



# **Durham Public Library Strategic Plan 2022-2024**



**49 Madbury Rd., Durham, NH 03824**

**Approved by the Library Board of Trustees on 01/27/2022**

## 1--Introduction/Executive Summary

The Durham Public Library is pleased to present its Strategic Plan 2022-2025. This plan is the result of many months of gathering community input, planning, discussion, meeting and work on the part of Strategic Planning Committee, Board of Trustees, and Library Staff. In summary, this plan outlines our prioritized goals for the near future taking into consideration feedback from over five hundred community members—users and non-users, the community, the Library’s mission, and our values as an organization. While it is designed to be flexible and dynamic, its foundational design will give us steady direction in our future endeavors to serve the community.

The four priority areas of focus that this plan covers are:

- **Community Connections:** The Library strives to be at the heart of Durham, supporting and strengthening the community by fostering social cohesion and cultivating opportunities for Durham residents to come together through shared spaces, resources, programs, and events that inform, educate, and entertain.
- **Access for All:** The Library will provide access to information resources to all, providing a welcoming and safe physical and digital environment.
- **Literacy and Lifelong Learning:** The Library reaffirms its commitment to supporting and celebrating reading literacy as well as cultural, digital, information, and art literacy as a mechanism for fostering learning, personal growth and discovery.
- **Focus on the Future:** The Library will continue to expand and enhance its ability to provide a wide range of evolving services that meet the needs of the community.

## 2--The Strategic Planning Process

Strategic planning is a key process to prepare organizations for the future and essential for successful change management. In late 2019, the Library Board of Trustees tasked the Library Director to endeavor to create a flexible roadmap to the Library’s future in the form of a 3-year strategic plan to be crafted in collaboration with the community. The COVID-19 pandemic served as a disruptor

to the goal of creating a plan in 2020 and the task was pushed to 2021.

In collaboration with the Library Board of Trustees a working group to be called the Strategic Plan Steering Committee was formed in January 2021. The committee, which included a Library Friend, three Library Trustees, The Town Planner and the Library Director began meeting virtually in February of 2021 approximately every two weeks. The first task at hand was to review the Library's mission statement. All agreed that the Durham Public Library mission statement needed no improvement but would circle back to the statement at the end of the strategic planning process if new information revealed that it should be updated.

Next, the group was to establish a flexible timeline and basic process for the Strategic Plan. The framework of the plan and process was presented to the Library Board of Trustees at the June 10<sup>th</sup> meeting and was approved.

The next task of the committee was to identify how community feedback would be gathered for the purposes of informing the Strategic Plan. While a paper survey mailed out to the community was originally planned, the idea was tabled due to the sufficient number of responses (339) from the online survey. The committee agreed that both quantitative and qualitative data would be collected in the following ways from the following groups:

- *Personal one-on-one interviews* – The goal of these interviews was to get feedback directly from library users and non-library users about their thoughts and perception of the library and its role in the community.
- *Paper and Digital Surveys* – The goal of the survey was to gather both quantitative information such as patron demographics, and qualitative information about service priorities and community needs.
- *Community Planning/Visioning Meetings* - In two sessions the Community Planning/Visioning Meetings were designed to bring together 20 diverse, strategic-thinking stakeholders, from all walks of life who live in the Oyster River community to share their aspirations for the Durham community, the challenges to these aspirations, and the changes needed to overcome them.
- *Staff/Trustee/Friends Planning/Visioning Meetings* – These meetings were largely identical to the Community Planning/Visioning Meetings but for the targeted approach to solicit feedback from the groups most closely involved with the Library.

In September, around the same time that the Strategic Planning Steering Committee was able to begin meeting in-person again, it was decided that it would be helpful to engage a professional Library Strategic Planning consultant. Ruth Kowal joined the Steering Committee Team in September upon approval of the Library Board (09/09/21). Ms. Kowal helped the group drive the Strategic Plan to its finish with her skillful facilitation of both the community meetings and the overall planning process.

### Key Findings

Beginning in March of 2021 and concluding in the Fall of 2021, the Strategic Planning Committee began engaging with community members through different platforms (see above) to collect data and feedback. Throughout all of the meetings there were themes that continued to surface during our discussions and interviews:

Community	Collaboration	Cooperation
Communication	Culture	Reading and Learning
Equity, Diversity, & Inclusion	Connection	Library Visibility
Promotion of Services	Meeting Space	Access

With regard to cooperation and collaboration, one survey respondent commented that they would like to see:

*“ Full interoperability and membership with Lee and Madbury”.*

Another stated,

*“I use the Madbury Library. They will receive books from Durham for me. I wish the library cards were able to be used at all Oyster River libraries”.*

Others would like to see us promote our services more stating:

*“Maybe put out more info around the towns to show what they offer”.*

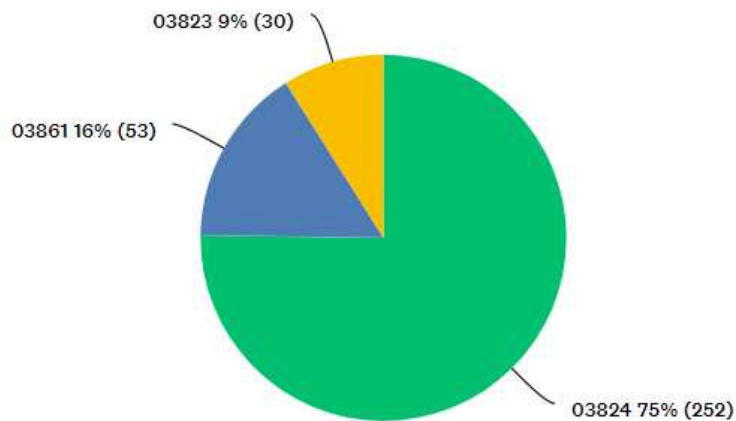
These themes are strongly reflected in the four areas of priority and corresponding objectives set forth in the Library Strategic Plan. Each objective is intended to produce corresponding activities that are relevant, achievable, and measurable. Planned operational activities relate directly to the objectives in the Strategic Plan and produce outcomes that will increase:

- connection, cooperation, and collaboration with other community entities such as schools and other community partners,

- provide increased and improved communication regarding library services available to citizens with the goal of increasing use and access,
- promote literacy and learning throughout all age groups, and
- foster social community and cohesion by continuing to provide safe spaces for civil discourse and the free exchange of information and ideas.

In planning operational activities, consideration was certainly given to the data gleaned from the responses to the online survey so that we might target our activities correctly and allocate the correct resources.

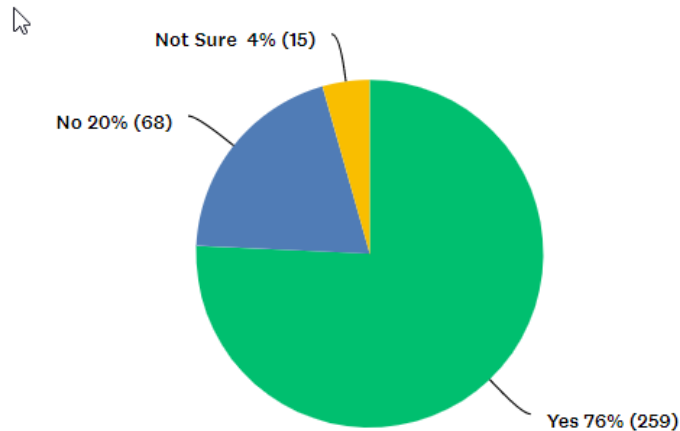
Despite the fact that nonresidents, local employees, UNH Staff & Students and other students eligible for the Oyster River Cooperative School District are eligible patrons, 75% of the survey respondents reside in Durham.



Most respondents possess a card (76%):

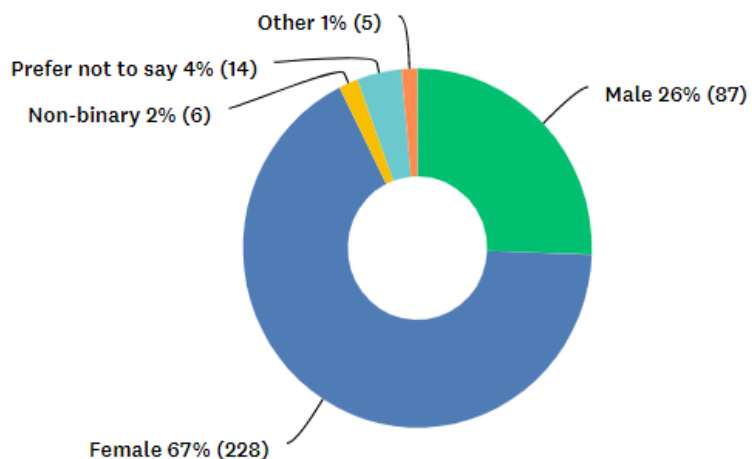
## Do you have a Durham Public Library Card?

Answered: 342 Skipped: 0



When asked whether they access resources in the physical Library building, remotely or both, 38% responded that they visit the building, but a majority of people (42%) do both. Only 4% of respondents access resources remotely at this time.

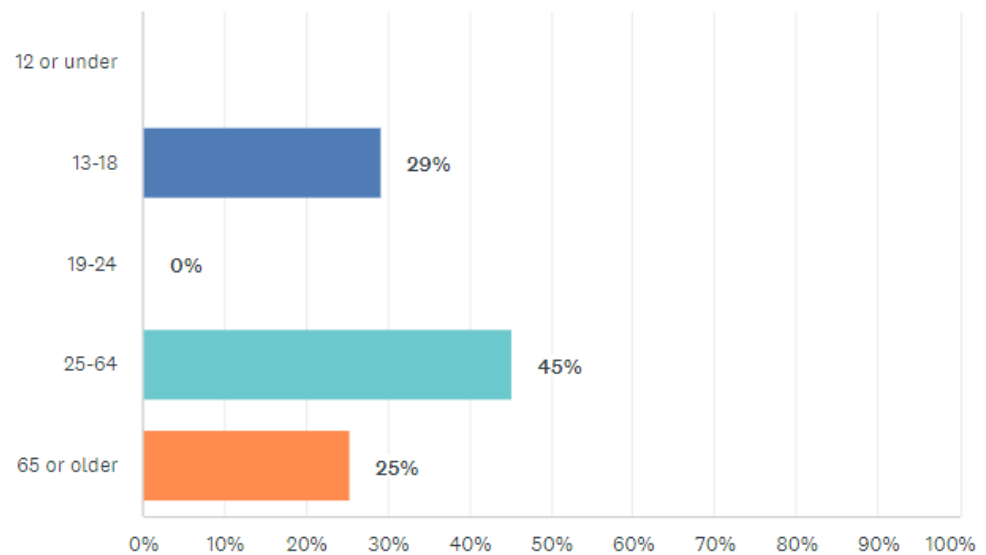
The majority of respondents were female.



While the majority of respondents fell somewhere in the 13-18 and 25-64 age range, a significant percentage of respondents were seniors 65 or older:

## What is your age?

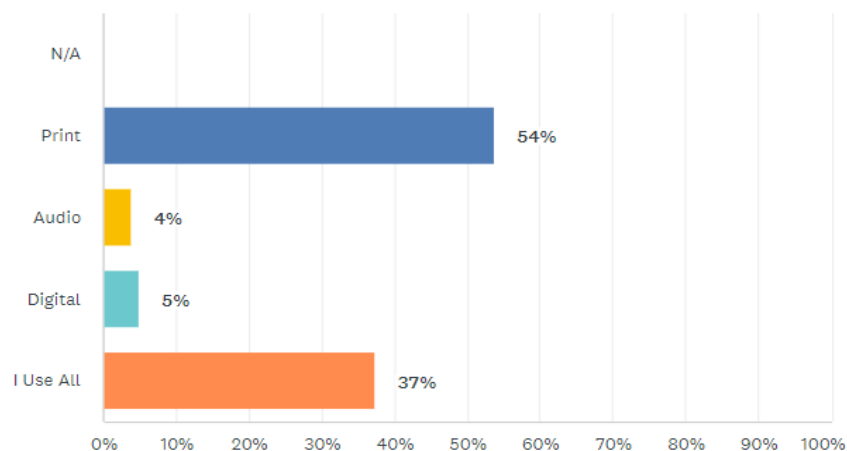
Answered: 340 Skipped: 2



And not *too* surprisingly 54% of our respondents told us that they prefer print materials over materials offered in other formats while 37% responded that they use all material formats when using the Durham Public Library.

## Given the option, which materials format do you prefer?

Answered: 340 Skipped: 2



And though the Durham Public Library wasn't without criticism or suggestion for improvement, 88% of respondents rated the Library as excellent or good finding much value in our materials and resource, as well as in the help provided by Library Staff.

When asked what they valued most about the Durham Public Library many of our users told us:

*“An excellent resource for all ages with an outstanding staff”.*

*“I value the public access to reading material and research material and also the access to indoor space that doesn't require money (the way a cafe would require purchases). “*

*“That it EXISTS in our town. It is a beautiful place in a beautiful setting. A refuge. I feel happy when I enter there”.*

And so, the Durham Public Library continues to strive for excellence in its service to the community. This Strategic Plan, as presented, represents a forward-thinking approach to guide the Library into the future, serving the Durham and Oyster River community to the best of its's ability by setting the following Strategic Planning Priorities and Objectives in parallel with the Library's Mission.

### **3a--The Durham Public Library's Mission**

*The mission of the Durham Public Library is to enhance the quality of life in Durham through open access to ideas and information, encourage exploration and learning in people of all ages, and support cultural enrichment by establishing the library as a center of our community.*



## 3b--Priorities and Strategic Objectives

### Priority 1

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#### *Community Connections*

The Library strives to be at the heart of Durham supporting and strengthening the community by fostering social cohesion and cultivating opportunities for Durham residents to come together through shared spaces, resources, programs, and events that inform, educate, and entertain.

#### **Strategic Objectives**

- Facilitate community conversations to support informed civic engagement and nurture civility.
- Actively represent the Library beyond its four walls. Encourage staff to foster relationships in the community and to utilize their extensive knowledge and resources for its continued development.
- Increase awareness and use of library resources, services, and programs by promoting offerings using the most effective and leading-edge tools, platforms, and media available.
- Seek out partners in the public, private, and nonprofit sectors with mutual interests to develop joint programs that will attract new populations and widen the scope of the Library.

## Priority 2

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### *Access for All*

The Library will provide access to information resources to all, providing a welcoming and safe physical and digital environment.

#### **Strategic Objectives**

- Ensure that library services are delivered with sensitivity and care to people of all ages, abilities, education levels, interests and social and cultural backgrounds.
- Find creative ways to connect with underserved populations and identify and mitigate barriers to access.
- Facilitate patrons expanding their relationship with the library to use new resources and technologies.
- Engage non-users to find ways to accommodate their particular needs and interests.
- Provide an attractive, friendly, and stimulating space for the public and ensure that the Library's resources are legible and easy to use.
- Provide an inviting civic space—encourage the use of meeting rooms by community organizations and groups.
- Reflect multiple perspectives and remain a neutral and safe space for the civil exchange of ideas and information.

## Priority 3

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### *Literacy and Lifelong Learning*

The Library reaffirms its commitment to supporting and celebrating all forms of literacy for fostering learning, growth, and discovery.

#### **Strategic Objectives**

- Celebrate the wonder of books. Promote reading and expansion of the mind. Facilitate the public gaining insight into our community, our country, and our world.
- Continue the Library’s long tradition of nurturing readers and enthusiastic library users of all ages and backgrounds.
- Maintain the Library’s position as a “trusted resource” of reliable information.
- Actively participate in Durham’s intellectual and cultural life through events that celebrate what the Library does best —supporting reading, personal growth, education, and entertainment.

## Priority 4

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### *Focused on the Future*

The Library will continue to expand and enhance its ability to provide a wide range of evolving services that meet the needs of the community.

#### **Strategic Objectives**

- Maintain and expand the range of library services that address 21st-century literacies available to the community including print, digital, and STEAM-themed services.
- Develop the Library's collections -print and digital- informed by community needs and interests, and to continue to be current, reliably factual, and representative of all people.
- Actively seek out reliable, stable, and appropriate resources to support service delivery priorities.
- Explore new, efficient, and convenient ways to deliver library services to meet the needs of community members.
- Recruit and train service-oriented, skilled, and knowledgeable staff to ensure first-rate public service and to be active participants in the planning and design of new models of service delivery.
- Form new partnerships with stakeholders in the community, including the university, the school system, Town Hall, and local businesses and organizations to promote mutual educational, cultural, and recreational goals.

## **4--About the Durham, NH Community**

Durham is an historic university town located beside Great Bay at the mouth of the Oyster River. Citizens enjoy strong community bonds, excellent schools, recreational and cultural opportunities, an accessible downtown, and a rural quality evident in visible, verdant expanses with numerous outdoor activities accessible and available.

It is a town diverse in age groups, occupational endeavors, geographical backgrounds, and interests with a population of about ~16,015 people. The majority of that population is the student population of the University of the New Hampshire (UNH), the state's flagship public institution of higher learning, which contributes greatly to the Town's character, economy, and purpose. The ~6,500 non-university residents of Durham value positive interactions with the university population.

The population trend for Durham shows that while the school-age population will rise by about 4% by 2040 those over 65 are expected to grow at a rate of 17% as increased elderly housing is developed in the area. While age cohort population and poverty data for Durham (27%) may be distorted by the UNH student population, these projections are suitable for the purposes of library planning.

## **5--About the Durham Public Library**

In 1958, Dimond Library was completed on the campus of the University of New Hampshire. The public portion of the library collection was stored in the basement of Dimond Library and grew to contain a multitude of children's titles and books available for use and checkout by the public. As space constraints and interest in the public collection increased, it became clear that the community required a separate public library building to house the public collection. In March 1997, by a voting margin of 2-1, Durham passed a charter amendment to establish a Board of Trustees to craft a plan for a new library. A temporary space was established in a store front that is now known as the Mill Plaza. On July 21, 1997, a dedication ceremony was held for the new library with Governor Jeanne Shaheen as the keynote speaker. It was the first new public library to be established in New Hampshire in almost a century.

Time passed and a grassroots movement led by the Library Friends, Board of Trustees and other community champions joined together to advocate for and establish a standalone library for the Durham community. In July 2013, a new public library building was completed at 49 Madbury Rd. The 10,500 square foot facility is a combination of new construction and renovation of an existing brick home on a 2.8-acre parcel near the center of Durham. While the building is not formally certified under any sustainable design and construction program, it was designed for

energy efficiency, durability, easy maintenance , and environmental sensitivity.

The beautiful physical space at the Library offers the Oyster River community the perfect place to gather as a community hub for programs, study, and exploration of the many resources the Library has to offer. In addition to the 35,580 physical items in the Library collection, the Library offers a multitude of information, entertainment and cultural resources in various formats. With online access to many digital information resources such as the New York Times and Wall Street Journal, and digital resources that support literacy and entertainment like hoopla, Kanopy and Libby, the Library offers a platform for access to interesting and engaging resources for all. The Durham Public Library strives to be a place of creativity and innovation that supports literacy and growth both inside and outside the four walls of the physical library building.

### **2021 Durham Public Library Statistics**

<b>Holdings - Physical Materials (Books, DVDs, Magazines, Audiobooks, etc.)</b>	<b>35,520</b>
<b>Circulation</b>	
Adult Physical Materials Circulated	30,047
Juvenile/ YA Physical Materials Circulated	57,542
<b>Total Physical Items Circulated</b>	<b>87,589</b>
<b>Total Digital Items (eAudio, eBooks, Digital Magazines, etc.) Circulated</b>	<b>19,294</b>
<b>Total Combined Circulation</b>	<b>106,883</b>
<b>Total Library Visits</b>	<b>43,418</b>
<b>Total Library Cardholders</b>	<b>5,377</b>
<b>Interlibrary Loan</b>	
Interloan Materials Lent to NH Libraries	950
Interloan Materials Received for DPL Patrons	2,068
<b>Total Interloan Transactions</b>	<b>3,018</b>
<b>Total Outreach- Physical Materials Delivered to Homebound Individuals</b>	<b>2,600</b>

## 6--Durham Strategic Planning Timeline

Strategic Planning Steering Committee Formed	02/01/21
First and Subsequent Strategic Planning Steering Committee Meetings	02/08-01/22/21
Individual Interviews	03/01-04/30/21
Friends Input Session #1	09/30/21
Trustee Update	10/14/21
Friends Input Session #2	10/26/21
Online Survey Opens	11/01/21
Teen Advisory Board Input Session	11/01/21
Community Input Session #1	11/09/21
Community Input Session #2	11/15/21
ORHS River Survey Initiative	11/15 - 01/19/21
Staff Input Session	11/18/21
Survey Response Deadline	11/19/21
Steering Committee review of input; draft themes	11/22/21
Library Director & Facilitator draft statement of themes and priorities	11/29 - 12/15/21
Steering Committee input	12/16 - 12/29/21
Final Drafting	12/15/21 - 01/13/22
Trustee presentation/review/input into draft Plan	01/13/22
Board of Trustee Adoption	01/27/22

## 8— Appreciation

Thank you to the participants for sharing their ideas and visions for the Durham community, as well as their generous contributions of time to the strategic planning efforts.

Thank you also to the members of our Strategic Plan Steering Committee, composed of representatives from the Library Board, staff, Friends, and Town leadership, who gave generously of their time and dedicated themselves to the completion of this plan. The Library would also like to extend our sincere gratitude to Ruth Kowal, Library Strategic Planning Consultant, for her patience and steady guidance through the strategic planning process.

Robin Glasser, Library Trustee  
Beth Newkirk, Library Friend  
Michael Behrendt, Town Planner  
Ruth Kowal, Consultant

Erik Waddell, Library Trustee  
Stan Reczek, Library Trustee  
Sheryl Bass, Library Director