



# ABBOT PUBLIC LIBRARY Strategic Plan 2022 – 2027

Approved by the Board of Trustees, January 3, 2022

---

Abbot Public Library  
235 Pleasant Street  
Marblehead, MA 01945

Kimberly Grad, Director  
[kgrad@noblenet.org](mailto:kgrad@noblenet.org)

## HISTORY AND BACKGROUND

---

Founded in 1629, Marblehead is a coastal community with a population of 20,441 as of the 2020 census. Data from the 2020 census shows that the largest population in town is aged 19-64 (51.3%), followed by 18 years and under: (26.9%) and 65 years and over (21.8%). 71.3% of those 25 years or older hold a bachelor's degree or higher.

In March 1877, Abbot Public Library opened as a Reading Room in a section of Abbot Hall. Oversight of the library was given to a board of trustees elected by the town. Books were first loaned in April 1878. In 1923 a Children's Room was added and by 1931, the need for a larger space was acknowledged and a branch library opened in the Clifton section of town. Due to increasing demand, the library moved to a new building at 235 Pleasant Street in 1954. In 1990, a significant expansion took place when the lobby, first floor and the lower-level meeting rooms were reconfigured. A third floor housing office space was added. Renovations of the children's and teen rooms were completed in 2016 and 2020 respectively. Between 2016 and 2021, numerous repairs were made to fix the HVAC, elevator, and minor plumbing leaks. In Fall 2022, the library will move to an interim space while the first major renovation and upgrade in over 30 years will take place, made possible by the passing of an \$8.5 million budget override through the Town of Marblehead, and an additional \$1 million provided by a newly formed Abbot Public Library Foundation. Meanwhile, the library continues to strive to resume the high level of activity that was interrupted by the pandemic closure to the public between March 15, 2020 and June 15, 2021.

## MISSION

---

The Abbot Public Library serves as a vibrant hub of education, community and culture for the Town of Marblehead. It will continue to be a free, inclusive and safe gathering place for all where the pursuit of knowledge, literacy and continuing education is actively encouraged and supported.

## VISION

---

We will reimagine Abbot Public Library as a beacon in the community where everyone is welcome, bringing together the confluence of technology and innovation in a state-of-the-art facility. We will reestablish our treasured institution as Marblehead's trusted source of information with a diverse collection of materials, and as a catalyst of change, promoting collaboration between diverse and like-minded educational, cultural, creative and historical organizations that will connect and empower the community.

## GUIDING PRINCIPLES

---

Abbot Public Library takes on a vital role in the community of Marblehead, celebrating the cultivation of a civil society through its work. As we address the changes that must take place in the next five years, the following core principles will guide and motivate us.

1. Fostering literacy and lifelong learning
2. The pursuit of knowledge and trusted information resources
3. The importance of free, inclusive, and adaptive space for gathering
4. Supporting civic engagement through collaboration and connection with community

The section below elaborates on the work we are currently doing toward the support of these principles and delves into some of our future high-level goals for these areas.

### **1. FOSTERING LITERACY AND LIFELONG LEARNING**

Encouraging a love of literacy and lifelong learning includes supporting artistic and cultural opportunities, paying attention to on-site collection development, offering fun educational programs for children and teens and continuing education programs for adults.

- A. Collection Development:** New materials are acquired with a selective approach as we are committed to continued excellence in the development of our collections in all formats, being aware of emerging digital formats and how that affects the balance of print and electronic resources. We also highlight special collections such as the maritime print and periodical collections, the Eissner Art Collection, and both circulating and non-circulating local-history collections in the Marblehead Room. As we move into our renovation period and beyond, we will work with local history professionals in preservation and promotion of these special collections. We may also

consider consulting with an archivist and offering internship opportunities to help in maintaining the collections.

**B. Literacy and Continuing Education:** Abbot Public library offers education, informing and nurturing the curious, the thinkers, the entrepreneurs and those needing a range of help and technical assistance. For children, we will continue to enrich and improve early literacy programs by seeking additional outside performers and teachers, and to create a bridge between learning that takes place at school and at home. We will continue to offer teens their own space in which to feel empowered and valued, and to participate in creating their own events. We will enhance the Summer Reading Program with reading lists, a theme, art, themed programs and promotional pieces. We offer educational opportunities for adults such as lectures, gallery exhibits, book clubs, author appearances, poetry salons, classes in technology and information literacy.

**C. Programs:** We will continue to develop a variety of formal programs and workshops reflecting the plan to provide both recreational and educational opportunities. When possible, we develop programs that highlight current local, state, and national issues. Programs are available in person, online and in a hybrid format. In a renovated space, we will provide areas for self-directed activities. We will introduce professional information services such as resume review, job search assistance and financial resources.

## **2. THE PURSUIT OF KNOWLEDGE AND TRUSTED INFORMATION RESOURCES**

Abbot Public Library is a guide to reliable and current information. We provide distinct reference and circulation services. We will introduce classes in information literacy for all age groups. For school age and high school students this may be in partnership with the school leadership, aligning with curriculum needs.

For thorough research options, we offer numerous electronic resources. Examples of the many specialized online databases accessible with the use of an Abbot Public Library card include:

- **Access to online periodicals and journals:** Through our membership with the North of Boston Library Exchange (NOBLE), we offer access to EBSCO Information Services, which offers over 20 searchable databases of articles in over 17,000 magazines, newspapers and journals online, as well as access to databases designed for school research, health research and science and regional business news.

- **Language study:** Mango Languages provides online lessons in 44 languages, including English.
- **Business Resources:** For analysis of financial investments, we offer Morningstar Investment Research Center, StockInvestor, and Value Line Investment Survey.
- **Local history:** Through Advantage Archives, we offer a focus on the history of Marblehead through full-text articles from the Marblehead Reporter and other newspapers and magazines.

### **3. THE IMPORTANCE OF FREE, INCLUSIVE AND ADAPTIVE SPACE FOR GATHERING**

One of the best ways to connect people is to provide flexible physical space that serves to bring the community together. The library also needs quiet spaces, areas for children and teens, customized rooms for collaboration and virtual meetings, and larger meeting rooms and galleries. Between 2022 and 2023, this will involve conducting a large-scale renovation of main areas. Managed by the Abbot Public Library Building Renovation Committee in partnership with the Town of Marblehead, a renovation of the library is scheduled to begin in Fall 2022 and will include interior renovations and upgrades to the HVAC system and basement sump pump controls. We will be working with architect Stew Roberts at Johnson Roberts Associates and CHA Consulting, an owner's project management company. Additional renovation plans include the following:

- New meeting rooms, a popular library/ reading area and an information zone
- Possible relocation of elevator and staircases
- Addition of a maker space/ project area to the teen room
- Renovation of kitchen and lower-level meeting room area, expanding into the garden area, updating for accessibility. Note that this area will be designed to be used as a rental space for events.
- Updates to the 3<sup>rd</sup> floor conference room, and staff areas including a new galley kitchen and staff bathrooms.
- Upgrades to all technology (WiFi and Internet ports, plus public and staff computers, for example).

The renovation requires moving operations and materials to an interim location to maintain library services in all departments during the renovation. The interim space will first require its own renovations to accommodate library services and storage needs.

### **4. SUPPORTING CIVIC ENGAGEMENT THROUGH COLLABORATION AND CONNECTION WITH COMMUNITY**

We will continue to partner with local groups and individuals to develop programs of community interest. For example, we are currently working on projects with Sustainable

Marblehead, Salem Sound Coastwatch, the Seacoast Quilter's Guild, Marblehead Conservancy, Marblehead Racial Justice Team and the Driftwood Garden Club.

To support our programs in continuing education, we have several partnerships planned:

- A teen volunteer service/ internship opportunity to assist in technology education for older adults
- Programming support for the Council on Aging and scheduling regular visiting opportunities for older adults.
- Community educational opportunities with the Marblehead Museum
- Summer Reading program support for the Recreation and Parks Department

## STRATEGIC GOALS FOR THE FUTURE

---

This section covers a set of goals that Abbot Public Library's leadership, staff and stakeholders will pursue to support future action toward the four guiding principles listed above.

1. **Guide and Manage the Capital Project**, which in FY22 and FY23 will include infrastructure improvements in addition to a re-design as referenced in Guiding Principal #3: The Importance of Free, Inclusive and Adaptive Space for Gathering.
2. **Address Equity, Diversity and Inclusion** through services, specific accessibility updates during the renovation, technology upgrades, outreach, collection development, staffing and programming opportunities.
3. **Rebrand the image** of the library by creating a new logo for promotional and marketing materials.
4. **Improve communications** with a newly designed website in conjunction with enhanced social media efforts.
5. **Support staff continuing education** by establishing professional development goals and offering training opportunities.
6. **Develop fundraising** in partnership with the Abbot Public Library Foundation and Friends Group.

### 1. GUIDE AND MANAGE THE CAPITAL PROJECT

In FY22 and FY23, the library will undergo infrastructure and functionality improvements as part of the renovation project referenced in Guiding Principal #3: The Importance of Free, Inclusive and Adaptive Space for Gathering. We will seek energy efficient options in the effort to improve sustainability and resilience. Some of the

infrastructure improvements will address the following:

- Discovering the best options for intuitive wayfinding
- Installation of a new HVAC system
- Finding better solutions to an inadequate drainage system
- Installing new drinking fountains, lighting options and gender-neutral bathrooms

## 2. ADDRESS DIVERSITY, EQUITY AND INCLUSION

Diversity, equity and inclusion will be addressed through services, specific accessibility updates during the renovation, technology upgrades, outreach, collection development, staffing and programming opportunities.

### A. Diversity as viewed in the scope of collections, programming and staffing

As a library we are in the unique position of providing mirrors and windows to diversity through our collections, programming and staffing. This means adding books to our collection that provide mirrors that reflect our experiences and also windows that provide a few into other cultures and ways of life. We will strive to provide programming that supports this idea and expands on the work that the Marblehead Racial Justice Team is offering, for example. When hiring future staff members and outside performers, we will seek diverse perspectives and representation.

### B. Equity as viewed through the lens of technology and service upgrades

- **Technology:** Enrich the overall lives and wellbeing of individuals, town-wide organizations, and academic, social and community organizations with respect to the ever-changing digital world. Offer all people regardless of background or circumstance free access. Open doors of opportunity and an on-ramp to the information highway. This includes the following action items:
  - Upgrade technology (increase Wi-Fi capability in the building, offer mobile hotspots and Chromebooks for check-out through a new Library of Things program)
  - Upgrade staff and public computers and copy machines.
  - Make laptops available for use in building for staff and public use.
- **Services:** We are committed to maintaining services during the upcoming renovation and beyond with the following enhancements. Note that after we emerged from a 16-month shut-down due to the COVID 19 pandemic, we needed to re-staff the library prior to opening for longer service hours, allowing for more visitors. To maintain this level of service, we must maintain our current staff level and may need to increase it after the renovation. The following action items will be included as service

enhancements:

- Installation of a self-checkout system
- Addition of a payment option for lost items on the website
- Consider the possibility of eliminating fines for overdue materials

### **C. Inclusion through access**

- **Address accessibility:** This includes improving wheelchair access throughout the building and in the outdoor areas, creating non-gendered bathrooms, increasing and improving the quality of natural light and strategic use of light fixtures, and being mindful of open sight lines in all spaces.
- **Outreach:** We will investigate the possibility of purchasing a Bookmobile for outreach services at events and for those who have physical limitations preventing them from visiting the library.

## **3. REBRAND THE IMAGE OF THE LIBRARY**

We will refresh the image of the library by creating a new logo for promotional and marketing materials. In order to accomplish this, we will hire a marketing and design firm with the following action items:

- Develop a new logo and color scheme to be used in marketing materials, signage, new library card and website.
- Develop collateral materials such as letterhead; templates for flyers, brochures and posters; business cards for staff; templates for online and print newsletters; and outreach materials such as branded tablecloths.
- Create collectible promotional materials such as magnets, stickers and tote bags.
- Conduct a library card drive – featuring a card that showcases the new logo.

## **4. IMPROVE COMMUNICATIONS**

We will promote library programs and services via social media, newsletter, local and regional media outlets to reach the majority of Marblehead residents and to increase annual engagements. The following action items are planned:

- Upgrade and redesign the library website, integrating a blog, a calendar of events, and portals for giving for both the Friends Group and the Abbot Public Library Foundation.
- Upgrade digital and print newsletters.
- Study social media and utilize the most effective methods to reach the community. Study the effectiveness of Facebook vs. Instagram.

- Utilize the wisdom of focus groups and public surveys when needed to gather opinions about the best ways to reach the community via social media.

## **5. SUPPORT STAFF CONTINUING EDUCATION**

Introduce a focus on staff development in the effort to maximize professional development and continued improved service at the library. The following action items are planned:

- Review job descriptions and restructure the organization to reflect the evolving role of the library.
- Introduce tools and structure for an annual personal professional goal-setting process.
- Encourage and support opportunities for staff development, shared knowledge, and team building.

## **6. DEVELOP FUNDRAISING**

Maximize financial resources and explore opportunities for additional funding through the following efforts:

- Work with the Development coordinator position that will be supported by the newly formed Abbot Public Library Foundation. Enable tax-deductible donations to the library through the newly designed website. Explore opportunities for additional funding.
- Continue to work with the Finance Committee and Town officials regarding the changing requirements of both the library's operating and salary budgets.
- Work with Town officials in managing the financial obligations for the upcoming renovation to start in Fall 2022.
- Continue to support the work and fund-raising efforts of The Friends of Abbot Public Library. (A bookstore on the main level of the library was established in October of 2018 to facilitate the Friends fund-raising efforts. This location will be preserved in the upcoming renovation).

## PLANNING METHODOLOGY, BACKGROUND AND SURVEY DATA

---

Work for this five-year plan began shortly after the release of the previous plan which was originally released in 2016. A fundraising campaign to refurbish the library was established in 2017 and 2018. The community of the Town of Marblehead was included in 2017 in the plans through focus groups, stakeholder interviews and questionnaires and informed through news and social media coverage. Input from the town leaders and stakeholders formed the basis of the advocacy campaign “Our 17<sup>th</sup> Century Town Deserves a 21<sup>st</sup> Century Library.” In 2020, the COVID 19 Pandemic interrupted the progress of the strategic plan and the renovation. In June 2021, the warrant article for \$8.5 million dollars passed at town meeting, enabling plans for the renovation to resume. An additional \$1 million will be provided for the project by a newly formed Abbot Public Library Foundation. When new Director Kimberly Grad arrived in July 2021, she reviewed future and past initiatives including notes from the Board of Trustees and the Building and Renovation Committee to compile the background information needed to write the current plan. Final drafts were reviewed by a team of full-time staff members, and local Marblehead resident and museum planner John W. Jacobsen.

## USER NEEDS ASSESSMENT

---

In Fall 2021, a survey was conducted by the library to seek the opinions of the community. The survey questions were pulled from suggested examples in strategic planning resources provided by the Massachusetts Library Association. Of the 125 responses (online and on paper), 3% reported using the library daily, 36.8% weekly, 33.1% monthly and 27.1% less than once a month. Respondents were most appreciative of superior customer service, print and digital collections and interlibrary loan. Many noted that they are seeking improvements in collection development, children’s services, programs, website design, communications, and partnerships with other Marblehead institutions.

## CONCLUDING STATEMENT

---

We view this five-year plan as a living document approaching our goals in an open-minded way and prepared to adjust our course, as needed, keeping abreast of the changing role of public libraries.