

Needs Assessment

Dedham Public Library

2024.1.26

Introduction

Dedham Public Library has the opportunity to apply for a grant to improve the Library's physical plant through the Massachusetts Public Library Construction Program (MPLCP), administered by the state's Board of Library Commissioners. To prepare a building program, DPL's administration and Board of Trustees partnered with the Ivy Group to create a history of the community and current and projected demographics in the community analysis, library statistics, and community analysis via benchmarking, community engagement through focus groups, visioning exercises, and a survey. Across all methodologies, contributors agreed that DPL's staff and programs are excellent but that its buildings limit modern library services.

"The staff is great and welcoming/helpful but main library doesn't feel inviting or welcoming due to physical limitations."

Based on the data gathered from state and national sources, staff, trustees, stakeholders, and community members, the needs assessment offers recommendations for improvements in programming, services, collections, and spaces, especially for underserved populations.

"Our library is severely lacking in space and resources (books, media) compared to our surrounding towns."

Summary of Findings

Community Analysis

Introduction

An environmental analysis examines the external factors that affect an organization or industry. This report uses a modified PESTLE (political, economic, social, technological, legal, and environmental) framework to create a snapshot of the setting in which the Dedham Public Library (DPL) operates. Education and library benchmarking have been added to the framework for their relevance to library services.



Political

Dedham's lawmaking body is the Town Meeting, comprised of the 270 elected members from seven districts, which meets twice a year. An elected 5 person Select Board meets twice a month, crafts policy, and makes appointments to boards and committees, as well as hiring the Town Manager who oversees daily operations.

The Library Director reports to the Town Manager. The Director oversees the day-to-day operations of the Library, hires and manages all Library staff, develops annual operating budgets, and implements general library procedures that uphold adopted Library policies. The Board of Library Trustees is the chief policy-making entity for the Dedham Public Library. The Board adopts high-level library policies and strategic plans, reviews and approves the annual operating budget, and has custody and management of the Library buildings, including decisions related to closures and operating hours.

The town is part of the state's Norfolk and Suffolk senatorial district, and the 11th Norfolk representative district. Nationally, they are a part of Massachusetts' 8th congressional district.

Dedham is the county seat of Norfolk County and the location of the Norfolk County Superior Court and Registry of Deeds, as well as the Dedham District Court.

In a draft of the Designing Dedham 2030: Dedham Maser Plan, the town has set fiscal responsibility, sustainability, and inclusivity as its core priorities. The priorities are supported by four cross-cutting themes of inclusion and equality, walking and biking, livability and quality of life, and aligned and effective polices.

Economic

Dedham is home to over 1,000 business establishments. The largest industries are health care/social assistance and retail. Notable employers include retailers at Legacy Place, the American Red Cross, and the Amazon Distribution Center. Dedham has more retail space but less industrial space than contiguous towns.

Those employed at establishments in Dedham are more likely to live elsewhere. While Dedham residents have median incomes in line with their counterparts in Norfolk County and the state, those employees who commute into town, especially in the top industries, do not earn enough money to live in Dedham. According to MIT's Living Wage Calculator, the living wage in Norfolk County for a family of two working adults and one child is \$27.54/hour, while the minimum full-time wage for the same family is \$15.00. Housing costs in Dedham are similar to the County median, but higher than elsewhere in the state. The town is examining options to increase the housing stock for downsizers, young families, and housing in mixed-use locations. Employment and services are in

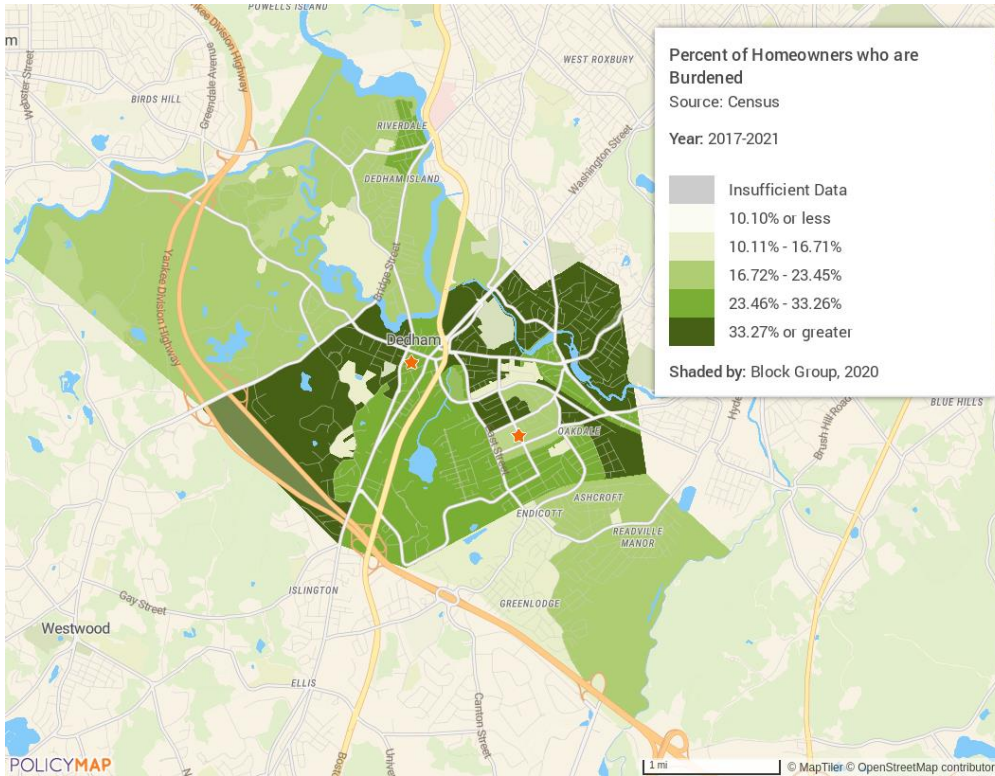


car-dependent areas of town, limiting options further for one-car households and for those who cannot drive.

In addition to encouraging affordable housing, the town has set a draft goal that seeks to better the ability for people who work in Dedham to be able to afford to live in town by “improving living wages and attracting better paying employment opportunities.”

	Dedham	Norfolk County	Massachusetts	United States
Median Household Income	\$108,047	\$112,089	\$94,488	\$74,755
Persons in Poverty	4.6%	6.9%	10.4%	12.6%
Median Home Value	\$511,000	\$529,200	\$424,700	\$244,900
Median Gross Rent	\$1,795	\$1,957	\$1,634	\$1,300
Employment Rate	67.2%	66.3%	64.0%	60.3%

U.S. Census



Estimated percent of all homeowners who are burdened by housing costs, between 2017-2021, by 2020 Census block group. Library locations indicated by stars. Via PolicyMap



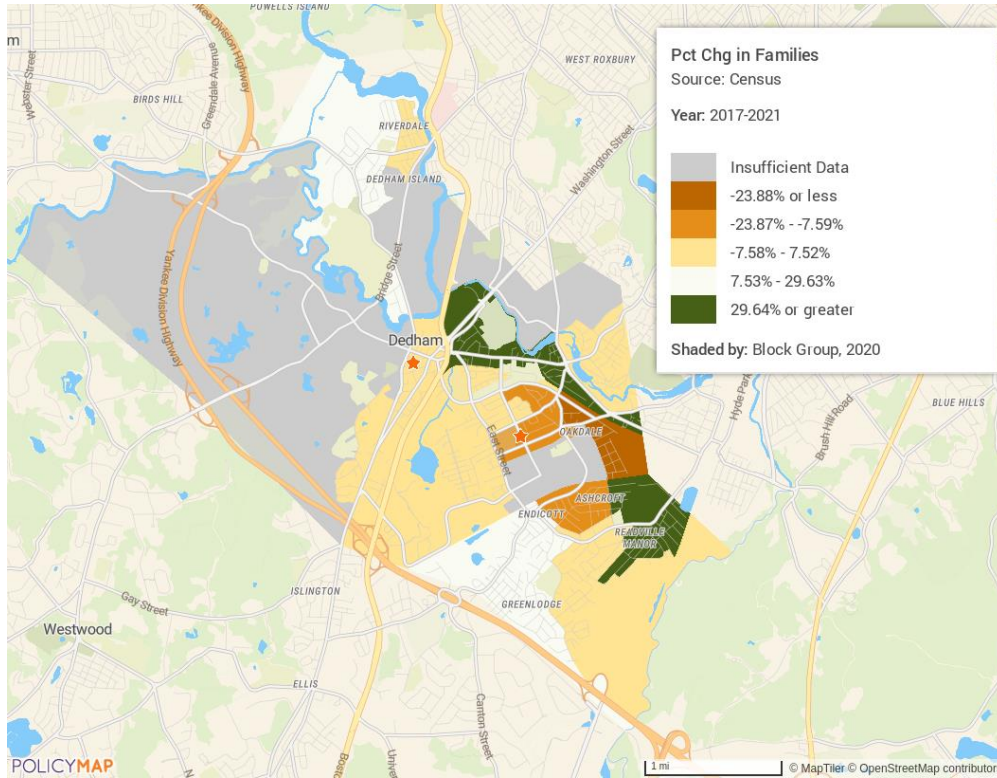
Social

The median age in Dedham is 43.1, higher than in Norfolk County and the state. The town has larger percentages of those between age 45-64 and over 65 than the County, and those age groups are expected to see the greatest increases in the next 30 years. The average family size is consistent with County, state, and national figures.

	Dedham	Norfolk County	Massachusetts	United States
Population	22,997	725,531	6,981,974	333,287,557
Median Age	43.1	40.9	40.3	39.0
Under 5	6.6%	5.1%	4.9%	5.6%
Under 18	18.2%	20.2%	19.2%	21.7%
18-24	8.5%	8.9%	10.0%	9.4%
25 – 44	25.3%	26.2%	26.9%	26.8%
45-64	28.3%	26.6%	26.0%	24.9%
Over 65	19.6%	17.9%	18.1%	17.3%
Average Family Size	3.0	3.1	3.0	3.1

U.S. Census





Estimated percent change in the number of families between the periods of 2012-2016 and 2017-2021 by 2020 Census block group. Library locations indicated by stars. Via PolicyMap

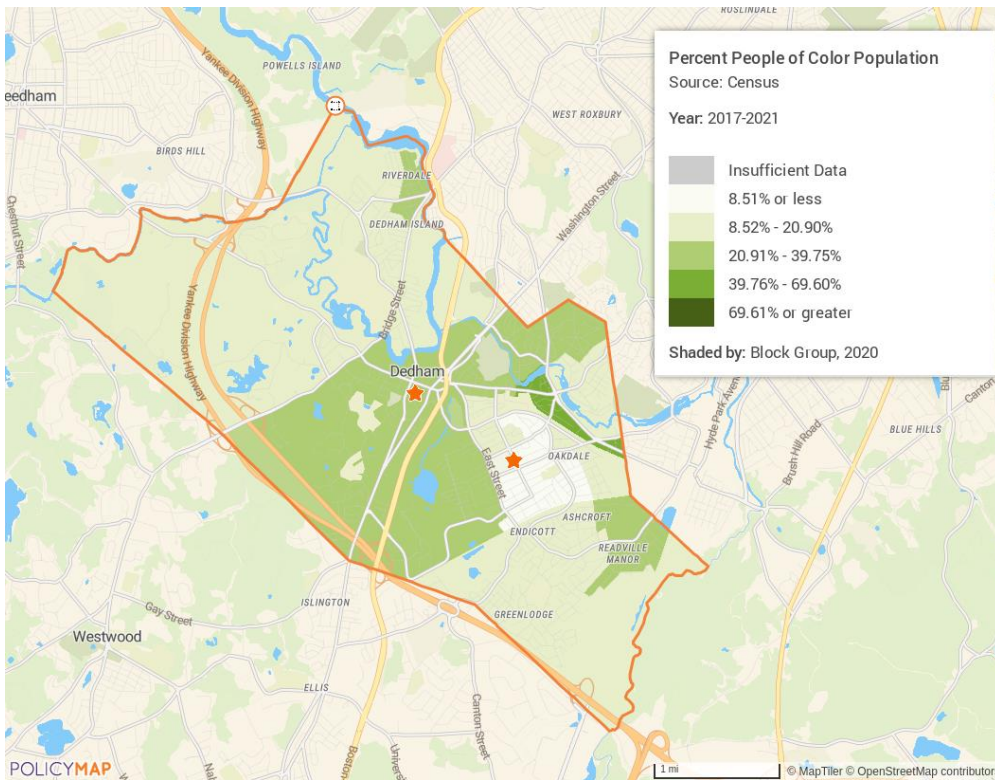
According to the latest Census data, the community is becoming more diverse as the non-white population has grown since 2010. That growth is being led by increases in multi-racial, Black, and Hispanic people.

	Dedham	Norfolk County	Massachusetts	United States
White Alone	83.5%	75.4%	79.4%	75.5%
Black/African American Alone	7.6%	8.9%	9.5%	13.6%
American Indian & Alaska Native Alone	0.0%	0.3%	0.5%	1.3%
Asian Alone	2.7%	13.0%	7.7%	6.3%
Native Hawaiian & Other Pacific Islander Alone	0.1%	0.1%	0.1%	0.3%



Two or More Races	4.5%	2.4%	2.7%	3.0%
Hispanic/Latino	7.9%	5.7%	13.1%	19.1%
Foreign Born Population	13.8%	19.2%	17.3%	13.6%
Language Other than English Spoken at Home	18.3%	22.5%	24.4%	21.7%
Households with Limited English-Speaking Status	2.7%	5.0%	5.9%	4.2%

U.S. Census

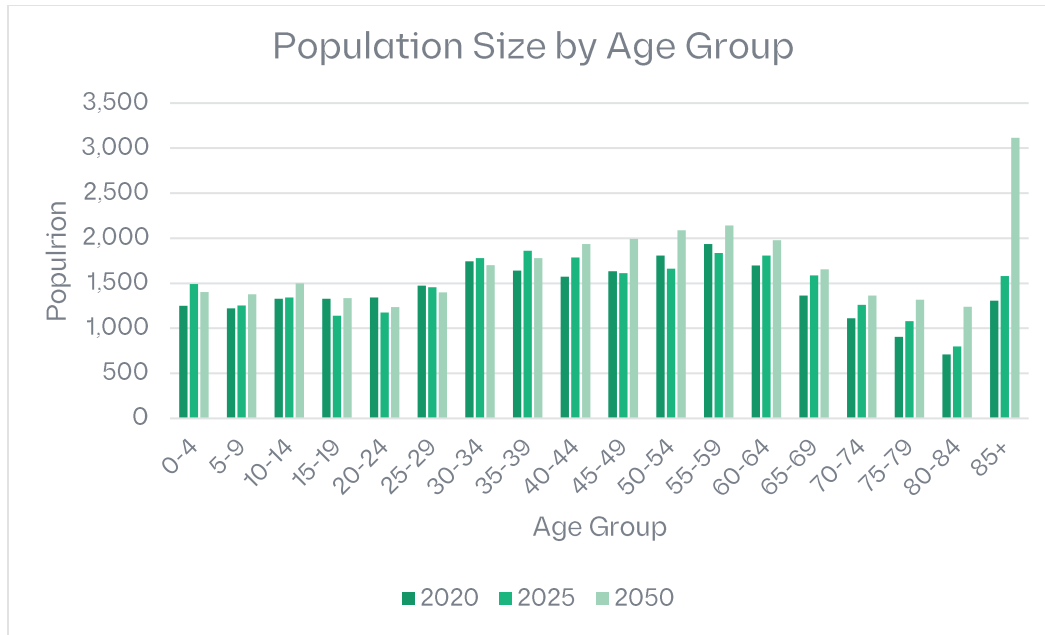


Estimated percent of the population that is people of color, between 2017-2021 by 2020 Census block group. Library locations indicated by stars. Via PolicyMap

From 2020 to 2050 the Massachusetts Population Estimates Program at the University of Massachusetts' Donahue Institute predicts that Dedham's overall population will



increase by 20.5%. The greatest gains will be in those aged 85+ (138%) and 80-84 (74.8%). The largest population decreases are expected among those aged 20-24 (7.8%) and 25-29 (5.2%).



Estimated changes in population among age groups in Dedham. Source: Donahue Institute.

Age	2020	2025	2030	2035	2040	2045	2050	% Change
0-4	1,249	1,492	1,480	1,411	1,351	1,349	1,403	12.3%
5-9	1,223	1,252	1,500	1,480	1,412	1,364	1,377	12.6%
10-14	1,328	1,343	1,378	1,636	1,620	1,550	1,500	13.0%
15-19	1,328	1,140	1,151	1,189	1,406	1,395	1,335	0.5%
20-24	1,341	1,176	1,038	1,035	1,081	1,233	1,237	-7.8%
25-29	1,475	1,455	1,352	1,232	1,218	1,287	1,398	-5.2%
30-34	1,743	1,781	1,766	1,685	1,609	1,608	1,702	-2.4%
35-39	1,640	1,861	1,880	1,854	1,794	1,764	1,781	8.6%
40-44	1,573	1,788	2,012	2,035	2,005	1,947	1,936	23.1%
45-49	1,632	1,613	1,828	2,048	2,069	2,043	1,994	22.2%
50-54	1,807	1,663	1,654	1,868	2,089	2,113	2,087	15.5%
55-59	1,937	1,837	1,694	1,684	1,898	2,120	2,142	10.6%



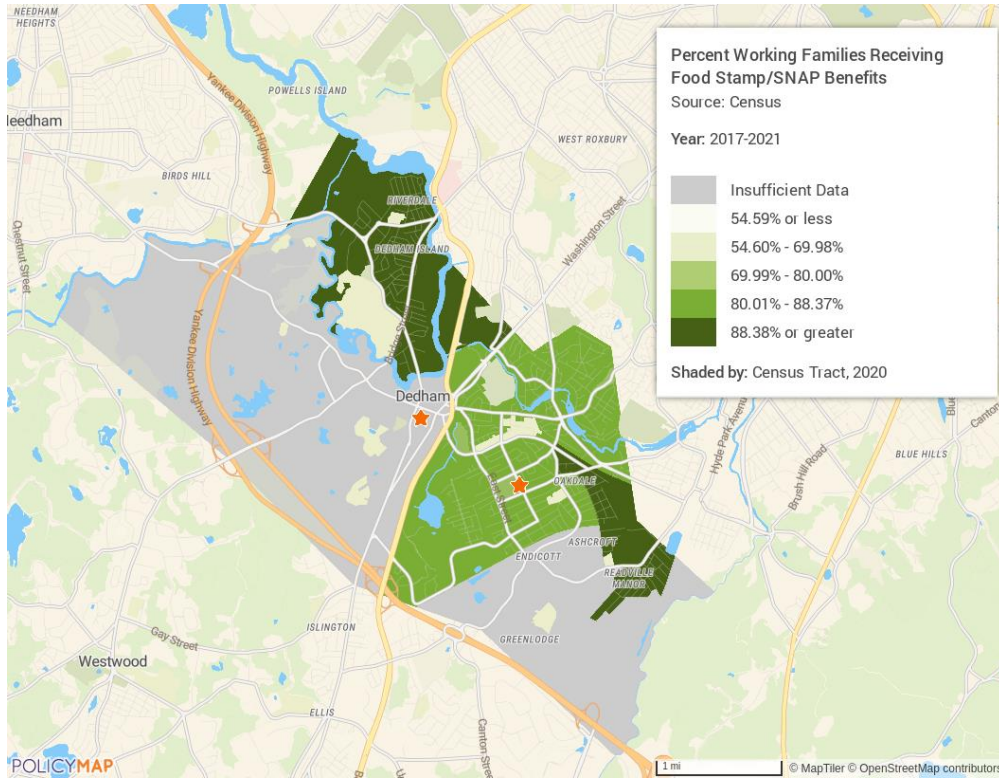
60-64	1,698	1,809	1,713	1,581	1,580	1,773	1,977	16.4%
65-69	1,363	1,589	1,683	1,597	1,478	1,477	1,656	21.5%
70-74	1,110	1,259	1,463	1,548	1,468	1,359	1,365	23.0%
75-79	904	1,080	1,224	1,415	1,491	1,418	1,317	45.7%
80-84	709	798	949	1,074	1,239	1,304	1,239	74.8%
85+	1,306	1,579	1,848	2,178	2,498	2,860	3,115	138.5%
TOTAL	25,366	26,515	27,613	28,550	29,306	29,964	30,561	20.5%

Adults in Dedham have similar health measurements to other Massachusetts residents. They are slightly more likely to have limited access (more than one mile) to food sources. They are more likely to be insured.

	Dedham	Massachusetts	United States
Life Expectancy at Birth	80.3	80.6	78.7
Poor Mental Health	13.1%	14.7%	14.7%
Poor Physical Health	9.2%	9.7%	10.9%
Cancer Incidence per 1000,000 Population	463	449	442
Asthma	10.2%	10.9%	9.7%
Routine Checkups	74.9%	74.3%	73.6%
Uninsured Population	1.8%	2.8%	8.8%
Low Food Access	30.3%	27.8%	22.2%
No Leisure-Time Physical Activity	18.5%	21.5%	23.7%
Households Near Public Transit	66.7%	62.3%	48.2%
Disabled Population	11.0%	11.6%	12.6%

Massachusetts Department of Public Health Community Health Assessment Dashboard





Estimated percent of all families receiving Food Stamp/SNAP benefits that are working families, between 2017-2021 by 2020 Census tract. Library locations indicated by stars. Via PolicyMap

Technological

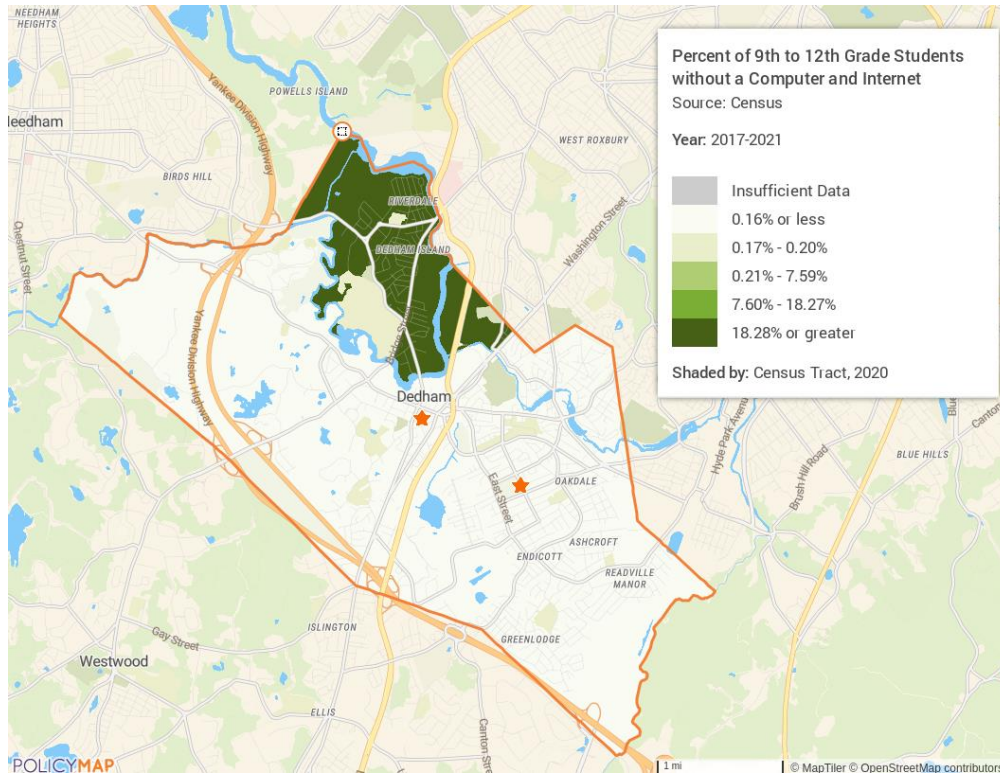
Designing Dedham 2030’s draft plan identifies biotech, medical research, and clean energy as industries to develop in the town.

	Dedham	Norfolk County	Massachusetts	United States
Households with Broadband	90.7%	92.6%	89.6%	87.0%
Households with Computer	93.6%	95.5%	93.5%	93.1%

U.S. Census

83.9% of households own a smartphone, but only 69.4% own a tablet or other portable wireless computer. High school students in Riverdale are more likely than students in other neighborhoods to lack a computer and internet access at home, as shown in the map below.





Estimated percent of students enrolled in 9th through 12th grade without a computer and an internet subscription, between 2017-2021 by 2020 Census tract. Library locations indicated by stars. Via PolicyMap

Legal

The nation has seen an increase in organized attacks on intellectual freedom in public and school libraries. PEN American reported 1,477 book bannings in 37 states during the second half of 2022, a 28% increase from the first six months of that year. The American Library Association (ALA) released a statement in 2021 condemning acts of censorship and intimidation:

Libraries manifest the promises of the First Amendment by making available the widest possible range of viewpoints, opinions, and ideas, so that every person has the opportunity to freely read and consider information and ideas regardless of their content or the viewpoint of the author. This requires the professional expertise of librarians who work in partnership with their communities to curate collections that serve the information needs of all their users.

Resources to defend against attacks on intellectual freedom include:

- ◆ ALA’s Unite Against Book Bans action [toolkit](#)
- ◆ The Freedom to Read Foundation’s litigation [support](#)

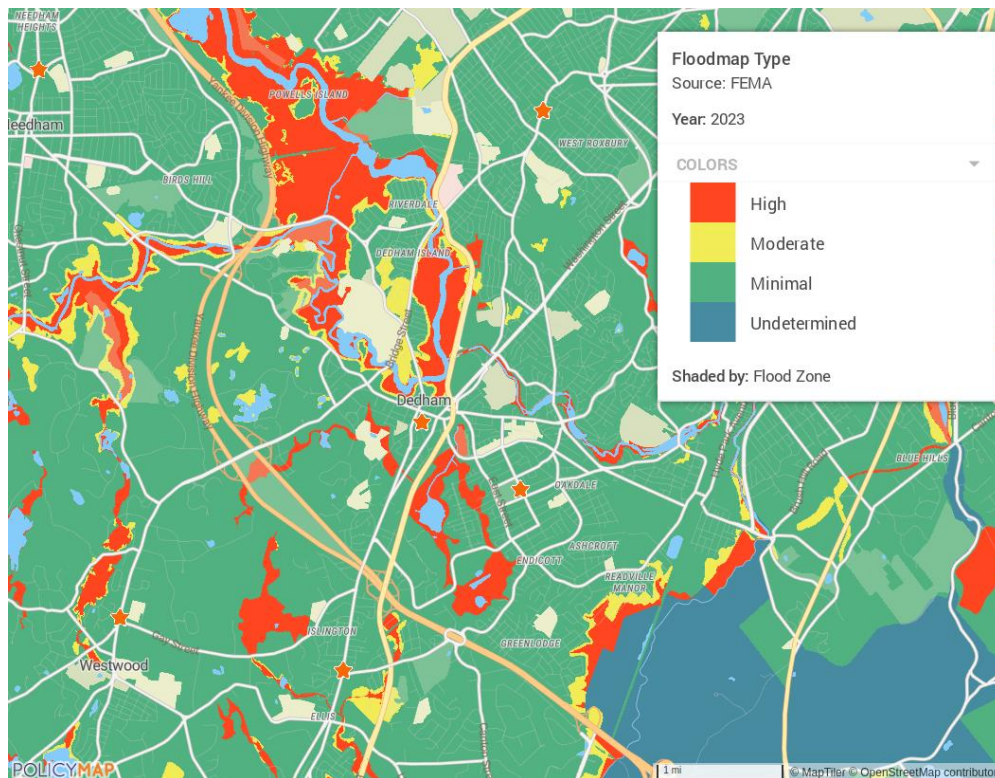


- ◆ The Merritt Fund’s [support](#) for library workers who have lost employment because of their defense of intellectual freedom
- ◆ The California Library Association’s [Intellectual Freedom Committee](#)

Environmental

Residents have access to over 1,000 acres of recreation and conservation land, owned by town, state, and federal governments. Highlights include access to the Charles and Neponset Rivers, the Endicott Estate, and the Noble and Greenough School campus.

Sustainable Dedham, the town’s 2020 climate action and resiliency plan, prioritizes reducing greenhouse gas emissions and achieving zero waste by 2050 as well as expanding the tree canopy by 65% and improving public transit and walkability. The town’s design guidelines are being updated to account for extreme storms and flooding triggered by climate change.



FEMA Floodmap type as of 2023. Library locations indicated by stars. Via PolicyMap



Education

Nearly all adult residents have graduated from high school, and more than half have a bachelor's degree.

	Dedham	Norfolk County	Massachusetts	United States
Bachelor's Degree	55.3%	55.5%	45.2%	33.7%
High School or Higher	94.7%	94.2%	91.2%	88.9%

U.S. Census

The town of Dedham is home to the country's first tax-supported public school. Dedham Public Schools serve 2,577 children from pre-kindergarten through 12th grade at the Early Childhood Education Center, four elementary schools, one middle school, and one high school. The district spends \$22,791 per student, compared to the \$18,521 state average. Dedham High School has a 94% graduation rate, with 70.1% of students going on to post-secondary education.

The district provides iPads to each middle and high school student. LEAP after-school enrichment is offered at each elementary school, and summer programs are open to students in kindergarten through middle school. On-site before and after-school care is available at two of the elementary schools with plans to expand to all four elementary locations.

The school system is in the midst of a multi-year process of updating facilities. The new Early Childhood Center opened in 2019. The next steps involve renovation and reconstruction recommendations for Greenlodge, Oakdale and Riverdale Elementary Schools, and Dedham High School.

Comparing results of Massachusetts Comprehensive Assessment System (MCAS) test scores reveals differences among "meeting expectations" rates of each public school.

	English Language Arts	Mathematics	Science & Tech/Eng	Chronic Absenteeism Rate	Student Teacher Ratio
Avery Elementary	32%	25%	29%	26%	11.5:1
Greenlodge Elementary	45%	51%	29%	10%	11.4:1
Oakdale Elementary	49%	46%	41%	10%	11.9:1



Riverdale Elementary	42%	42%	44%	16%	9.7:1
Dedham Middle	37%	39%	30%	23%	10.0:1
Dedham High	46%	55%	43%	46%	11.5:1

Massachusetts Department of Education 2022

Blue Hills Regional Technical School offers academic, career, and technical training to Dedham residents from ninth through twelfth grades through 16 vocational paths. In addition to its Canton campus, it also has a Dedham location that offers high school equivalency and ESOL classes.

Residents of Dedham are also eligible to attend Norfolk County Agricultural High School in Walpole. Ninth through twelfth grade students follow a combined academic and vocational curriculum and can major one of three agriscience and agribusiness tracks: animal and marine science, plant and environmental science, and diesel and mechanical technology.

Students also attend secular and religious private schools in the area, including in-town options Dedham Country Day School, Noble and Greenough School, the Rashi School, and Ursuline Academy.



Library Benchmarking Snapshot

Benchmarking is a comparison of performance measures among similar entities, relative to recognized standards.

Library performance measures are typically drawn from statistics regarding circulation, visits, and revenues. Comparing its performance to that of similar institutions will enable Dedham Public Library to highlight areas of excellence, as well as underperformance that may require further study or attention.

Data reflects past performance. Statistics collected by the Institute of Museum and Library Services (IMLS) for FY 2021—the most current information publicly available at the time this report was prepared—are the basis of the comparisons.

Benchmarking begins with identifying peer institutions similar to the Library in size, population, finances, and geographic area served. In identifying the peer set for DPL, Ivy Group used a combination of the following criteria to select four peers:

- ◆ Two locations, no bookmobile
- ◆ Population size within +/- 10% of DPL's
- ◆ Total operating expenditures within +/- 10% of DPL's

	Total Locations	Service Area Population	Total Expenditures	Legal Basis
Dedham Public Library (MA)	2	25,219	\$1,607,350	CL
Windsor Public Library (CT)	2	24,373	\$1,695,086	CL
Three Rivers Public Library District (IL)	2	26,600	\$1,472,546	LD
Crawfordsville District Public Library (IN)	2	24,176	\$1,700,028	LD
Barberton Public Library (OH)	2	24,768	\$1,509,594	CL
Composite Library	2	35,898	\$1,683,274	-

A “Composite Library” was created to represent the average of all libraries in the United States serving a population between 25,000 and 49,999 with two locations that report data to IMLS’s Public Libraries Survey.



The peer set performs similarly to the composite library as well as the national average, and generally better than the state average.

Dedham Public Library leads the peer set in staff expenditures but ranks last in staff benefits and total number of staff. In addition to ranking last in size of the physical collection and in print expenditures, it ranks last in circulation of physical materials. While DPL ranks low on uses of public computers, it ranks second in number of terminals. This may be a reflection of pandemic-related closings or higher instances of DPL users bringing their own devices into the building, but it does suggest that less floor space needs to be devoted to public terminals.

All the outcome measures were affected by the COVID pandemic, and the effects may have been uneven, even between neighboring library systems. DPL's 5th place ranking in physical circulation and wireless sessions may reflect pandemic-related limits to service rather than a consistent difference among peers.

Similarly, DPL reported many fewer hours open and number of visits. The chart below offers the mean and median of the peer set, as well as the state average and Composite Library for comparison.

	Mean	Median	State	Composite
Hours Open	3,936	4,824	783	3,630
Hours Open per Staff*	204.2	220	74.8	200.9
Visits	64,284	58,712	16,232	51,248
Visits per Capita*	3	2	0.9	1.4
Visits per Hour Open*	17	16	20.7	14.1

* Indicates a calculated field



	Dedham Public Library	Windsor Public Library	Three Rivers Public Library	Crawfordsville District Public Library	Barberton Public Library	DPL Rank Within Peer Set	Composite Library
Total Operating Expenditures per Capita*	\$63.74	\$69.55	\$55.36	\$70.32	\$70.32	3	\$46.89
Registered Users per Capita*	0.4	0.5	0.3	0.2	0.8	3	0.5
Reference Transactions	16,140	41,178	18,907	3,605	31,044	4	10,323
Population per FTE Staff *	1,764	1,310	1,509	1,101	1,192	1	1,986
Print Books	44,851	110,164	63,162	96,074	69,979	5	84,805
Total Physical Materials*	50,949	132,803	79,230	105,291	92,158	5	100,064
Physical Materials Circulation	75,117	177,701	106,193	82,683	200,217	5	120,765
Circulation per Physical Material*	1.5	1.3	1.3	0.8	2.2	2	1.2
Total Programs	377	348	155	136	501	2	266
Total Programs per 1,000 Capita	14.9	14.3	5.8	5.6	20.2	2	7.4
Total Attendance	6,153	3,482	1,858	1,765	8,625	2	5,459
Total Attendance per Program*	16.3	10.0	12.0	13.0	17.2	2	20.6

* Indicates a calculated field

Community Conversations

Focus Groups

Consultants conducted four in-person focus groups at the Library throughout Dedham on November 6 and 7. The composition of each session was designed in close consultation with the Library and was intended to represent multiple voices in town.

The one-hour sessions were grouped into the following categories:

- ◆ Seniors (Council on Aging): 4 participants
- ◆ Leaders Luncheon (Town Hall): 8 participants
- ◆ Teens (Main Library): 8 participants
- ◆ Young Professionals (Oscar's Restaurant): 3 participants

Themes

Residents are leaving Dedham to access comprehensive library services.

A surprising number of focus group participants visit libraries in neighboring communities, especially Westwood, Needham, Norwood, Stoughton, Newton, Wellesley, and Boston Public Libraries. When asked what they could find at those libraries that were unavailable or limited at Dedham Public Library, they mentioned ample and safe parking, small private rooms for tutoring and studying, children's rooms that provide appropriate seating for a range of ages as well as opportunities to learn through play, and separate meeting rooms with A/V technology. Participants perceived that the physical collections at these libraries were newer, more ample, and easier to locate.

"It's a small-town library from 1960."

Task-specific zones can increase the utility and flexibility of DPL facilities.

All participants said they appreciated the historic nature of the Main Library building and the neighborhood integration of the Endicott Branch. However, they also reported that Dedham is often divided along neighborhood and school lines, diminishing the opportunities to meet and converse with different types of people. Participants named DPL as one of the few locations where residents from all walks of life can gather without spending money. To foster this type of community building, participants requested more comfortable seating in areas that were not in shared walkways or used for programs.

One way that participants suggested that the Library's buildings could better meet residents' multiple needs was to create task-specific zones that would accommodate



competing uses. For instance, young professionals reported reluctance to work in the Main Library's reading area because it is frequently used for evening meetings and programs. Teens requested a defined teen room where they could work collaboratively without disturbing those using adjacent open quiet areas. Both parents and grandparents in the focus groups noted that the children's rooms at both branches are too small to fully accommodate programming, independent play, stroller parking, and seating appropriate for both children and adults.

"The Library is stuck in 2016. It hasn't had major current things happening to it."

Participants also had recommendations for the Library's outdoor amenities. They identified the need for shaded outdoor areas that could host events. They expressed confusion about which parts of the Endicott Branch's grounds belong to the DPL and which were controlled by the Endicott Estate. Along with safe parking, they requested that all Library facilities remain part of a walkable network.

"It's time for a new Library. It has outgrown its space."

The work-from-home revolution has changed residents' expectations of library spaces.

Focus group attendees noticed that DPL's facilities lack private spaces to work or study. While staff has tried to accommodate the growing demand for "work-away-from-home" space, these set-ups were described as a "fishbowl" and "claustrophobic." In a reimagined library, participants preferred rooms with doors, video conferencing technology, and the ability to accommodate both collaborative and solo use. Participants wanted to be able to reserve these spaces in advance and have access to tables and carrels throughout the facilities for more casual working and reading.

"I can't really focus when I study at home."

Users perceive DPL's collection as "less than" others in the Minuteman Network.

Adult participants observed that DPL's physical collection is smaller than that of other libraires in the Minuteman Network. They also noted that DPL seems to have fewer bestsellers and magazines than it offered in the past. Usually, many of the users in the focus groups were unaware of the location of entire sections of the collection at the Main Library, especially in the non-fiction stacks. Many have turned to the digital collection, where they perceive the wait times as shorter and the offerings more robust. Teens reported long hold times for YA titles, causing them to purchase books that are part of a popular series.



All age groups wanted more opportunities to be surprised and delighted by the collection, through rotating floor displays, more shelf space for new arrivals, and weeding of out-of-date material in the stacks.

“You can feel claustrophobic at the Dedham Library.”

Compared to other libraries that participants use, DPL’s makerspace and Library of Things have a lower visibility. Participants described their eagerness to try out new technology but were unclear where to start. Teens reported that their schools offer up-to-date tech, but that the Library is a better place to experiment.

The Library can support civic participation and coordination.

The leaders who attended the luncheon described Dedham as a tight-knit town but one that is divided along neighborhood lines. They saw the Library as a neutral location that can bring residents together and serve as a conduit of information about social services and civic events. While they acknowledged that the Library’s buildings are currently serving as a safe space for teens to gather after school and as heating and cooling centers for the town, they stated the facilities are not currently configured to support long-term emergency response plans.

Young professionals in particular expressed frustration in accessing information about town governance and finding ways to participate in civic life. They suggested that the Library could host information sessions about running for office, hold office hours for elected officials, and serve as a clearinghouse for local and regional information.

Another way participants suggested that the Library could support community connections was to identify specific volunteer opportunities at DPL. Seniors in particular wanted to be able to tutor in Dedham, instead of traveling to libraries in other towns to use small study rooms. Teens were eager to join an advisory board to guide the Library’s responsive young adult programming.

“I just feel more connected to the community when I go to events like this.”

The Library can improve use by raising its profile.

A frequent library user both appreciated all that DPL has to offer, but noted that they “have never been in a conversation in a coffee shop about the Library.” To bring DPL to the forefront of more residents’ minds, participants recommended targeted emails about Library offerings, continuing the monthly newsletters in digital and print forms, and promoting the events calendar on the website. Outside media channels included a column in the Dedham Times, posts on Instagram and Facebook, and cross-posting on the town’s email announcements.



“The Library has everything you need if you know about it.”

Community Meeting

The Library hosted a community meeting open to all at Dedham’s Town Hall on the evening of November 6. Consultants guided the 14 attendees through two activity stations and a group discussion.

Themes

Residents are getting their needs met at other libraires.

Participants looking for private spaces for tutoring, studying, and ad hoc uses travel to nearby libraries in Westwood, Norward, and Canton, among others. Because these locations have safer, more reliable parking, attendees were more likely to visit these other libraries after dark. Participants reported that it was easier to find what they were looking for at other facilities and that these locations had more best-sellers available in print.

Collections are not visible.

Even the frequent library users in the discussion were not aware of the locations of the stacks on each floor of the Main Library. Compounding the confusing, limited floor space for materials was the perception that DPL provides fewer magazines and high-demand items than in the past. Current efforts to promote the collection in-house, such as displays, are not enough to help the discussion participants locate books.

“I just love to browse on the shelves, where are the shelves anymore?”

Community members seek warm, inviting gathering spaces.

Although participants described the Main Library as special, they desired a warmer, café atmosphere that encourages longer visits and facilitates social and civic meetings. Soft furnishings, task-specific lighting, flexible furniture, reading nooks, and purpose-driven zones would allow multiple audiences to use the building in multiple ways across the course of a day while maintaining that “library feel.”

“It’s important to have a place to be, to exist.”

The outside is as important as the inside.

When asked to reimagine library space in Dedham, participants put a premium on a centrally located, walkable facility. Ample, safe, well-lit parking is especially important



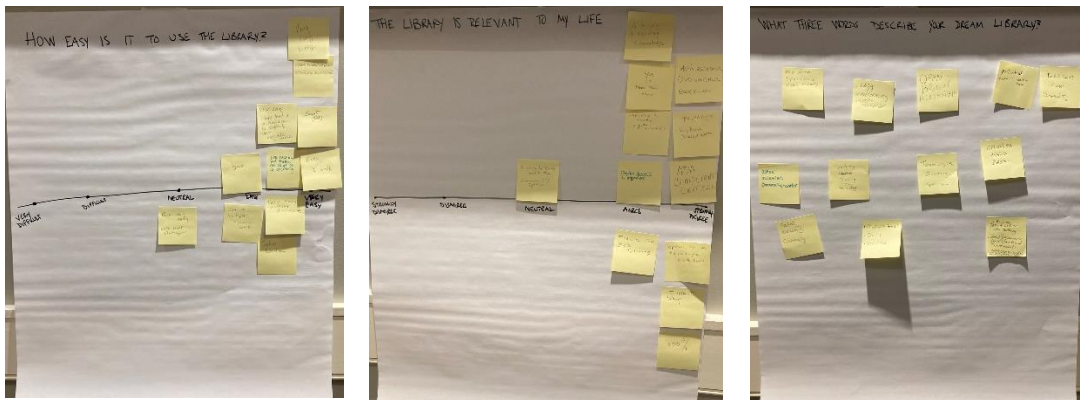
during winter months. Successful outdoor programming during the pandemic illustrated the importance of shaded, multi-functional open-air areas that the Library can reliably use for programs and that community members can enjoy.

Even super-users want to learn more about DPL.

Many participants frequently use the Library. Despite their familiarity and appreciation for the Library's offerings, they learned about collections, services, and programs through the course of discussion. In addition to a lack of space to display materials, the multiple entries, levels, and lack of wall space at Main constrain informational displays to the main hallway, which frequently fills with strollers during children's programs. Attendees said they preferred to receive information about the Library via emails tailored to their interests.

Poll

Participants were invited to answer questions in a short poll. The majority agreed that the Library is easy to use and relevant to their lives. When asked to describe a new library, attendees repeatedly mentioned community, welcoming, and accessibility.



Staff Forum

Seven staff from both the Main Library and Endicott branch gathered for a staff forum on November 7. Consultants facilitated a strengths, opportunities, aspirations, and results (SOAR) exercise. The themes of each aspect follow below.

Strengths

- Customer service
- Two convenient locations



- Outreach in the form of delivery and school visits
- English language learner services
- Welcoming to asylum seekers

Opportunities

- Growing, diversifying population, including many families with children and teens
- Partnerships with early education providers
- Expansion of volunteer program
- More integration with town departments
- Professional development with Minuteman Network, Public Library Association, and American Library Association

Aspirations

- Space that supports learning through play and exploration
- Defined zones for the different needs of infants, toddlers, elementary students, tweens, and teens
- Small study rooms with doors and appropriate technology
- Increasing use of the collection by housing it in visible, accessible locations with display units
- Meet public demand for programs with task-specific, private spaces
- Buildings that are at minimum ADA accessible, including parking and restrooms
- Intuitive wayfinding
- Flexible public spaces that accommodate multiple uses (reading, meetings, art, etc.)
- Staff workspace to accommodate increased programming and preparation
- Align staffing with new responsibilities, such as English language learning, outreach, Makerspace, public relations, etc.

Results

- Increase in number of active card holders
- Increase in program attendance
- Increase in circulation
- Increased partnership with town agencies and organizations
- Increased staff morale
- Improved net promoter score
- English language learners report feeling integrated into the community



Planning Summit

On November 8, consultants met with Library administration, Trustees, and Friends of the Library representatives. In addition to a SOAR exercise, participants were asked to consider 19 issues facing the community and identify which are the most pressing. Finally, consultants provided examples of innovative library service throughout the county, and participants discussed how those models could apply in Dedham.

SOAR

Strengths

- Active, supportive Board of Trustees
- Dedicated, talented, committed staff
- Variety of programs
- Membership in the Minuteman Network
- Outdoor spaces at each library building

Opportunities

- Improved profile and appreciation of staff
- Diversify outside library funding
- Improved town investment in library infrastructure that can meet shared goals such as emergency preparedness and telehealth
- Widen network of local advocates for library service and develop volunteer opportunities
- Ensure public transportation network reaches all library locations
- Evaluate patron-driven programs and services
- Find efficiencies through town department partnerships

Aspirations

- Emphasize warm, café-style atmosphere in library facilities
- Ensure equal access to and use of library offerings across all town precincts
- Provide requested meeting space for civic and cultural groups
- Improve accessibility with better parking, public transport stops, bathrooms, outdoor space, etc.
- Improve adult education services
- Establish a foundation to develop additional sources of funding
- Create dedicated, use-specific spaces for Friends and Foundation groups
- Improve staff onboarding, documentation, and reporting tools



Result

- Data-driven decisions
- Improved public awareness of the breadth of DPL's offerings

“For a lot of people, a library is a good thing and an easy thing to support. They just need to know about the opportunity.”

Areas of Need

Participants ranked social development as the most important area of need. Demographic, pandemic, and structural factors compound the issue. As Dedham's population ages, the risks of isolation grow, leading to poor emotional and physical health among seniors. Participants noted that the effects of the pandemic are evident in students, who need support and safe spaces to form bonds and meet new people. Residents reported that the town is often divided along neighborhood lines and youth sports, siloing the community. The library is one of the few non-commercial gathering spaces in town, competing with the businesses in Dedham Square and Legacy Place, which are largely inaccessible without reliable car transportation.

“People don't know how to talk and listen to each other.”

Housing and diversity were related to the need for more opportunities to get to know one's neighbors. Participants pointed out that zoning has remained stagnant, prioritizing single family homes. Rising house prices are squeezing out the middle class and young families, and the housing stock provides few opportunities for seniors to downsize and remain in town. Denser housing options would provide greater walkability, easier access to limited public transportation, and accommodate more types of households.

Dedham is welcoming a recent wave of international residents, but participants noted barriers that include the lack of translated materials, lack of coordination among service providers, and the lack of meeting and gathering spaces.

Library Innovations

To inspire decision-makers and connect DPL's plans for advances in library service, consultants presented case studies from leading libraries.

Community engagement revealed the desire for programmable outdoor space. Both Cedar Rapids and Fayetteville Public Libraries offer LEED-certified rooftop and lawn



areas that can be used for large-scale events and generate income for the libraries through rentals to outside groups.

Stakeholders were interested in supporting food literacy through on-site programs. Charlie Carts, mobile kitchens that come fully equipped and with curriculum, are used by the Lorain Public Library System at numerous branches and outreach events. On the other end of the spectrum, Fayetteville Public Library's teaching kitchen is an accredited, commercial grade kitchen that is co-programmed by a community college and available to rent by individuals, businesses, and organizations.

To accommodate the demand for quiet study and working spaces, the group considered after-hours access. FPL+ allows cardholders to work in the lobby of the Fayetteville Public Library's building from 6am to 10pm, when the rest of the building is closed. Open+ Express at Ventura County Library's Hill Road branch allows card holders to use the entire branch from 8am to 10am, before the location is open to the general public. Both services rely on pin numbers and security cameras to increase the utilization of facilities without additional staff or staff assignments.

Dedham is a town of defined neighborhoods. Consultants presented the access options of drive-up service, kiosks, and lockers and discussed equity drawbacks.

Community Survey

A total of 578 individuals participated in the survey effort over the course of four weeks (October 23 – November 20). 551 people completed the survey after being screened for residency, employment, or schooling in Dedham.

- 18.0% of respondents have patronized the Library two or fewer times in the past 12 months. For purposes of this research, these respondents are classified as “non-users” of library services.
 - The primary reasons that these respondents give for not using the Library (or not using it more frequently) are “It doesn't occur to me to go there” (41.4%); “I use the Internet to get information” (28.3%); and “I don't have time” (24.2%).
- 82.0% of respondents report having used the Library three or more times in the past 12 months. For purposes of this research, these respondents are classified as “users” of library services.
 - Among respondents, 66.2% indicate they have patronized the Library more than seven times in the past year. 33.6% of respondents are considered “power patrons,” having used the Library 25 or more times in the past year.



- Users report using the Main Library (44.3%) more often than the Endicott branch (35.5%) or using both locations about the same amount (19.7%).
- The top reasons that users cite for patronizing the Library are “to check out books and/or magazines” (81.2%); “to attend a program” (38.1%); “to download digital materials” (31.3%); and “for reasons related to hobbies and entertainment” (31.3%).
- Users are “very satisfied” with staff courtesy and customer service (65.8%); the welcoming atmosphere (62.2%); and the Library overall (53.8%). 37.2% are “dissatisfied” with the Library’s space for large meetings.
- The majority of users indicate it is “very important” to emphasize space for physical materials (64.7%); quiet space to read, work, or study (62.7%); comfortable places to sit (60.8%); space for children to explore and play (60.3%); and parking (55.5%).
- Library users and non-users were asked a set of questions about DPL’s future.
 - When asked what they would like to see in a meeting space, respondents chose space for up to 25 people (41.7%); space for up to 5 people (25.0%); and space with access to video conferencing (24.7%). 41.7% indicated that they do not have a need for meeting space.
 - Respondents identified STEM (51.4%); arts and handcrafts (44.3%); and 3D printing, Cricit and Glowforge machines (40.1%) as Makerspace services that the Library should offer.
 - When asked how the Library should feel, respondents replied warm (69.6%), relaxing (66.3%); and cozy (64.1%).
 - The top “very important” roles for a public library to play include a source for books and other media (88.9%); a source for reliable information (82.2%); and a center for lifelong learning and enrichment (67.1%).
 - Respondents are “very interested” in adding or increasing digital book and media titles (56.2%) and on-site programs and events (44.5%). 37.5% are “not interested” in 24/7 access to Library materials.
 - Email (78.4%); social media (54.8%); and the Library website (54.4%) are the most popular ways for respondents to receive communications from the Library.
 - 44.3% (244) of all respondents shared ways in which the Library can improve. Facilities (36.1%), programs and services (16.0%), policy (12.7%), and support for the Library (12.7%) were mentioned most frequently.



Recommendations

Areas in which the Library Excels

The majority of community survey respondents were very satisfied with customer service, DPL's welcoming atmosphere, and the Library overall. In community conversations, participants praised DPL's hometown feel and availability of staff. They felt that programs were relevant and interesting, even if the building limits capacity and frequency of offerings.

Populations Served by the Library

Community conversations participants indicated that seniors are well served by DPL's collections and programs.

“Library services for the elderly is 100% a priority as it's a large part of their daily activities.”

Residents and staff agreed that children, teens, and English language learners are well served by programs, but the physical constrictions of the Library's current facilities limit the size of the collections and events that serve these populations. Rooms for children and teens designed with their developmental milestones in mind as well as collections and meeting spaces for ELL students will improve levels from adequately served to well served.

Residents with mobility disabilities are particularly poorly served by the Library's current facilities. At the Main Library, the basement and second floor are only accessible by staircases, and there are numerous steps and high thresholds on the main level. Only one bathroom on the main floor is ADA compliant. The carpet in the children's room at the Main Library has been reported to trigger sensory issues in visitors.

“The Main Library, because of its antiquated building is physically a challenge! ADA compliance, parking, and access to meeting rooms are ALL IMPOSSIBLE at this site.”

There are no meeting rooms, either for library programs or for use by community groups. While Town Hall does offer small conference rooms, it cannot meet the demand for



space that is flexible enough to accommodate a messy children's crafting program and a large lecture.

Students and those who work from home are eager to use the limited study spaces within DPL buildings, but those areas do not have doors or sound protection and are very often located next to high-traffic areas such as the children's room or gaming zone.

Young professionals report that they are not well served by the Library because of the lack of current collections, space to work remotely, and opportunities to meet new people at DPL events. Similarly, newcomers and those looking to connect with their neighbors also shared that the Library's current configuration doesn't provide space to casually gather without being interrupted by DPL programs which are currently held in public areas because the Library has no meeting rooms.

Relevant Library Trends

In response to the consultant's trends presentation, DPL stakeholders identified three trends in public library service that apply to Dedham's changing demographics and needs.

After-hours Access

Community engagement underscored the demand for non-commercial shared workspace for both remote workers and students. To meet that need without adding staff, DPL could follow the extended hours model of Fayetteville (AR) Public and Ventura County (CA) Library. Both use security technology tied to their integrated library systems to allow cardholders to enter parts of their buildings outside of normal operating hours.

Programmable Outdoor Spaces

Community members value the outdoor spaces adjacent to both of DPL's buildings. Stakeholders were interested in the natural spaces added to the Cedar Rapids (IA) and Fayetteville Public Libraries during remodels. Both LEED-certified outdoor locations are informally gathering and relaxing locales and are used for programs hosted by the libraries and their partners. These outdoor areas can be rented by private groups, generating revenue to support the libraries' missions.



Food Literacy

From full-scale, commercial grade kitchens that support workforce development and internal catering, to compact, fully stocked mobile Charlie Carts, public libraries are advancing food literacy through experiential programs. Starting with a mobile solution can determine demand while increasing outreach opportunities, while a teaching kitchen can expand the reach of continuing education partners and serve as a long-term revenue source for DPL.

Collection Considerations

DPL's small buildings limit the size of its physical collection, as reflected in the benchmarking study. Dedham ranks last in its peer group for print books and total physical materials. DPL has 53% fewer print books than the peer group average, and 58% fewer total physical materials. When asked about collections that need to be expanded, community members and stakeholders identified YA fiction, world languages, and current best sellers.

"Would like to have more Chinese books."

Many people the consultants spoke remarked that DPL did not have adequate non-fiction holdings. However, they were unaware that the nonfiction collection is located off the main level in spaces that are only accessible through one doorway with a high threshold. These stacks are structural and cannot be adjusted. Reimagining a library space that housed print materials on accessible, visible shelves could increase user satisfaction and improve circulation figures, which are currently 5th in the benchmarking study.

"More current non-fiction books displayed right in front. More access to current non-fiction reads."

Partnership Opportunities

Community conversations and stakeholder workshops identified partnerships that can benefit both DPL and the community. Focus group members specifically mentioned the Council on Aging as a location for shared programs. Participants in the leader's luncheon prioritized Town Hall, veterans' organizations, and the school system as key supporters who can share both promotional outreach and meeting space.



Internal stakeholders noted the importance of a rich working relationship with the school system and resettlement organizations to share information about the needs of newcomers. As demonstrated by the success of the promotional efforts for the survey, involving all 270 elected Town Meeting members in library initiatives is a very effective way to raise DPL's profile.

Technology and Equipment Integration

Both of DPL's locations can improve safety and security by installing cameras that on-site managers can review in real time.

The lack of meeting rooms and dedicated small study spaces do a disservice to the growing remote worker and traditional student populations, as well as limiting the capacity and variety of library programs. These rooms should include A/V capabilities such as soundproofing and video conferencing. Both buildings were built before the advent of personal tech and need upgrades to the number and location of outlets available to users. Laptop or Chromebook kiosks will allow cardholders to borrow devices for use in house, to enable individual use, collaboration efforts, or telehealth appointments.

The existing public computer terminals offer no privacy or workspace to users. The computer banks should be placed in a space that allows for dividers, larger work surfaces, and where consultation conversations will not disturb other patrons.

The current makerspace is located in the basement of the Main Library, which is highly visible to those entering the teen room, but inaccessible to those who cannot navigate stairs. Moving the makerspace to an accessible, highly visible space will increase the use and also offer the opportunity to install appropriate ventilation and safety measures. Adding handcraft options such as embroidery or Cricut machines can diversify the user base.

“The library could use an upgrade on all the stuff it has. It still functions but it's starting to feel dated. The technology here hasn't really advanced.”

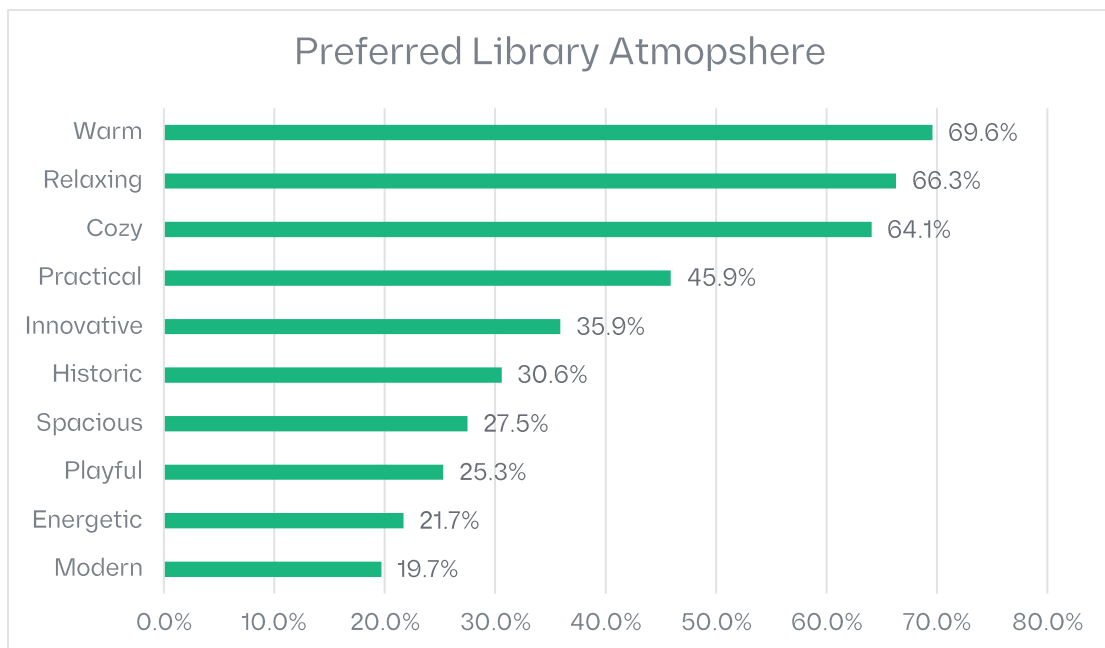


Features to Support User Experience

- ◆ A majority (55%) of community survey respondents identified parking as very important at DPL.
- ◆ When asked about outdoor spaces, participants in community conversations requested space for programming, informal gatherings areas, and play spaces, all of which can raise the visibility of the Library in the community.
- ◆ Stakeholders identified hold lockers and kitchen facilities as important features to add to better serve users.

Special Circumstances

Time and again, community members and stakeholders stressed the importance of the historic feel of both library buildings and the importance of retaining a sympathetic façade on any future renovation or new construction. When asked how they would like the Library to feel, the majority of survey respondents replied warm, relaxing, and cozy.



From students to seniors, walkability and access to public transportation were primary considerations when thinking about potential new library sites.



“The library is a significant historic building in Dedham and importantly it is in a location where many people can walk to the library.”

Staff Spaces Required

As with public areas, staff work zones are not fully accessible, with steps, high thresholds, and tight turning radiuses. Emergency evacuation routes from staff areas are affected by overcrowding.

Collections, program materials, and building supplies are being stored in areas that interfere with the public use of the facilities. Proper, secure storage will not only improve the user experience, it will also improve flow in staff areas and reduce redundancies. As outreach efforts expand, storage will be needed for vehicles and dedicated collections.

DPL relies heavily on delivery from other Minuteman Network members to fulfill holds for its patrons. The existing service desks and staff workstations were not designed for this purpose and need to be reimaged to meet the consortium delivery model.

Currently, managers share office space, meaning that sensitive patron and staff data is not secure. Managers, at minimum, need access to small study rooms to hold private personnel conversations. Non-managers should have individual workstations for planning and preparation.

The Endicott branch has no staff break rooms, bathrooms, or secure storage for personal belongings. These spaces exist at the Main Library but are inadequate to meet the needs of a modern, fully staffed library.

Areas In Which the Library Could Improve

Upgrade the collection’s breadth, depth, and access

- ◆ Provide floor space to add more physical items to meet the demand for best sellers and new releases available at other Minuteman Network locations.

“I generally need to request all books I want as holds from other libraries since we have such a small collection.”



- ◆ Assess the collection to determine if it reflects the diversity of Dedham’s projected demographics, welcomes new asylum populations, and uplifts diverse viewpoints and provide space for new materials.
- ◆ Improve discoverability of the collection with space for dedicated display units.

“I always take time to linger to check out the new releases or the displays.”

- ◆ Place materials on shorter, accessible shelving.
- ◆ Create appropriately sized display units for the Library of Things and adequate storage that doesn’t interfere with movement throughout public spaces.

“The collection of things lacks appeal and organization.”

- ◆ If materials must be housed on an upper floor or in a basement, provide elevator access and clear wayfinding.

“I hope they can have books out in the open more, instead of going up and down the stairs. As I’ve gotten older, I know I can’t go up and down easily.”

Ensure safe, accessible, and friendly operations

- ◆ Provide ADA-compliant access at all main entrances.
- ◆ Create a living room area that combines comfortable seating with DPL promotional displays and space for gathering.

“Maybe small individual areas with a few chairs and small table where you could sit and read.”

- ◆ Install security cameras that Library administration can review.
- ◆ Clean out mechanical areas and move items to dedicated storage.
- ◆ Place service desks near entrances to raise visibility of staff.
- ◆ Upgrade parking areas with lighting, adequate capacity, and walkways.

“The parking is limited to expand and try and be a community space.”



Energize young minds

- ◆ Create warm, welcoming children's rooms with soft, flexible, accessible furnishings, that include seating for children and adults, and tables and chairs that are easy to rearrange.
- ◆ Encourage learning through play and exploration by stocking the children's rooms with manipulatives for multiple motor skill levels (puzzles, Lego tables), and space for movement.

"The kids room is already great, but even more ways to play / activities would be wonderful."

- ◆ Meet current and future program capacity with dedicated children's programming rooms that include a sink, storage, and task-specific furniture.
- ◆ Improve discoverability by locating all juvenile materials in children's rooms large enough to house them.
- ◆ Increase access to physical juvenile materials with new shelving that accommodates multiple formats (board books, oversized picture books).
- ◆ Upgrade physical access to children's rooms with plentiful family bathrooms and dedicated stroller parking.
- ◆ Integrate child-specific tablets and programs in children's rooms with adequate infrastructure.

"It is important to have spaces where children can play without constantly being shushed."

Support the academic, social, and emotional needs of adolescents

- ◆ Create a dedicated teen room with a café atmosphere that encourages gatherings and can house all Young Adult (YA) offerings in one location.

"I think teenagers need a place to do homework, projects, study groups, etc. and important to have programs geared towards teenagers."

- ◆ Support academic achievement with flexible seating for group and independent work.
- ◆ Meet the social and emotional learning needs of teens with responsive after-school programming in meeting rooms that support crafting and technology.



“I am becoming concerned that my kids will soon “Age out” of the library and its services/events. I would love to see an increased focus on pre-teens and teens, ways to keep them engaged as library visitors!”

- ◆ Provide more volunteer opportunities, including a Teen Advisory Board.
- ◆ Expand the physical YA collection to include full series and reduce wait times.
- ◆ Supplement technology supplied by the Dedham Public Schools with offerings in DPL teen spaces.
- ◆ Accommodate teens’ preferred commuting modes with infrastructure for walkable, bikeable, and public transportation.

Help English language learners thrive

- ◆ Support the growth of the popular ELL offerings with space for expanded, relevant collections.
- ◆ Meet the capacity for responsive programs, tutoring, and partner events with dedicated programming space with audio/visual technology.

“I would love to see more languages represented as the number of ELL students in Dedham is increasing.”

Plan for changing use patterns

- ◆ Provide a meeting room for large DPL and community events so that they do not interfere with the daily operations of the Library.
- ◆ Support students and remote workers with quiet, private small study spaces with doors, videoconferencing technology, and online reservations.
- ◆ Enable telehealth, consultations, and other sensitive interactions through sound-proof booths.

“Please improve and expand the spaces for working/studying!”

Preserve local history

- ◆ Provide climate controlled, restricted access storage to preserve historical collections
- ◆ Expand into family history options (scanning, recording, conversion, etc.)



Lay the foundation for organizational excellence

- ◆ Improve recruitment and retention of board members through onboarding and periodic continuing education.
- ◆ Provide transparency through ongoing reports from Library administration at board meetings.
- ◆ Prepare for fundraising initiatives by providing advocacy training for board members and other library advocates.
- ◆ Learn about best practices in library architecture by touring the neighboring libraries most used by Dedham residents.
- ◆ Understand building project opportunities and challenges through board meeting presentations from leaders of area libraries that have recently undergone upgrades.
- ◆ Conduct a compensation study to confirm that DPL offers competitive salaries and benefits to recruit and retain outstanding employees.
- ◆ Define DPL as “one library with two locations” through public branding and staff working groups and committees.

“It would be nice to be able to stay in Dedham and use our town’s library!”



Appendix: Survey Data



Background

To gather feedback from a wide variety of people, The Ivy Group surveyed individuals who live, work, or attend school in Dedham in the fall of 2023. The goal of the survey is to define how the Dedham Public Library and its facilities can best support the town's future needs. The findings will inform DPL's Massachusetts Public Library Construction Program's grant application.

Research Objectives

Specific objectives of the survey are to:

- Identify barriers preventing use of public library services
- Assess user satisfaction with Library facilities and offerings
- Quantify interest in potential new Library offerings and spaces
- Identify the role(s) the community looks to the Library to fulfill
- Determine how the community prefers to receive communication from the Library
- Learn what the Library might do or offer to better meet people's needs

Research Methodology

Together with Library administration, the consulting team developed the questionnaire for DPL's community survey. Upon the Library's approval, the team built the questionnaire within the Sogolytics survey platform and made it available via a link and QR code. The Library promoted the survey on social and traditional media, within the Library, to elected town officials, and through partnerships. A paper version of the survey was made available, and those answers were entered into the online portal by Library staff.

A total of 578 individuals participated in the survey effort over the course of four weeks (October 23 – November 20). 551 people completed the survey after being screened for residency, employment, or schooling in Dedham. The Ivy Group tabulated the data and analyzed the findings.

Research Highlights

- 18.0% of respondents have patronized the Library two or fewer times in the past 12 months. For purposes of this research, these respondents are classified as “non-users” of library services.
 - The primary reasons that these respondents give for not using the Library (or not using it more frequently) are “It doesn’t occur to me to go there” (41.4%); “I use the Internet to get information” (28.3%); and “I don’t have time” (24.2%).
- 82.0% of respondents report having used the Library three or more times in the past 12 months. For purposes of this research, these respondents are classified as “users” of library services.
 - Among respondents, 66.2% indicate they have patronized the Library more than seven times in the past year. 33.6% of respondents are considered “power patrons,” having used the Library 25 or more times in the past year.
 - Users report using the Main Library (44.3%) more often than the Endicott branch (35.5%) or using both locations about the same amount (19.7%).
 - The top reasons that users cite for patronizing the Library are “to check out books and/or magazines” (81.2%); “to attend a program” (38.1%); “to download digital materials” (31.3%); and “for reasons related to hobbies and entertainment” (31.3%).
 - Users are “very satisfied” with staff courtesy and customer service (65.8%); the welcoming atmosphere (62.2%); and the Library overall (53.8%). 37.2% are “dissatisfied” with the Library’s space for large meetings.
 - The majority of users indicate it is “very important” to emphasize space for physical materials (64.7%); quiet space to read, work, or study (62.7%); comfortable places to sit (60.8%); space for children to explore and play (60.3%); and parking (55.5%).
- Library users and non-users were asked a set of questions about DPL’s future.
 - When asked what they would like to see in a meeting space, respondents chose space for up to 25 people (41.7%); space for up to 5 people (25.0%); and space with access to video conferencing

(24.7%). 41.7% indicated that they do not have a need for meeting space.

- Respondents identified STEM (51.4%); arts and handcrafts (44.3%); and 3D printing, Cricut and Glowforge machines (40.1%) as Makerspace services that the Library should offer.
- When asked how the Library should feel, respondents replied warm (69.6%), relaxing (66.3%); and cozy (64.1%).
- The top “very important” roles for a public library to play include a source for books and other media (88.9%); a source for reliable information (82.2%); and a center for lifelong learning and enrichment (67.1%).
- Respondents are “very interested” in adding or increasing digital book and media titles (56.2%) and on-site programs and events (44.5%). 37.5% are “not interested” in 24/7 access to Library materials.
- Email (78.4%); social media (54.8%); and the Library website (54.4%) are the most popular ways for respondents to receive communications from the Library.
- 44.3% (244) of all respondents shared ways in which the Library can improve. Facilities (36.1%), programs and services (16.0%), policy (12.7%), and support for the Library (12.7%) were mentioned most frequently.

Dedham Public Library (DPL) Online Community Survey

Data tables for full respondent base

Q1. Do you live, work, or attend school in Dedham?

Responses	Count	Percentage
Yes	550	95.2%
No	27	4.7%
Don't know	1	0.2%
Total	578	

Q2. Do you have a current Minuteman library card?

Responses	Count	Percentage
Yes	506	91.8%
No	31	5.6%
Don't know	14	2.5%
Total	551	

Q3. In the last 12 months, about how many times have you visited or used the services of the Dedham Public Library? Please include visits or calls to the Main Library on Church St. or the Endicott Branch on Mt. Vernon St., visits to the Library's website, and use of digital services such as Libby.

Responses	Count	Percentage		
0	47	8.5%	<i>non-users</i>	18.0%
1-2	52	9.5%		
3-6	87	15.8%		
7-12	83	15.1%	<i>users</i>	82.0%
13-24	96	17.5%		
25+	185	33.6%		
Total Responses	550			

Q4. What are the primary reasons you or members of your household do not use the Library or do not use it more frequently? *Please select all that apply.*

Responses	Count	Percentage
It doesn't occur to me to go there.	41	41.4%
I use the Internet to get information.	28	28.3%
I don't have time.	24	24.2%
I have other places to obtain books, DVDs, etc.	18	18.2%
I have trouble parking near the Library.	12	12.1%
I don't read a lot.	11	11.1%
I use another library.	10	10.1%
I didn't feel welcome when I visited.	7	7.1%
I don't have a library card.	6	6.1%
The Library's hours are not convenient for me.	4	4.0%
The Library doesn't have what I need.	2	2.0%
There's nowhere to sit.	2	2.0%
I owe money for fines or damaged materials.	1	1.0%
It's difficult to find what I need.	1	1.0%
The Library is too loud.	1	1.0%
A health condition prevents me from going.	1	1.0%
The Library is too far away.	1	1.0%
I don't have a way to get to the Library.	1	1.0%
There's a language barrier between me and the Library.	0	0.0%
Other (Please specify)	18	18.2%
Total Unique Responses	99	
Total Responses	189	

Q5. Which branch of the Dedham Public Library do you visit in person most often? *Please select one answer.*

Responses	Count	Percentage
Main Library (43 Church Street)	200	44.3%
Endicott Branch Library (257 Mt. Vernon Street)	160	35.5%
I use both locations about the same	89	19.7%
Don't know	2	0.4%
Total	451	

Q6. What are the primary reasons you or members of your household use the Library?
Please select all that apply.

Responses	Count	Percentage
To check out books and/or magazines	366	81.2%
To attend a program	172	38.1%
To download digital materials from services like Hoopla, Libby, and Kanopy	141	31.3%
For reasons related to hobbies and entertainment	141	31.3%
To read or work in a quiet place	89	19.7%
To meet or socialize	84	18.6%
To check out movies and/or music	48	10.6%
To use the Library's computers	47	10.4%
To check out items from the Library of Things (e.g., games, metal detector, carpet cleaner, etc.)	46	10.2%
For school or coursework-related reasons	39	8.6%
To get one-on-one help from Library staff	34	7.5%
To use online resources such as Consumer Reports	25	5.5%
To use the Library's Wi-Fi	23	5.1%
To provide or receive tutoring	19	4.2%
For job and career support services	17	3.8%
Other (Please specify)	48	10.6%
Total Unique Responses	451	
Total Responses	1,339	

Q7. Please indicate your level of satisfaction with the following Dedham Public Library attributes:

Responses	Very Satisfied	Satisfied	Dissatisfied	Total
Dedham Public Library overall	240	186	20	446
	53.8%	41.7%	4.5%	
Welcoming atmosphere	278	149	20	447
	62.2%	33.3%	4.5%	
Accessible, ADA-compliant spaces	105	122	39	266
	39.5%	45.9%	14.7%	
Staff courtesy and customer service	291	140	11	442
	65.8%	31.7%	2.5%	
Space to work alone or in small groups	109	140	72	321
	34.0%	43.6%	22.4%	
Space for large meetings	47	76	73	196
	24.0%	38.8%	37.2%	
Space for children to play and explore	150	153	23	326
	46.0%	46.9%	7.1%	
Space for teens	49	87	50	186
	26.3%	46.8%	26.9%	
Space for programs	89	147	66	302
	29.5%	48.7%	21.9%	
Space for technology (computers, 3D printers)	76	133	38	247
	30.8%	53.8%	15.4%	
Marketing and communication from the Library	114	201	50	365
	31.2%	55.1%	13.7%	

Q8. How important is it that the Library emphasizes the following spaces in the future?

Responses	Very Important	Important	Not Important	Total
Space for books, magazines, DVDs, etc.	348	164	26	538
	64.7%	30.5%	4.8%	
Space for children to explore and play	312	174	31	517
	60.3%	33.7%	6.0%	
Dedicated teen space	190	232	57	479
	39.7%	48.4%	11.9%	
Quiet space to read, work, or study	341	186	17	544
	62.7%	34.2%	3.1%	
Collaboration and gathering space	193	245	76	514
	37.5%	47.7%	14.8%	
Makerspace (3D printing, podcast studio, digitization lab, etc.)	119	227	119	465
	25.6%	48.8%	25.6%	
Community event space	195	238	80	513
	38.0%	46.4%	15.6%	
Gallery and exhibit space	96	257	148	501
	19.2%	51.3%	29.5%	
Comfortable places to sit	330	199	14	543
	60.8%	36.6%	2.6%	
Parking	300	189	52	541
	55.5%	34.9%	9.6%	
Outdoor space for programs and gatherings	138	257	114	509
	27.1%	50.5%	22.4%	

Q9. What would you like in a meeting space? *Please select all that apply.*

Responses	Count	Percentage
I don't have a need for meeting space	230	41.7%
Space for up to 25 people	230	41.7%
Space for up to 5 people	138	25.0%
Space with access to video conferencing	136	24.7%
Space with access to projection	125	22.7%
Space with smart screens or white boards	123	22.3%
Space with a large conference table	109	19.8%
Access to meeting space when the Library is closed	94	17.1%
Space for up to 2 people	56	10.2%
Kitchenette	45	8.2%
Space for up to 100 people	44	8.0%
Total Unique Responses	551	
Total Responses	1,330	

Q10. What types of Makerspace services should the Library offer? *Please select all that apply.*

Responses	Count	Percentage
STEM (science, technology, engineering, math) offerings	283	51.4%
Art and handcraft supplies	244	44.3%
3D printing, Cricut, Glowforge	221	40.1%
Digital editing and design (e.g., Adobe Creative Suite)	198	35.9%
Audio and video recording	169	30.7%
Cooking classes	164	29.8%
Media conversion (e.g., VHS to digital)	157	28.5%
Virtual reality	60	10.9%
Don't know	145	26.3%
Other (Please specify)	19	3.4%
Total Unique Responses	551	
Total Responses	1,660	

Q11. How would you like the Library to feel? *Please select all that apply.*

Responses	Count	Percentage
Warm	382	69.6%
Relaxing	364	66.3%
Cozy	352	64.1%
Practical	252	45.9%
Innovative	197	35.9%
Historic	168	30.6%
Spacious	151	27.5%
Playful	139	25.3%
Energetic	119	21.7%
Modern	108	19.7%
Colorful	104	18.9%
Elegant	64	11.7%
Total Unique Responses	549	
Total Responses	2,400	

Q12. There are several roles that a public library can fulfill in its community. How important is it to you that the Dedham Public Library be:

Responses	Very Important	Important	Not Important	Total
A place to access technology, Internet, Wi-Fi, copy/print services	350	159	34	543
	64.5%	29.3%	6.3%	
A source for reliable information	448	87	10	545
	82.2%	16.0%	1.8%	
A source for books and other media, both physical and digital	489	57	4	550
	88.9%	10.4%	0.7%	
A center for lifelong learning and enrichment	363	160	18	541
	67.1%	29.6%	3.3%	
A forum for the exchange and discussion of ideas	183	241	95	519
	35.3%	46.4%	18.3%	
A cultural hub that promotes local art, culture, and history	203	237	83	523
	38.8%	45.3%	15.9%	
A community center	203	223	98	524
	38.7%	42.6%	18.7%	
A place for workforce and career development	151	244	106	501
	30.1%	48.7%	21.2%	

Q13. The Library is considering expanding its program and service offerings. How interested would you or your family be in the Library adding or increasing the following?

Responses	Very Interested	Interested	Not Interested	Total
Digital books and media titles (Libby, Hoopla, Kanopy, etc.)	290	146	80	516
	56.2%	28.3%	15.5%	
Opportunities to use and explore innovative technology	148	254	97	499
	29.7%	50.9%	19.4%	
24/7 access to Library materials (e.g., Amazon-style pick-up lockers)	129	189	191	509
	25.3%	37.1%	37.5%	
On-site programs and events	237	239	56	532
	44.5%	44.9%	10.5%	
Off-site programs and events	90	241	151	482
	18.7%	50.0%	31.3%	

Q14. What is the best way for the Library to communicate with you? Please select all that apply.

Responses	Count	Percentage
Email	432	78.4%
Social media	302	54.8%
Library website	300	54.4%
Town email blasts	167	30.3%
Local media (newspapers, tv, radio)	156	28.3%
In-library displays	118	21.4%
Text message	109	19.8%
Mailings from the Library	81	14.7%
Other (Please specify)	1	0.2%
Total Unique Responses	551	100.0%
Total Responses	1,666	302.4%

Q15. Your age:

Responses	Count	Percentage
Up to 17	4	0.7%
18-24	4	0.7%
25-40	139	25.2%
41-64	245	44.5%
65 and up	147	26.7%
Prefer not to answer	12	2.2%
Total	551	

Q16. Your gender identity:

Responses	Count	Percentage
Woman	433	78.6%
Man	91	16.5%
Transgender	2	0.4%
Non-binary/non-conforming	1	0.2%
Prefer not to answer	24	4.4%
Total	551	

Q17. Which description best fits your household? Please select all that apply.

Responses	Count	Percentage
Family/adults without children in the home	216	39.2%
Family with young children in the home	196	35.6%
Family with teens in the home	94	17.1%
Single person household	56	10.2%
Prefer not to answer	21	3.8%
Total Unique Responses	551	
Total	1,134	