

STRATEGIC PLAN 2026-2030



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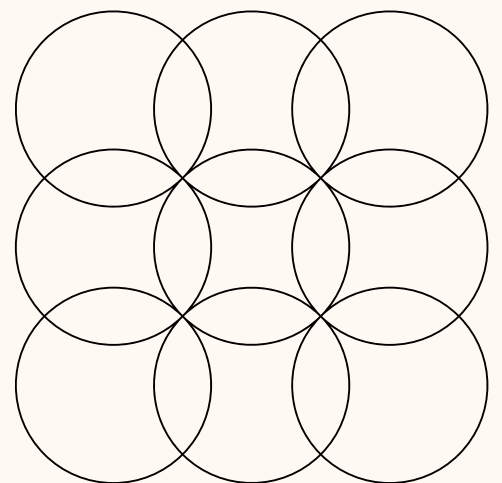
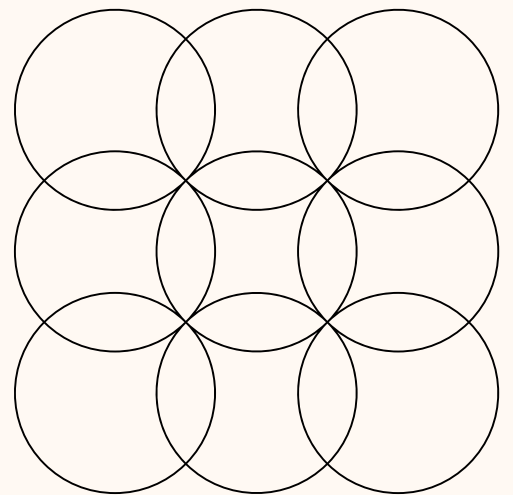
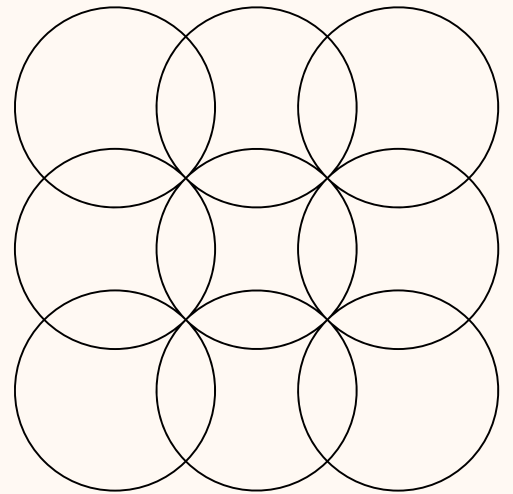
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Acknowledgments

Board of Library Trustees Approval

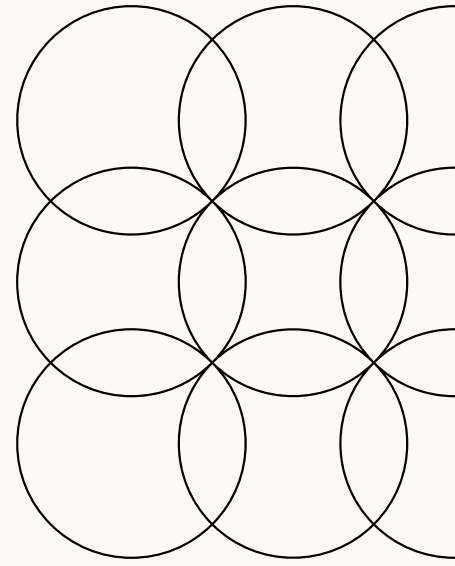


Introduction

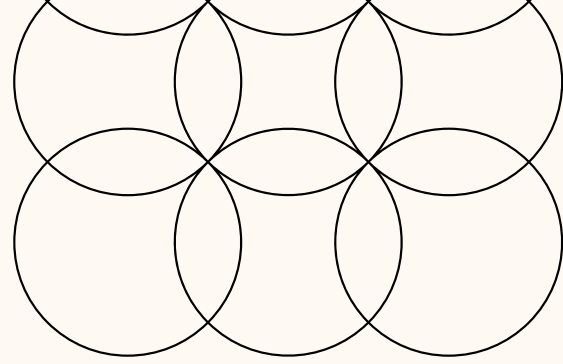
In the fall of 2023 Beebe Library contracted with Sage Consulting to facilitate a strategic planning process. Sage had worked with the library on its earlier plan that had successfully guided us through the pandemic. In this new process, we sought to discover trends and needs throughout the Wakefield community, and to evaluate our current roles and their value to those we serve.

The Plan that follows is the result of data collection and analysis conducted over a six-month period. Barbara Alevras, PMP of Sage, facilitated forums, organizational exercises, and surveys; Trustees conducted stakeholder interviews; and library staff provided research. Patrons of all ages – including nonusers – shared their time and thoughts. In addition, recently conducted town-wide studies, including Vision 2030 and a Health and Human Services Department Connection & Loneliness Survey helped inform our work.

We learned a lot to help us consider where our community may be headed and what our patrons and our staff will need to thrive. We were gratified and humbled by the outpouring of support, respect, and value expressed by those we serve. We share our community's pride in Wakefield and the architectural treasure that is Lucius Beebe Memorial Library. We seek to lead Wakefield's library into the future, while honoring its past.



The Process

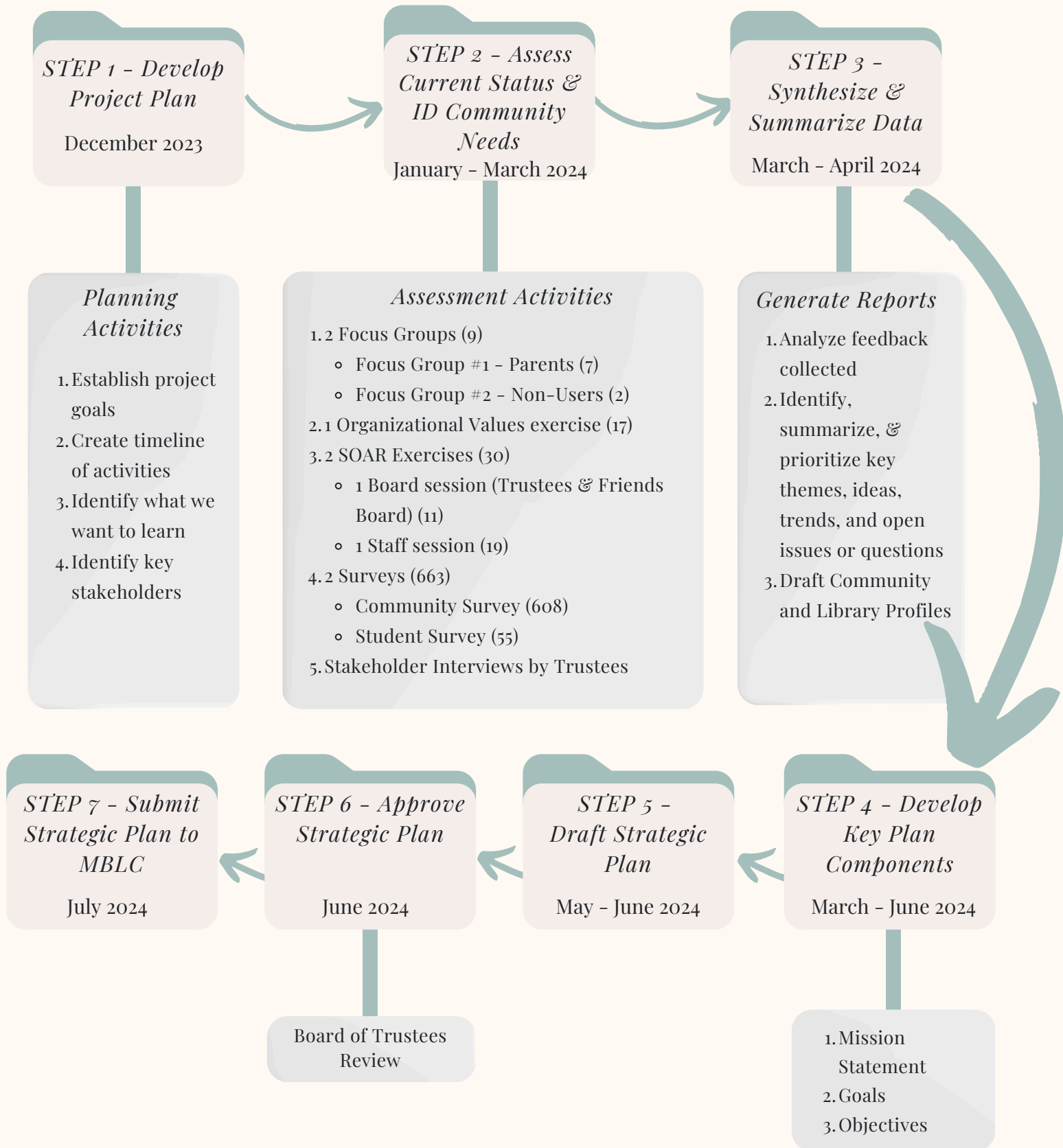


In fall 2023 library administrators worked with Sage Consulting to develop a new strategic plan. The resulting process is detailed on the next page in the Strategic Planning Process Flowchart for 2023-2024.

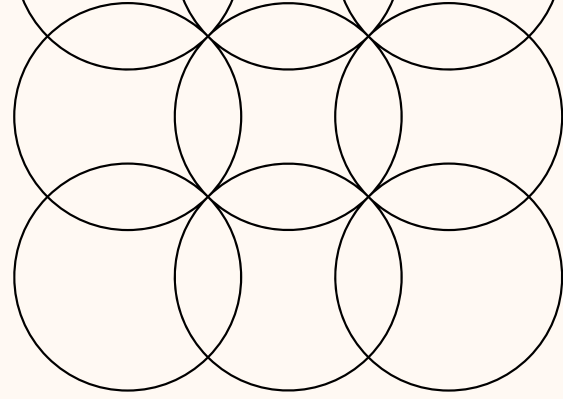
The process was designed to gather input from a wide variety of stakeholders: staff, trustees, Friends of the Library, parents, students, users and nonusers, and community and town partners. From January through March 2024 Sage facilitated SOAR exercises, focus groups, and a staff organizational values retreat. Sage also advised on and managed 2 unique surveys. In addition, Library Trustees held interviews with key stakeholders, and we collaborated with a Town Council Youth Council member on a Youth Survey, both on the questions asked and with promotion of that survey to students.

Focus groups and surveys were designed to learn more about people's lives, how things may be different post-pandemic, and barriers they may encounter to achieving goals or satisfying needs. The library sought to find out what people know about and expect of their town and their library, and how they get news and information. In April we summarized and analyzed data collected, with an eye toward where the library might play a role.

Strategic Planning Process Flowchart



About Wakefield & Beebe Library



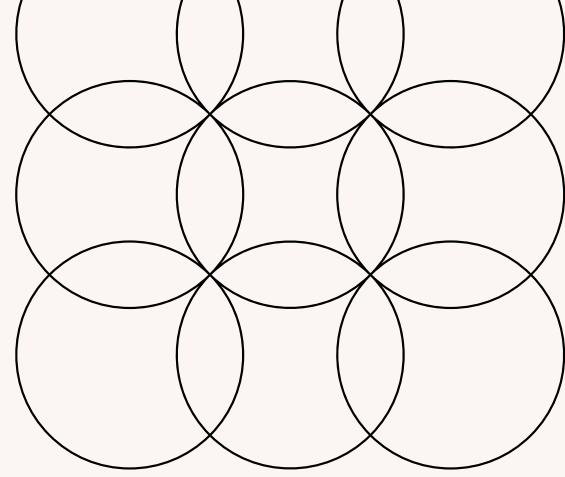
Wakefield is a roughly seven square mile suburban town north of Boston. The population is slowly increasing with available housing units. Cost of housing, proximity to Boston and Rt. 128, public transportation that includes commuter rail, and a well-educated populace have contributed to increased median household income. The town prides itself on being welcoming, yet the size of the town, and the cost and limits of housing, have contributed to minimal shifts in racial demographics.

Wakefieldians are fairly evenly distributed in age ranges, as long-term vs. newer residents, and — judging by Town Meeting and local elections — by political opinion, despite a clear majority of registered Democrats. The workforce leans more heavily white-collar, with college degrees higher than the state average.

Wakefield recognizes and cares for its neediest citizens, be they disabled (6.2%) or in poverty (4.2%), with partnerships among various human services, religious, and municipal organizations.

During the past decade, the town has worked steadily toward making quality-of-life and infrastructure improvements. These include a redesign and renovation of the Main Street shopping district, mixed-use development near public transportation, improvements for multimodal transportation, an arts district centered on the Albion Cultural Exchange (ACE) building, the addition of a robust Health and Human Services Department, and new, sustainable schools: Wakefield Memorial High and Northeast Vocational Technical.

Beebe Library strives to spot trends and respond to current needs. The library diligently tracks a wide variety of measures of use and regularly reviews it to gain insights.



Since the pandemic, librarians have been aware of changing preferences in collection formats, building use, and programming options.

Through partnerships with town educators, Librarians are aware of changes in student learning and school readiness.

In the wake of the pandemic, many professions experienced workforce changes, with librarianship no exception. Beebe Library has seen substantial turnover in its staff, with a notable increase in staff newer to the profession.



about the town

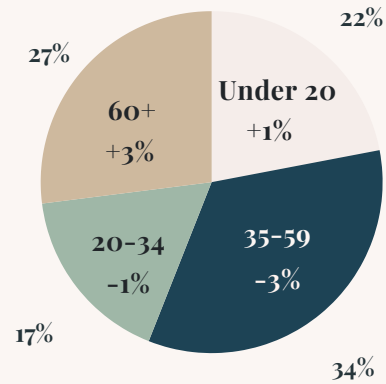
Wakefield, MA

POPULATION



2010	24,733	
2017	26,450	+7%
2021	27,041	+2.2%

RESIDENTS BY AGE



Change from 2017 to 2022

INCOME & EDUCATION



MEDIAN HOUSEHOLD INCOME +34%



RESIDENTS WITH BACHELORS DEGREE OR HIGHER +5%

Change from 2017 to 2022

HOUSING

NUMBER OF HOUSEHOLDS +9.7%

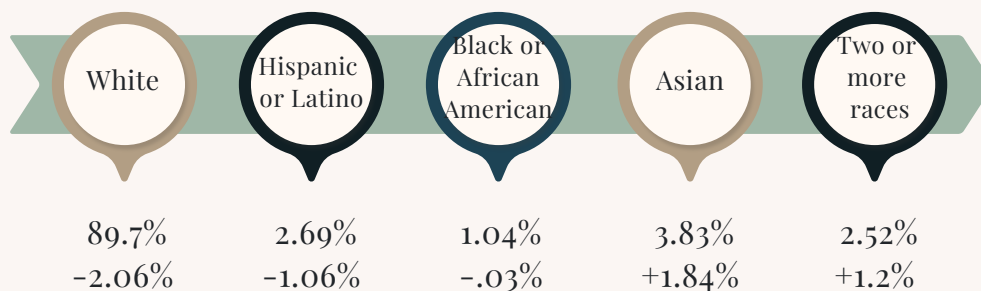
OWNER-OCCUPIED UNITS -5%



MEDIAN VALUE OF HOMES +44%

Change from 2017 to 2021

RESIDENTS BY RACE



Change from 2017 to 2021

SOURCES:

<https://www.census.gov/quickfacts/fact/table/wakefieldcdpmassachusetts,US/PST045223>

<https://datausa.io/profile/geo/wakefield-ma>

<https://data.census.gov/profile/01880?g=860XXooUSo1880#populations-and-people>

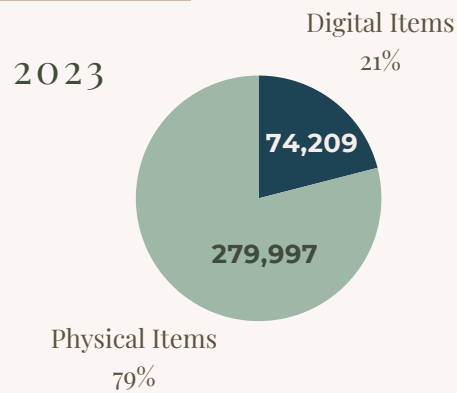
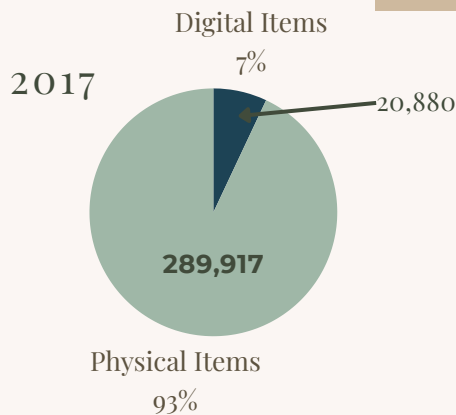
about the library

Lucius Beebe Memorial Library

BUILDING USE

	2017	2023
<i>Days Open</i>	334	330
<i>Total Traffic</i>	243,987	158,115
<i>Meeting Room Uses</i>	872	547

CIRCULATION BY FORMAT



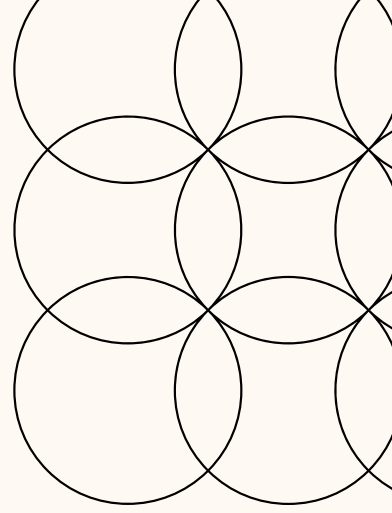
PROGRAMMING

	2017		2023	
	# programs	attendance	# programs	attendance
<i>IN-PERSON</i>	649	15,983	578	17,044
<i>VIRTUAL</i>	0	0	103	1,445

STAFF EXPERIENCE

Years of Service	2017	2024
<i>AVERAGE</i>	16	10
<i>MEDIAN</i>	16	4
<i>MODE</i>	22	0
<i>RANGE</i>	37	29

Needs Assessment Results & Key Findings



Focus Group: Parents

Of twelve volunteers, seven participated; three were homeschoolers. Children included preschoolers.

Most parents reported pandemic-related changes for their families.

This group expressed disconnection from local government, and most did not have reliable sources of information.

As library patrons, all participants approved of available resources and had excellent experiences with librarians.

Library use is diverse: books, resources, a place to go, programming. Similarly, time of use is diverse: the commonality is that it depends on each family's unique schedule.

The website is seen as adequate.

Focus Group: Non-users

Of ten volunteers, two participated. In general they like the town and its services, and both value libraries. One uses the website, but did not discover things there. They were unaware of many town and library services, resources, and news sources. Both came to tour the library with a librarian.

Interviews

Trustees made connections with community leaders and groups to enhance networking, awareness, and partnerships. These interviews included the Health Dept., Senior Center, and town and state government representatives.

Community Survey

94% of respondents have a library card; 27% visit weekly, 70% visit intermittently, 3% do not visit.

16% do not use the website; 7% are *unaware* of the website.

Website is primarily used to find books, reserve museum passes, and register for programs.

While throughout the assessment process there were comments that found the website lacking, it is the primary way, along with the email newsletter, that respondents learn about library events and resources. The least used option, Community Calendar, is surpassed only by “I don’t hear.”

Feedback was overwhelmingly positive and grateful, with numerous ideas and requests. Complaints include parking, disabled parking, noise, and space for youth or private study.

Interestingly, someone likes that “homeless and illegals are not loitering in and around the library,” which is a perception not based on reality. That perception may reflect a successful partnership of the library, Police Department, and Health & Human Services.

Student Survey

Students report a very diverse range of favorite books, music, movies, and preferred activities.

School media centers are reported as sufficient for homework.

Thirty percent of respondents do not find it easy to find a place to hang out.

48.6% report biking, scooting, or skateboarding around town. This is likely to increase with town infrastructure improvements and emphasis on sustainability.

While traditional teen challenges like avoiding bad influences, bullying, and fitting in were mentioned, there is broad agreement that youth challenges center on mental health, stress, social media culture, and phones.

Examination of Findings

Residents are proud of their town and their library. Patrons overwhelmingly hold positive attitudes toward the library building, its collections, and the library staff.

The library is seen as welcoming.

Library hours adequately accommodate patrons' diverse schedules and preferences to come to the building.

The library successfully hosts a very broad and diverse range of people, interests, and activities, and meets a wide variety of needs without sacrificing comfort for most patrons. The rare, yet most common complaint is about noise levels.

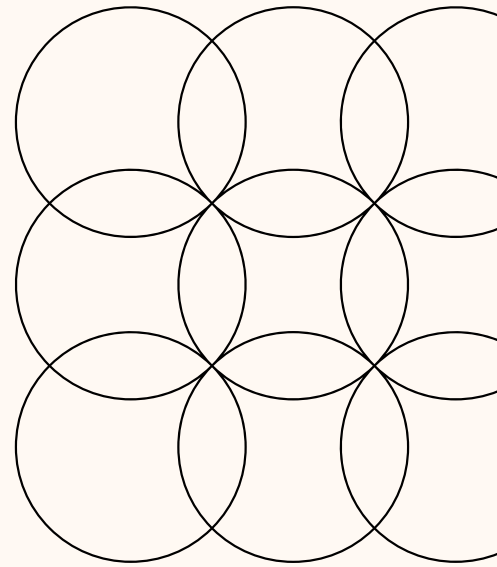
People would be more likely to work in the library if there were private spaces.

In many cases, the library has what people need if they know to look for it and where.

Patrons underutilize the website, resulting in less information about – and use of – available offerings.

Frustration expressed about how the collection is weeded, and a lack of awareness of ways librarians aid literacy development, were grounded in misinformation or misunderstanding.

The library has additional potential to create community, and that role is valued by residents.

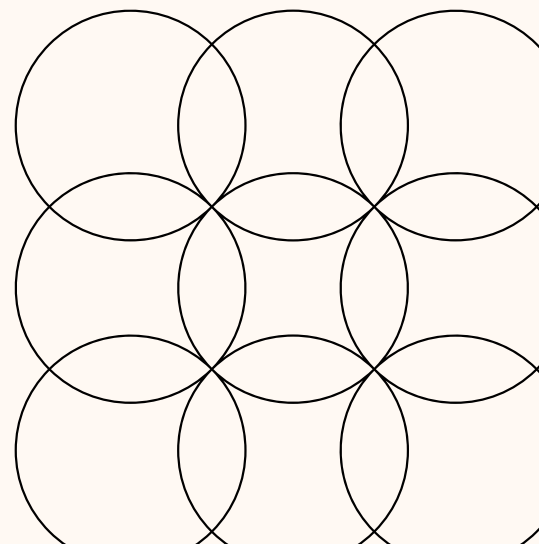


Examination of Findings cont.

Less measurable, but noted in part through work with other town service providers, is an undercurrent of anxiety, tension, and contentious communication. Town services are aware of substance abuse, domestic violence, and mental health concerns. While social media could be helpful in building connections, it too often is a source of overuse, misinformation, or bullying.

Communication has been a continuous problem reported throughout the needs assessment process. Despite the numerous channels that exist, people seem unable, or perhaps unwilling, to find out about things of importance or interest to them. Wakefield excels at communicating. The town has a Communications Manager with a website, newsletters, social media presence, text and email alerts; downtown kiosks; local paper The Daily Item; WCAT local cable; all public meetings on Zoom, recorded, and archived; and physical mail is sent.

The library strives to anticipate trends. This has become more difficult. Expectations and attitudes changed with the pandemic. The rapid pace of technology makes it hard to adapt to seismic changes like AI. Climate change and global conflicts contribute to anxiety and other challenges to mental wellness. The library's strategy is developed within this context.



Town Studies

The town has conducted projects that provide additional insight into trends and resident's values, hopes, and expectations. These include the Metropolitan Area Planning Council's (MAPC) Vision 2030 and a Wakefield Health & Human Services Connection & Loneliness survey.

Vision 2030 identified Beebe Library as a “most liked community asset” and “strongest physical asset” in Wakefield.

The WV-2030 public forum discussions and extensive community survey input revealed an overwhelming appreciation and support for the Lucius Beebe Memorial Library. The library was valued not only for its architectural and historic significance as a tangible community asset, but also for the extraordinary services it provides beyond that of a conventional library as a low-barrier informational and welcoming resource and place for anyone who crosses the threshold of its doors.

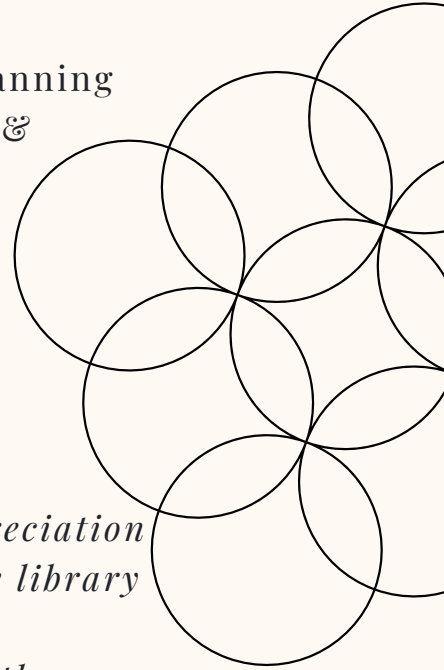
Connection & Loneliness Survey

39% of respondents go to the library to connect with others in Wakefield.

Respondents stressed a desire for more programming and a single central location for information on news, community events, and volunteer opportunities.

SOAR

Two SOAR exercises were conducted: one by Trustees and Friends of the library and a second by library staff. While both groups had points in common, there were differences worth considering to be sure all stakeholders are aware of information relative to their respective viewpoints. The summary follows.



SOAR Summary Results

TRUSTEES & FRIENDS OF BEEBE

STAFF

STRENGTHS

- 1.Events
- 2.Building
- 3.Staff
- 4.Beyond Books
- 5.Reputation

- 1.Staff
- 2.Building
- 3.Connections
- 4.Collections
- 5.Programming

OPPORTUNITIES

- 1.New, evolving outreach
- 2.Targeted program communications
- 3.Continue to Innovate
- 4.Tech & Digital literacy for all ages
- 5.Sustainable financial plan for future

- 1.Strengthen staff management skills
- 2.Private space for patron use
- 3.Interdepartmental communications
- 4.Staff training in patron support skills
- 5.Support community's tech needs

ASPIRATIONS

- 1.Library is viable, relevant, & vibrant
- 2.Library enjoys broad awareness & high engagement
- 3.Core values & tenets are maintained
- 4.Library is financially secure
- 5.All households have a library card

- 1.Staff are supported by leadership, resources, and training
- 2.Library is relevant & known as the place to get what you need
- 3.Entire community is aware of all offerings
- 4.Welcoming to all
- 5.Space is optimized for staff, patrons, and collections

RESULTS

- 1.Positive feedback from target groups
- 2.Number of cardholders
- 3.Ample Town budget
- 4.Number of outside event attendees
- 5.Number of Friends of Beebe members

- 1.Increased positive feedback
- 2.Increased room bookings
- 3.Increased community partnership requests
- 4.increased craft program participants & related checkouts
- 5.Increased community agency meetings

The 5-Year Strategic Plan

Mission

To engage our community in lifelong learning that builds knowledge and promotes understanding.

Principles

Library staff identified the following principles as foundational to Beebe Library's service:

- **Access** - the library provides equitable access to quality resources
- **Intellectual Freedom** - the library upholds patrons' right to hold, receive, and disseminate ideas and information
- **Welcome** - the library is open, welcome, and free to all
- **Connection** - the library fosters connection through collaboration, partnerships, outreach, and programs



The 5-Year Strategic Plan cont.

Goals & Objectives

Goal 1: Sustain the library's commitment to excellence.

Objective 1. Provide and promote high levels of staff training and development that encompass librarianship, public service, institutional knowledge, succession, and cross-training.

Objective 2. Evaluate library building and website, and execute appropriate changes most advantageous to patrons.

Objective 3. Redesign the long-range building capital plan to address aging infrastructure, sustainability, and historic preservation.

Goal 2: Cultivate connection.

Objective 1. Develop plans to engage underserved populations.

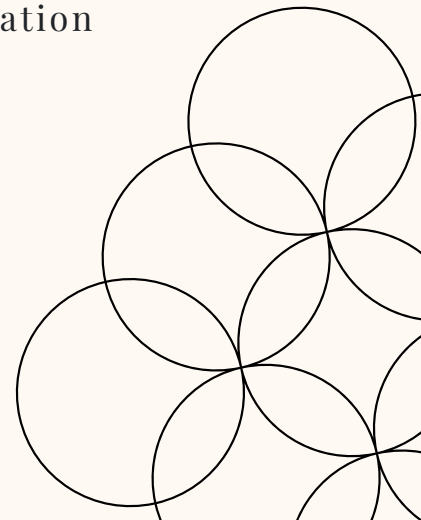
Objective 2. Structure programs and events to include social opportunities.

Goal 3: Develop a strategy that responds to current communication challenges.

Objective 1. Update library branding to include consistency across departments.

Objective 2. Focus marketing efforts on communication channels that deliver optimal results.

Objective 3. Form a partnership with the town communications manager to enhance town-wide communication.



Communicating Results

The Library Director will evaluate strategic plan progress and review results at monthly staff meetings.

Status updates will be reported to the Board of Library Trustees quarterly.

Strategic Plan performance highlights will be reported in the Town Annual Report.

The Strategic Plan will be available on the library website.

Acknowledgements

We are grateful to staff, trustees, residents, patrons, and advocates who participated.

Board Approval

June 26, 2024

