

The Orange Public Libraries



STRATEGIC PLAN 2026-2030

PREPARED BY
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IN COLLABORATION WITH
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STRATEGIC PLANNING SUBCOMMITTEE
TRUSTEES OF THE ORANGE PUBLIC LIBRARIES

STRATEGIC PLANNING PROCESS

The Orange Public Libraries Strategic Planning Subcommittee followed the process laid out in **The New Planning for Results** by Sandra Nelson which has been recommended by the Massachusetts Board of Library Commissioners. Consideration has also been given to the Town of Orange Long Range Plan being developed in 2025.

WINTER 2025

The Library Trustees formed a Strategic Planning Subcommittee tasked with developing a new Strategic Plan for the Orange Public Libraries. Members of the community, Trustees, and library staff serve on the committee.

SPRING 2025

The seven member subcommittee met once each month in March, April, and May to establish a vision, evaluate the community's needs, and choose library responses to serve those needs.

SUMMER 2025

A User Needs Assessment Survey was created and circulated at the Annual Town Meeting, library programs, and on the library website. A staff survey was also created and circulated. The Library Director developed Goals and Objectives based on the service responses chosen by the Subcommittee and data collection from surveys.

FALL 2025

The Strategic Planning Subcommittee met to review the draft plan. Trustees vote to adopt the Strategic Plan for 2026-2030

PLANNING PARTICIPANTS

All meetings of the Strategic Planning Subcommittee were posted and publicized to encourage public participation.

STRATEGIC PLANNING SUBCOMMITTEE

Amy Borezo, Trustee
Julie Davis, Selectboard Member
Jason Sullivan-Flynn, Director
Cory Tanner, High School Student
Harry Veilleux, Parent
April Violette, Children's Librarian
Joanne Woodcock, Trustee

FRIENDS OF THE ORANGE PUBLIC LIBRARY

Janet Marble
Debbie Kent
Rice Flanders

STAFF

Jason Sullivan-Flynn
Rusty Shaw
Shawnee Shaw
Jennifer Kohlstrom
April Violette
Kathryn Chaisson
Sarah Houghton



MISSION STATEMENT

The mission of the Orange Public Libraries is to support each resident's pursuit of personal, educational, and professional growth. To that end we provide free access to diverse resources and experiences, build community by engaging with others and exchanging ideas, and foster a welcoming and safe environment for all.

PRIORITIES

The following service responses were chosen to address community needs:

COMMONS

A library that provides a Commons environment helps address people's need to meet and interact with others in their community and to participate in public discourse about community issues.

COMMUNITY REFERRAL

A library that offers Community Referral addresses the need for information related to services provided by community agencies and organizations.

GENERAL INFORMATION

A library that offers General Information helps meet the need for information and answers to questions on a broad array of topics related to work, school, and personal life.

CURRENT TOPICS & TITLES

A library that provides Current Topics and Titles helps to fulfill community residents' appetite for information about popular cultural and social trends and their desire for satisfying recreational experiences.

LIFELONG LEARNING

A library that provides Lifelong Learning service helps address the desire for self-directed personal growth and development opportunities.

BUSINESS & CAREER INFORMATION

A library that offers Business and Career Information service addresses a need for information related to business, careers, work, entrepreneurship, personal finances, and obtaining employment.

GOALS & OBJECTIVES

SERVICE RESPONSE: COMMONS

GOAL: Community members will have a welcoming, comfortable, and safe space to gather and interact.

OBJECTIVE 1: Wheeler’s roof replacement, drainage improvements, main level plaster repair, and aesthetic upgrades will be completed by the end of 2029.

OBJECTIVE 2: Apply for a grant from the Massachusetts Public Library Construction Program (MPLCP) to renovate the Wheeler Memorial Library’s facility and improve its accessibility. The next grant round is expected to open in 2028.

SERVICE RESPONSE: COMMUNITY REFERRAL

GOAL: Citizens in need will have improved access to providers of social services.

OBJECTIVE: The Wheeler Library will facilitate community members’ connections with social service providers for contact sharing and referrals. Monthly engagement will be tracked to gauge the library’s success in effecting positive change for our users.

SERVICE RESPONSE: GENERAL INFORMATION

GOAL: Orange residents will trust the library to be a reliable provider of resources that meet their information needs.

OBJECTIVE 1: The adult collection will be maintained per the updated collection development policy; measurable benchmarks will be used to gauge improvements in circulation.

OBJECTIVE 2: The library’s Collection Development Policy will be reviewed and revised to ensure the preservation of our community members’ Intellectual Freedom. As declared by the American Library Association, Intellectual Freedom includes “the rights of library users to read, seek information, and speak freely as guaranteed by the First Amendment.”

OBJECTIVE 3: The Wheeler’s Local History Room will be cleaned and organized to improve patrons’ access to the collection.

GOALS & OBJECTIVES

SERVICE RESPONSE: CURRENT TOPICS AND TITLES

GOAL: Children 8 - 12 years old in Orange may safely exercise their interests in current popular culture trends year-round.

OBJECTIVE: Form a Friends of the OPL funded Tween Advisory Group (TAG) to create and run programs of interest to their peers (children ages 8-12). The TAG will run at least 3 programs at the library each school year.

SERVICE RESPONSE: LIFELONG LEARNING

GOAL: Increase engagement with teens and seniors.

OBJECTIVE 1: Plan and run at least two programs each year at the library in cooperation with the Town of Orange's Council on Aging.

OBJECTIVE 2: Coordinate with area artists and craftspeople to run at least two programs a year that nurture teens' interest in art and making.

SERVICE RESPONSE: BUSINESS AND CAREER INFORMATION

GOAL: Job seekers and small business owners will have easy access to powerful professional resources.

OBJECTIVE 1: Identify current needs of prospective and existing business owners and job seekers and acquire resources to assist them in reaching their professional aspirations.

OBJECTIVE 2: Invite local small business owners and the Franklin County Community Development Corporation to run workshops at the Library on how to start your own business.

COMMUNITY PROFILE

From Grow Orange 2035; A Long-Range Comprehensive Plan for the Town of Orange.

The Town of Orange is a small, historically industrial community working to position itself for a more prosperous and vibrant future. Once a center of manufacturing and innovation in the North Quabbin region, Orange today is a close-knit town that blends natural beauty, a creative spirit, and a strong sense of community with the realities of demographic shifts and evolving economic needs. Orange's population was estimated at 7,536 in 2025 and is projected to gradually decline over the next several decades if nothing changes. While this trend presents challenges, it also provides an opportunity to carefully plan for housing, infrastructure, and services that meet the needs of a changing community. Orange's population is aging, with 20% of residents over the age of 65 and that share is expected to rise to 31% by 2030. This demographic shift emphasizes the importance of accessible, smaller housing options and expanded services for older adults, while also emphasizing the need to attract and retain workers and young families.

Like many small towns, Orange is facing housing challenges—including limited new construction, aging housing stock, and rising costs. Between 2012 and 2022, the number of housing units in Orange declined by 6%, and both renters and homeowners are experiencing increasing cost burdens. However, recent years have seen growth in the town's supply of two-family and multifamily homes, indicating small but meaningful steps toward diversifying the housing stock.

Orange remains an important economic center in the North Quabbin region. The local economy is anchored by sectors like healthcare, retail, education, and manufacturing—together representing more than two-thirds of the town's jobs. New businesses are emerging alongside legacy employers, and the town has shown strong post-pandemic job recovery, reaching its highest employment levels in a decade by 2022. While median household income and educational attainment levels are lower than the county and state averages, Orange is home to a growing network of small businesses, entrepreneurs, artists, and makers. Local employers such as Rodney Hunt, Walmart, and Seaman Paper remain major job providers, and new efforts such as the Orange Innovation Center and LaunchSpace are helping to cultivate local talent and creative enterprises.

Orange's greatest assets may be its people and its place. The town boasts exceptional natural resources, including the Millers River, Tully Mountain, and several other conservation areas that provide residents and visitors with opportunities for hiking, fishing, biking, kayaking, and outdoor exploration. Local agriculture remains strong, and community institutions like Quabbin Harvest and the Garlic and Arts Festival celebrate Orange's local food, creative culture, and environmental values. The town also benefits from active local organizations and volunteer energy. Community groups, public institutions, and dedicated residents are working together to improve Orange's housing, downtown vitality, youth engagement, and recreational offerings.

Orange is a community with deep roots and strong potential. While it faces challenges—such as an aging population, housing pressures, and a changing economy—it also has meaningful assets: natural beauty, economic resiliency, civic pride, and a commitment to shaping its own future.

CURRENT FACILITIES

In 2025, the Wheeler Memorial Library will be 111 years old. There have been many attempts to renovate and improve the building, beginning with a plan in 1983. Trustees and Building Committee members have repeatedly supported the idea of renovation, voting in favor of feasibility studies and applying for grants, but voters have not had the appetite for a debt exclusion vote, mainly due to conflicting municipal building projects and the overall economic decline of the town.

Consequently, the Wheeler Memorial Library building remains in poor shape due to limited funding for maintenance and the natural aging of a building that is over a century old. The basement, where the children's section is located, has extremely poor ventilation and relies almost entirely on wall fans, a portable air purifier, and a dehumidifier for "climate control." There is an active leak in the boiler room, causing water to enter the building. This may be due to a high water table. Shades on 7 of the first floor windows are stained with large watermarks from leaks in the roof penetrating the ceiling.

The Wheeler Memorial Library has inadequate parking, lacks a restroom accessible to patrons with disabilities, and does not have an elevator despite having two stories. The front entrance presents its own accessibility challenges for patrons. There is no dedicated staff space. The Moore Leland Library is located in North Orange and is staffed by the same personnel as the Wheeler Memorial Library. The facility is a small Cape style building that is accessible. It is open to the public on Saturdays from 10:00 AM to 1:00 PM.

