

Dear Patrons,

Originally, the Impact Report was created to showcase our accomplishments during the pandemic. Now, it has grown into an annual tool for data analysis and reflection. Seeing my team's incredible work reflected on these pages is so rewarding. Each new year brings new promises and goals for the year ahead.

This fall, the Waltham Public Library completed a Strategic Plan intended to guide the Library's priorities for the next five years. The plan was developed through meetings, data collection and activities in the summer of 2023. Under the facilitation of a planning committee led by the Library Director, members of the public, staff, focus groups, the Friends of the Waltham Public Library and the Board of Library Trustees contributed information and ideas. The data we collected was closely examined to identify goals essential to strengthen and improve progress toward being the best public library in the world.

Your feedback was overwhelmingly positive and kind. In your words:

- I am so proud of our library. I am proud to call Waltham home; the Library is important to my family and me.
- Thank you for all your wonderful work. I can't say enough positive things about the staff.
- The Library is a wonderful representation of the values of the City as a whole and makes me proud to call myself a Waltham resident.
- Everyone there is GREAT. The staff are the best in the world.
- I really love the Waltham Library.

And your critiques were constructive and fair. Our facility issues like HVAC malfunction, leaks, inadequate restrooms, dim lighting, old furniture and the lack of electric outlets are just a few of the concerns and we share your frustrations. We also loved your requests for MORE of everything! More storytimes, more hours, more furniture, more programs...we want more too!

Thanks to all of you, the WPL has had tremendous success over the past 7 years, with record circulation and programming statistics showing no signs of slowing down.

People of all ages and backgrounds use the Library in droves and we are busier than ever.

As we continue our work toward being the best public library in the world, it is time to talk about renovating our building. WPL needs major infrastructure updates. We have outgrown our space and are not equipped for future technology. More importantly, we are not easily accessible or usable by everyone in Waltham.

This is why I am particularly thrilled to share with you on behalf of the Board of Trustees, and with permission from Mayor McCarthy, that the Waltham Public Library is writing a Library Building Program application for a building grant from the Massachusetts Board of Library Commissioners.

Imagine more physical space for our growing programs, more parking, easier access to the building, more comfortable and inviting reading and studying spaces, more workspaces and meeting rooms. Envision a state of the art Makerspace, a larger PIE Room, Technology Lab and more room for our Children's and Teen spaces. Think about more restrooms, functioning AC, regulated airflow, upgraded wiring and power to prevent storm outages, masonry improvements, roof replacement, etc.

The Library Building grant, which helps pay for major capital improvement projects, would easily resolve ongoing facility issues and allow us to expand and renovate the existing Library building. Considering that our last renovation was over 30 years ago (completed in 1994), we are in a prime position to receive a grant. The grant will pay an average of 45-50% of eligible costs. Of course, further financial aspects and implications exist for our community; receiving the grant does not require us to commit to the project or accept any funds.

The WPL team, the Trustees, and I are in agreement that this process must be a community driven initiative. We need YOU to join us in the dreaming phase and the planning process, sharing your thoughts and frustrations, ideas and visions, so together we can shape the future of the Waltham Public Library.

Over the next few months, the Waltham Public Library will offer community forums, surveys, and meetings where residents of all ages can share their thoughts and ideas. We look forward to collaborating with you to present a community-centered Library Building Program Application.

With gratitude,

Kelly Linehan