaller booths for phone calls/Skyping and a version for breastfeeding/pumping.
  - g. Add changing tables to Men's and Women's Rooms on Ground Floor and L2
  - h. As a participatory budget project, add solar PV panels to the roof of the Main Library
2. Ensure that library system has the resources required to provide the highest quality services to the community
  - a. Ensure all policies and procedures reflect the top priority of exceptional user driven customer service
  - b. Staffing levels should be sufficient to allow for in-service training, regular department meetings, cross training, knowledge sharing, and necessary back of house work.
  - c. Collaborate with Community Engagement Team (CET) to aid in recruiting a more diverse Library staff representative of the City's diversity by providing job advertisements to CET that can be edited to better attract diverse candidates.

- d. Create a mentorship and development program for diverse staff members currently holding entry-level positions to foster their professional growth within the Library and City.
    - e. Create a paid internship program for diverse CPS high school students to learn more about a career in public libraries.
3. Consider improvements to the Central Square Branch:
  - a. Coordinate with DPW to investigate the feasibility of replacing Central Square Branch windows with energy-efficient ones
  - b. Start discussing, with other city departments, creating a park experience at the Central Square Branch's Pearl Street entrance with benches, planters and public chess tables.
4. Participate in the design and construction of the new Valente branch:
  - a. Open the new Valente Branch Library in the fall of 2019 with extended hours, including evenings and Saturdays, to extend access to library services for those living in East Cambridge.
5. Redesign the floor plan of the Boudreau, O'Neill and Collins Branches to reflect current use patterns and priorities
  - a. Implement open holds where possible
  - b. Clarify division between youth and adult areas
  - c. Reduce stack collections and increase seating in youth and adult areas
  - d. Identify good place for digital sign in each branch
6. Recalibrate branch services:
  - a. Place a greater emphasis on youth services and a targeted down adult function that concentrates on high demand titles.
  - b. Identify services missing in branch communities that could be a draw for patrons and could be piloted.
7. Expand collections of English language learning materials as well as international languages (relevant to demographic data) and actively promote their use
  - a. Gather demographic data from the city to support acquisition of language-specific materials.
  - b. Address demand for languages outside of demographics (i.e. French). Survey community for others.
  - c. Promote and highlight foreign language materials
8. Increase e-content collections:
  - a. Identify and implement new models for providing digital content in anticipation of and in response to user demand (Hoopla, Flipster, Launchpads)
  - b. Address patron demand for OverDrive Advantage
  - c. Add a skills-learning system to Library offering (e.g. Lynda.com)

## People and Connections

1. Test service delivery by mobilizing staff with tablets to serve patrons on-the-go.
2. Create opportunities for readers to connect to books by improving readers' advisory services, offering a diverse selection of book discussion groups throughout the system (both in and out of library buildings), writers' workshops, and author readings
3. Collaborate with community organizations to:
  - a. Develop attractive programs that reach new audiences
    - i. Provide informal learning activities at the Library, such drawing and memoir writing, to support lifelong learning opportunities and to foster new connections for seniors.
  - b. Initiate innovative outreach efforts to extend the library to under-served residents
    - i. Build Community Conversation groups and provide bi-annual library tours for CET workers and clients.
  - c. Provide opportunities to bring organizations together to explore and share resources that will strengthen the community's economic welfare and cultural richness.
    - i. Investigate partnerships with other agencies to help patrons to build basic financial literacy skills.
4. Create programming that brings the community together, such as the award-winning Our Path Forward Series, that is consistent with our mission to foster the lively interaction of people and the open exchange of ideas.
5. Expand offerings/classes for individuals seeing to learn to speak, read, and write English and possibly other languages
  - a. Offer Citizenship Preparation Classes at Central Square and the Main Library.
6. Develop skill sharing programs for community members at the Library, such as Fixit Clinic and Learning Circles.
7. Strengthen collaborative and outreach efforts to promote early childhood and grade-school literacy by expanding the library's presence outside its walls
  - a. Bring story times and other children's programming to parks that serve free lunch.
  - b. Develop a schedule to bring story time and library visits to day care centers and pre-schools that serve predominantly low income and immigrant children (e.g. CHA After-School Program outreach: brings kids from housing authority for free books, story time, scavenger hunt, intro kids to the Library)
  - c. Library to work with Department of Human Services (DHSP) to identify which programs have the greatest need for early literacy outreach services and increase the number of preschool classroom visits the Library provides by 10%
  - d. Train Library staff in running an infant program and begin to offer programming specifically for babies (and their caretakers) at all branch locations
  - e. Explore CPL collaboration with potential partner(s) to bring free lunches at targeted library locations
  - f. Foster stronger school collaboration for the library's Summer Reading Program

8. Host a panel of local experts at the Library to discuss "How Cambridge Elections Work", highlighting our unique proportional representation voting system.

### **Public Awareness and Outreach**

1. Expand the boundaries of the library through technology, outreach, and language accessibility
  - a. Strengthen the Library's offerings of print and digital materials and programming in languages other than English.
    - i. Translate simplified general brochures on library services & early literacy
  - b. Seek to offer tech classes in other languages
  - c. Explore need for Chinese-speaking story-time/sing-along leader
  - d. Explore/Pilot library programs in other languages, including PR
  - e. Deepen partnership with the Community Engagement Team (CET) to extend the Library to new or underserved residents.
  - f. Pilot online instruction for using the library via YouTube (tutorial videos, etc.)
2. Seek staff that can speak the most common international languages of the community
  - a. Develop interactive digital displays that promote library services, collections, and programs. (These will not initially consider international language aspects.)
  - b. Simulcast/stream appropriate programs
3. Transform the organizational culture to one that actively promotes library resources, collections, and programs within the buildings, through traditional media and social media
  - a. Ensure every staff member sees him/herself as a member of the public relations team.
  - b. Ensure that no new service or program is initiated without a commensurate public awareness effort
  - c. Frontline Advocacy: identify monthly cohesive theme that everyone owns and support with signage, messages that staff can share with the public, etc.
4. Acquire roving hot spots so that staff can go out into the community and sign people up for library cards and offer "on the spot" library services.
  - a. Bring mobile hotspots to parks and outdoor events, such as Hoops for Health and Danchy Park Day, to register people for new library cards, circulate titles and to register children and families for the 1000 Books Before Kindergarten program.
  - b. Create pilot program to circulate hotspots & Chromebooks within two library branches serving more disadvantaged sections of the City.

### **Technology, STEAM, and Innovation**

1. **Public Access Computing:** Ensure access to new technology, electronic resources, and the Internet, especially for residents without personal access
  - a. Continue to ensure free, open and reliable public access to the Internet and online resources
  - b. Aggressively seek out new technologies that extend and fulfill the library's mission (e.g. 3D Workstation)

- c. Offer powerful multimedia workstations so patrons can edit audio, video, and other media using professional-grade hardware and software.
  - d. Develop video conferencing capability at all library locations.
  - e. Circulate computer equipment (laptops, tablets, etc.) patrons can take anywhere within the Library and ensure that there are always enough computers available for patrons to get online.
    - i. Introduce in-library checkout of laptops via Laptop Kiosk
    - ii. Introduce in-library checkout of light-weight laptops (e.g. Chromebooks)
  - f. Offer more advanced software on MAC computers/laptops to support student and adult learning
  - g. Circulate computer equipment for out-of-library checkout
    - i. Introduce takeout Netbooks
    - ii. Introduce takeout Mobile Hotspots
  - h. Expand and streamline web access on library devices by introducing dedicated Web Stations
  - i. Upgrade public access PC management system to achieve greater reliability, maintainability and ease of use
  - j. Expand access to scanning technology
  - k. Implement wireless printing and Print/Release Station model across CPL system.
  - l. Explore potential to provide tools, collaborative areas, and hands-on learning opportunities with low socio-economic status and youth entrepreneurs/creators in mind.
2. **Build Partnerships:** Develop partnerships with local businesses/organizations, such as Cambridge Community Television (CCTV) or Community Development Department (CDD), to leverage expertise and enhance library offerings.
- a. Offer in-library programs with Akamai, ALA/Google, Innovators*for*Purpose and Harvard/MIT.
  - b. Seek local technology industry partner for technology funding and resources.
  - c. Exchange expertise between CCTV staff and CPL staff.
3. **Technology Education:** Enhance digital literacy & STEAM opportunities at the Library:
- a. Increase CPL's collaborations with local institutions and businesses to provide free and open STEAM learning opportunities for youth.
    - i. Launch SPACE Initiative with Harvard and MIT.
    - ii. Design & deliver modeling course with innovatorsforpurpose.
    - iii. Participate in knowledge-share of library technology programming via Ready to Code.
  - b. Increase opportunities for digital literacy instruction as well as instruction in state-of-the-art technology
    - i. Modularize existing business software courses to address student needs in a more flexible way
    - ii. Integrate Virtual Reality System into existing library programming, such as book groups and teen social events, making this new technology more accessible to Cambridge residents.
  - c. Enable flexible technology programming by introducing light-weight laptops for course support, allowing the Library to offer more classes and to collaborate more efficiently with the CPSD.

- d. Provide a mobile 3D Workstation and bookable 3D experience at the Library to provide STEAM programming for school-aged participants.
- e. Introduce computational programming for broader audiences of learners (e.g. beyond Girls Who Code)

**4. Support Core Library Systems**

- a. Maintain Inter-Library System (ILS) to ensure optimum performance and reliability
  - i. Roll-out new self-check stations
- 5. Create an environment for staff that promotes innovation and encourages risk-taking
  - a. Recruit and develop a tech-savvy staff with a high percentage of “early adopters”
  - b. Create position for Manager of Innovation and Technology

**THE LIBRARY AND ITS COMMUNITY**

For all the people of our city, the Cambridge Public Library opens doors to the world’s ideas, perspectives, arts, and occupations and fosters a lifelong love of reading. The Library actively promotes free and confidential access to its resources and programs in formats appropriate to the varied needs of its users and assures its patrons a public space, both physical and virtual, for discourse and for their pursuit of learning and recreation. The Cambridge Public Library serves the 105,000 residents of our City through the Main Library and six branches. E-library services are available 24/7. The Library is known for its exceptional commitment to free and open access for all, protecting the privacy rights of library users, championing intellectual freedom, providing the highest level of customer service, and anticipating and meeting the reading/viewing/listening interests of its community. Since 2000, the number of registered cardholders has risen 60% to more than 76,000. In that same time period, circulation has risen 68% to 1.6 million.

**Cambridge at-a-Glance**

The City of Cambridge is located in southeast Middlesex County across the Charles River from Boston and occupies a land area of 6.26 square miles. It is bordered by Watertown, Belmont, Arlington and Somerville. The 2010 U.S. Census reported 105,162 residents in Cambridge and, in July 2014, the Census Bureau estimated the population to be 109,694. Only 10 U.S. cities (over 50,000) have population densities higher than Cambridge.

Cambridge was settled in 1630, incorporated as a town in 1636, and became a city in 1846. Since 1942, Cambridge has had a council-manager (Plan E) form of government with nine City Councilors elected at-large every two years. Members of the city council elect a mayor from their own ranks. The six members of the Library Board of Trustees are appointed by the City Manager for three year terms with two positions being appointed each year. The Board is largely a policy-making board with all fiscal and personnel responsibilities falling to the City.

As home to the nation’s oldest university (Harvard) as well as the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT), Lesley University, and Cambridge College, Cambridge is widely known as an international center of academia. Over one-fourth of residents are students and approximately one in five jobs are in the aforementioned institutions.

## Demographics

- 63% of residents are White Non-Hispanic
- 26% of residents are foreign born
- 30% of residents speak languages other than English at home (19% Spanish, 16% Chinese)
- 65% of all households rent
- 41% of households are single persons, 40% are families, and 19% are roommates or unmarried partners
- 17,420 families reside in Cambridge; 6972 of them have minor children
- 76% of residents have a four-year college degree and 46% have a graduate degree; only 6% of adults aged 25 or older lack a high school diploma
- 111,581 jobs are performed in Cambridge, 93.1% of them are in the private sector
- Unemployment is 2.8%, considerably lower than the state and national averages
- Major employers are academic institutions, biopharmaceutical and biotechnology companies, and high tech businesses

## Population Projections

The Metropolitan Area Planning Commission (MAPC) projects between 6% and 12% growth in the regional population depending on whether one uses the “status quo (SQ)” or a “strong region (SR)” scenario. At this time, the Cambridge Community Development Department is using the SR scenario in its planning. MAPC recommends using the SR scenario as well.

Regional projections such as:

- Growth in the need for housing single person households
- 2/3 of housing demand will be for multiple family housing
- Resurgence of urban communities
- 6.9% growth in labor force

will likely ensure that Cambridge enjoys as much growth as its available housing and developable land can manage. With one of the strongest business sectors in the Commonwealth, if not the nation, Cambridge is likely to attract young workers. It is also likely to continue to attract seniors who are downsizing from suburban homes and looking for greater services and smaller living units in the city. Two of the largest parcels of undeveloped land in Cambridge are located in East Cambridge at North Point and in north Cambridge at Alewife. It is probable that much of Cambridge’s housing and commercial growth over the next twenty years will happen in or near these areas.

## Process

In the fall of 2013, the Board of Trustees met with consultant Steve Miller and developed the vision and mission statements for the CPL. In the spring of 2014, led by Mr. Miller the entire library staff in a brainstorming session to identify their broad goals for the strategic plan. They were then grouped into:

- Policy Goals

All suggestions in this area fell under the policy of ensuring equality of access for all

- User Experience Goals  
Suggestions in this area fell into three broad categories: Collections, Programming and Facilities
- Operational Goals  
Suggestions in this area fell into 5 broad categories: Personnel Resources/Efficiencies, Outreach, Communications, Partnerships with Other Organizations, and Forecasting/Positioning

In the 2014 biannual survey of residents conducted by Opinion Dynamics for the Cambridge City Council, 74% of respondents had used the Cambridge Public library in the last twelve months, up from 66% in 2000. Sixty-three percent of respondents had used the library three times or more, with 26% using it 26 times or more. Ninety-five percent rated the library as good or excellent, a 20% improvement since 2000.

In 2015, a staff committee was formed to solicit the community's input in the development of the strategic planning goals. The committee conducted outreach to community groups, other agencies, and other libraries. A survey was developed and randomly conducted on the streets, in the libraries, and on the web. More than 400 individuals participated in the survey.

Survey results indicate:

- 14% of non-users don't know if they are allowed to use the library
- 14% of non-users say the library does not have what they want
- 28% of non-users use another library
- 87% of library users use the Main Library, but only 66% identify it as their most frequently used location
- 98% of users feel welcome
- 97% of users say the library is clean
- 89% of users say they can find a quiet place in the library
- 96% of users say computers are available when they need them
- 91% of users say they can get what they want
- 93% of users say it is easy to get what they need
- 98% of users say the staff is helpful

Survey respondents use the library in traditional ways with:

- 82% looking for items to borrow
- 71% picking up requested items
- 43% sit and read
- 32% use a library computer with another 30% using the wifi network
- 25% attend programs
- 23% do research
- 20% get recommendations for good books to read

- 40% have never used electronic resources

There is interest in technology with:

- 50% interested in creative technology (29% software and 21% maker space)
- 37% wanting instruction in new technology
- 29% want technology to borrow

The desire for the social aspect of library services was evident in that 49% want movie nights, 28% want game/trivia nights, and 24% want to participate in international language discussion groups.

Traditional forms of communication are being eclipsed by electronic means. Seventy-nine percent want to get their information about the library from its web site and 63% through email. Twenty-eight percent wanted a printed calendar and only 11% wanted to get their information from the local newspaper.

Respondents spending priorities were:

1. Collections (hard copies) 57%
2. Youth programming (children and teen) 51%
3. Staff to assist users 25%

What do respondents want more of? Keep the Main Library open on Sundays throughout the summer and bring the branches back to five days a week with Saturday hours. Expand Saturday hours at Central Square.

### **Major Accomplishments of Last Strategic Plan** (as of 2013):

- Planned, built, and opened a newly expanded Main Library to much acclaim
- Restored the O'Neill and Collins Branches
- Improved Central Square building with a new elevator, HVAC system, and painting
- Created a reading garden at the Valente Branch
- Increased library budget as a percentage of overall city budget from 1.5 % to 1.76%
- Increased staff salaries to be above average for comparable communities
- Increased ratio of FTEs per operating hour to 3.04
- Recruited staff who speak French, Italian, Spanish, Kreyol, Polish, German, Greek, Portuguese, Hebrew, Tamil, Hindi, Armenian, and Chinese
- Increased materials expenditures to be the highest in the Minuteman Network and higher than every other public library in Mass with the exception of Boston
- Increased circulation per capita from 10.4 to 15.6
- Hired first archivist to set up and manage the Cambridge History Room
- Coordinated branch schedules to ensure that every sector of the city has a nearby library open Monday through Friday and every evening Monday through Thursday
- Installed software for the visually impaired on all public computers
- Developed ongoing computer literacy classes at Central Square and the Main Library

- Initiated “Welcome Baby” packets in coordination with the Cambridge Health Alliance and the Department of Human Services
- Delivered books on a bi-weekly basis to home daycare providers
- Installed a minimum of four public access computers at the O’Neill, Valente, and Central Square Branches

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