

FY 2024-2028

Southwick Public Library Strategic Plan



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Approval by the Board of Library Trustees:

The Southwick Public Library Board of Trustees accepted and adopted this 5-Year Strategic Plan for FY 2024-2028 on February 14, 2023

Notification of acceptance from the Massachusetts Board of Library Commissioners received February 17, 2023

Having a thoughtfully drafted, regularly updated strategic plan has grown the Southwick Public Library from a friendly little book-lender into an all-ages learning, arts, business, technology, information, and recreation center. In recent years, I made my favorite Christmas wreath at the Southwick Public Library. I've borrowed a telescope, a wifi hotspot, multiple museum passes, and a ghost hunting kit from the library. I've enjoyed local history presentations, improved my garden, updated my resume, brought home COVID testing kits, learned about climate change, and received one-on-one instruction on how to use a Kindle. Along the way, I've also borrowed an endless stream of books - physical, electronic, and audio - not just from Southwick but from libraries across the state. Often, I do this from my computer without ever leaving home. Southwick Public Library is an essential town service that feeds residents' curiosity, connects us to our community, and expands our collective experiences and capabilities. I cannot wait to enjoy the improvements the next five years will bring!

-Andrea Bugbee



Acknowledgements

The library would like to thank the members of the Strategic Planning Committee for their time and energy into creating this five year plan.

Andrea Bugbee, Community Member

Erin Carrier, Powder Mill Principal

Tammy Ciak-Bissaillon, Trustees & Agricultural Commission

Heather Dunfee, Southwick Public Library Assistant Director

Molly Encarnacion, Southwick Public Library Coordinator of Children's Services

Hunter Gargano, STGRSD Student

Lilly Hoch, Community Member

Carol Kwasny, Community Member

Robert Lempke, STGRSD Student

Dayna Lovell, Southwick Public Library Children's Librarian

Susan Mastroianni, Community Member

Michael McMahon, Head of the Board of Library Trustees & Economic Development Com.

Shelley Motsko, Community Member

Linda Pickreign, Community Member

Cindy Sullivan, Council on Aging Director & Parks and Recreation

Nancy Zdun, President of the Friends of the Southwick Public Library

and Lynn Blair, Director of the Southwick Public Library

Mission Statement

Southwick Public Library is an accessible, comfortable, friendly environment where people of all ages and abilities can meet and interact on a variety of levels. The library strives to be a beacon in the community for free resources so that patrons may discover, create, engage, and explore educational and recreational opportunities. It is an inclusive setting dedicated to lifelong learning.

Vision Statement

The Southwick Public Library will strive to be a beacon in the community for free and accessible resources for our patrons to discover, create, engage, and explore educational and recreational opportunities in a welcoming and supportive environment supporting lifelong learning.

Community Profile

The town of Southwick was incorporated in 1770, however, settlements date back to the mid 1600's. Southwick was originally part of the town of Westfield. In the 1700 and 1800's, the farming community of Southwick was known for its tobacco and ice harvesting. Southwick is also well known for the "Jog" - the part of Massachusetts that juts down into Connecticut.

Southwick is located 12 miles west of Springfield and 20 miles north of Hartford, CT, and about 2 hours from Boston. Southwick is a bustling suburban community that boasts great outdoor recreation including the Congamond Lakes, miles of Rail Trail, three golf courses, and great parks, including Whalley Park. Southwick also has several campgrounds and a motocross track that attracts large crowds for the events.

The population at the 2020 U.S. Census was 9,232. Persons under 5 made up 4.5%, persons under 18 made up 17.9%. According to the 2020 census, there are 3,022 persons age 60+ in town making the percentage of those 60+ in Southwick 32.7%.

According to the U.S. Census Bureau, the median household income is \$84,896.

"Yes the library has books and a welcoming helpful staff; but, it offers so much more. Among a myriad of other adventures, I've tried metal working, shopped at stores I didn't know existed for spices I'd never heard of, had my opinion challenged by a zoomer, played African drums with a one year old. The library has enriched my life, connected me to my community, and along the way a most precious gift- new friends I hope will last a lifetime."

-Carol Kwasny

"The Library is not just for books. I love the seed library in the Spring! Being new in town it was a nice way to meet other community members."

-Lilly Hoch



Library History & Description

The first library in Southwick was started in 1891 by Reverend David L. Kebbe. From 1891-1893, the library was housed in the Congregational Church. In 1893, the "Southwick Free Public Library" opened and operated in the center of town until 1999 when the current building was opened.

The Southwick Public Library today is a 12,000 square foot building with a main room that houses the adult and young adult collections, a separate children's room, a community room, two restrooms and a staff room. The parking lot has 33 parking spaces. The library is one floor and is handicap accessible.

The library is open six days per week except during the summer when it is closed on Saturdays. There are seven computers available for public use. The library also has wi-fi for use inside and outside the building. Part of the library's circulating collection are two hotspots which patrons can check out to use wi-fi in their travels.

In 2014, the library became a full member of the Central/Western Massachusetts Library System (C/WMArs). Being a member of this system allows the library to borrow (and reciprocally provide) materials from other libraries to be used by Southwick patrons. The library also has access to the Commonwealth Catalog and so patrons can search for and request items from outside the C/WMArs system- sometimes as far away as Boston! Library patrons also have the ability to request an item that both C/WMArs and the Commonwealth Catalog does not have. Items requested this way arrive from out of state delivered through the USPS.

The library is staffed by a full time Director, Assistant Director, Young Adult Librarian (who also works with Reference) and a Coordinator of Children's Services. The part time staff include a Reference Librarian, Children's Librarian, and four Circulation Librarians. The library is also thankful to have several adult volunteers- three who process new materials, one who manages the Laporte Gallery, and two who deliver Books on the Go to homebound residents. The Young Adult Librarian also runs a teen volunteer program during the school year.

The library is a municipal department in the Town of Southwick and governed by six library trustees. Trustees are elected by town voters and serve a three year term.

The library is centrally located right on the busy Route 57 and down the hill from the Southwick Regional School, the public high school. Towards the center of town but within walking distance is Powder Mill Middle School. A few minutes further is Woodland Elementary. The after-school hours get many students coming to the library.

The library offers a full range of programs for children, teens, adults, and families. Regular programs occur each month, such as the Teen Lounge, Lego Club, and Cookbook Club, among others, but the library strives to provide special programs of interest each month.

In addition to the regular collection of books, movies, audiobooks, and magazines, the library has several special collections including the Library of Things (tools, equipment, etc.) that can be checked out and the Suzanne Davis Seed Library- where patrons can take home a packet of seeds to plant. The Children's Room has also developed special Home Education kits which families can take home to explore a topic in depth. The library also has an extensive digital collection of items available through C/WMars (Libby) and Hoopla.

Southwick Public Library by the Numbers

The following statistics (excluding cardholder count) were taken from the ARIS Report for the State of Massachusetts for the fiscal year July 1, 2021-June 30, 2022.

- Total Holdings (Including Print & Digital)= 244,459
- Total Circulations (Including Print & Digital)= 61,935
- ILL Items Received from Other Libraries= 5,953
- ILL Sent Out to Other Libraries= 11,198
- Hours Open= 2,298
- Visitors= 32,147
- Reference Transactions= 2,672
- Saturdays Open= 39
- Hours Open After 5pm= 447
- Adult Live Programs= 63, Attendance= 608
- Teen Live Programs= 34, Attendance= 233
- Children Age 6-11 Live Programs= 27, Attendance= 227
- Children Age 0-5 Live Programs= 39, Attendance= 287
- General Audience (All Ages) Live Programs= 2, Attendance= 125
- Public Computer Use= 1,144
- As of November 28, 2022, Number of Registered Library Cards= 3,329

"The Southwick Library does a fantastic job on informing me. Their evening adult programs have brought me to so many wonderful local activities such as hiking around the area and learning about the history of the Southwick Canals from the Historical Society members. Whenever I travel with my family I ask for destination books and they are always available to me."

-Linda Pickreign

"I like the library because I can get books from the shelves (I love to peruse the shelves) or via CWMars so easily. The staff is always willing to help. The library works well with other groups - FSPL, Southwick Food Pantry and people who are housebound (book drop-offs at their home). As a Friend, I can participate in many of the programs, assist with the programs and assist with determining what programs are presented. People should join the Friends to assist with our fundraising efforts, as well as coming up with fundraising ideas. We are a small group of people who are dedicated to fundraising for the library. We are incredibly well organized and always willing to try new fundraising ideas!"

-Nancy Zdun

"I love the library because when I walk in, I know there's a whole world of possibilities awaiting me.....new people and places to learn about. Every book that I borrow takes me on a mini vacation. What more can you ask for?"

-Susan Mastroianni

Methodology

The Southwick Public Library Strategic Planning Committee first met on September 20, 2022. The Committee was introduced to what a Strategic Plan was and the parts of the plan needed. Library Director, Lynn Blair, presented briefly on the library including its programs, services, resources, and physical setting. The group was then asked to do a SOAR (Strengths, Opportunities, Aspirations, and Results) exercise. A survey for the community was planned for the next month and attendees were asked for input on the survey. After the meeting, a SOAR exercise chart was sent around to library staff to get their responses. The results of both SOAR exercises can be found in the appendices.

A survey was made available to the public from October 10- November 10, 2022. A digital version was available on the library's website, social media pages, and was sent out through email. Paper copies were available at the library, senior center, Our Community Food Pantry, Southwick Village (retirement community), and at town hall. Three volunteers from the Committee handed out surveys outside of the polling location during the morning and early afternoon of the November 8, 2022 election. A copy of the survey and survey results can be found in the appendices.

The Committee had their second meeting on November 16, 2022. The meeting discussed the survey results. The group also created goals and objectives for the new Strategic Plan as well as a vision statement.

The Library Director will spend the remainder of November and December creating a draft of the Strategic Plan.

The final meeting was held January 31 to discuss the draft of the Plan and offer a final chance for input. Staff were also provided a copy of the draft for their input. The committee made final edits. The Trustees discussed the plan at their February 14, 2023 meeting.



"The library director and staff during Covid-19 converted the library from its normal operation to a service that provided curbside service, limited customer access, and programs via Zoom. Access to Wi-fi continued 24/7 during 2020-2022. The library provided a modified service for several years based on health requirements and more. It provided service to the public while town hall was closed to the public. Thank you to the director and staff for the work provided over the past three years."

-Michael McMahon

Needs Assessment

The Needs Assessment is based upon the results from the Survey and the SOAR Exercise. Among the many responses from the survey and the SOAR exercise, several needs stood out among the rest as being needs that were mentioned more often than the rest. Firstly, there appears to be a need for programming- and a variety of it. Many requests were made for additional programs as well as certain program topics and requests for programs at varying times of day. As a side note to programming, there were many statements saying that technology help would be beneficial. Additionally, requests for more community support- such as help finding jobs were reported.

When asked what age groups respondents believed the library was missing, many of the responses noted the elderly, teenagers, individuals in their 20's-40's, career and young professionals and parents.

More open hours were requested frequently. This is dependent on the library budget and staffing levels.

Many responded that the collection needed more books such as large print books and paperback fiction.

Lastly, there was interest in more advocacy from and for the library including working on the library's image and outreach. Some suggested a marketing plan/strategy would help increase interest and knowledge about the library. Partnering with schools and location organizations would assist in the goal.

"The library has impacted my life since moving to Southwick in 2002. I first participated with my daughters in the children's programs. They met their first friends in the storytime. As a family, we participated in summer reading challenges. We always enjoyed free passes to museums! Now that my children have "grown and flown" I enjoy participating in book club and cookbook club. These programs encourage me to remain active. The people that I meet encourage me to remain social. The library is important to me because it provides a special social atmosphere and a connection to the town I live in." -Shelley Motsko.



Goals & Actions

The Goals and Actions for this plan were drafted by the Strategic Planning Committee based on survey responses and SOAR exercise responses.



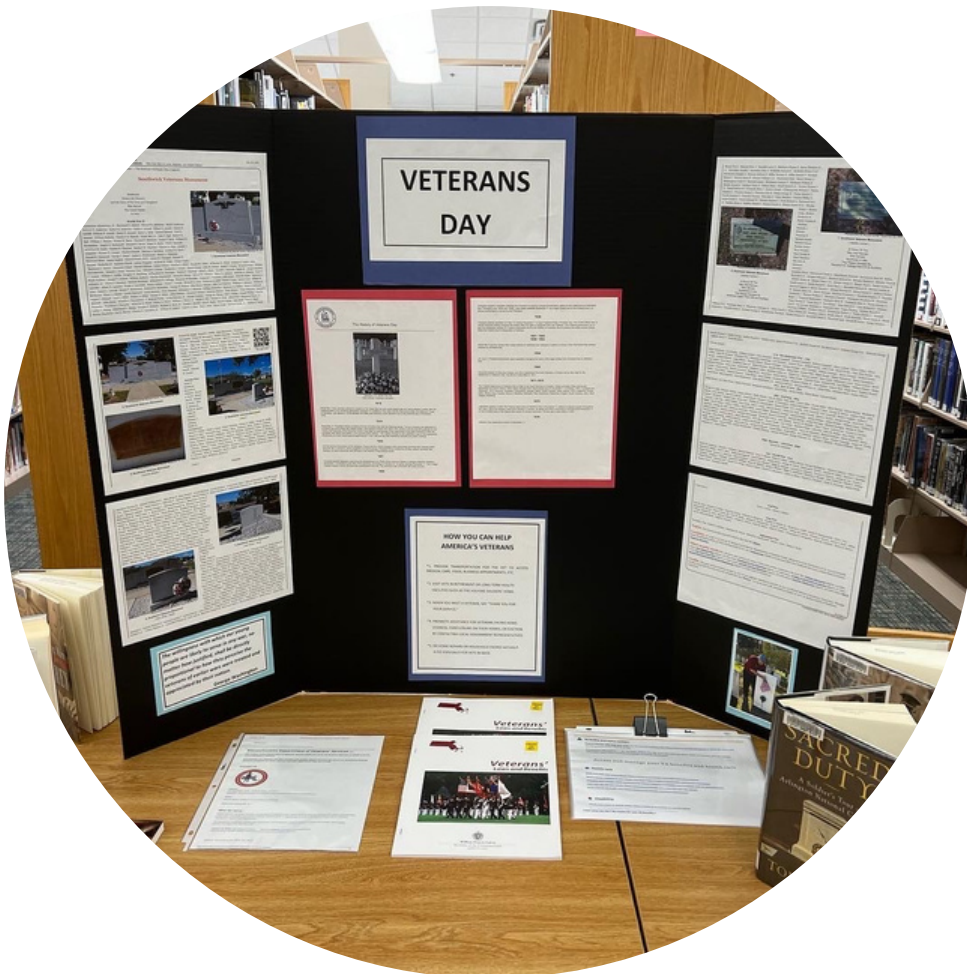
Community Communication

Goal: Increase community communication through advertising, planning, and collaborations.

Action: Create a marketing plan for the library.

Action: Find new ways to communicate with the community about library programs and services through both print and digital mediums (local access, social media, schools, word of mouth, etc.)

Action: Collaborate with community partners for services and to advertise.



Programming

Goal: Experiment with varying times of day for programming.

Action: Expand the program offerings for adults to include more daytime program options and the program offerings for children to include evening and weekend programs.

Action: Program variety- experiment with offering more “social” programming such as board games, etc.

Goal: Collaborate with the schools.

Action: Collaborate with the schools about after school programming.

Goal: Teen Program Offerings.

Action: Offer teen programs in more educational/career topics- potentially offer speakers or mentors from a career path of interest.

Action: Continue to offer volunteer opportunities for teens.

Goal: Collaborate with Town Organizations.

Action: Collaborate with more boards and organizations in town for program offerings.

Goal: Outreach Programming.

Action: Continue to look for ways to do outreach programming.

Educational Services

Goal: Maintaining a Diverse Collection.

Action: Continue to maintain a diverse collection and respond to patron needs/requests.

Action: Promote the genealogy and local history services of the library.

Goal: Business/Job/Career Development.

Action: Investigate ways to offer the library as a resource for business, job, and career development through programs or educational resources.

Goal: Services to Homeschool Students

Action: Develop ways to assist homeschooling students and families.

Goal: Educational Services for Teens

Action: Develop ways to supplement what the schools are already doing to provide resources or programming on educational topics.

Library Funding/Staffing

Goal: To explore different methods to supplement library funding.

Action: Keep aware of grants or other opportunities.

Goal: Communicate library needs with the town.

Action: Present the final strategic plan to the selectboard.

Action: Find ways to make the community aware of the library's funding needs.



Appendixes (Unpaged)

Appendix 1: Survey- Questions & Responses

Appendix 2: SOAR Exercise Results