



# BURNHAM MEMORIAL LIBRARY

STRATEGIC PLAN  
2024-2029

<https://www.colchestervt.gov/Library>



# PLANNING SUMMARY

## Introduction

---

The Burnham Memorial Library began its planning process in November 2022. Director Kelly McCagg worked with a Planning Committee to gather qualitative data using tools from the Harwood Institute of Public Innovation and held a Strengths, Opportunities, Aspirations, Results (SOAR) exercise with library staff.

During the planning process, McCagg and the Planning Committee worked with Erica Freudenberger from Thriving Libraries to gather input from more than one hundred fifty community members. Conversations were held with strategic stakeholders, residents of a senior housing complex, and people at community events. Those conversations revealed what people cared about, what they valued, and their aspirations for Colchester's future.

## Thanks

---

This process could not have happened without the input of many people. Our thanks go out to the Planning Committee:

- Brent Litterer, Library Trustee
- Kelly L. McCagg, Library Director
- Hannah Peacock, Assistant Director
- Meg Malone, Young Adult Services Librarian
- Frances Bailey, Friends of the Library
- Ted Seissen, Library Volunteer
- Carrie Seissen, Library Patron

The Burnham Memorial Library Board of Trustees:

- Toni Josey, Chair
- Leora Black, Vice Chair
- Carol Anderson, Treasurer
- Rebecca McMahon, Secretary
- Brent Litterer, Member
- Shabnam Saini, Youth Representative

And the residents of the Town of Colchester.

# LANDSCAPE REVIEW

## History

---

The first public library in the Town of Colchester opened September 14, 1901, in rooms above Wolcott's Store, located on the corner of Main Street and Mill Pond Road. The library had 47 books and was run and partially financed by the King's Daughters organization. In 1911, the library began receiving Town taxpayer funding and changed its name to the Colchester Free Library. Mrs. Electa Burnham died in 1939, leaving her estate to build and furnish a new Town library. The Burnham Memorial Library was dedicated in 1942, costing \$8,650. An addition was built in 1989, quadrupling its size and providing the infrastructure for the library's first computer. The library added Internet access in 1996. In 2018, the library took over stewardship of the Meeting House, also known as the White Church, an older building that now serves as a venue for expanded programming and community meetings, further enhancing the library's role in the community.

Today, the library offers many services, including books, digital resources, educational programs for babies through seniors, and community events. It serves as a cultural hub, promoting literacy and lifelong learning while providing space for the community to convene.

The Burnham Memorial Library maintains a local history collection of books and maps related to Colchester's history. It collaborates with the Colchester Historical Society by offering joint programs and exhibitions, and sharing resources to promote awareness of Colchester's history.

The 2019 Town Plan identifies lifelong learning and recreation in a healthy environment during its Cultivating Colchester initiative, and identifies three significant issues impacting Colchester:

- Affordability
- Economic opportunity
- Infrastructure

These issues were echoed in planning conversations.

# LANDSCAPE REVIEW

## Demographic Data

---

Colchester's population increased by 3% to 17,612 people between the 2010 and 2020 Census. Most of the population is between 35–54 years old, younger than other areas of Vermont but mirroring the aging trend, with 10% of residents being retirement age.

The Colchester community has recently welcomed people from Bhutan, Somalia, Iraq, and the Democratic Republic of Congo due to the efforts of the Vermont Refugee Resettlement Center. Approximately 9% of residents speak a language other than English at home and 0.9% of households are limited English-speaking.

Colchester boasts a highly learned populace. Most residents graduated high school; 45% have earned a bachelor's or another advanced degree, reflecting an interest in education and intellectual pursuits. The Colchester School District provides elementary and secondary education, while Saint Michael's College, and neighboring Champlain College, the Community College of Vermont and the University of Vermont provide post-secondary education. In its 2019 Town plan, Colchester identifies lifelong learning as a priority.

Although the median income (\$83,000 + per year) is more than the average Vermonter (\$67,674), 8% of residents live in poverty, and 20% of students are eligible for free lunch. The town anticipates continued growth of an older demographic with fewer traditional households.

According to the U.S. Census, 96% of households have a computer and 90% are equipped with broadband internet. The Library offers public access to computers, free Wi-Fi, and digital resources, such as e-books, online databases, and streaming services.

To best serve the needs of long-time residents and newcomers, the library provides multilingual materials, cultural programs and events, language learning resources, and outreach efforts to support an inclusive and thriving community. The library's role as a cultural and educational hub positions it to promote understanding, facilitate integration, and contribute to the overall well-being of Colchester residents.

# LANDSCAPE REVIEW

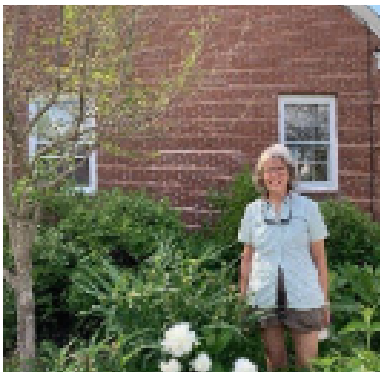
## Economy

---

Colchester has a diverse economic base with healthcare, education, retail, technology, financial services, non-profits, and manufacturing. Its proximity to Burlington, the largest city in Vermont, provides additional economic opportunities. The University of Vermont Medical Center and the University of Vermont contribute to the strength of the healthcare and education sector. The town's thriving business community also includes local restaurants, specialty stores, cafes, and services, all contributing to the local economy.

The town has embraced digital infrastructure and connectivity by providing online access to library materials, recreation program registration, permitting, land records, payments, public meeting information, and assessment data. The local educational institutions have also focused on promoting STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics) education to prepare students for careers in the technology sector. Currently Colchester has several STEM-based businesses.

The library offers resources and programs related to entrepreneurship, small business development, and career advancement to support the town's ongoing economic growth.



# LANDSCAPE REVIEW

## Future Trends

---

Colchester has made strategic investments, including passing a ballot item to create a recreation center and building a sewer system in the Malletts Bay neighborhood.

The Burnham Memorial Library is highly regarded as a welcoming, inclusive space that provides opportunities for personal growth and enrichment. It is crucial in promoting literacy, lifelong learning, and community connectivity. The library has eliminated almost all fines to remove a barrier to library services. It supports the 2010 Heritage Project and Town Plan goals. Areas of focus may include:

- Providing state-of-the-art services, including e-books, digital resources, public access computers, Wi-Fi, online programming, and computer classes.
- Being a valued community hub, sharing materials and hosting events, workshops, and classes.
- Contributing to civic life by collaborating with other community stakeholders.
- Incorporating eco-friendly practices and promoting information about renewable energy and sustainability.
- Providing space for meetings, workshops, co-working, and cultural events.
- Developing innovative services reflecting the needs and interests of the community.

# SHARED VALUES

As part of its planning process, the library identified five shared community values:

## 1 Community

---

We want to know, respect, and rely on our neighbors.

## 2 Welcoming

---

Our library is a warm, welcoming place where the community is known, valued, heard, and seen as they learn and grow.

## 3 Efficiency

---

We effectively deliver essential resources and information, making the best use of the resources provided by the community.

## 4 Safety

---

We embrace kindness, understanding, neighborliness, peace, tolerance, and respect for and toward all. We support a cooperative, sustainable, thriving community where everyone is honored.

## 5 Accessibility

---

We empower people through equitable access to resources, opportunities, innovative educational programs, services, and cultural experiences.

# VISION STATEMENT

We are a community that learns and grows together, collaborates for impact, and embraces possibility.

# MISSION STATEMENT

We take pride in creating a welcoming space where people explore a world of ideas, share their stories, and dream of the future.



# STRATEGIC DIRECTIONS

Based on conversations with multiple stakeholders and individuals, the Burnham Memorial Library will focus on four strategic directions:

## 1 Building & Welcoming Community

---

We give friends, neighbors, and visitors an accessible, welcoming place to be known, valued, heard, and understood.

## 2 Creating a Third Place

---

We recognize the library as a third place where people can gather, connect, and use as a centralized meeting space. This will foster community through planned and spontaneous interactions between citizens, creating an informal communication network.

## 3 Cultivating Curiosity Through Educational Enrichment

---

We provide efficient, affordable access to lifelong learning in a non-threatening environment. We believe democracy is threatened in an uneducated populace, and commit to providing a place to find answers, showcase community talent, and learn from each other.

## 4 Sharing Information: Collaboration & Communication

---

We collaborate with local partners to create relevant, engaging programs, convene stakeholders to accomplish community aspirations, and identify and provide more volunteer opportunities for people to get involved in Colchester's daily life and decision-making.

# STRATEGIC PRIORITIES

## Building & Welcoming Community

The library will host programs to increase social connections. At least 90% of attendees will report feeling more connected to their neighbors, as measured by the Project Outcome civic engagement survey.

### Action Step 1

---

Library will partner with stakeholders to create annual quarterly community events & celebrations.

**Responsibility:**

Adult Program Librarian, Assistant Library Director, Youth Programming Assistant

**Resources:**

Programming Budget, Friends of the Library, Rotary & Lions Clubs

**Time Frame:**

- Ice Cream Social—July 2024
- Trunk or Treat—October 2024
- Festival of Lights—December 2024
- National Library Week—April 2025

### Action Step 2

---

Library will welcome and familiarize refugees and immigrants to the library and its services (2025).

**Responsibility:**

Adult Program Librarian, Library Director, Youth Programming Assistant

**Resources:**

Dr. Maria Mercedes Avila, Programming Budget

### Action Step 3

---

Library will collaborate with Age Well on outreach services (homebound delivery) to Meals on Wheels recipients (2026).

**Responsibility:**

Adult Program Coordinator, Library Director

**Resources:**

Erica Marks (Age Well), Programming Budget

# STRATEGIC PRIORITIES

## Creating a Third Place

Evaluate, design, and finance a substantial capital reinvestment to provide an energy and staff efficient space for state-of-the-art programming, collections, and community meetings.

### Action Step 1

---

Conduct an evaluation of the condition and capital upkeep costs of the two buildings utilized by the library (2025).

**Responsibility:**

Town Manager's Office, Library Director

**Resources:**

Funding from the Recapitalization Fund

### Action Step 2

---

Evaluate the current and future spatial needs of the library and community over the next 30 years (2025/2026).

**Responsibility:**

Town Manager's Office, Library Director

**Resources:**

Funding from Recapitalization Fund, Friends of the Library

### Action Step 3

---

Developing an alternatives analysis to evaluate options and identify a preferred alternative considering both the Conditions Assessment and the Spatial Needs Evaluation (2026/2027).

**Responsibility:**

Town Manager's office, Library Director, Library Trustees, Selectboard

**Resources:**

Funding from Recapitalization Fund, Friends of the Library

### Action Step 4

---

Complete the architecture, engineering, permitting, and cost estimation of the selected alternative to a level of detail that it can be brought forward for consideration by the Trustees, Selectboard, and the voters, for approval of a capital project as identified in the alternatives analysis.

**Responsibility:**

Town Manager's Office, Library Director, Selectboard, Library Trustees

**Resources:**

Funding from Recapitalization Fund, Friends of the Library, and other sources.

# STRATEGIC PRIORITIES

## Cultivating Curiosity Through Educational Enrichment

The library is a place where everyone can find answers. It will host programs to encourage lifelong learning and showcase the talent, creativity, and skills of community members of all ages.

### Action Step 1

---

Library will host regular programs directed by community members providing an arena where expertise and ideas are shared – Lunch & Learn, Coffee & Conversation (2024/2025).

**Responsibility:**

Adult Program Librarian, Library Director, Assistant Library Director

**Resources:**

Asset Map

### Action Step 2

---

Library will facilitate the local author series by inviting an adult, youth, and teen author to come speak at the library annually (2024–2026).

**Responsibility:**

Adult Program Librarian, Library Director, Teen Librarian, Youth Programming Assistant

**Resources:**

Local Donation, Friends of the Library, Partner with Local Bookstores & Schools

### Action Step 3

---

Library will provide equitable access to community resources by helping to hire a bus to transport students from Porters Point Elementary School to the library for annual visits.

**Responsibility:**

Assistant Library Director, Youth Programming Assistant

**Resources:**

School Librarian, Friends of the Library

# STRATEGIC PRIORITIES

## Sharing Information:

### Collaboration & Communication

The library will collaborate with community partners to improve communication across town departments and with the community so residents may enjoy all it has to offer.

#### Action Step 1

---

Work with our Board of Trustee student representative to improve communication to the community via local schools.

**Responsibility:**

Library Director, Teen Librarian, Trustee Chair, Student Trustee

**Resources:**

School Librarians, School Superintendent

#### Action Step 2

---

Action Step: Create communications plan for Josh's House, Refugee Resettlement, Holy Cross Retirement, Green Mountain Retirement, Age Well, other organizations to build awareness of library resources and encourage library use.

**Responsibility:**

Adult Program Coordinator, Library Director

**Resources:**

Asset Map, Operating Budget

#### Action Step 3

---

Evaluate, with the Clerk's Office and Economic Development, the possibility to re-initiate the creation and distribution of a welcome packet to new residents including information about town services (such as Parks & Recreation and the Library).

**Responsibility:**

Circulation Services, Youth Programming Assistant, Library Director, Assistant Director

**Resources:**

Julie Graeter (Town Clerk), Kathi O'Reilly (Economic Development), Operating Budget, Friends of the Library