CHELMSFORD PUBLIC LIBRARY

FY26 – FY30

Strategic Plan

Charting the Path Forward

Introduction & Overview

This strategic plan serves as a roadmap for the Chelmsford Public Library's next five years. This Strategic Roadmap is anchored in community values and built to reflect, connect, and empower. It outlines a clear vision for how the Library will evolve, expand its impact, and deepen its role as a welcoming, inclusive, and forward-thinking civic space.

The pages that follow include our guiding vision, mission, and values, as well as a year-by-year plan for priorities, goals, and investments. Together, they represent our shared commitment to building a library that grows with and for the Chelmsford community.

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The Heart of Our Work:
Vision, Mission, and Values That Guide Us

> At Chelmsford Public Library, everything we do is rooted in connection. Connection to learning, to one another, and the shared fabric of our community. Our vision, mission, and values reflect our commitment to being a welcoming, responsive, and inclusive space where everyone belongs.

Vision

A connected community starts here.

Mission

We cultivate connections that empower everyone to learn, explore, contribute, and feel welcome.

Core Values

- **Welcome and Inclusion**: We create an open and inviting environment where everyone feels at home, connected, and empowered to share their voice.
- **Respect**: We treat all individuals with dignity, valuing diverse perspectives, and actively seeking to understand and consider their input.
- **Curiosity and Discovery**: We encourage asking questions, seeking accurate information, exploring ideas freely, and embracing new possibilities.
- **Community**: We prioritize the well-being and connection of our community, ensuring our actions, programs, and people authentically reflect its diversity.

A Five-Year Strategic Path Forward: Building a Library That Reflects, Connects, and Empowers

This five-year strategic plan outlines Chelmsford Public Library's bold commitment to deepening community impact through inclusion, innovation, and co-creation. From foundation to celebration, each year builds intentionally toward a library that reflects the needs, voices, and diversity of Chelmsford. Grounded in our core values, this roadmap guides how we will expand access, strengthen partnerships, and ensure every resident feels seen, valued, and empowered to engage.

Adopted by Chelmsford Board of Library Trustees, September 10, 2025

Year 1 | FY26: Foundation, Visibility, & Trust

Establish a visible, values-based foundation that positions the library as a central civic partner in advancing open access, inclusion, and a sense of belonging across Chelmsford. Year 1 is about both physical and emotional transformation, creating spaces and connections that help every resident feel seen, safe, and welcomed. With a focus on historically underserved groups, this foundational year makes the Library's values tangible through people, spaces, and messages.

Training and Development Needs:

- DEI and inclusive communication training
- Trauma-informed service practices
- Language basics (non-English and ASL)
- Marketing and design principles and tools
- Grant writing

Goals:

- Conduct an accessibility and equity audit across all spaces, programs, collections, and digital resources.
- Diversify communications with multilingual signage, print materials, web content, and translation tools in the top 4 community languages.
- Launch a Belonging & Visibility micro-campaign, including "You Belong at Your Library," featuring inclusive displays and "Meet the Staff" highlights.
- Provide staff training on inclusive communication, trauma-informed service, ASL, and non-English language basics, boundaries, and wellness.
- Host listening sessions with local ELL, faith-based, and cultural organizations.
- Actively participate in the new town-wide events calendar.
- Host a community picnic or gathering at the MacKay branch.
- Attend Vinal Square Strategic Action Plan committee meetings at least bi-monthly.

Measure of Success/Progress: By the end of Year 1, at least 80% of library visitors responding to feedback requests/surveys will report feeling that the library is a welcoming and inclusive space for all.

Year 2 | FY27: Engagement & Connections

Build on Year 1's progress by deepening relationships, expanding outreach, and enabling broader access to services. This is the year of showing up for neighborhoods, schools, housing developments, and seniors with responsive programming and new ways to connect.

Training and Development Needs:

- Pop-Up Library and off-site service/program delivery training
- Measuring and building community engagement
- Community advocacy and public speaking

Goals:

- Create and implement a Plan for Community Engagement, including Pop-Up Library truck and other scheduled visits to community locations.
- Explore additional off-site spaces for providing services.
- Expand volunteer opportunities (e.g., teen tech mentors, library event ambassadors[1], home delivery drivers).
- Actively participate in the Town's Strategic Community Engagement Committee.
- Pilot services unique to the MacKay branch.
- Launch a system for tracking engagement, participation, and outcomes (e.g., NPS, program surveys).
- Host the first "Meaningful Conversations" or "Community Listening" series.

Measure of Success/Progress: Increase participation in library services outside the main building by 30% through programs and pop-up events

[1] *Library event ambassador: a person who attends library events as a greeter, library advocate, support for audience member needs or questions*

Year 3 | FY28: Access & Belonging

Ensure that equity and belonging are fully integrated across library offerings, guided by community collaboration. This year focuses on co-creation—with programs, policies, and events shaped by those we serve.

Training and Development Needs:

- Inclusive facilitation and co-creation skills
- Cultural humility and cultural celebration planning
- Sensory accessibility awareness
- Targeted marketing and communication

Goals:

- Tailor marketing and services to underrepresented and prioritized groups.
- Partner with ELL and cultural organizations to host orientations and deliver a multilingual ambassador program.
- Celebrate multicultural identities through new collections, programming, and partnerships.
- Host regular community forums and develop public channels for ongoing input.
- Improve physical and sensory accessibility throughout library spaces.

Measure of Success/Progress: 10-15% of library programs and new services will be designed in collaboration with diverse community members and organizations.

Year 3.5 | FY28 Mid-Year: Review, Refine, Refresh

Training and Development Needs:

- Data interpretation and outcomes reporting

Goals:

- Evaluate communications through surveys and engagement analytics.
- Refine outcomes and reporting systems.
- Convene a mini-review committee to assess staff capacity, training, and funding needs.

Year 4 | FY29: Innovation & Invention

Position the library as a leader in community empowerment through new technology, creative learning, and civic engagement. We strengthen our role as a convener for partnerships that tackle complex community challenges together.

Training and Development Needs:

- Digital literacy instruction
- Emerging technology awareness
- Civic engagement and municipal government principles and activities

Goals:

- Expand tech borrowing and instruction on emerging tools.
- Join local and regional digital equity initiatives.
- Partner on resource nights for housing, employment, and legal aid.
- Implement civic engagement initiatives (e.g., Citizens Academy, school partnerships).
- Explore and add creative tools, such as maker equipment.

Measure of Success/Progress: Establish access to creative/maker tools, spaces, and opportunities and increase tech tool circulation (e.g., hotspots, tablets) by 40%.

Year 5 | FY30: Evaluation, Sustainability, & Celebration

Reflect, recognize, and recommit. This capstone year honors collective progress while preparing for the future. Strategic planning becomes a shared practice, and success is measured by its impact, visibility, and the pride of the community.

Training and Development Needs:

- Data visualization and impact storytelling
- Strategic foresight and scenario planning

Goals:

- Conduct a complete evaluation of strategic priorities.
- Publish the first Community Impact Report
- Institutionalize dashboards for real-time tracking of usage, equity, and engagement.
- Scale the most effective programs (e.g., Pop-Up Library, digital literacy, ambassador model).
- Host a celebratory community event: *The Library We Built Together*.
- Launch the next round of strategic planning grounded in data and co-creation.

Measure of Success/Progress: Complete a community-wide impact evaluation with at least 300 residents participating and identify three scalable programs to carry forward.

Strategic Enablers & Resource Plan

This section outlines the operational backbone of Chelmsford Public Library's five-year vision. It connects strategy to action by aligning budget planning, partnerships, staffing, and adaptive systems with the Library's core values and priorities. Each initiative is supported by thoughtful resource allocation, capacity-building strategies, and built-in flexibility, ensuring that the work is not only visionary but also viable and sustainable. From community engagement to innovation and equity, this plan empowers the Library to deliver meaningful outcomes through smart investments and strong partnerships.

Investing in What Matters:
Strategic Budget Alignment for Impact

> Each year of this five-year plan is backed by intentional, right-sized investments that align resources with Chelmsford Public Library's priorities. This estimated budget framework ensures the feasibility of key initiatives while remaining flexible, grant-aware, and partnership-driven. These allocations reflect our commitment to making values visible, scaling innovation, and delivering meaningful outcomes for the community.

Year 1 | FY26: Foundation, Visibility, & Trust

Estimated Budget Allocation: $30,000–$35,000

[$5000] Equity/accessibility audits: investigate MLS consulting services, local non-profit organizations, UML interns

[$10,000] Diversify communications: operating budget, gift book, State Aid

[$10,000] Belonging & visibility campaign: operating budget, gift book, in-kind donations

[$5,000] Staff training: operating budget, State Aid, MLS reimbursements for language learning courses, MLS/MBLC free or subsidized trainings

[$1,000] Picnic/gathering at MacKay: programming budgets, donations for MacKay, Cultural Council grant, in-kind donations

Year 2 | FY27: Engagement & Connections

Estimated Budget Allocation: $20,000–$125,000

[$5,000] Plan for Community Engagement: operating budget, organization capacity/development grants, MLS consulting services

[$10,000] Pilot services at MacKay: operating budget, CFOL support, grants

[$5,000] Engagement, participation, and outcomes tracking system: operating budget, intern

[$5,000] Meaningful Conversations series: Cultural Council grant, CFOL programming budget

[$5,000] Staff training: operating budget, State Aid, MLS/MBLC free or subsidized trainings

Year 3 | FY28: Access & Belonging

Estimated Budget Allocation: $125,000–$130,000

[$10,000] Multilingual engagement tools: grants, State Aid

[$100,000] Accessibility tools and facilities upgrades: capital funding, grants. State Aid, fundraising

[$5,000] Tailored marketing and services: operating budget

[$5,000] Celebrations of multicultural identities: Cultural Council and other grants, programming budgets

[$1,000] Community forums: operating budget

[$5,000] Staff training: operating budget, State Aid, MLS/MBLC free or subsidized trainings

Year 3.5 | FY28 Mid-Year: Review, Refine, Refresh

Estimated Budget Allocation: $10,000

[$10,000] Evaluative tools, facilitated workshops: MLS consulting services, State Aid, organization capacity/development grant

Year 4 | FY29: Innovation & Invention

Estimated Budget Allocation: $80,000-$85,000

[$50,000] Maker space and creator equipment, spaces, tools: grants, in-kind donations, fundraising

[$15,000] Technology lending inventory: grants, operating budget, CFOL support, in-kind donations

[$5,000] Staff training: operating budget, State Aid, MLS/MBLC free or subsidized trainings

Year 5 | FY30: Evaluation, Sustainability, & Celebration

Estimated Budget Allocation: $50,000
[$10,000] Community Impact Report: organizational capacity/development grants, SCORE services

[$5,000] Data visualization and reporting tools: operating budget,

[$25,000] Strategic planning consultant, materials: grants, State Aid, MLS resources

[$10,000] Dashboards and tools for real-time tracking of usage, equity, and engagement: don't know where this funding would come from!

[$5,000] Seed next-level scale of most successful initiatives: programming budgets, CFOL support

[$5,000] Host a celebratory community event: Cultural Council grant, in-kind donations, gift book, fundraising

Resource and Funding Alignment Strategy

To successfully execute this 5-year plan, the Library will align its operational capacity with financial resources and external partnerships. This will ensure that each initiative is not only aspirational but also feasible.

Actions:

- Map each year's priorities to anticipated municipal, state, and grant funding cycles
- Establish a multi-year budget projection tied to strategic initiatives
- Identify specific grant opportunities aligned with goals
- Leverage Friends of the Library and Foundation support for pilot programs, technology, and outreach
- Create a staff resource planning calendar to anticipate and phase in new roles or capacity needs

Partnership & Collaboration Map

Meaningful collaboration will be key to delivering on this plan. From cultural groups to town departments and school leaders, the Library will maintain a living partnership map and annual engagement goals.

Partnership Map Includes:

- **Strategic Partners**: Town departments, school leadership, COA, ELL programs, housing authorities
- **Civic & Cultural Partners**: Faith-based orgs, local nonprofits, cultural associations, DEI groups
- **Knowledge & Learning Partners**: Regional library networks, educational institutions, tech/digital equity providers
- Host an annual **Community Partner Convening** to review shared goals, gather feedback, and identify co-creation opportunities

Strategic Risk & Flexibility Plan

To ensure the plan is durable and adaptable, the Library will proactively manage potential disruptions and maintain flexibility in its approach.

Risk Considerations:

- **Staffing & Capacity:** Build in contingency strategies for turnover and hiring gaps
- **Funding Uncertainty:** Prioritize initiatives with scalable options and alternate pathways
- **Technology Shifts:** Stay agile with pilot-based tech adoption and sunset outdated tools
- **Community Needs Change:** Refresh data and stakeholder input at least every 18 months to revalidate priorities

Built-in Flexibility Tactics:

To ensure the long-term viability and responsiveness of this plan, the Chelmsford Public Library will implement structured, ongoing mechanisms for review, reflection, and realignment. These flexibility tactics allow the Library to adapt to shifting community needs, operational realities, and emerging opportunities, without losing momentum or strategic focus.

Key Components:

- **Quarterly Milestone Check-Ins with Library Leadership**
  Used to monitor progress on key deliverables, identify early barriers, and adjust timelines or support where needed.
- **Mid-Year and Annual Strategy Reviews**
  Formalized touchpoints to assess what's working, recalibrate initiatives based on data and feedback, and plan any required shifts in approach.
- **Tiered Implementation (Core vs. Stretch Goals)**
  Each year's priorities will be designed with built-in flexibility: essential "core" initiatives that must be delivered, and "stretch" goals pursued based on resource availability or new opportunities.

- **Real-Time Dashboards**
  Dashboards will track usage, engagement, and equity metrics in real time to support data-informed decisions and course corrections.
- **Community Advisory Group Feedback Loops**
  A representative advisory group will meet biannually to provide insights, highlight blind spots, and help ensure the Library's strategic focus remains grounded in evolving community realities.
- **Internal Insight Channels (Staff Suggestion Box & Idea Forum)**
  Frontline staff will be empowered to surface feedback and propose innovations through an ongoing idea-sharing platform, encouraging ownership and continuous improvement from within.

Stakeholder Activation Guide

A framework for sustaining shared ownership, transparency, and momentum across the five-year strategic plan.

Why Stakeholder Activation Matters

A strategic plan gains power when those closest to it feel invested and empowered to act. By proactively engaging internal and external stakeholders, the Chelmsford Public Library ensures that this plan is not only implemented but lived, refined, and celebrated.

Engagement Timeline Snapshot

Year	Stakeholder Priority Focus	Key Activation Actions
FY26	*Staff & Trustees*	*Strategy huddles, equity training, and launch visibility campaign*
FY27	*Community Members*	*Pop-Up Library, off-site events, community engagement tracking*
FY28	*Partners & Patrons*	*Co-designed programs, ambassador model, listening forums*
FY29	*Innovators & Donors*	*Civic collaborations, makerspace pilots, digital equity campaigns*
FY30	*Everyone*	*Community-wide celebration, scaled programs, and impact report*

1. Internal Stakeholders

Library Staff

Purpose: Foster shared ownership, transparency, and alignment across all levels of the organization.

Activation Tactics:

- **Monthly Strategic Huddles** by department to review progress, raise challenges, and celebrate wins

- **Quarterly All-Staff Town Halls** to highlight strategic themes, guest speakers, and progress updates
- **Departmental Goal Alignment**: Tie individual work plans to strategic objectives
- **Annual Innovation Challenge**: Staff pitch new ideas aligned to yearly themes (e.g., belonging, access, digital literacy)
- **Leadership Development Track** for managers to lead cross-functional initiatives tied to the plan goals

Board of Trustees

Purpose: Ensure oversight, strategic alignment, and ambassadorial leadership.

Activation Tactics:

- **Annual Strategic Scorecard Review** at board meetings to assess success factor progress and adjust course
- **Trustee-Led Listening Circles** to gather feedback from residents, especially in Years 3 and 5
- **Trustee Advocacy Toolkit** to help board members champion the plan with local officials and funders
- **Biannual Learning Sessions** on emerging library trends and challenges related to the plan

2. External Stakeholders

Community Members & Patrons

Purpose: Keep the plan transparent, build civic trust, and invite co-creation and feedback.

Activation Tactics:

- **Quarterly Community Updates** via newsletters, website, and in-library displays
- **Pop-Up Strategy Boards** at library branches and town events that showcase progress and invite feedback

- **Annual "You Belong" Impact Report** highlighting milestones, stories, and community voices
- **Community Listening Forums** aligned to Year 3 and Year 5 evaluations to gather real-time insights
- **Feedback Kiosks** or QR-code posters across branches for ongoing community input

Municipal & Civic Partners

Purpose: Deepen alignment with town-wide goals, improve coordination, and strengthen funding opportunities.

Activation Tactics:

- **Annual Strategic Alignment Meeting** with town departments to coordinate shared efforts (e.g., housing, schools, public health)
- **Cross-Departmental Strategy Liaisons** to serve as ongoing points of contact
- **Co-hosted Events and Workshops** tied to plan goals (e.g., civic engagement, digital inclusion, wellness fairs)

Friends of the Library

Purpose: Support targeted fundraising, advocacy, and volunteerism for priority initiatives.

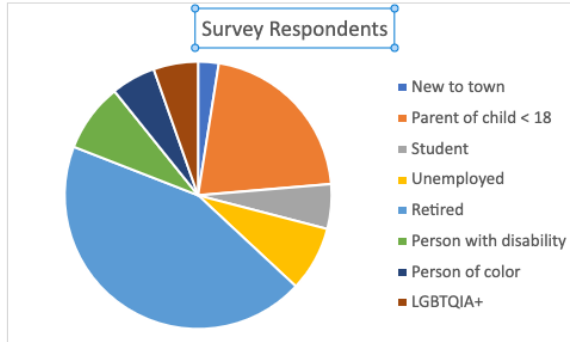
Activation Tactics:

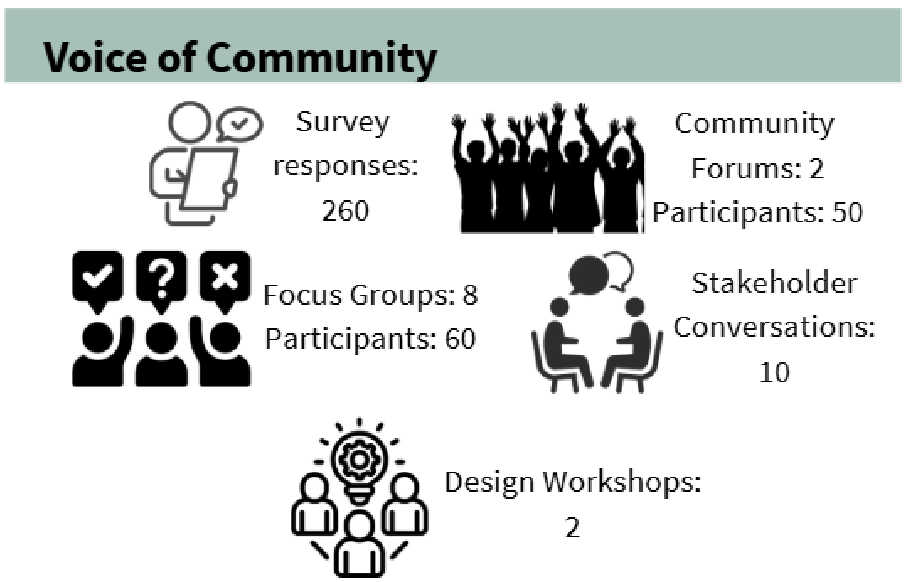
- **Annual Strategic Priorities Pitch Deck** for donors and sponsors
- **Campaign-Specific Fundraising Drives** tied to years/themes (e.g., Pop-Up Library, Makerspace)
- **Recognition Wall or Annual Reception** to honor contributions aligned to strategic outcomes

ADDITIONAL APPENDICES: WHO WE ARE, WHAT WE NEED

User Needs Assessment

- **Methods Used**
  - **Surveys**: Distributed online, at events, and to specific groups
  - **Community Forums**: Open to all
  - **Interviews**: Conducted with community leaders and public stakeholders
  - **Focus Groups**: Discussions with identified groups
  - **Review of Town Strategic Plan development survey and focus group results**: The Town completed a strategic planning process in April, 2025.





- **Key Findings**
  - Respondents/participants prioritize in-person and connective experiences, accessible and welcoming spaces, and lifelong learning materials, programs, and opportunities.
  - Respondents/participants expressed a desire to see values like inclusion, sustainability, and community be reflected in the library.
  - Respondents/participants put a high value on the cost-sharing, “free” aspect of library resources and spaces, maintaining as many open hours as possible, off-

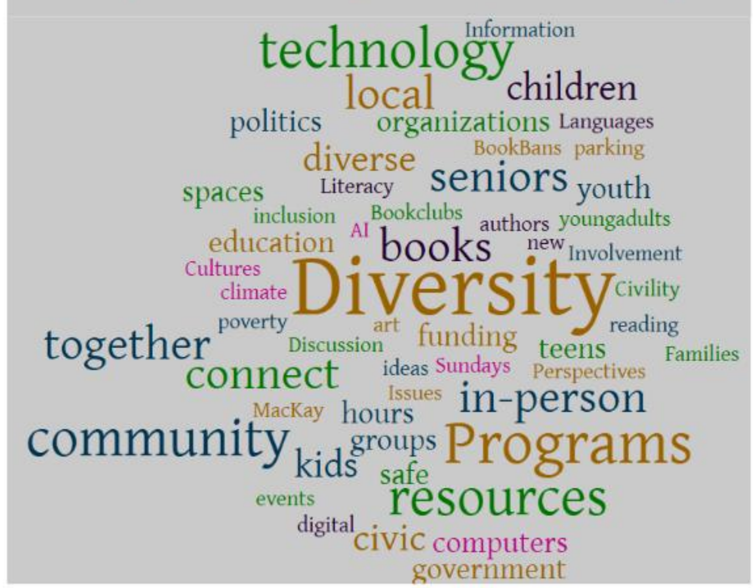
site and mobile library services, and access to diverse perspectives, experiences, and backgrounds.

- Common frustrations include space limitations, a need for more recognition of underrepresented or hard-to-reach communities, lack of centralized information availability, a growing need for digital education, media literacy, and digital equity.
- A majority of public conversations included observations that the library acts as a community center, since the town doesn't have other spaces or locations that fill this need.

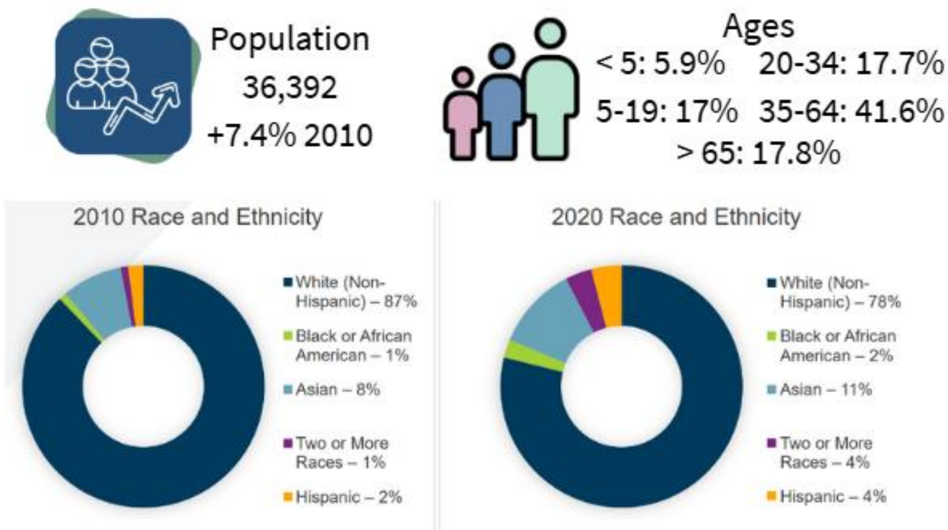
  "The Town's library system was frequently mentioned as a community asset"
  --Town of Chelmsford Strategic Planning Project, Gap Analysis Report, 2025

What do you value most in your library now and in the future?

What new or changing needs do you see in our community that the library should be thinking about over the next three years?

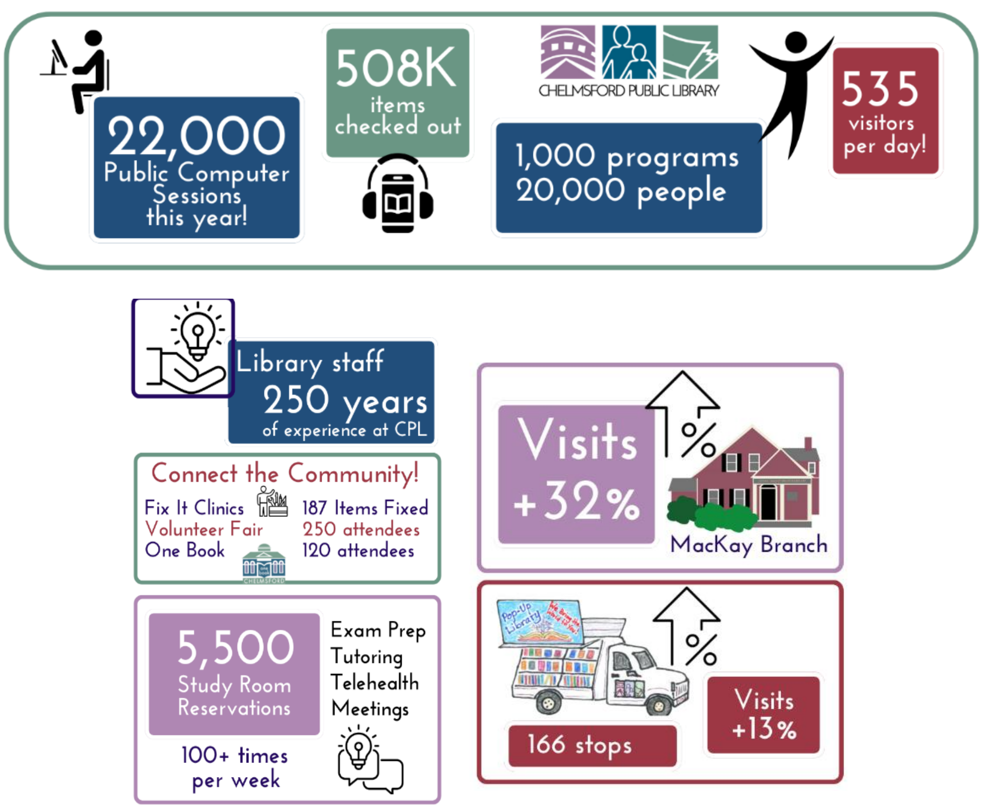


About Chelmsford:



Source: U.S. Census Bureau 2010 and 2020

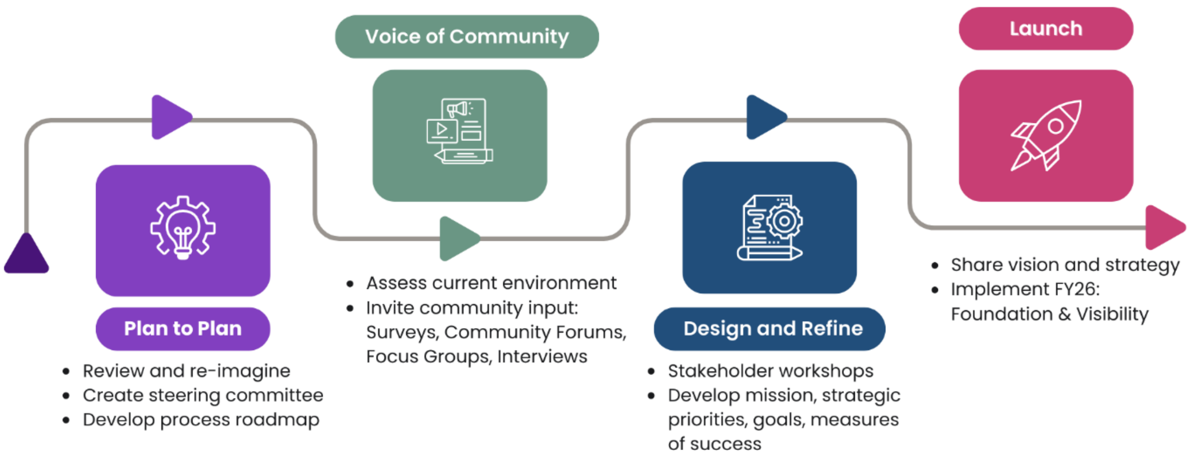
About Chelmsford Public Library: FY25



CHELMSFORD PUBLIC LIBRARY

STRATEGIC PLANNING FY26-FY30

PROCESS & METHOD



Thank You Stakeholders!

- Chelmsford Residents
- Board of Library Trustees
- Library Staff
- Friends of the Library
- Teens of Chelmsford
- ELL Director, Schools
- Police Chief
- Cultural Council
- N Chelmsford Vinal Square
- Town Department Heads
- Faith-based Communities
- Library Volunteers
- Select Board
- Business Association
- Climate Action Team
- Senior Center