Pelham Public Library
1893

Strategic Plan

Fiscal Years:

2024-2026

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Acknowledgements

Many people assisted with the development of this strategic plan. The Library would like to extend a sincere thank you to all community members who participated in our surveys and outreach opportunities and shared their opinions with us. These insights were invaluable and helped to shape our mission and long term goals. A special thank you to Pelham Public Library's staff for sharing their honest insights and feedback, and to the Pelham Library Trustees for their feedback and commitment to shaping the Library's mission and future.

Executive Summary

Mission Statement: *Enriching lives and building community.*

Demographics Snapshot
- Pelham Total Population: 14,473
- Pelham Housing Units: 5,165

Library Data Trends
- Patron Data:
  - Active Cardholder Market Penetration (by Housing Unit): 37%
  - Active Cardholder Growth (2023): 12%.
  - Visitor Count Growth (2023): 4%
- Borrowing Data:
  - Physical Borrowing Growth (2023): 57%
  - Digital Borrowing Growth (2023): 16%
- Programming Data:
  - Adult Attendance Growth (2023): 66% - average of 12 attendees per program.
  - Teen Attendance Growth (2023): 29% - average of 19 attendees per program.
  - Children Attendance Growth (2023): 39% - average of 30 attendees per program.

NOISE Analysis Summary
For this strategic plan we conducted a NOISE analysis: Needs, Opportunities, Improvements, Strengths, and Exceptions.
- *Needs*: Increase households with active cardholders and community knowledge of library resources.
- *Opportunities*: Seek new partnerships such as PTV and the fire department. Explore filling community gaps in availability of meeting spaces, fun spots, and a centralized meetup and event resource.
- *Improvements*: Improve materials access and data collection, especially for outreach data. If possible, address facilities weaknesses such as programming space improvements, lack of storage, and lack of meeting spaces. Examine use of interior spaces and design spaces and policies to match patron needs. Address poor layout of library stacks. Better utilize existing assets such as nearby outdoor spaces.
- *Strengths*: Able to capitalize on found opportunities. Problem identification and solving is quick. Staff retention is good, and staff are competent, motivated, and empowered in their positions. Library's location is central in town and near schools and other important services. Higher than expected performance of children and teen services.
- *Exceptions*: Library not near those living on town's edges. Lack of bike paths and sidewalks makes navigating Pelham difficult without a vehicle. Residents polarized on some issues, such as the need for town development.

Strategic Objectives
- Increase Active Cardholders: Reach 2224 households with unique cards by the end of strategic plan year 3. That's approximately 104 households added every year.
- Provide Options For Meeting Space Demand: If possible, open one new meeting space for public use by end of strategic plan year 3. Increase usage of existing meeting spaces by showing at least 5% growth each year.
- Interior Space Audit & Design: Complete audit of interior spaces in strategic plan year 1. Show visitor count growth of at least 5% in strategic plan year 1. Evaluate this metric and further actions to be taken in year 2.
- Improve Materials And Service Access: Show 20% growth across all collections combined in each year of the strategic plan.

Pelham Public Library History

In 1893, the library was set up in a corner of the Town Hall. A library building was constructed in 1896 to celebrate the 150th anniversary of the incorporation of the town and to honor Pelham's war veterans. That single story brick structure was designed with a main "Memorial Room," a book stack area, and a Town Officers' Room. The square footage of the building was doubled in 1975 by renovating the unfinished cellar to create a Children's Room, staff workroom, and periodical storage. The library had long-outgrown the 1896 building when the present 10,000 square-foot facility was completed in August 2003.

Located at 24 Village Green in the municipal complex that includes other town services, the present library has over 30,000 items in its collection, as well as ebooks and other online resources accessible from the comfort of home. Collections include traditional fiction and nonfiction books as well as media such as DVDs and video games, and a shared collection of tools and other household items called a Library of Things. Thanks to the generosity of our Friends of the Library, the library also has discount passes to nearby museums and cultural institutions.

Library membership is free to all Pelham residents, 5 years of age and older, and non-residents who own property, work, or attend school in Pelham. Library cards are available to non-residents for an annual fee.

Mission Statement

Enriching lives and building community.

Vision Statement

The Pelham Public Library seeks...
...to be a welcoming space for community members to connect.
...to provide access to relevant and timely collections, programs, and services.
...to educate, entertain, and inform the public.

Values Statement

- *Access: Using the library should be simple with as few barriers to access as possible.*
- *Assistance: Staff's discretion and personalized service best connects people to the resources they need.*
- *Collaboration: Community-led initiatives and partnerships lead to a stronger library.*
- *Confidentiality: The library protects individual confidentiality in the use of library resources.*
- *Learning: Intellectual curiosity and educational goals are empowered by the library.*
- *Literacy: Reading, writing, technology, and information literacy are fundamental for everyone.*
- *Recreation: Entertainment and relaxation are important to a well-balanced life.*
- *Respect: The library is a positive and supportive environment for all members of the community.*
- *Services: The resources and services offered by the library support the needs of the community.*

Pelham Community Demographics

[1]

Population	(US Census Bureau)	
(1-Year Estimates/Decennial)		
Total Population	Community	County
2022	14,473	426,594
2020	14,222	422,937
2010	12,897	400,721
2000	11,006	382,384
1990	9,428	336,549
1980	8,090	276,608

[1]

Demographics, American Community Survey	
(ACS) 2017-2021	
Population by Gender	
Male: 6,872	Female: 7,227
Population by Age Group	
Under age 5	571
Age 5 to 19	3,062
Age 20 to 34	2,143
Age 35 to 54	4,145
Age 55 to 64	2,166
Age 65 and over	2,012
Median Age	**43.5 years**
Educational Attainment, population 25 years and over	9,750
High school graduate or higher	95.7%
Bachelor's degree or higher	36.9%

[1]

Housing	(ACS 2017-2021)
Total Housing Units	5,165
Single-Family Units, Detached or Attached	4,682
Units in Multiple-Family Structures:	
Two to Four Units in Structure	163
Five or More Units in Structure	274
Mobile Homes and Other Housing Units	46

[1]

Income, Inflation Adjusted $	(ACS 2017-2021)
Per capita income	$47,566
Median family income	$127,472
Median household income	$111,333
Median Earnings, full-time, year-round workers	
Male	$75,139
Female	$58,216
Individuals below the poverty level	2.2%
Percent of Working Residents:	(ACS 2017-2021)
Working in community of residence	24.5%
Commuting to another NH community	27.3%
Commuting out-of-state	48.2%

[2]

Race and Hispanic Origin	
White alone, percent	91.9%
Black or African American alone, percent	1.3%
American Indian and Alaska Native alone, percent	0.1%
Asian alone, percent	1.7%
Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander alone, percent	0.0%
Two or More Races, percent	3.4%
Hispanic or Latino, percent	4.2%
White alone, not Hispanic or Latino, percent	90.3%

Pelham Public Library Cardholder Demographics

Cardholder age demographic data is limited by card type. Not all adult cardholders have a date of birth recorded in their account, thus the number of 65+ cardholders below is the best estimate based on available data. Library card data for minors is limited to 6-18 years old, but census data counts birth to 19 years old. We deemed this close enough for rough comparison. Cardholder stats change daily as accounts are added or expire. These stats were collected in February 2024.

Age Range	% of Total Population	Total Population	% of Active Cardholders	Total Active Cardholders	Active Cards % of Population
<18 years old	26%	3633	23%	720	20%
18-64 years old	60%	8454	69%	2167	26%
65+ years old	14%	2012	8%	240	12%
Households	N/A	5165	N/A	1911	37%

Analysis: The library has a lower than expected proportion of 65+ cardholders. Even with the noted incomplete data this remains a growth opportunity. The percentage of active cardholders compared to total population in all age groups is low. However, many families use a shared library card. There are 5165 housing units in Pelham of which there is at least one cardholder in 1911 of them for a 37% market penetration. This is the best measurement of market penetration.

1: New Hampshire Employment Security. https://www.nhes.nh.gov/elmi/products/cp/profiles-htm/pelham.htm
2: US Census Quick Facts. https://www.census.gov/quickfacts/fact/table/pelhamtownhillsboroughcountynewhampshire,NH/PST045222

Pelham Public Library Usage Data

<u>Patron Data</u>
Metrics: Serving community members is the most important aspect of library services. Metrics to measure community impact include cardholders, especially active cardholders, and library visitors.

Active Cardholders

Library Visitors
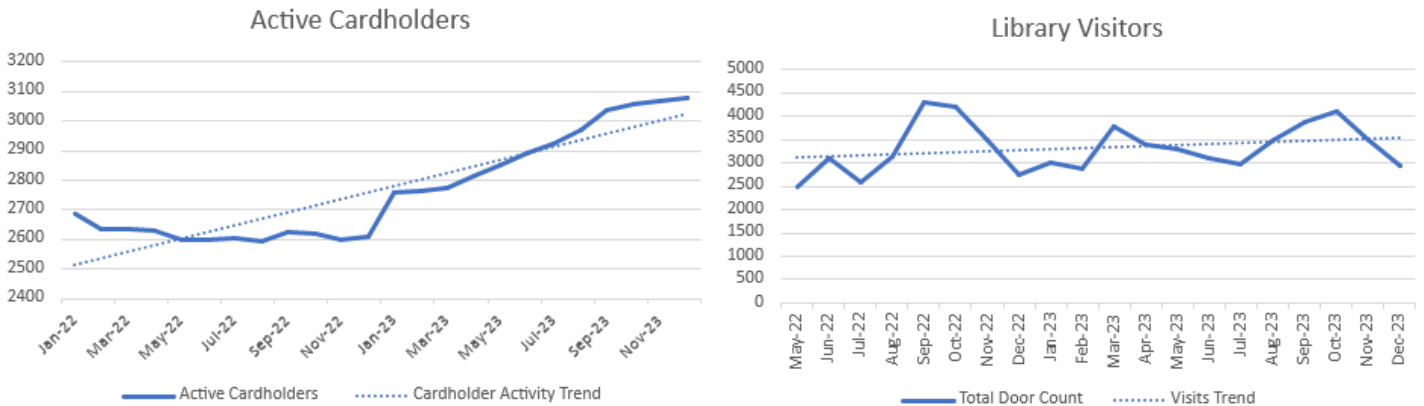
Analysis: The number of active cardholders has grown considerably in the last year and continues to trend upward. However, total active cardholders remains a growth opportunity. Visits to the library have remained mostly level. However, the library often delivers services outside the building by attending outreach opportunities such as the Farmer's Market. Data collection for these activities needs improvement to be included for future planning.

<u>Lending Data</u>
Metrics: Lending is the main means by which we give the public access to educational, informational, and recreational resources. Items borrowed from the library with a library card are split between physical and digital. Specific statistics for Interlibrary Loan (ILL) are also shown below. These are counted in the total physical items borrowed.

Physical Items Borrowed
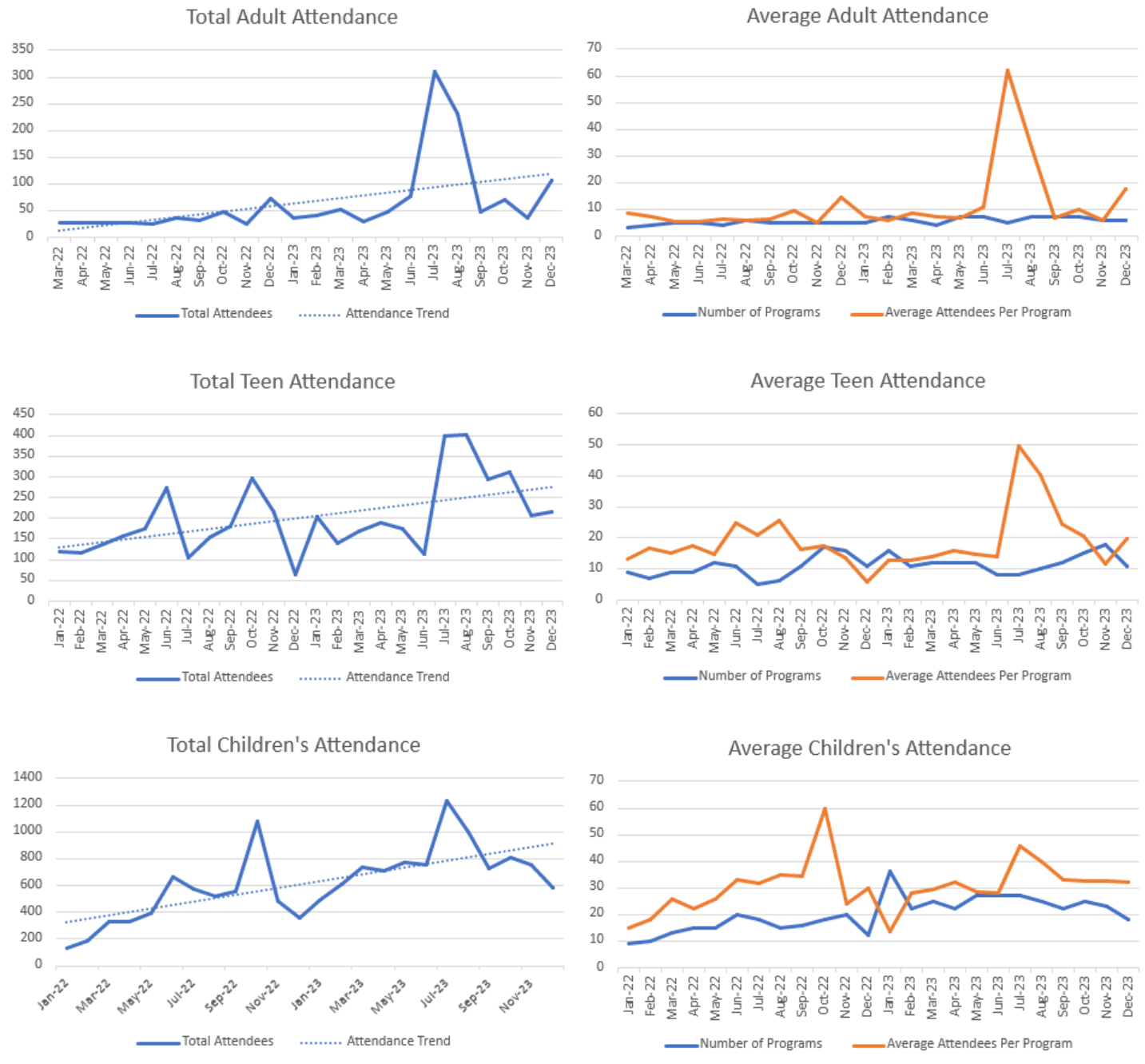

Digital Items Borrowed

Interlibrary Loan
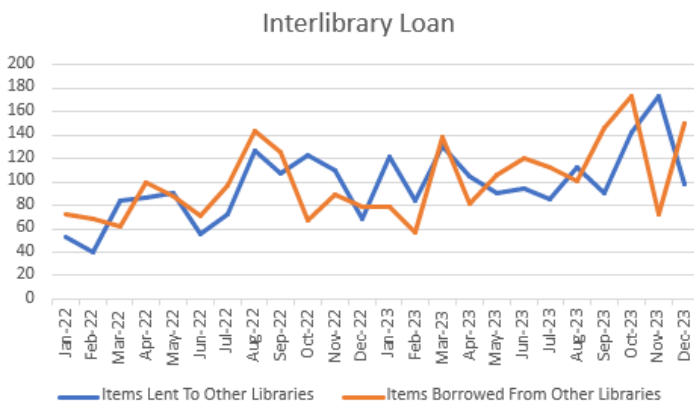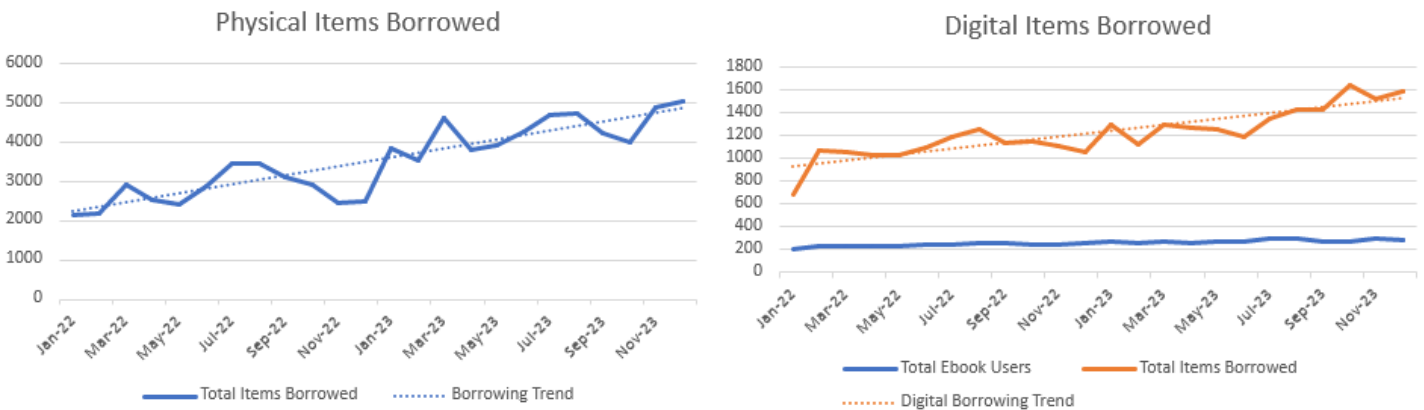
Analysis: The circulation trend of physical items in Pelham shows strong growth. This runs counter to typical downward trends in other libraries. However, some may be the result of pandemic recovery, and growth may slow in coming years. Increasing resource sharing through Interlibrary Loan will be needed. The trend of digital item lending shows moderate growth. Digital lending is of high interest to the community, and is expected to rise. However, usage limitations and rising costs make growing these services difficult.

Programming

Metrics: Library programs are typically free and open to the public. They add value to the community by providing opportunities for community members with shared interest to learn and grow together. The major metrics are the total number of programs, the total number of attendees, and the average attendance per program.

Total Adult Attendance

Total Attendees ········· Attendance Trend

Average Adult Attendance

Number of Programs —— Average Attendees Per Program

Total Teen Attendance

Total Attendees ········· Attendance Trend

Average Teen Attendance

Number of Programs —— Average Attendees Per Program

Total Children's Attendance

Total Attendees ········· Attendance Trend

Average Children's Attendance

Number of Programs —— Average Attendees Per Program

Analysis: Programming is an area of growing interest in Pelham. Growth in 2022 is partly accounted for by continuing recovery from the 2020 COVID-19 pandemic. However, the trend continued into 2023, showing that long term growth is possible. The library should seek to maintain this growth trend for as long as possible. Programs for children and teens are particularly well-attended. Ignoring large attendance at a couple outliers, the total number of adult programs is a growth opportunity if average attendance doesn't fall. Pelham Public Library's successful teen programming is not typical in many NH libraries, and is likely due to proximity to the schools and staff efforts to reach and connect with teens.

Staff & Trustee Questionnaire Summary

Early in 2023, staff and trustees filled out questionnaires to help guide the strategic planning process and decide what things we might want to ask in our community surveys. The following is a summary of staff and trustee opinions.

Strengths:

- Adaptable: PPL has become agile, adapting quickly to suggestions and ideas for improvement:
  - Collections: Addition of a Library of Things. Overhauling and updating nonfiction collections to replace worn out volumes. Adding an additional van delivery for ILL, improving wait times for patrons.
  - Technology Updates: Replacement of dated machines with new computers repurposed from other town departments. The addition of a popular 3D printing service.
  - Teen Services: Renovation of the teen space to reduce noise and creation of a Welcome Week to set expectations and train staff on handling unwanted behaviors.
- Partners: We have strong existing partnerships with the Senior Center, Middle School, Crossroads, and FLiP.
- Regular Users: Frequent users are retained after they sign up for a card and they are positive about our services.
- Staff: Library staff are effective at building relationships with visitors and they work well as a team.
- Young Audiences: Strong offerings for children and teens, especially young children and middle schoolers.

Opportunities:

- Accessibility: Offerings for people with limited eyesight, especially seniors, could be improved.
- Feedback: Patrons don't often express their wants, needs, and issues, even when asked. Solutions are needed to actively collect regular feedback to help guide future services.
- Marketing: Informing people of our services remains challenging.
  - Community members don't always understand the value that the library offers.
  - Community members, especially non-users and non-readers, are often unaware of the library's services or are unaware that accessing them is free. Increasing brand awareness is needed.
  - Most marketing efforts reach existing library users. Non-users are challenging to reach.
  - There are more opportunities for outreach:
    - Library should continue to participate in town-wide events whenever possible.
    - Book tastings have been a success, can we expand to other schools or organizations?
    - Crossroads School visits have been a success, can we expand to other organizations?
- Online: The library could increase services and resources offered online.
- Partnerships: There are other organizations in town that might offer opportunities for community partnerships.
- Programs: Adult programs could grow, both in number offered and in diversity of community attendance.
- Reach: There is still more opportunity to invite community members into our library community.
- Renewal Rate: The retention of infrequent users could be improved.
- Spaces: Library spaces have an inconsistent appearance, especially carpeting, chairs, baseboards, permanent signage. Many chairs with arms are not accessible for larger bodied people.

Aspirations:

- Community Exhibits: The library has very little space to highlight or exhibit local artist's work.
- Facilities: The building has challenges that will be a challenge to address.
  - Library programming spaces lack necessary features, such as sink access.
  - Outdoor programming spaces need larger shaded areas, especially for children.
  - Current library stacks are poorly laid out for browsing.
  - Storage space in the library building is inadequate.
- Meeting Spaces: The town of Pelham has too few meeting spaces to meet the demand for them.
- Staffing: Growth will soon be limited by available staff. Additional library staff will be needed in the future to better support current offerings and to support the growth and development of new services.

Community Survey Results Summary

Community member surveys with open-ended questions were conducted throughout 2023 in print and online within the library, during library outreach, and through the library newsletter. There were 75 respondents across all surveys.

Positive Takeaways:
- Respondents are very likely to recommend the library to others.
- Library staff are well-regarded.
- ILL service is appreciated.

Mixed Messages:
- Books: Some patrons listed as positive, at least one noted that we don't carry what they're looking for.
- Building: Some people noted the space as a positive, others noted that the building is small.
- Children's Programming: largely positive, but some noted a lack of offerings for older elementary age.
- Print/Copy: We know these services are appreciated and used. However, at least one patron pointed out the copier is difficult, and another pointed out that the print quality is only decent.
- Public iPads/Computers: Some noted that access is a positive, at least one did not like that we have computer games available. Others thought our machines could be better or we could have more of them.

Areas For Improvement:
- Having "no time" prevents people from using the library. In the afternoon, noise from teens is a barrier.
- Non-users, especially non-readers, think there is nothing here for them and they don't hear about the library.
- Users are not always clear on our offerings.

How People Hear Town And Library News:
- Library Calendar/Newsletter
- Word of Mouth/Friends
- Online: Library Website, Instagram, Facebook, FLIP Facebook, Town Website
- Physical Fliers: In Library, at Senior Center, on town bulletin boards.
- Local News: Pelham Evergreen, Local TV Channels 21 & 9

Program Suggestions:
- Children/Teen Interests: Chess, Sports, Cheer, Art, Dance, Pokemon
- Crafts/DIY: Knitting, Calligraphy, Origami, Canning, Sewing, Crochet, Needlepoint, Crewel, Cake decorating, Floral arrangement, Watercolor painting, Basic home repair, Feng shui.
- History: Tudors, Vikings, Clothing/Fashion, Colonial New England, Pelham or Hillsborough County, Genealogy
- Language Learning & American Sign Language
- Nature: Gardening, Nature journaling
- Reading: Summer reading bingo year round. Offer incentives year round, especially for younger audience.
- Tech: wiping devices for disposal or sale, handling and deleting cookies, the cloud and cloud storage, using apps.
- Veteran's Issues

Service Suggestions:
- Circulating Items: iPads, Hotspots, Laptops
- Website: short biographies on staff and trustees, top 10 favorite book of the month & year.
- Other: Public Phone, Water bottle filling station.

Concerns About Pelham (not library specific):
- Accessibility: not enough sidewalks, not bike friendly
- Development: some think Pelham is developing too slowly, others think too fast. Noted lack of businesses and fun/activity places in town.
- Taxes & Affordability: concern about rising tax rates and cost of living, especially for the older population.

NOISE Analysis

Needs: New areas that need development or areas that must be addressed for the organization to achieve its objectives.
- Increase households with active cardholders.
- Increase community knowledge of library offerings and community pride in the library as a resource.

Opportunities: Leverageable assets that benefit the organization or avenues for growth, partnership, or expansion.
- Community lacks centralized meetup hub and event calendar. Our website, calendar software, information focus, and community building mission all make us a good candidate to meet this need.
- People watch PTV, especially people interested in town meetings and events. This is a marketing opportunity. Additionally, PTV may be interested in created content, which the library could provide.
- Proximity to Town Hall and Fire Department and existing positive relationship with the Police Department are all assets we could leverage for programming and collaboration.
- The community lacks meeting spaces, especially for private functions. We have some meeting space to offer, but the need for library programming and the restrictions on public usage are barriers.
- The community cited a lack of fun spots in town. This is a gap that the library might be able to address in part.

Improvements: Areas within the organization that can be enhanced or optimized for better performance.
- Access to materials not available in our collection could have fewer barriers.
  - Large print and other materials that serve people with poor eyesight are a growing need.
  - ILL service is well-utilized and appreciated, but could be easier to understand and access.
  - Consider addition of digital services to meet demand for e-content.
  - Consider joining GMILCS consortium to widen selection of available materials.
- Data collection efforts in some areas could be improved.
  - Collection of regular feedback from community members needs improvement.
  - Current metrics should be audited to ensure relevance.
  - Outreach statistics need to be recorded: people met, fliers taken, cards issued.
  - At programming: "How did you hear about this program?" could assist with general marketing.
  - At new card signup: "Why did you decide to get a card today?" could assist with marketing to non-users.
- Facilities weaknesses should be improved or addressed if possible.
  - Lack of meeting spaces at the library, especially those available for public use.
  - Relaxing spaces in the library are primarily located in children's and teen areas.
  - Lack of storage inside the library.
  - Lack of shade in outdoor spaces.
  - Lack of sink access in programming spaces.
- Interior spaces are functional, but could be redesigned in accordance with a community needs assessment.
  - More data and analysis needed to determine the best use of library spaces by the public.
  - Decisions regarding intended patron visit length should inform space design and policy creation.
  - Furniture, signage, and food and drink policy (including water filling station) should be audited to match defined expectations and accessibility needs (i.e. barriers such as poor eyesight and larger bodies).
- Library stacks are poorly laid out for browsing.
- Outdoor space on library property is an asset that could be better utilized.

Strengths: Internal capabilities and assets that give the organization an advantage or set it apart.
- Agility: Library is excellent at taking advantage of found opportunities, sometimes within the same day or week.
- Collaborations: Existing partnerships and relationships are strong.
- Focus: Problem identification and solving is fast. Staff are motivated and empowered to solve problems.
- Location: Library is centrally located in town near schools and other town services that people frequently access.
- Outdoor Spaces: Library property is easy to access and located near the well-used village green.

- Staffing: Employees are knowledgeable and motivated, excellent at patron relations, and retention is good.
- Youth Services: Programs and collections for children and teens have excellent performance.

Exceptions: Outliers that deviate from typical patterns or that represent unique or unexpected circumstances.
- Location can be a challenge for residents on town's edges. A drop box elsewhere in town might help.
- Lack of bike friendly roads and sidewalks is a challenge for those navigating Pelham without a vehicle.
- On some issues, residents are highly polarized. For example: the future of development in Pelham.

Strategic Objectives

Each of the objectives below represents an area of overall strategic interest and its connection to the library's mission. Action Items are potential initiatives that could be initiated or expanded upon to achieve the objective. Goals are intended to be specific and measurable, with key metrics and potential financial costs also noted.

Increase Households With Active Cardholders
- Mission: Enriches lives by bringing library services to more people.
- Goal: Reach 2224 unique households by strategic plan year 3. The overall goal is to reach 2,582 unique addresses with cardholders for a 50% market penetration, bringing Pelham in line with national cardholder averages.
- Action Items:
  - Improve marketing to non-users who don't know what we offer. Ask program attendees how they heard about the program. Ask at account creation why the patron decided to get a card. Partner with PTV.
  - Collect feedback from non-users to develop new services to meet their needs.
  - Increase outreach efforts and involvement in town events and improve data collection of these activities.
  - Remove or reduce existing barriers that affect library usage. Identify and evaluate invisible barriers, such as overdue fines, that psychologically push people to choose not to get or keep a library card.
  - Require library cards for high interest services (i.e. 3D printing, Solar Eclipse Glasses, etc.).
  - Reach new audiences. Develop new content, such as programming for PTV, that reaches new people.
  - Celebrate library initiatives to better inform the community of our services and to generate a sense of pride in the library as a service.
  - Celebrate existing local partnerships such as with the Senior Center or schools. Explore new local partnership opportunities, such as a quarterly collaboration with the fire department.
- Key Performance Indicators: Total households with at least one cardholder. Current: 1,911. To reach the 3-year goal, we will need to add about 104 households per year.
- Potential Costs: Marketing materials cost. Staff time cost for designing materials and doing outreach.

Provide Options For Meeting Space Demand
- Mission: Improving meeting space opens a place for people to build community.
- Goal: If possible, open one new meeting space for public use by the end of strategic year 3. Show at least 5% growth in existing meeting space usage each year.
- Action Items:
  - Evaluate need for meetup spaces versus private meeting rooms.
  - Explore options for creating new meeting spaces at the library.
  - Explore options for creating shaded spaces outside that community members could use.
  - Evaluate meeting room policies to reduce or remove barriers.
  - Evaluate current spaces for improvement, such as the addition of a dimmer switch in Molly Hobbs.
  - Evaluate need for and feasibility of providing dedicated quiet spaces.
  - Explore options for externally accessible meeting spaces and spaces for private functions.
  - Library may be good candidate to host centralized meetup hub and event calendar.
- Key Performance Indicators: Number of spaces. Space usage (number of meetings and attendance).
- Potential Costs: May require building modifications. Space availability may be limited by library hours, staffing, and library programming needs. A centralized meetup hub and event calendar may require additional software.

Interior Space Audit & Design
- Mission: The library itself is a space where people can meet and connect to build community.
- Goal: Complete full audit of interior spaces in strategic plan year 1. Evaluate further actions to be taken in year 2. Show visitor count growth of at least 5% in strategic plan year 1. Evaluate this metric for year 2.
- Action Items:
  - Determine usage of library spaces, both how we intend for those spaces to be used and how the public actually uses them. Data collection may be direct (i.e. asking people), or indirect (i.e. observing people). This includes determining our messaging and intention regarding patron visit length.
  - Review or craft relevant policies, such as food and beverage policy, to achieve usage goals.
  - Explore the addition of a much requested filtered water bottle filling station.
  - Conduct a signage audit to ensure signage is adequate, understandable, and consistent in design.
  - Conduct a furniture audit to minimize physical barriers, such as accessibility for large-bodied people. Address whether or not the library has an adequate number of relaxing spaces, especially in adult areas.
  - Conduct a walking path analysis to see how patrons access our space.
- Key Performance Indicators: Visitor counts.
- Potential Costs: Signage. Furniture. Water bottle filling station. Professional assistance or opinions may be valuable or required for some initiatives.

Improve Materials And Service Access
- Mission: Our materials are the main way by which we enrich the community.
- Goal: Show 20% growth across all collections combined in each year of the strategic plan.
- Action Items:
  - Improve layout of library materials to aid in discovery and browsability.
  - Explore reducing friction to use ILL service and improve patron knowledge of this service.
  - Consider addition of other digital services to meet demand for e-content.
  - Expand Large Print and other resource collections for those with poor eyesight.
  - Expand non-traditional lending such as Library of Things and explore additions in this area.
  - Explore need and usefulness for additional drop boxes or lending spots in town or other ways to deliver services to people who find it challenging to visit the library directly.
  - Consider joining GMILCS consortium to widen materials available and improve delivery speed.
- Key Performance Indicators: Circulation statistics.
- Potential Costs: Cost of digital services is high and many are not sustainable long term. Duplicating materials in regular and large print. Non-traditional materials tend to cost more per item than books, though these collections may be supplemented by donations. Cost of drop boxes or other remote service delivery options. Joining GMILCS has considerable financial and staffing costs that must be weighed against the benefits.

Review Process

This strategic plan will be subject to yearly review by administrative staff to assess progress towards objectives and adjust the action plans for each objective accordingly. The deadlines outlined below are intended dates of completion for each task, though it's possible that tasks may be completed sooner.
- [Month] 2024: Approval of Strategic Plan.
- April 2025: Review of Year 1 Complete. Strategic objectives adjusted for year 2.
- April 2026: Review of Year 2 Complete. Strategic objectives adjusted for year 3.
- November 2026: Surveys and feedback data collection completed for creation of new strategic plan.
- January 2027: Review of entire strategic plan complete. Results to be included in the next strategic plan.
- February 2027: Draft of new strategic plan written.
- April 2027: Approval of new strategic plan.