



**WALTHAM PUBLIC LIBRARY**

*Window to the World*

# **Waltham Public Library Strategic Plan FY2024-FY2028**

Approved by the Board of Trustees September 14, 2023

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# Welcome:

## Waltham, Massachusetts

Waltham, Massachusetts is a vibrant city in Middlesex County, home to about 65,000 residents. The socioeconomic makeup of Waltham sheds light on the unique blend of cultures, industries, and economic realities that shape the City's character. We have two large universities, Brandeis and Bentley, and a growing percentage of families with young children. 14% of our population are under 18 years old. 31% of residents over five speak a language other than English at home. 8.8% of Waltham lives below the poverty line.

Waltham's economic heritage dates back to the Industrial Revolution when it earned the title "Watch City" due to its prominent watch and clock-making industry. Although the City's manufacturing prominence has evolved, its entrepreneurial spirit thrives.

The City's accessibility to Boston and Cambridge, with our commuter rail station and direct bus lines, attracts young professionals and families seeking affordable housing near job centers. According to the U.S. Census, Waltham's median household income stands around \$103,498. Additionally, Waltham is home to various industries, including technology, biotechnology, healthcare, and education. Major corporations and startups add to the City's economic robustness. This financial strength creates a stable community with various educational, cultural, and recreational opportunities.

Waltham is a culinary and cultural hotspot, offering many international restaurants, cultural events, and festivals. This tapestry of diversity enriches the City's social fabric, fostering an environment of inclusivity and cultural appreciation. You might enjoy multicultural Moody Street, with various restaurants representing a global appetite, or visit one of our many beautiful, renovated public parks.

Despite the City's economic vitality, Waltham also faces socioeconomic challenges. Income inequality exists within the City, and some neighborhoods experience economic disparities. Affordable housing remains a pressing issue, as the demand outpaces the available supply. Additionally, the pandemic's impact on the economy has posed challenges for vulnerable populations, necessitating targeted support and community initiatives to address the immediate needs via various local nonprofit and community organizations like Healthy Waltham, Waltham Family School, and Waltham Partnership for Youth.

At the heart of this, the Waltham Public Library provides the community with free educational, information, and recreational resources and the means to access them fully.

# The Waltham Public Library

Welcome to the Waltham Public Library. We are glad you are here! *Bienvenidos a la Biblioteca Pública de Waltham. ¡Nos alegra que estén aquí!*

The Waltham Public Library team wants WPL to be the best public library in the world; that is what sets us apart. We choose excellence every day. We are forward-thinking and open-minded. We listen. We have difficult conversations. We embrace and celebrate diversity; people of all backgrounds belong in our Library. We apologize. We do better. We have fun. We laugh a lot.

The Library serves many wonderful families and individuals who love and support their library. More than anything, we are a dynamic library. Data shows that the average full-time employee handles almost 17,500 transactions annually. That is a lot of material and a lot of face-to-face engagement.

We serve many people experiencing homelessness, struggling with substance use, and living with mental illness. For our team, public service often goes beyond helping someone find a book or walking them to a different floor. It could be providing a patron with information on finding housing for the night, being alert for a medical emergency, recognizing what substance use or intoxication looks like, and knowing when to call for help. All staff are onboarded with, and continue to have access to, Ryan Dowd's Homeless Librarian Training and are trained and empowered to continue to make the WPL as safe and as welcoming as possible.

At the WPL, we talk a lot about making the Library a habit. We want people to return monthly, weekly, and daily, and we try to give everyone an outstanding and empathetic experience.

We start with our early literacy programs, engaging our littlest citizens with stories and songs, helping them grow into thoughtful, critical-thinking humans. We offer the Play Imagine Experience Room (PIE Room), a museum-inspired play installation that changes seasonally. Recently, we introduced *Te Cuento Un Cuento*, our weekly Spanish storytime.

The Teen Room focuses on civic engagement and social-emotional growth during the teen years with programs like For Freedom. This artist collective centers art and creativity as a catalyst for transformative connection and collective liberation. Real Talk, a for-youth-by-youth conversation forum, promotes youth voice, encourages social-emotional learning, and develops awareness of issues facing our community.

We continue life-long learning through adulthood, partnering curiosity and creativity with a willingness to reexamine our past to move forward together. Our Watch Read Listen program, where the City experiences a story together, and more recently, our Year of Black History programming, have been two outstanding examples of this in action.

One of our most significant indicators of success is the number of people who have made the Library a habit and choose to spend their time in the WPL and with our team. It is not uncommon for a then-teen and now-adult to return (taller) to say hello and thank us for always being kind. Or a family that might have moved away continues to send us holiday cards. And, of course, our former staff, often promoted to more prominent positions, drop by for a visit to say hello, show off their newest family members, or bring us brownies. We are so grateful to all of you who have created the WPL community.

## ❖ Summary

The Waltham Public Library's FY2024 Long Range Plan is intended to guide and describe 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 considered essential to strengthen and improve the progress toward fulfillment of the Waltham Public Library's Vision. It was cross-referenced with global concerns, which are included in this plan.

The planning committee formally re-wrote the Library's Vision and Mission as part of our action plan, aligning them as one and the same.

The goals and objectives in this plan address some of the most pressing needs identified by the committee and include a portion of the work the Library will undertake in the next five years.

## ❖ Vision for Waltham

*Waltham will continue to grow as a civically engaged Boston area hub for recreation, family, business, education, and technology, centered around a vibrant community that honors our multicultural working-class roots while focusing on a successful future.*

## ❖ New Vision and Mission

The Waltham Public Library is the best public library in the world.

## ❖ Values

Community  
Curiosity  
Fun  
Honesty  
Innovation  
Kindness  
Service

# The Waltham Public Library Today

Since our last Strategic Plan, thanks to the support of the City of Waltham, our amazing patrons, and the Friends of Waltham Public Library, the Library has invested in growing and strengthening the WPL team. We are designing our services to be as agile, forward-thinking, and efficient as possible.

While no one was prepared for the pandemic, the Waltham Public Library was well-positioned to rise to the challenge.

We called patrons at home to check in on them and say hello. We contacted multiple organizations working with high-risk individuals to see how we could help. We immediately moved all programming to virtual platforms. Our YouTube channel is now bustling with programs you can watch at your convenience. We built a new website in-house, making our 24/7 offerings easier to navigate. Librarians learned as much as possible about rental assistance and housing programs, safety guidelines, and COVID-19 updates. We organized meetings around nap times and welcomed toddlers and pets who occasionally made cameos on Zoom. We discussed accessibility and equity and then took actionable steps in both areas. One such step was restructuring our materials budget to buy as much e-content as possible and make it accessible to everyone by investing in hotspots, laptops, and other tools for our patrons.

The world has changed dramatically since the pandemic, and like most institutions, the WPL has been transformed; our work during and since reflects that. However, one thing that has remained constant is our team's *intentionality* toward our work and the services we provide.

Last summer, our Literacy Coordinator helped a woman who visited the Library for the first time. He gave her a tour of the Library and explained all the services we offer in her native language, Spanish. She seemed delighted and a little overwhelmed at everything available, from materials in Spanish, English language lessons, job and resume assistance, and computer access, resources many of us might take for granted.

Toward the end of the orientation, she paused and asked the Literacy Coordinator what she had to clean to access everything he had told her about. She cried when he explained that it was all available to her for free whenever she needed or wanted it.

It is important to highlight this story, one of many that show how this type of patron connection can be powerful and life-changing; what a benefit to our community. There is no doubt that reading expands our minds and helps us to understand ourselves and others better. However, it is often forgotten that access to that knowledge is just as important as the information itself. Many in our community need public libraries and services but may not know about or understand them or may have less reason to trust us.

This interaction gave us pause. As a team, we began to question how public libraries build community, the role the public library plays in improving that community's economic, physical, and mental health, and how we could be more intentional in these roles.

We pivoted.

We put circulation statistics in the drawer for a bit, and instead of focusing on numbers, we centered ourselves around the people. We asked a lot of questions. We listened. We began to challenge our assumptions when connecting with those who need our services and resources the most.

We tabled our expectations and leaned into the mentality that when others show us how to help them, and we listen, the true magic of service is experienced. We meet people where they are and work from there to treat them respectfully and offer outstanding and empathetic service, giving them the power and tools to transform their lives.

We learned that excellent customer service looks different to different people, and there are occasions when it will require something different. Our new focus is to provide the same quality of service regardless of whom we are serving, understanding that sometimes that service will need to be altered to meet the patron's needs.

Since our last Strategic Plan, WPL has undergone an evolution. Even factoring in a global pandemic, outstanding progress was made in our 2017-2022 strategic goals, leading to some of the most tremendous successes in WPL history. We hired a Teen Librarian and built a new Teen Department, hired a Literacy Coordinator and created a Literacy Classroom, built a Makerspace with the generous support of the Friends of the Waltham Public Library, went fine free, and grew our staff by 30%, just to name a few accomplishments.

We expanded our services by acquiring more print materials. We also researched and studied the best, most financially responsible way to meet the growing demand for e-books, digital resources, hotspots, laptops, and Rokus. We invested in platforms and formats to serve everyone, regardless of language spoken or literacy level. FY23 was one of Waltham Public Library's busiest years in its 150+ year history, circulating almost 575,000 items and earning the #7 ranking (out of 42 network libraries) for highest users of e-content.

For the first time, we signed up over 1,000 kids for our summer reading program and visited every school in Waltham. We visit senior centers, parks, homeless shelters, and other community organizations working with immigrant families. WPL hosted a social worker grad student from Boston College who provided our patrons with in-person services twice a week. We expanded our Library of Things collection, reopened our PIE Room, and hosted events on our reinvented #LibraryLawn, like our now-annual Bouncy House Party and Halloween Party, which continue to draw between 500-1,500 attendees. We offer snacks and dinner for the 18 and under crowd Monday-Friday, courtesy of our partnership with the Boys & Girls Club.

The Waltham Public Library is much more than a building filled with books. WPL builds community by finding creative ways to share our stories and, more importantly, encourages active listening to each other's stories. WPL looks forward to building an even brighter tomorrow over the next five years.

# Building Tomorrow: The Planning Process

This plan was created through the efforts of a planning committee led by the Library Director in collaboration with community members and staff through a survey and focus groups.

Our process was influenced by “Turning Outward,” a step-by-step process developed by The Harwood Institute for Public Innovation. We identified stakeholders and used survey results to design our focus groups. Staff facilitated and documented the focus groups and distilled the feedback into a concrete plan.

Please note that during the planning process, the Waltham Public Library had to close because of a major Heating Ventilation Air Conditioning malfunction. For most of July, the Library operated on an altered schedule and reduced regular service by approximately 20 hours weekly.

## ❖ Community Survey

The survey was available in English and Spanish on the Library’s website and in print at the Library. Over 4,000 library card holders on our email list received a digital online survey. We received approximately 500 responses.

## ❖ Focus groups

Four focus groups were held in the summer of 2023: one for Parents/Families (of school-age children or younger), one for Spanish speakers, and two for Seniors. Most focus groups were at the Library, except one conversation with seniors at the Senior Center in Waltham.

In our focus groups, we asked everyone the same questions that revolved around their thoughts and hopes for Waltham. We worried if we limited our questions to things like what would you like to see at the Library, we would get the same rote answers (more story times, a sing-along, book discussion groups). We asked the following open-ended, community-centered questions to guide our conversations:

1. What are your aspirations for your community?
2. What are the challenges Waltham faces in reaching these aspirations?
3. What changes need to happen to reach our aspirations?

As a team, the staff discussed what the Library is capable of and what programs and services we could offer as applied to the community’s wants, needs, and challenges.

## ❖ Staff Input

All Library staff were invited to fill in a Strategic Planning Survey and meet with the Library Director individually to discuss the future of the WPL.

The Department Heads and Administration met in March for a one-day retreat in the late spring of 2023. Together, we drafted a series of values used to solicit feedback from the entire staff on which values are most important to the Waltham Public Library as an organization and as a team, culminating in our new values.



# Results of the Planning Process

## ❖ Opportunities

This section of our Strategic Plan results from much discussion and analysis of the data, invaluable insight and feedback from our community, and our planning process.

Opportunities might be described as the moment where our resources, ingenuity, collaborative spirit, and creativity come together to illuminate the path to becoming the “best public library” in the world.

### 1. Outreach and Connection

An unparalleled commitment to outreach and connection. WPL has continuously adapted to meet the needs of our ever-changing community. Seeking to fill the gaps with partner organizations, WPL is committed to creating a more equitable Waltham. Strengthening our existing partnerships and creating new ones has been and will continue to be a significant focus.

Boys & Girls Club - WPL partners with the Waltham Boys & Girls Club, a pillar in our community for over 85 years, to provide our youth with the best possible after-school and summer services and free meals in our building year-round.

English at Large - An organization that serves adult immigrants with many free services, WPL has partnered with English at Large to provide the Waltham immigrant community with weekly English conversation groups.

Healthy Waltham - Our Children’s team has joined Healthy Waltham at many pop-up food pantries to bring library services to community members. WPL provides crafts and stories, makes library cards, and provides information about library services to many children and families through this fruitful partnership.

LEAP Brandeis - The Language Empowerment Action Project has been a powerful partner to our Literacy Coordinator. Student volunteers provide our English Language Learner patrons with weekly free tutoring sessions and English classes.

MassHire - The newly rebranded Massachusetts Workforce Development System, MassHire, helps connect Waltham job seekers and businesses. Beginning in October, WPL has been host to MassHire liaisons who offer our patrons job search help, career guidance, resume critique, classes, and training opportunities, including scholarships for classes and materials.

More Than Words - More Than Words, a local non-profit that empowers youth through employment, now picks up donated and discarded books from the Library weekly.

Waltham Partnership for Youth - Thanks to WPY, over the summer, WPL had two summer interns who helped our Literacy Coordinator and Children’s Department. Through this partnership, we have grown and fostered relationships, hopefully inspiring the next generation of librarians!

Waltham Public Schools - WPL has deepened our relationship with WPS. 2022 saw the return of many library visits from elementary and middle school classes, and our Children’s and Teen Librarians visited classrooms. Recently, our Children’s team led a professional development day for the WPS called “Beyond Books” to highlight the resources in the library available to teachers and students.

## 2. Staff Development and Support

Staff Development and Support is an area where the WPL truly shines. We are committed to investing in the team's potential and growing the next generation of diverse, outstanding future library leaders, and we take an active role in ensuring this happens.

- The Library currently has 47 positions, with five vacancies at the time of writing. Of those 42 positions, 14 staff have MLS degrees and provide almost 450 weekly professional service hours to the community. Waltham pays higher salaries on average, which accounts for more professional staff wanting to work here.
- We collaborate with Waltham Partnership for Youth and MassHire to offer paid internship opportunities to high school students, many of whom have become Library Pages. These programs serve as one of our greatest pathways to build a future library workforce reflective of the larger Waltham community.
- We also encourage the growth of new and existing staff, working with them to expand into their roles, learn new skills, and create their best practices, leading to promotions and career advances. Most professional staff who have left WPL since COVID have been promoted to leadership roles.
- Our staff are active in many notable organizations supporting libraries and the City.
- We encourage attendance at national conferences and participation in MLN committees.
- We prioritize hosting staff meetings twice yearly, including periodic offsite retreats, and we provide training on customer service, DEI, and accessibility.

## 3. Community Support

Waltham is a community that loves and supports its library; the feedback we have received from patrons has been overwhelmingly positive. We see the support through daily visits and appropriate funding. We have an incredible Board of Trustees and an amazing Friends group that helps us fund our flagship programs and events. Today's world faces many challenges regarding the need for continued investment in our public libraries. WPL is fortunate to work within a community that truly understands, values, and invests in its library.

## 4. Financial Acuity

The City of Waltham is a testament to prudent financial management and a commitment to fiscal responsibility. With a robust and well-balanced budget, Waltham has consistently demonstrated its financial security through careful planning, strategic investments, and sound economic practices. The City's healthy reserve funds, low debt burden, and consistent revenue streams indicate its strong financial position. Waltham's leadership has prioritized essential services and infrastructure projects and maintained a transparent and accountable approach to financial decision-making. This stability reflects the City's commitment to its residents and positions Waltham as a model of financial security in the region. According to 2022 data provided by the MBLC, Waltham staff salaries are some of the highest in the state and include a competitive benefits package.

## 5. A Growing Spanish-Speaking Population<sup>1</sup>

Many of our patrons are native Spanish speakers. We have noticed a significant increase in the number of Spanish-speaking patrons, notably once we committed to hiring native Spanish speakers and bilingual English/Spanish speakers. Hispanic patrons have expressed to us on many occasions

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<sup>1</sup> Martínez García, E. & Martínez García M. T. (2022). The Economic Value of Spanish in the United States: Opportunities and Challenges for the Future. *Estudios del Observatorio / Observatorio Studies*, 78, pp. 1-48.  
<https://cervantesobservatorio.fas.harvard.edu/en/reports>

how helpful and welcoming it is to be served in their native language, providing an extra level of understanding and nuance when receiving assistance.

Serving Spanish-speaking patrons and working on growing our Spanish-speaking capabilities, individually and as a team, benefits everyone. Waltham also boasts a Dual-Language school, an English-Spanish K-5 (and growing) school, with attendance based on a lottery system.

## 6. The Waltham High School Building Project<sup>2</sup>

The City of Waltham is building a new, comprehensive educational facility for students in grades 9-12. The new high school will provide students with access to technologies and opportunities that do not exist within the current high school facility, including integrated learning between the vocational programs and the academic programs, as well as introducing four new career track educational programs: HVACR, Cosmetology, Web Design & Programming, and Environmental Science.

According to Waltham Public Schools, Waltham School District is experiencing unprecedented growth in its student population at all grade levels. The current high school has an enrollment of approximately 1,751 (2022-2023). The new high school will be constructed to accommodate 1,830 students, allowing for documented growth patterns. The new high school building is also designed to accommodate future expansion.

### ❖ Challenges

This section is an honest reflection of anecdotal roadblocks and complexities and those found in our analysis of data and feedback.

Challenges might best be described as situations where we build our capacity for growth, exercise our temperament for adversity, and learn that many parts of our work are not necessarily cut and dry.

By addressing challenges, armed with insights derived from data and the voices of those we serve, we are better equipped to forge innovative solutions that lead to lasting transformation.

### 1. Physical Space

Many beautiful spaces exist at the Waltham Public Library. Two prominent examples are the stunning skylight at the Main Street entrance and the nearby Waltham Room, filled with our Charles Woodbury paintings collection. The #LibraryLawn hosts daily programs, special events, story-time meet-ups, picnics, naps, and diligent students. Our tagline, "Window to the World," is an accolade for the many windows framed in a stately brick facade and Roman columns illuminating the inside happenings.

However, many parts of the building are unattractive, out-of-date, and poorly functioning, distracting from any moments of beauty and posing significant barriers to access and safety for our patrons and staff.

Firstly, the WPL suffers from major facility issues, often causing the Library to close on various days of the year. The HVAC is almost wholly non-functioning. In FY23, we had to close for many days.

There is no climate control in the building. This is an increasingly inconvenient and wasteful situation, particularly when part of the building has no air conditioning and other parts are so cold that space heaters are in use.

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<sup>2</sup> <https://sites.google.com/walthampublicschools.org/waltham-high-building-project/about/background?authuser=0>  
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The roof was last replaced in the early 90s and currently allows for unfortunate rainwater pooling. It is structurally unsound, out of date, and needs replacing. Many leaks endanger our valuable collections and become a significant safety concern in inclement weather.

Two single-use bathrooms for patrons, plus a single-use “Children’s bathroom” with no ventilation, are woefully inadequate and one of the most common complaints received by patrons, including in the survey.

The lighting, overall, is dim. It is challenging to see books clearly because the lights are older models and hung incorrectly, blocking much-needed light.

Our brick pathways and stone steps are in desperate need of repair. They are greatly chipped and damaged and are a tripping hazard.

Second, WPL is sorely lacking in the technological infrastructure for today’s learners. Even simple things like the need for more electrical outlets are recurring issues that must be addressed. Without the technological infrastructure for modern research and information retrieval, access to digital resources is hindered, impeding learning.

Thirdly, a poorly functioning layout, uncomfortable furniture, and insufficient amenities can hinder users’ comfort and convenience, detracting from their overall experience and deterring them from extended stays. Currently, the Library cannot accommodate various user needs, such as collaborative work, silent study, or community events. These are integral to any library’s role as a versatile hub for learning and social engagement.

Finally, we have physically outgrown our space. Our daily use and demands from the public far exceed what our physical space can provide for them. Crowds of baby carriages and families swarm our entrance and Children’s Area. There is not enough space in the Teen Room for the number of patrons each day, nor are there enough computers, desks, or quiet study spaces. Behind the scenes, our staff needs more dedicated space for off-desk projects, like Collection Development or program planning, where they can work uninterrupted. And we have no storage space, which concerns our programming and outreach staff.

No one would argue that the aesthetic appeal of our building plays a crucial role in engaging and motivating our patrons. In sum, an unattractive, out-of-date, and poorly functioning space undermines our potential as a welcoming and dynamic center of knowledge, blocking the community’s full utilization of its resources and services by discouraging patrons from spending time in the Library.

## **2. Staffing: We need more diverse staff representing our community!**

Growing our team is of the utmost importance over the next few years. The Waltham community wants more: more classes, more programs, more options, more time, more everything. But, our busy pace needs to match our current staff schedules.

Our patrons have highly diverse needs. To continue to create a welcoming, accessible, and safe experience while meeting those needs and without the risk of burnout requires more hands. We need more staff for the number of visitors each hour in the building. Between FY2022 and FY2023, we increased visits to the Library by over 7,000, with no increase in staffing.

Our less-than-ideal staffing prevents us from giving more to the community. We want to reinvent, reimagine, and test new ideas. We would like to investigate opening an hour earlier during the week and matching our weekend hours to weekdays. We want to offer as many of our services as possible in Spanish, including those beyond traditional reference services, like social workers, career assistance, and housing assistance. We also want to expand our food program and offer weekend meals to children and adults.

As a team, the Waltham Public Library acknowledges we serve a much more diverse population than we represent as a staff. We are committed to hiring a more diverse Library staff within the City that is more reflective of our community. At the same time WPL commits to cultivating pathways and encouraging Waltham youth into the broader field of librarianship.

# The Strategic Plan Goals and Objectives

Our Strategic Direction centers around the goal of being the best public library in the world. What is exciting about this goal is that it reflects our desire to raise the bar on each thing we focus on continuously. However, “being the best” means different things to different people. As we reviewed patrons’ feedback and gathered more data, it was clear that the WPL cannot be the best in our current building; we must explore opportunities to improve the Waltham Public Library building significantly.

In light of this, we have divided our Goals and Objectives into two parts. First, regardless of our Library’s physical condition and limitations, there are some **global trends** and **broad focus areas** that we must keep at the forefront of all our decision-making to continue our trajectory of success.

## ❖ Global Trends

These trends are significant developments that library leadership continues to focus on. These pressing issues reshape how public libraries interact with and serve our communities. Our collective education about these topics will greatly strengthen our capacity for public service.

### 1. Digital Literacy

Many librarians are concerned about the digital divide and lack of digital fluency, primarily in evaluating where the information comes from and determining what is factual and what is misinformation. We live in a world with unfettered access to an obscene amount of information, available in seconds. It is no accident that it is difficult to pull your attention away from the screen, to stop swiping on our phones, and to think, “Where did this information come from? What’s the source?” Brains are complex; intentional or not, our individual experiences shape our quest for knowledge and decision-making. WPL is here to help you get to the heart of your questions and navigate past distractions.

### 2. Digital Economy and Urgency

Our expectation for service today is greatly shaped by our online experiences. From Amazon, Dunkin Donuts, Instacart, to UberEats... in 2023, there is a convenient app for everything, and we have been conditioned to get what we want when we want it. 98% of consumers find customer service interactions frustrating, which makes sense. We have become used to unlimited options instantly without needing an ID or cash. We order ahead, pay virtually, and we have stuff delivered in under an hour. How will these expectations transfer onto a public library’s already pressed work environment?

### 3. Influencing

Social Media influencers have transformed how people form their opinions and get their questions answered. Influencers have great power and reach, often gained by fostering a sense (real or not) of community from their followers. 92% of consumers trust an influencer over other traditional marketing sources<sup>3</sup>, blurring an already fuzzy line between opinion and fact.

### 4. Artificial Intelligence

Both exciting and frightening, AI encompasses much of what we have already covered. First, there are the ever-pressing concerns about privacy and the amount of access to personal data. More research is needed to understand any biases that AI technology and pattern recognition has and to assess its credibility and sources. Perhaps our biggest concern is the decrease in human interactions and less

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<sup>3</sup> <https://www.questionpro.com/blog/consumers-trust-influencers-celebrities/>  
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opportunity to serendipitously stumble upon new material, part of the intangible magic of walking through a public library.

## 5. Sustainability

In 2019 the ALA adopted Sustainability as one of its core values. Former President Patty Wong stated that libraries must adopt the 'triple bottom line' mindset in order to become truly sustainable. That is: we must embody practices that are environmentally sound, economically feasible, and socially equitable. By incorporating the 'triple bottom line' mindset into both our operations and programming, we can serve as a hub for sustainable living, education, and community engagement, contributing to a greener and more resilient future for our communities.

## 6. Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion

It is imperative that librarians recognize, understand, and have the support to address any biases in their services, materials, or programs. Ongoing training in cultural and cognitive competencies will allow a better-equipped staff to understand and be responsive to our communities and each other. Hiring a diverse workforce that reflects our ever-changing community is also a key component of DEI work.

Our team will continue researching, reflecting on, and implementing Global Trends in our daily work.

## ❖ Broad Focus Areas

Our broad focus areas are inspired by the opportunities uncovered during our strategic planning sessions. WPL has demonstrated its serious commitment to the following broad focus areas by making meaningful strides over the past few years. WPL is well positioned and ready to expand on our past achievements. Each of the following points is an area we will continue to strengthen, in tandem with a new building project, incorporating global trends in external operations and internal functions.

### 1. Outreach and Connection

- Continue partnering with local organizations to reach underserved communities.
- Strengthening our partnership with Waltham Public Schools.
- Grow partnerships with local businesses and organizations.
- Participate in all major community events and initiatives.
- Intentionally utilize social media and other platforms, across all Library departments, for more effective outreach and better communication.

### 2. Staff Development and Support

- Provide ongoing training to improve customer service.
- Offer ongoing diversity and inclusion training to enhance cultural competency.
- Encourage a learning culture to adapt to both the everchanging patron and staff needs.
- Leverage some of our outstanding staff expertise to train others.

### 3. Community Responsiveness

- Conduct regular community needs assessments to identify specific demands.
- Build a diverse programming series to cater to various interests and age groups.
- Collaborate with community stakeholders to co-create relevant services.
- Host a city-wide community event for all local organizations to introduce the public to the City's resources.

- Review and regularly update the collection based on patron feedback and global trends.

#### 4. Fiscal Preparedness

- Continue transparent financial reporting, including spending summaries in our annual Impact Report, and ensure stakeholders and staff understand our finances.
- Implement measures to control costs and increase operational efficiency while growing our materials collection to meet demand.
- Demonstrate a commitment to the organization's long-term financial sustainability by exploring reserve funds, endowments, and other mechanisms to support future operations and staffing.
- Compare the organization's financial performance with industry peers to gauge its relative fiscal health and identify areas for improvement.

#### 5. Bilingualism

- Improve accessibility with more outreach, better signage, etc.
- Hire bilingual staff and encourage existing staff to become bilingual.
- Expand multilingual resources and services.
- Organize workshops and training sessions on digital literacy skills in Spanish.
- Offer e-books and online resources to reach a broader audience in Spanish.

WPL believes that at the end of this Strategic Plan timeline, we have the potential to become a leadership organization that develops the standards used in other libraries to impact and support the field of librarianship positively.

### ❖ Strategic Goals and Objectives

#### Overview

Broad objectives to achieve over the next 3-5 years

- Goal 1: Center the people, our vision and mission, our values, and our Broad Focus Areas in all we do.
- Goal 2: Advance the Library's growth and capacity, ensuring a well-rounded team equipped to meet and exceed current and future demand.
- Goal 3: Focus on adaptive, flexible staffing protocols and a meaningful work culture experience that addresses the changing needs of employees.
- Goal 4: Complete a Building Plan, Feasibility Study, and Capital Funding Proposal
- Goal 5: Invest in "24/7" and Mobile Library Concepts
- Goal 6: Create an Updated and Inclusive Library Space

#### Details

For each goal we have outlined objectives and actions needed to achieve the goals.

#### **Goal 1: Center the people, our vision and mission, our values, and our Broad Focus Areas in all we do.**

Objective: Audit all existing public policies and procedures to structure our work around our goals.

Actions:

[Waltham Public Library Strategic Plan FY 2024-2028](#)



- Review our onboarding experience for new staff. Solicit feedback and implement changes.
- Invest in succession planning so that our internal procedures are documented and clarified.

Objective: Enhance Accessibility and Inclusivity.

Actions:

- Improve physical accessibility for patrons with disabilities
- Expand multilingual resources and services, including signage
- Continue to partner with local organizations to reach underserved communities.

Objective: Regularly review and update the collection based on user feedback.

Actions:

- Make collection feedback opportunities more easily available for our patrons.
- Revamp our personal recommendation feature.
- Continue to monitor e-content, collection use, and holds.

## **Goal 2: Advance the Library's growth and capacity, ensuring a well-rounded team equipped to meet and exceed current and future demand.**

Objective: Create a comprehensive schedule framework that allows for flexible allocation of staffing and resources based on fluctuating demand and changing priorities.

Actions:

- Document and analyze existing roles and responsibilities.
- Analyze current Library functions and feasibility.
- Identify areas of concern, delay, or poor performance.
- Review circulation transaction data and reorganize workflow around strategic times.

Objective: Define service strategies and staffing implications for the future/ideal Library by creating a five-year staffing organization chart with personnel costs.

Actions:

- Identify gaps between current and future staffing and operations.
- Define plans to expand services, programs, and outreach efforts and how additional staff would be crucial in successfully implementing them.

Objective: Create a formal staffing proposal.

Actions:

- Assemble statistics from the last 5-10 years to illustrate the growing demand for Library services.
- Collect first-hand stories on how staff shortages affect customer service and productivity.
- Detail instances where patrons were not attended to promptly, programs had to be postponed, or essential tasks were delayed due to limited staffing.
- Create a cost-benefit analysis showing how investing in more FT staff can save the Library/City money in general operations, like efficiency and hiring.
- Compare staffing with libraries of a similar size, workflow, and population.
- Share examples from other organizations that faced similar challenges and benefited from increasing their staff.

Objective: Ensure behind-the-scenes preparation for increasing staffing has happened.

Actions:

- Update job descriptions and salaries as needed.

- Examine any barriers to the hiring process: educational qualifications, application requirements, process, cost, etc.
- Increase opportunities for Department Heads to take management training.

### **Goal 3: Focus on creating an adaptive, flexible staffing protocol and a meaningful work culture experience that addresses the changing needs of employees.**

Objective: Improve staff technical and analytical skills.

Actions:

- Provide ongoing opportunities for skill development and training to ensure employees are equipped to adapt to new technologies and emerging trends, particularly regarding digital content, access, and AI.
- Encourage a learning culture to adapt to changing patron and staff needs.
- Offer diversity and inclusion training to enhance cultural competency.

Objective: Improve staff wellness and overall work experience that reflects our core values.

Actions:

- Implement initiatives prioritizing employee well-being, such as wellness programs, stress management workshops, and mental health resources.
- Update the current evaluation tool to better reflect how the Library functions today.
- Introduce a recognition system that acknowledges employees' contributions, fostering a sense of belonging, appreciation, and motivation.
- Research opportunities to provide staff with bike share programs.
- Reward staff for taking alternative transportation to work.

Objective: Become a modern, family-friendly workplace.

Actions:

- Research and implement remote and flexible work policies.
- Develop and communicate clear policies for remote work, enabling employees to balance their professional and personal responsibilities effectively.
- Establish an agile scheduling system that accommodates varying work hours, remote work options, and part-time arrangements to better align with employees' needs.
- Investigate the potential for a Bring Your Baby to Work program at the Library and pilot it.
- Investigate the potential for WPL to cover the cost of tuition for employees.

Objective: Create the capacity to learn another language at work.

Actions:

- Offer free, work-time classes to learn another language.
- Research a stipend for multilingual staff.

### **Goal 4: Complete a Building Plan, Feasibility Study, and Capital Funding Proposal.**

Objective: Define the project's scope.

Action:

- Develop a comprehensive document and FAQ that explains the need for a renovation.

Objective: Create a Building Plan Team to collaborate on the work needed to accomplish this goal.

Actions:

Waltham Public Library Strategic Plan FY 2024-2028

- Reach out to key stakeholders, patrons, and City representatives.
- Create a schedule of monthly meetings.

Objective: Do the Research

Actions:

- Visit other libraries that have undergone recent renovations for ideas and inspiration.
- Talk with these libraries' staff, administration, and trustees about their experience.
- Review past plans and proposals from other libraries that successfully received a building grant.
- Share data with key stakeholders.

Objective: Create a transparent, comprehensive, and effective Communication and Marketing Plan for the Building Project.

Actions:

- Collect and highlight stories demonstrating the Library's impact on our community.
- Share stories that demonstrate the need for a new building.
- Create a brand for the project and feature it in as much of our work as possible (e.g., PIE themes, special collections, guest speakers, programs).
- Research brand merchandise.
- Create and utilize various channels (website, social media, newsletters) specifically focused on the Building Plan.

Objective: Prioritize community input.

Actions:

- Gather input from community members through surveys, focus groups, activities, and public meetings to shape the redesign.
- Host special Makerspace events that highlight creative visioning for building improvements.
- Set up regular assessment processes to review progress and adjust the plan.
- Continue to publicize action and results on new communication channels.

Objective: Engage Decision Makers.

Action:

- Use data, anecdotes, and persuasive communication to make our case to the Mayor, Trustees, and City Council effectively.

## Goal 5: Invest in “24/7” and Mobile Library Concepts.

Objective: Be as agile and forward-thinking as possible regarding Library service, particularly as we plan to renovate.

Actions:

- Investigate the potential to offer more robust delivery services/24-hour smart lockers.
- Enhance website capabilities to expand access to services online (room booking, museum passes, library cards, etc.)
- Promote e-magazine resources and investigate lending devices exclusively for magazines.
- Market and promote our transition from online services to a 24/7 branch model.
- Get a bookmobile.
- Continue to offer pop-up Library services at local parks, schools, and community events.

Objective: Anticipate and accommodate changing formats for audio-visual materials.

Actions:

- Develop a 5-year plan for physical AV materials and space, digital AV materials, and streaming services.
- Increase access to digital resources and online databases, aligning the Library with the digital age while maintaining a solid physical presence.
- Allocate the budget appropriately and transparently.

Objective: Preserve Local History and make it as accessible as possible for future generations.

Actions:

- Develop a strategy to digitize historical documents, photographs, and newspapers to make them accessible online.
- Invest in the preservation of the original copies.
- Plan for the ongoing cost of maintenance and data access.

## Goal 6: Create an Updated and Inclusive Library Space

Objective: Transform the Library into a modern, welcoming, and inclusive physical space that caters to the diverse needs and interests of the community.

Actions:

- Improve the overall user experience by incorporating user-friendly layouts that optimize space utilization, provide designated areas for different activities, and ensure easy navigation for users of all ages, abilities, and backgrounds.
- Implement up-to-date technology infrastructure, including high-speed internet, interactive displays, RFID, and self-checkout stations.
- Source adaptable and ergonomic furnishings that accommodate different activities and group sizes.
- Ensure the Library is physically accessible to everyone by incorporating features such as ramps, elevators, and adjustable furniture.
- Incorporate inclusive, comfortable seating and workspaces and cutting-edge technology readily accessible for patrons.
- Invest in meeting and study room spaces for community collaboration and individual use.

Objective: Investigate Green Building Design opportunities.

Actions:

- Adopt sustainable building designs prioritizing energy efficiency and renewable materials.
- Integrate green technologies such as solar panels, rainwater harvesting, and efficient lighting systems to reduce energy consumption and minimize the Library's carbon footprint.
- Integrate sustainable design elements such as energy-efficient lighting, recycling stations, and green roofing.
- Research grants and stipends available for Green Building Designs.
- Create a new community garden and more vibrant green space at the #LibraryLawn.

# Acknowledgments

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We would also like to thank the entire team at the Waltham Public Library, the Trustees of the Waltham Public Library, and the Friends of the Waltham Public Library for their work and continued support of the Waltham Public Library.

# The Data

## ❖ Waltham Population<sup>4</sup>

According to the United States Census Bureau, the population estimate for Waltham in July of 2022 was 64,065, and in April of 2020 it was estimated at 65,213 (-1.8% change). It estimates that the population of Massachusetts was 6,981,974 in July of 2022 and 7,029,949 in April 2020 (-0.7% change).

## ❖ Waltham Quick Facts<sup>5</sup>

Population	Waltham, MA	Massachusetts
Population Estimates, July 1, 2022, (V2022)	64,065	6,981,974
Population estimates base, April 1, 2020, (V2022)	65,213	7,029,949
Population, percent change - April 1, 2020 (estimates base) to July 1, 2022, (V2022)	-1.8%	-0.7%
Population, Census, April 1, 2020	65,218	7,029,917
Population, Census, April 1, 2010	60,632	6,547,629
Age and Sex		
Persons under 5 years, percent	5.0%	4.9%
Persons under 18 years, percent	13.9%	19.2%
Persons 65 years and over, percent	14.5%	18.1%
Female persons, percent	50.8%	51.0%
Race and Hispanic Origin		
White alone, percent	68.6%	79.4%
Black or African American alone, percent(a)	6.8%	9.5%
American Indian and Alaska Native alone, percent(a)	0.6%	0.5%
Asian alone, percent(a)	12.2%	7.7%
Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander alone, percent(a)	0.1%	0.1%
Two or More Races, percent	5.5%	2.7%
Hispanic or Latino, percent(b)	14.5%	13.1%
White alone, not Hispanic or Latino, percent	63.8%	69.6%
Population Characteristics		
Veterans, 2017-2021	1,490	277,442

<sup>4</sup> <https://www.census.gov/quickfacts/fact/table/walthamcitymassachusetts#https://www.census.gov/quickfacts/MA>

<sup>5</sup> <https://www.census.gov/quickfacts/fact/table/walthamcitymassachusetts#https://www.census.gov/quickfacts/MA>

Foreign born persons, percent, 2017-2021	24.9%	17.3%
<b>Housing</b>		
Housing units, July 1, 2022, (V2022)	X	3,036,334
Owner-occupied housing unit rate, 2017-2021	49.8%	62.4%
Median value of owner-occupied housing units, 2017-2021	\$602,200	\$424,700
Median selected monthly owner costs -with a mortgage, 2017-2021	\$2,726	\$2,365
Median selected monthly owner costs -without a mortgage, 2017-2021	\$822	\$875
Median gross rent, 2017-2021	\$1,950	\$1,429
Building permits, 2022	X	17,692
<b>Families &amp; Living Arrangements</b>		
Households, 2017-2021	24,943	2,714,448
Persons per household, 2017-2021	2.27	2.48
Living in same house 1 year ago, percent of persons age 1 year+, 2017-2021	81.5%	87.5%
Language other than English spoken at home, percent of persons age 5 years+, 2017-2021	31.0%	24.4%
<b>Computer and Internet Use</b>		
Households with a computer, percent, 2017-2021	95.2%	93.5%
Households with a broadband Internet subscription, percent, 2017-2021	91.7%	89.6%
<b>Education</b>		
High school graduate or higher, percent of persons age 25 years+, 2017-2021	92.6%	91.2%
Bachelor's degree or higher, percent of persons age 25 years+, 2017-2021	55.5%	45.2%
<b>Health</b>		
With a disability, under age 65 years, percent, 2017-2021	5.8%	7.9%
Persons without health insurance, under age 65 years, percent	3.7%	2.8%
<b>Economy</b>		
In civilian labor force, total, percent of population age 16 years+, 2017-2021	69.0%	67.1%
In civilian labor force, female, percent of population age 16 years+, 2017-2021	66.9%	63.5%

Total accommodation and food services sales, 2017 (\$1,000)(c)	344,989	22,892,801
Total health care and social assistance receipts/revenue, 2017 (\$1,000)(c)	612,516	74,023,959
Total transportation and warehousing receipts/revenue, 2017 (\$1,000)(c)	204,867	13,596,083
Total retail sales, 2017 (\$1,000)(c)	1,076,157	110,194,522
Total retail sales per capita, 2017(c)	\$17,120	\$16,055
<b>Transportation</b>		
Mean travel time to work (minutes), workers age 16 years+, 2017-2021	24.5	29.6
<b>Income &amp; Poverty</b>		
Median household income (in 2021 dollars), 2017-2021	\$103,498	\$89,026
Per capita income in past 12 months (in 2021 dollars), 2017-2021	\$49,193	\$48,617
Persons in poverty, percent	8.8%	10.4%

## ❖ Education Information

Note: This information is from the 2022-2023 school year unless otherwise noted. The data is derived from the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) and the Waltham Public School District (WPS).

### **General Enrollment (2022-2023)**

There were 5,643 students enrolled in WPS during the 2022-2023 school year; during that same time, 913,735 students enrolled in Massachusetts public schools.

### **Enrollment by Race/Ethnicity (2022-2023)<sup>6</sup>**

Race	% of District	% of State
African American	8.5	9.4
Asian	4.8	7.3
Hispanic	45.5	24.2
Native American	0.1	0.2
White	38.4	54.4

<sup>6</sup> Enrollment Data (2022-23) - Waltham (03080000) (mass.edu)  
 Contact Information - Massachusetts (00000000)  
 Waltham Public Library Strategic Plan FY 2024-2028



Native Hawaiian, Pacific Islander	0.1	0.1
Multi-Race, Non-Hispanic	2.8	4.4

The largest ethnicity enrolled in the Waltham Public School District is Hispanic (45.5%), significantly higher than the rest of the state (24.2%). This is followed by White (38.4%), which is lower than the state (54.4%), and African American/Black (8.5%), which is also lower than the state (9.4%).

### **Enrollment by Gender (2022-2023)<sup>7</sup>**

Gender	District	State
Female	2,664	442,564
Male	2,972	469,563
Non-Binary	7	1,608
Total	5,643	913,735

WPS’s gender percentage totals are similar to Massachusetts’ as a whole, though the female public student population in Waltham is slightly lower than that of the state. It is important to note that, in recent years, non-binary has been included as a gender demographic by DESE. The percentages are as follows:

- Males - Waltham: 52.7%; State: 51.4%
- Females - Waltham: 47.2%; State: 48.4%
- Non-Binary - Waltham: 0.1%; State: 0.2%

### **High Needs Populations (2022-2023)<sup>8</sup>**

Note: “High Needs” encompasses students DESE designates as low income/economically disadvantaged, English learners/former English learners, or have disabilities. Many students hold multiple designations (e.g. a student can be an English learner and have a disability), so “High Needs” is an all-encompassing label that indicates students who need more support.

Title	% of District	% of State
High Needs	61.9	55.1
First Language not English	59.2	25.0
English Language Learner	24.3	12.1
Low-income	48.9	42.3
Students With Disabilities	17.1	19.4

The percentage of “High Needs” students enrolled in WPS (61.9%) was significantly higher than Massachusetts as a whole (55.1%).

<sup>7</sup> <https://profiles.doe.mass.edu/statereport/enrollmentbyracegender.aspx>  
2021-22 Class Size by Gender and Selected Populations - All - Waltham (03080000) (mass.edu)

<sup>8</sup> [Selected Populations \(2022-23\) - Waltham \(03080000\) \(mass.edu\)](https://profiles.doe.mass.edu/statereport/selectedpopulations.aspx)  
<https://profiles.doe.mass.edu/statereport/selectedpopulations.aspx>

WPS's English language learners (24.3%), or students whose first language is a language other than English and are unable to perform ordinary classroom work in English, is double the state average (12.1%).

Waltham students who come from families where English is not the first language (59.2%) is also more than double that of the state (25%). This statistic also marks a sizable increase for the district from the 2021-2022 school year (51.2%).

Comparisons to neighboring cities/towns also show Waltham has a drastically higher concentration of students whose first language is not English (59.2%):

- Newton (29.5%)<sup>9</sup>
- Weston (8.9%)<sup>10</sup>
- Lexington (35.6%)<sup>11</sup>
- Watertown (40.8%)<sup>12</sup>

Waltham has a substantially larger population of students who speak more than one language than its neighbors. Newton, Lexington, and Watertown's bilingual student populations are also rising, though more gradually. Weston's, meanwhile, has slightly decreased.

The number of low-income students enrolled in Waltham (48.9%) is another "High Needs" category where we are above Massachusetts' state average (42.3%).

As of 2022-23, low-income percentages for Waltham's neighbors are as follows:

- Newton (13.3%)
- Weston (7.9%)
- Lexington (7.6%)
- Watertown (36.1%)

As this data shows, WPS has a slightly larger percentage of low-income students when compared to the rest of the state. However, when compared to its neighbors, these numbers are dramatically larger.

### **Student Dropout Rate Report (2021-2022)**<sup>13</sup>

Below is a report providing the percentage of Waltham public high school students who dropout of high school during the 2021-2022 school year. Note: dropout rates are not reported for student groups whose numbers are less than 6.

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<sup>9</sup> [\(Contact Information - Newton \(02070000\)\) \(mass.edu\)](#)

<sup>10</sup> [\(Contact Information - Weston \(03300000\)\) \(mass.edu\)](#)

<sup>11</sup> [\(Contact Information - Lexington \(01550000\)\) \(mass.edu\)](#)

<sup>12</sup> [\(Contact Information - Watertown \(03140000\)\) \(mass.edu\)](#)

<sup>13</sup> <https://profiles.doe.mass.edu/dropout/default.aspx?orgcode=03080505&orgtypecode=6&leftNavId=15627> & <https://profiles.doe.mass.edu/dropout/default.aspx?orgcode=03080000&orgtypecode=5&leftNavId=15627> & [2021-22 Student Dropout Rate Report - Massachusetts \(00000000\)](#)

Dropout Rate Report (2021-2022)							
Student Group	# Enrolled Grades 09 through 12	# Dropout All Grades	% Dropout All Grades	% Dropout Grade 09	% Dropout Grade 10	% Dropout Grade 11	% Dropout Grade 12
All Students	1,642	81	4.9	5.5	3.8	5.3	5.2
High Needs	1,031	63	6.1	4.7	4.9	7.5	7.5
Low Income	873	46	5.3	4.3	4.4	6.9	5.7
LEP English language learner	295	35	11.9	13.0	13.6	11.4	9.9
Students with disabilities	286	14	4.9	1.3	6.9	5.6	6.5
African American/Black	158	2	1.3	2.6	0.0	2.6	0.0
Asian	60	2	3.3	0.0	13.3	0.0	0.0
Hispanic or Latino	733	51	7.0	5.7	5.5	9.5	7.1
Multi-race, non-Hispanic or Latino	25	1	4.0	0.0	16.7	0.0	
Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander	1						
White	665	25	3.8	7.1	1.7	1.8	5.0
Female	774	36	4.7	4.7	4.3	5.8	3.8
Male	865	45	5.2	6.3	3.3	4.8	6.4

WPS's dropout rate (4.9%) is more than double Massachusetts' (2.1%). LEP English language learners account for the highest percentage of all dropouts (11.9%). This is followed by the Hispanic/Latino population (7%) and High Needs (6.1%). The group with the lowest dropout rate is African American/Black (1.3%). Asian students have the second lowest dropout rate (3.3%).

### **Graduation Rates (2022)<sup>14</sup>**

4-Year Graduation Rate (2022)							
Student Group	# in Cohort	% Graduated	% Still in School	% Non-Grad Completers	% H.S. Equiv.	% Dropped Out	% Permanently Excluded
All Students	432	81.0	7.2	0.2	0.0	11.6	0.0
Male	234	77.4	9.0	0.4	0.0	13.2	0.0
Female	197	85.8	4.6	0.0	0.0	9.6	0.0

<sup>14</sup> [https://profiles.doe.mass.edu/grad/grad\\_report.aspx?orgcode=03080000&orgtypecode=5&Waltham Public Library Strategic Plan FY 2024-2028](https://profiles.doe.mass.edu/grad/grad_report.aspx?orgcode=03080000&orgtypecode=5&Waltham%20Public%20Library%20Strategic%20Plan%20FY%202024-2028)

ELL	125	60.0	12.0	0.8	0.0	27.2	0.0
Low Income	280	75.0	9.3	0.4	0.0	15.4	0.0
High needs	319	74.6	9.7	0.3	0.0	15.4	0.0
Students w/ disabilities	86	72.1	19.8	0.0	0.0	8.1	0.0
Afr. Amer./Black	40	90.0	5.0	0.0	0.0	5.0	0.0
Asian	11	90.9	0.0	0.0	0.0	9.1	0.0
Hispanic/Latin o	204	73.0	7.8	0.5	0.0	18.6	0.0
Amer. Ind. or Alaska Nat.	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
White	172	87.8	7.0	0.0	0.0	5.2	0.0
Nat. Haw. or Pacif. Isl.	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Multi-race, Non-Hisp/Lat	5	-	-	-	-	-	-

Note: graduation rates are not counted for student groups less than 6.

The chart above reflects the overall graduation rate of students (it includes students who transferred into the district after 9th grade). DESE also tracks the adjusted graduation data (for just those students who enrolled in WPS in 9th grade). According to DESE, the adjusted graduation rate was 87.8% in 2022; this dataset is slightly higher than the overall graduation rate noted above (81%). Females graduated at a higher rate than their male counterparts in both the unadjusted and adjusted graduation rates: 91.9% of females and 83.8% of males from the adjusted cohort graduated, compared with 85.8% of females and 77.4% of males from the unadjusted cohort.

### Plans of Waltham High School Graduates (2021-2022)<sup>15</sup>

Plan	% of District	% of State
4-Year Private College	22.7	27.9
4-Year Public College	26.2	29.8
2-Year Private College	0.0	0.5
2-Year Public College	11.5	13.5
Other Post-Secondary	2.7	2.8
Apprenticeship	0.8	0.8
Work	17.8	14.4
Military	1.6	1.4
Other	1.4	2.0
Unknown	15.3	6.7

<sup>15</sup> [Plans of High School Graduates \(2022-23\) - Waltham \(03080000\) \(mass.edu\)](https://www.census.gov/quickfacts/fact/table/walthamcitymassachusetts/HSG445221#HSG445221)  
<https://www.census.gov/quickfacts/fact/table/walthamcitymassachusetts/HSG445221#HSG445221>

According to the US Census Bureau's five-year-estimate from 2017-2021 census estimates that 92.6% of Waltham residents age 25+ have graduated High School. The percentage of Waltham residents holding a Bachelor's Degree or higher for the same period is estimated at 55.5%, which is higher than the state average (45.2%).

The majority of students in the class of 2022 planned to attend a 4-year public college (26.2%), a 4-year private college (22.7%), or work after graduation (17.8%). These percentages are similar to that of Massachusetts as a whole, though plans of attending public and private colleges are slightly higher (29.8% and 27.9% respectively) and plans to work after college is slightly lower (14.4%).

## ❖ Race/Ethnicity and Gender<sup>16</sup>

According to the most recent census data, the Waltham population identifies their race as:

- (63.8%) White alone, not Hispanic or Latino vs. state (69.6%)
- (14.5%) Hispanic or Latino vs. state (13.1%)
- (12.2%) Asian alone vs. state (7.7%)
- (6.8%) Black or African American alone vs. state (9.5%)
- (5.5%) Two or more races vs. state (2.7%)

About half of the population of Waltham identifies as female (50.8%), slightly less than the state (51%).

## ❖ Immigration and Non-Native English Speakers<sup>17</sup>

According to Data USA in 2020 26.6% of Waltham's population was born outside of the United States (16.7K in total), compared to Massachusetts, where foreign-born residents make up 17% of residents.

69% of Waltham residents speak only English at home. 11.4% speak Spanish, 7.2% speak Asian or Pacific Island languages, 10.3% speak other Indo-European languages, and 2.1% speak other languages (2021 USA Census).

As of 2020, 84.5% of Waltham's residents were citizens, an increase from 2019 (83.7%). Citizenship in Massachusetts is 92.3% (Data USA 2020).

While the majority of households in the Waltham community speak only English (69%), it is interesting to compare this to the student body of WPS, where over 59% of the students come from households where English is not the first language and over 26% are English learners.

## ❖ Economics, including Employment, Income<sup>18</sup>

According to the 2021 US census, the median Household Income for Waltham was \$103,498, while the median income for Massachusetts was \$89,026.

- 3.4% of households make an income of less than \$10,000.
- 69.1% of Waltham is part of the civilian workforce (2021 US Census).

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<sup>16</sup> [U.S. Census Bureau QuickFacts: Waltham city, Massachusetts](#)  
[U.S. Census Bureau QuickFacts: Massachusetts](#)

<sup>17</sup> [Waltham, MA | Data USA](#)  
[Massachusetts | Data USA](#)  
[Waltham city, Massachusetts - Census Bureau Profile](#)

<sup>18</sup> [S2301: EMPLOYMENT STATUS - Census Bureau Table](#)  
<https://data.census.gov/table?q=Waltham+city,+Massachusetts+senior&t=Income+and+Poverty>  
[Waltham city, Massachusetts - Census Bureau Profile](#)  
<https://datausa.io/profile/geo/waltham-ma/#:~:text=Waltham%2C%20MA%20is%20home%20to,any%20other%20race%20or%20ethnicity>

[Massachusetts - Census Bureau Profile](#)

- 2.7% of residents identify as veterans, compared to Massachusetts (4.2%). The highest percentage are those who served in the Vietnam War (US Census).
- 8.8% of Waltham residents live under the Federal poverty line. In terms of age population, 8.9% of those 18 and under live in poverty, 8.5% for those between the ages of 18 to 64 years, and 10.3% for those 65 and over.
- Men who identified as Non-Hispanic White had the largest number of residents living below the poverty line at 14%. Non-Hispanic White women were at 12.4%. This was followed by Hispanic women, who were at 10.4%. This is nearly twice the percentage of Hispanic men at 5.79%. (Note: This particular piece of information was taken from Data 2020, so these numbers may have increased/decreased in more recent years).

## ❖ Housing/Household/Family Information<sup>19</sup>

In 2021 Waltham had 26,545 housing units.

The Homeownership rate in Waltham is 49.8% of the population, whereas it is 63.2% overall in Massachusetts.

- Most Household units in Waltham consist of two or more family units (55.5%), while single-family units are in the minority (44.3%). Mobile homes and other types of units are at 0.2%. By contrast, Massachusetts has 1-unit structures at 58.1%, while two or more units are at 41.2%. Mobile/other units are at 0.7%.
- Renter-occupied units vs. owner-occupied units are still fairly even, though renter units have a slight majority at 50.2%. Units that are owned and occupied by the resident are at 49.8%. In Massachusetts overall, owner-occupied housing units are 63.2%, while renter-occupied units are at 36.8%.

## ❖ Aging<sup>20</sup>

The median age for Waltham is 33.8 years, for Massachusetts it is 39.9 years.

The senior citizen population of Waltham is 14.5%, for Massachusetts it is 17.4%.

The largest age group of Waltham is 20-24 years olds (13.7%). The second largest group in Waltham is 30-34 year olds (9.5%).

## ❖ Resources Credit

All information and data collection were taken from these three resources:

- [United States Census Bureau](#)
- [Data USA](#)
- [Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education](#)

<sup>19</sup> [Waltham city, Massachusetts - Census Bureau Profile](#)  
[S1101: HOUSEHOLDS AND FAMILIES - Census Bureau Table](#) (Waltham)  
[S1101: HOUSEHOLDS AND FAMILIES - Census Bureau Table](#) (Massachusetts)

<sup>20</sup> [Waltham city, Massachusetts - Census Bureau Profile](#)  
[S0101: AGE AND SEX - Census Bureau Table](#)  
[S0102: POPULATION 60 YEARS AND OVER ... - Census Bureau Table](#)