

Hanson Public Library

Strategic Plan 2024-2028



132 Maquan Street
Hanson, MA 02341

Adopted by the
Hanson Public Library
Board of Trustees
September 26, 2023

Library Director's Message to the Community

In April of 2023, the Hanson Public Library embarked on an exciting project to apply for a grant through the Massachusetts Public Library Construction Program. We began work on a new strategic plan that serves as a guide to essential library services and the ways we can provide those services to meet the needs of Hanson's residents. Using a variety of methods, we listened to what our community had to say about our current services and what we can do better. What did we hear? The key themes expressed point to a desire for a Library that cultivates social connections, is welcoming to all, provides opportunities for enrichment, and is focused on the future. Service priorities were developed based on these key themes and have been incorporated into a Strategic Plan for 2024-2028.

Our new Strategic Plan is the product of successful collaboration among our supportive community members. We are immensely grateful to focus group and survey participants for their valuable and insightful input, and to those who served on our Planning Committee for investing their time to help us shape the Library's next five years. Thank you to Library staff, the Library Trustees, and members of town boards, committees, and departments, whose knowledge of Hanson and Library services assisted us in more clearly identifying community needs. Representative Josh Cutler and Hanson Public Library Foundation Directors were instrumental in securing the funding necessary for this endeavor, and we thank them for their efforts and generosity. Finally, a huge thank you to consultant Ruth Kowal for taking on our project and sharing her extensive library and planning expertise to guide us smoothly through the process.

I'm confident this new Strategic Plan speaks to the hopes and aspirations of Hanson's residents for Library service and captures their desire for community, connection, and culture. I'm excited to see what the next five years will bring.

*Karen Stolfer
Library Director*

Vision Statement

The Hanson Public Library enriches, engages, and strengthens our community.

Mission Statement

The Hanson Public Library inspires curiosity and fosters life-long learning by connecting people and ideas. The Library provides access to a wide variety of resources, technology, and experiences in a welcoming, supportive environment.

Library Priorities

We Connect our Community

The Library endeavors to be at the heart of the community by fostering social connections and offering opportunities for Hanson residents to come together through shared spaces, programs, resources, and events that inform, educate, and entertain.

- We actively pursue opportunities for creating new library spaces to support community-identified needs and wishes.
- We cultivate and strengthen community and town partnerships through shared community resources and spaces.
- We expand library marketing and promotion efforts to reach all residents.

We Enrich People's Lives

The Library reaffirms its commitment to reading, learning, and culture for all, by supporting and celebrating literacy in all forms - print, digital, artistic - to promote personal growth, discovery, knowledge, and understanding.

- We provide residents of all ages with resources and programs to support informal and formal learning goals, to explore personal interests, and to continue to learn throughout their lives.
- We provide materials and programs encouraging intellectual pursuits, creativity, and enhanced leisure time activities.
- We provide high-quality, flexible spaces for people to learn, explore, create, and socialize.
- We celebrate and promote reading in a variety of formats to nurture readers of all ages and backgrounds.
- We actively engage in the preservation of and access to Hanson's rich historical record.

We Open Our Doors to All

The Library is a place for everyone, providing a welcoming, inclusive, and safe community space. We actively seek out opportunities to engage all Hanson residents in the use of the Library's informational and recreational resources.

- We strive to continue as a trusted community resource, committed to supporting intellectual freedom for our residents.
- We focus our collection resources on the community, and enhance our resources through extensive shared access to other library collections.
- We ensure that library services are delivered with sensitivity and care to people of all ages, educational levels, interests, and social and cultural backgrounds.
- We seek opportunities to connect with underserved populations and identify ways to provide library services that respond to their particular needs and interests.
- We look outward into the community to identify barriers encountered by those using the Library and seek ways to remove those barriers.
- We serve as a bridge to other libraries and communities through our access to libraries statewide and beyond.

We are Focused on Hanson's Future

The Library is committed to expanding and enhancing its ability to provide a wide range of evolving services to meet the changing needs of the community.

- We incorporate community input as we work to improve library services and facilities, and seek out opportunities to improve the quality of life for all Hanson residents.
- We prioritize creating library spaces that are flexible and embrace evolving community service needs and interests.
- We recognize the importance of being poised to adopt and incorporate developing energy-saving practices and standards.

- We actively seek financial support from a variety of resources to ensure the Library is positioned to deliver services of key importance to the community.
- We recognize the rapidly evolving world of technology and seek ways to assist our community in understanding and successfully utilizing new technologies to share information and resources, and to communicate with our community.
- We pursue optimal staffing levels and recruit and retain staff that reflect our community and are service-oriented, skilled, and knowledgeable, ensuring high-quality library service.
- We encourage and expect staff to remain informed about emerging library services and technology, and be active participants in planning and developing new services and the spaces required to deliver those services.
- We continually explore opportunities for more efficient and convenient ways to deliver library services.

Planning Process

In April 2023, the Library Board of Trustees hired library consultant Ruth Kowal to assist the Library throughout the strategic and library building program processes. The Board of Trustees appointed a 5-person Planning Committee consisting of two members of the Board of Trustees (one of whom serves as the president of the Hanson Public Library Foundation), three community members, and ex-officio members Library Director Karen Stolfer and Assistant Library Director Julia Nee. The Planning Committee was responsible for providing advice and guidance on the process for gathering community input and the identification of priorities for the Library over the next five years.

The planning efforts were grounded in “looking outward” into the community, seeking input from individuals regarding their personal hopes and aspirations for the community and how the Library could support the achievement of those hopes and aspirations through its community-focused strategic priorities.

The Planning Committee began its work on May 8, 2023, providing suggestions to the director and the consultant on the soliciting of community input. Following that meeting, a series of focus groups, a community survey, individual interviews and questionnaires, and flip charts for public suggestions and comments were put in place.

- 2 open community focus groups
- 1 community focus group for town boards, commissions, and organizations
- Board of Trustees focus group
- Staff focus groups
- Library survey - online, via social media, and on paper
- Individual questionnaires for teens at the Library and Camp Kiwanee
- Flip charts in the Library lobby and children’s room

Forty-four people participated in the focus groups, approximately 20 teens responded to a teen-focused survey, and 205 people submitted survey responses. The focus groups and open-ended questions in the survey provided extensive input, which was analyzed and processed by the Planning Committee at their July 17,

2023 meeting. Key themes, words, and concepts were identified and will serve as the foundation for the Library's strategic priorities for the upcoming five years.

Important Key Words

- Inclusive
- Community
- Welcoming
- Convenient
- More than books - arts & culture
- Outreach
- Coordination
- Outdoor spaces
- Access
- Gathering (community) - welcoming/socializing
- A place for learning

The new strategic plan is flexible and nimble, and provides the framework for evolving service elements, focusing the Library's activities over the next five years. In addition, it serves as the primary guide to the creation of the Library Building Program, which will be submitted prior to June 1, 2024.

Community and Library

Community Profile

Hanson is a suburban community with an area of 15 square miles located approximately 20 miles southeast of Boston. The town was originally part of Pembroke and was included in a tract of land that Major Josiah Winslow and 34 others purchased from Sachem Josias Wampatuck in 1662. These settlers and later inhabitants found the land suitable for farming and used the many ponds, brooks, and streams to erect sawmills for lumbering. These waterways were also helpful for those involved in growing cranberries, which was a prominent business in the late 19th century along with shingle and shoe making.

Incorporated in 1820, the town was named after Alexander Contee Hanson, publisher of the Federal Republican newspaper in Baltimore. His criticism of the Madison administration and the War of 1812 led to riots in which Hanson himself was attacked. However, feelings soon changed, and three months later Hanson was elected as a representative to Congress. He then served in the United States Senate until his death in 1819 at the age of 33.

Hanson's population from the 2020 U.S. Census is recorded at 10,639. The largest growth was seen in the mid to late 20th century, with an increase of 63.6% from 1960 to 1970. Census data from 2010 (10,209) and 2020 (10,639) shows the recent population increase at 4%. Population size is projected by The UMass Donahue Institute to remain stable over the next 30 years, reaching an estimated 10,322 in 2050. The town is mostly residential with a rural atmosphere, but lies within close proximity to business hubs. The arrival of the Old Colony Railroad made the commute north to Boston and south to Plymouth more convenient and has made Hanson a desirable place to settle.

Library History

Library service in Hanson began with the formation of the Hanson Temperance Library Association on August 17, 1882. Through the generosity of Elijah C. Thomas and his sister Rachel C. Cushing, Thomas Hall was built in 1884 to house this privately endowed library. Five years later, residents from the southern part of

town formed the Wampatuck Library Association and housed a second privately endowed library in Wampatuck Hall.

In 1896 two branches of a town-funded library were established. The library at Wampatuck Hall was given into the care of the town to create a South Branch, and a North Branch was located at the store of E.F. Witherell, later to move into the home of librarians Mary and Evie Drew. A new location for the North Branch was sought after the resignation of Evie Drew in 1921, and was found when the Hanson Library Association turned over Thomas Hall and all their property to the town. The North Branch remained in Thomas Hall until 1961 when it moved into an addition at the Indian Head School. As part of the relocation, the South Branch was closed, and its books were also moved to the new site.

By the 1980's, the Board of Library Trustees realized that further expansion was needed. Lacking space at Indian Head, they decided to work with the Council for Elder Affairs, whose space was also crowded, to begin the process of constructing a joint facility on land donated by the Hanson School Department. This building opened to the public in October 1991 and is the home of the Library and Senior Center today.

With the development of new technology in the early 1990's, the Library joined the ABLE (Automated Bristol Library Exchange) network and the automation process began on October 17, 1994. Subsequently, ABLE merged with another network, SEAL, to form the SAILS Library Network, which currently consists of over 70 libraries in southeastern Massachusetts. Today, technology is an essential part of library services, and libraries have evolved into important community centers, providing access to a wide variety of materials, offering entertaining and educational programs, and contributing to a better quality of life for all residents.

Service Evaluation

The community survey, distributed via the Library’s website, on social media, and in print, brought in over 200 responses. The survey provided priority validation of current library services, as well as ideas and suggestions that were identified through the community focus groups, questionnaires, and in-library flip charts.

Top 10 important or very important services

99% | Borrowing materials (books, DVDs, etc.)

94% | Library staff available to assist with research, technology, and searching

93% | Programs for seniors

92% | Partnerships with community organizations, groups, schools, etc.

92% | Museum passes

91% | Programs for children

91% | Library staff available to help with finding new materials to read/watch/listen to

90% | Programs for adults

88% | Library as a community center
(i.e. a place to interact with neighbors/friends, meet new people, etc.)

87% | Delivery of Library materials to the homebound

Other important or very important services:

- ▶ Programs for teens
- ▶ Expanded open hours
- ▶ Preserving Hanson history resources and making them easily accessible to the public

Top 10 important or very important features for the Library to have in a redesigned space

88% | Expanded children's area

87% | Expanded tween/teen/young adult area

86% | Areas for children's play, creative learning, gaming, etc.

83% | Separate children's program and craft area

82% | Large community meeting/program rooms

82% | Small meeting rooms for community use

79% | More accessible service desks, restrooms, and shelving for materials

78% | Spaces for neurodiverse individuals of all ages

76% | Meeting rooms with technology for virtual and in-person use

73% | Incorporation of outdoor space into Library space
(e.g. outdoor seating, reading garden, walking paths)

Other important or very important features for the Library to have in a redesigned space:

- ▶ Expanded leisure seating area
- ▶ More natural air could flow through the building
- ▶ Green building, solar panels, electric vehicle charging station, etc.

Top 10 reasons survey respondents would make more use of the Library

75% | Expanded selection of museum passes

64% | More programs for adults

63% | More availability of new and bestseller titles in print/physical format

58% | More indoor seating areas that were comfortable, had natural lighting, and/or provided outdoor views

55% | Different or expanded hours of public service

53% | More outdoor seating areas

51% | More programs for seniors

49% | More "Library of Things" items to borrow (musical instruments, small tools, specialty crafting equipment, puzzles/games, etc.)

48% | More availability of online resources for school, work, research, business, jobs/careers

47% | A larger area for tweens/teens/young adults

Other reasons survey respondents would make more use of the Library:

- ▶ A larger area for children's activities
- ▶ Quiet study areas
- ▶ Small meeting rooms for community use

The majority of survey respondents, 68%, indicated they are between the ages of 40 and 75, with that number split equally among 40-59 year olds and 60-75 year olds. The number of respondents ages 25-39 and age 76 or older are also equal at 14%. The remaining 4% are under age 25.

36% of survey respondents said they used the Library, either in person or virtually, at least once a week, 39% once or twice a month, and 25% less frequently than that.

Planning Committee Members

Corinne Cafardo, Chair, Board of Trustees

John Papp, Library Trustee, Hanson Library Foundation President

Pam French, Community Member

John Sullivan, Community Member

Melissa Valachovic, Community Member

Karen Stolfer, Library Director

Julia Nee, Assistant Library Director

Ruth Kowal, Library Consultant

Calendar of Key Planning Events

April 20, 2023	Project Launch
May 8, 2023	Planning Committee Meeting
May 23, 2023	Trustees Focus Group
May 24, 2023	Staff Focus Groups
June 5, 2023	Open Community Focus Group
June 5-30, 2023	Community Input Flip Charts in Library
June 6, 2023	Open Community Focus Group & Invitation Focus Group
June 9, 2023	Questionnaire for Middle School Students
June 13-30, 2023	Planning Survey
July 2023	Questionnaire for Camp Kiwanee Student Employees
July 17, 2023	Planning Committee Working Meeting
August 22, 2023	Draft Plan Presented to Library Board of Trustees