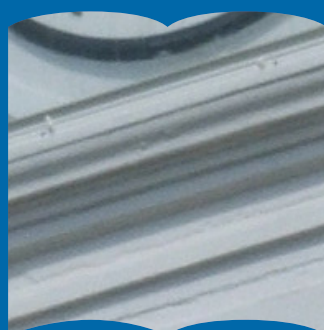


# **Needham Free Public Library Strategic Plan 2023-2027**





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All demographic data and survey information is available from the Needham Free Public Library upon request.

Dear Needham Public Librarians  
Thank you for being our  
local library!

From,  
Mittell Elementary  
School

Thank you Needham  
Library! Thank you  
for all the books the librarians  
you give! Thank you for encouraging  
us to read and love it!

Thank you librarians

Dear Librarians,  
Thank you librarians! I love  
reading! And I get so relaxed when  
I read! Thank you!

From, Ned

Dear Needham public librarians,

Thank you for helping  
all of the students of Needham  
grow their love of reading.

From, Mr. Vasiliadis 4th  
grade class

Thank you  
librarians

We appreciate you guys!  
Thank you for  
encouraging us to  
read and being  
so kind!

Thank you for  
all the joy of  
the book that  
we love



Thank you for  
the books and  
the courage to

-John A. H.



Thank you librarians

Dear Librarians,

Thank you for being me  
get all kinds of books  
that I love.

-Luke...

Thank you  
Needham  
Librarians!

For supplying needham  
with books for  
free!

Mitchell Elementary  
School



# Strategic Plan Goals and Objectives 2023-2027

Goal 1: Provide a seamless, efficient, equitable, and outstanding user experience.

- **Objective 1:** Offer superior customer service to all library users.
- **Objective 2:** Encourage feedback and constructive criticism from library users.
- **Objective 3:** Ensure staff is appropriately allocated throughout the organization.

Goal 2: Increase visibility as a critical community partner, known and valued by everyone in Needham.

- **Objective 1:** Grow the Library's visibility and position as the heart of the community.
- **Objective 2:** Strengthen the relationship between the Town and the Library.
- **Objective 3:** Become a trusted and reliable resource for information about the Town.

GOAL 3: Offer a user experience catered to the specific wants and needs of the Needham community.

- **Objective 1:** Improve service, space, outreach, and resources for Emerging Adults.
- **Objective 2:** Improve service, space, outreach, and resources for Seniors.
- **Objective 3:** Invest in "24/7" and mobile library concepts.
- **Objective 4:** Strengthen the Library's branding and marketing.

GOAL 4: Provide access to an outstanding, diverse collection of materials for Needham patrons and understand the importance of building and promoting a representative collection.

- **Objective 1:** Anticipate an ongoing need for accessible and current collections in various formats.
- **Objective 2:** Equity, Diversity, Inclusion, and Belonging (EDIB) are core tenets of all material collections.
- **Objective 3:** Investigate the development of an English Language Learning (ELL) Collection in the Children's Room.
- **Objective 4:** Consolidate and refocus World Languages Collection, emphasizing Needham patrons.

GOAL 5: Ensure staff is well-trained and fluent in analytic resources to provide the best collection of materials for the community.

- **Objective 1:** Evaluate and standardize collection development practices.
- **Objective 2:** Reduce wait times associated with popular physical and digital materials.
- **Objective 3:** Clarify the process and create an SOP for patron requests for purchase.
- **Objective 4:** Ensure library staff is fluent in statistical analysis for all circulation functions.

GOAL 6: Allocate time and resources to explore the future use of interior and exterior space and design.

- **Objective 1:** Audit interior and exterior use of space.
- **Objective 2:** Reorganize the Children's Room.
- **Objective 3:** Emphasize sustainability in any plans.

# Library and Community Profile

## Needham Free Public Library Mission Statement

The NFPL provides access to materials, resources, and information in its endeavor to expand minds, celebrate diversity, embrace differences, and build community.

## Needham Free Public Library Vision Statements

The Library will provide and expand resources and information to satisfy curiosity and will provide opportunities to discover and share new ideas.

The Library will be a vibrant and welcoming place for all people to gather, meet, and learn.

The Library will create opportunities for programs, services, and outreach by building partnerships with institutions such as schools, businesses, and organizations.

## About the Library

“Before we moved to Needham, I stopped at the Library to see if it met or exceeded my needs. It did. If it hadn’t, we would not have moved here. Really!”

“I feel a new energy among staff in the past year, with a lot of new offerings and reorganizing.”

“The Needham Library is an essential part of our family’s life. We were there multiple times a week when our daughter was young and still visit regularly.”

“I strongly believe in the importance of libraries in the community.”

Like many public libraries, the NFPL has undergone many changes over the last few years. Beyond the interruptions caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, there have been significant changes in leadership and staff. The Library Board of Trustees saw this as an opportunity to move the Library forward in a more substantial partnership with the Needham community, starting by engaging in a strategic planning process.

The Town of Needham community has high standards and equally high gratitude for its Library. Needham patrons are avid library users who understand how a public library works. They hold high expectations about what their Library should look like; they regularly use Interlibrary Loans and take advantage of the NFPL and the broader Minuteman network’s plentiful resources.

Needham residents are smart and engaged. The Library has strong patronage and support in the community. This genuine interest, coupled with sincere appreciation for the Library, equals an unparalleled understanding of the benefits a great library can afford the community.

## Community Quick Facts

Incorporated in 1711, Needham is a town in Norfolk County in the suburbs of Boston.

According to the 2021 US Census, the population of Needham was 32,091, with a median household income of \$182,813, which is more than double the median income for Massachusetts. Primarily a commuter town with easy access to the MBTA’s Commuter Rail, Needham has grown recently to attract some large companies such as SharkNinja and TripAdvisor and housing several large media firms such as WCVB Channel 5. Needham is also the home of Olin College.

- The Town is 82% White, 9.5% Asian, 1.5% Black, and 4.2% identify as Hispanic.
- The median age for Needham is 43.9 years.
- The two largest age groups are 10-14 at 8.9% and 55-59 at 8.2%.

- According to the Metropolitan Area Planning Council, the number of residents aged 65 and older will continue to increase, with a 59% projected to increase between 2010 and 2030.
- Most household units in Needham are 1-unit houses, with 82.9% of residential buildings having one unit.
- In Needham, 42.3% of households include at least one person under 18.

Please refer to the Community Profile on page 15 for more demographic information.

## The Planning Process

The Massachusetts Board of Library Commissioners (MBLC) has long espoused the value of strategic planning as a management tool for libraries of all types and sizes. They require an active plan on file for a library to be eligible for application to any direct grants from the MBLC under the federal Library Services and Technology Act (LSTA) or any state-funded grants. Strategic plans offer an opportunity to engage with the community and envision the needs and wants in the next several years.

The Needham Free Public Library's most recent Strategic Plan lapsed in 2021. Developing a new plan was put on hold until the Library's new director, Kim Hewitt, started.

The current strategic planning process began in the fall of 2022. The Board of Library Trustees voted to hire a consultant and voted to have two members, Rob Pettit and Jay Fialkov, help the director with the strategic planning process. The Board hired Kelly Linehan as their consultant. She began the process by meeting with the Trustees and soliciting feedback from the community.

The consultant then facilitated five focus groups, including three online and two in-person sessions, for patrons, one for staff only, and one for Town Department Heads and representatives. Additionally, the Library offered two surveys to its patrons and community, focused on general services and service to families. A total of 147 people took an online survey, with an average completion rate of 75%.

Most of the public focus groups started with the KARR exercise, which stands for Keep (what's working, what's loved), Acquire (what are other people doing/have), Reinvent (what's a good idea that's not working right), Retire (what's not working at all or is obsolete). As the groups progressed through the KARR exercise, the consultant asked specific questions about recurring themes. For the staff-only group, the director and assistant director did not participate in creating a safe space for staff to express their thoughts and opinions fully. Designees from the Board of Trustees and staff had an opportunity to review the goals, objectives, and actions and share feedback before finalizing the plan.

Those who participated in the focus groups came organized, well-researched, and ready to share their feedback—many prepared notes for the conversation. Quite a few participants asked the opinions of friends and family to get additional feedback to share. Furthermore, many focus group participants were already actively involved in the Library.

This strategic plan directly responds to constructive and thoughtful feedback and suggestions. It is a commitment to strengthening the relationship between the Library and every Needham resident and community member. These goals and ideas reignite excitement for the potential within the Library and for the NFPL team.

# Assessment and Priorities

Much of the feedback received from the Needham community aligns with national public library trends highlighted in The Center for the Future of Libraries<sup>1</sup> and broader concerns across the globe, particularly “Aging Advances” and “Emerging Adulthood.”

After a review of the planning work done by the Town of Needham for its strategic plan, three of the Select Board Goal Statements<sup>2</sup> felt particularly compatible in terms of top strategic priorities for the NPFL over the next five years: #3) Accessible & Connected, #4) Healthy & Socially Thriving, and #7) Environmentally Sustainable. Further relevant resources and statistics are available in the links cited. All library stakeholders should feel invited to read and familiarize themselves with these priorities.

## Aging Advances

The future well-being of the aging populations of Needham residents is on everyone’s minds. In the focus groups, many spoke about rising housing prices and the lack of affordable housing. Demographics support Needham’s concerns centering on the 55+ community and inflation, retirement income, jobs, technical skills, and mental and physical health and support a revised approach to services for this growing population that will increase their social vibrancy, economic stability, and emotional well-being.

## Emerging Adulthood

On the other side of the age pendulum, teens constitute a slightly higher percentage of the population in Needham. And, like the senior population, percentages are trending upward. Staff, community members, and town representatives all spoke of their desire for Needham teens to have a dedicated spot in the community that would encompass several needs, from study space to social connection. The vast majority of teens in Needham will attend a four-year college in the near future. Serving this population provides a wealth of support opportunities.

## Online Experiences

While not specific to public libraries, our expectations for customer service today are shaped by online experiences. How convenient it is to have an app available for any whim the public might have; unfettered access to unlimited options at any time of day or night, with no need for an ID or physical payment like a credit card or cash. A social media account is the new requirement mistakenly equated to digital fluency. In Needham, this is a particularly salient challenge, manifesting in two disparate ways in terms of the teen and senior populations. The entire community needs to know how to appropriately evaluate content to engage in meaningful civic and cultural conversations, particularly to foster connections in local and global neighborhoods.

In terms of this unlimited access and the pressing need for immediate response times, it is necessary to consider the expectations placed on the Library, both in terms of operations and personnel and explore the ways they are being relied upon to provide this level of service. NFPL must continue to simultaneously offer in-person and virtual experiences (and factor in associated costs). Physical audio-visual formats are being replaced with digital content that is more expensive to purchase and comes with many publisher-driven limitations for multiple users. This must be an area of continued focus.

- <https://www.libraryjournal.com/story/three-trends-future>
- <https://publiclibrariesonline.org/2016/10/the-library-of-the-future-is-coming-and-its-all-about-experience/>
- <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/13614533.2022.2058174>
- <https://publiclibrariesonline.org/2021/12/gazing-into-the-crystal-ball/>

## Equity, Diversity, Inclusion & Belonging (EDIB)

Libraries were built on the idea that knowledge, particularly representative knowledge, is power, and access to that power transforms lives. NFPL would be remiss not to place an EDIB lens on all aspects of public library work, including external, public-facing things like collections, displays, book lists, and programs. It also means improving existing EDIB priorities internally on hiring and setting staff expectations and values. Not only has NFPL referenced its intentions with its statement *Trustees' Commitment to Equity and Inclusion*<sup>3</sup>, but it was raised as a priority by the town representatives who participated in the focus group. Additionally, the Town of Needham has incorporated these themes into its Select Board's goals, specifically its Goal #4) Healthy & Socially Thriving: Initiatives. EDIB also repeatedly appeared in focus groups with the public, mainly focusing on collections and readers advisory.

Some community members need the NFPL and may need to learn or understand public libraries and their offerings. Throughout the Goals, there is a significant emphasis on outreach and investments in various services and materials to ensure that everyone who needs or wants to use the Library feels welcomed and empowered to do so.

## Conclusions

The trends shown draw directly from feedback from the Needham community. These trends are universal, extending beyond public libraries, and readily addressed as action items, providing an opportunity to learn from and build on what other libraries are doing to enhance NFPL's success and then share it with others. The lingering question is how NFPL will prioritize service for teens and seniors while maintaining excellence across all library departments.

Much of the solution lies in Design Thinking, a new trend in libraries that provides an opportunity for the staff to be hands-on in imagining creative solutions to deepen engagement with NFPL users and close any service gaps. The Design Thinking for Libraries toolkit offers "a way of working that will help you understand the needs of your patrons and engage your communities like never before. Design Thinking allows us to work together to discover what our communities want and experiment to create services, programs, and processes to meet their changing needs<sup>4</sup>. [It] could change the role of managers and leaders, placing a greater emphasis on their ability to facilitate cultures in which innovation and creation are the primary goals<sup>5</sup>."

The NFPL patrons' experience of the Library, and whether that experience is positive or negative, is the most controllable internal element under new leadership. Staff must take the lead in this mode of thinking. The plan heavily relies on a well-versed team in agility and adaptability. With dedicated investment, both financially and operationally, staff will gain a deeper understanding of the service mindset and develop the skills necessary to take the NFPL to the highest levels of success and innovation.

The NFPL staff, Administration, Board of Trustees, and all stakeholders should support these endeavors and seek accountability, particularly concerning customer service and collection development.







# Goals 2023-2027

**GOAL 1:** Provide a seamless, efficient, equitable, and outstanding user experience.

**Objective 1:** Offer superior customer service to all library users.

Actions:

1. Set aside a staff day with a facilitator to work with staff to determine the organization's core service values and priorities.
2. Hire an external customer service training facilitator. Define what superior service will look like—set standards and expectations.
3. Systematically review all policies (in collaboration with Trustees) and procedures to align with newly established values and service standards. Edit, revise, and review with staff as needed.
4. Dedicate time for staff training at least twice a year.
5. Grow staff's cultural engagement and understanding by offering specific training using demographic data and staff insights. Develop Equity, Diversity, Inclusion, and Belonging (EDIB) competencies.

**Objective 2:** Encourage feedback and constructive criticism from library users.

Actions:

1. Create patron feedback groups for children, teens, and adults to engage users and test ideas and improvements actively.
2. Maintain awareness of library user opinions, comments, and interests through periodic surveys and other means (seasonally or twice a year).

**Objective 3:** Ensure staff will be appropriately allocated throughout the organization.

Actions:

1. Audit service hours, cross-referenced with circulation data, for a projected ideal staffing ratio per department.
2. Use ratio to explore the potential for cross-training teams/service desk staffing.
3. Audit workflow and processes; determine areas where more training is needed; begin the process of succession planning at the Department Head level.
4. Create a five-year Ideal Staffing Proposal with personnel costs that factor in demographic trends, potential staff retirements, readjustment of current resources, and audit of future needs.

**GOAL 2:** Increase visibility as a key community partner, known and valued by everyone in Needham.

**Objective 1:** Grow the Library's visibility and position as the heart of the community.

Actions:

1. Create a community outreach plan and narrow specific locations such as assisted living facilities, recreation events, etc. Investigate the possibility of assigning a staff liaison to each outreach location for relationship building and communication.
2. Add a library-sponsored Storywalk to various outdoor spaces.
3. Expand live storytime at events throughout the Town and at key recreation spots regularly.
4. Investigate the purchase of a bookmobile or other ways of meeting people in the community.

**Objective 2:** Strengthen the relationship between the Town and the Library.

Actions:

1. Review and document in Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) internal processes related to the Town, specifically human resources, onboarding, communication, inventory, auditing,

- and financials. Collaborate on any Equity, Diversity, Inclusion, and Belonging proposals, processes, or training offered in Needham.
- 2. Create an internal library new hire orientation process directly involving the Town. Expand the process in reverse to offer new hire orientations for Town employees on library offerings.
- 3. Work with relevant representatives and the MBLC to create an administrative organizational chart that clarifies roles for Administration, Trustees, Town Departments, and critical stakeholders like Friends and the Foundation.
- 4. Work with Town Departments (specifically the Town Clerk) to systematically pull and review all library-related charters and mandates. Ensure compliance. (See: OBJECTIVE 3: Action 1).

**Objective 3:** Become a trusted and reliable resource for information about the Town.

Actions:

- 1. Ensure that the Library has copies of all essential documentation, investigate archival storage charters, and ensure all are available and communicated to the public.
- 2. Develop internal systems to ensure library events are on the Town's community calendar.
- 3. Add a community corner to the Library for one central access point for information and resources about Needham.

**GOAL 3:** Offer a user experience catered to the specific wants and needs of the Needham community.

**Objective 1:** Improve service, space, outreach, and resources for Emerging Adults.

Actions:

- 1. Investigate hiring more Teen Room staff (see Goal 1; Objective 3).
- 2. Work with the school department on a campaign to issue a library card to every school-aged Needham resident (resulting in every high school student possessing an active library card).
- 3. Ensure that all schools have at least one yearly visit by a public librarian.
- 4. Work with schools to facilitate mandatory library visits for rising middle school students.
- 5. Redesign the physical space dedicated to teens to encourage socialization and study. Add designated tech, STEM, gaming, and silent study spaces.
- 6. Investigate the potential for food options (i.e., vending machines).
- 7. Expand and manage summer teen volunteer opportunities for school credit. Develop SOP for potential expansion to other town departments.
- 8. Invest in more multimedia and gaming options.

**Objective 2:** Improve service, space, outreach, and resources for Seniors.

Actions:

- 1. Investigate hiring a Senior Services Librarian to focus exclusively on service to this population. (see also: Goal 1; Objective 3).
- 2. Work with nursing homes and assisted living locations to issue library cards to every resident.
- 3. Ensure monthly visits to all nursing homes and assisted living locations.
- 4. Research needs and offer specialized services for Seniors such as tours, delivery options, smaller niche collections at other locations, and customized tech help and classes.
- 5. Evaluate current Large Print materials, and determine a five-year spending increase to grow the collection. (See: Goal 4; Objective 1)
- 6. Work with the Town to partner with Senior Corps, the program for seniors to volunteer at NFPL (e.g., tax pay-off services).

7. Review Materials by Mail and explore the potential for expanding this service.
8. Investigate potential for intergenerational programming (Grandparents Story Hour, Teen and Senior STEAM workshops, etc.) Explore grant potential.

**Objective 3:** Invest in “24/7” and mobile library concepts.

Actions:

1. Investigate hiring an Outreach Librarian.
2. Analyze options to install 24-hour smart lockers and material vending machines outside the NFPL and other locations like train stations and the public pool.
3. Enhance website capabilities to expand access to services online (room booking, museum passes, library cards, etc.). Ensure compatibility with the town-wide calendar.

**Objective 4:** Strengthen the Library’s branding and marketing.

Actions:

1. Create a cohesive library communication plan: set standards, regulatory processes, and timelines.
2. Develop library style guides for marketing, design, language, social media content, etc.
3. Investigate developing a public-facing Annual Report or Infographic document to highlight successes.
4. Regularly survey website users for feedback. Use Google Analytics to study current patterns of use and identify problem areas.
5. Engage staff and patrons with fun and relevant library merchandise, like pool towels, waterproof Kindles (or for Library of Things, koozies, coolers, earbuds, and reading lights).

**GOAL 4:** Provide access to an outstanding, diverse collection of materials for Needham patrons and understand the importance of building and promoting a representative collection.

**Objective 1:** Anticipate an ongoing need for accessible and current collections in various formats.

Actions:

1. Find a brighter and more accessible location for Large Print.
2. Create a five-year spending plan for Large Print materials. (See: Goal 3; Objective 2; Action 5)
3. Create a funding plan to maintain audiovisual collections without withdrawing support for these materials while increasing the e-content budget needed for all populations.
4. Increase instruction and assistance in downloadable materials, devices, and resources.
5. Designate a computer terminal exclusively for e-book (and possibly e-video and e-music) downloads and tutorials.

**Objective 2:** Equity, Diversity, Inclusion, and Belonging (EDIB) are core tenets of all collections.

Actions:

1. Audit the collection for EDIB titles.
2. Set standards so all titles related to programming, speakers, series, art displays, promotion, etc., are audited for EDIB.
3. Train staff in Reader’s Advisory, resulting in superior EDIB knowledge of materials.



**Objective 3:** Investigate the development of an English Language Learning (ELL) Collection in the Children's Room.

Actions:

1. Entice existing patrons with a vibrant, browseable, accessible ELL section with takeaways, free materials, course information (including in surrounding towns), transportation schedules, and simple instructions on obtaining a library card.
2. Reach out to schools, daycares, and other child-focused organizations to determine the needs of those who utilize the Children's Room.
3. Explore the feasibility of simultaneous programs for parents/caregivers learning specific ELL skills and small children needing care.
4. Invite feedback; explore the development of flyers in multiple languages describing the collections, encouraging use, and suggestions for additional titles.

**Objective 4:** Consolidate and refocus World Languages, emphasizing Needham patrons.

Actions:

1. Assess the entire collection. Weed as needed.
2. Study circulation data and assess spoken languages in Needham to determine a core world language collection for Needham patrons. Take advantage of and promote collections available in the Minuteman Network.
3. Explore World Language Collections at neighboring libraries for inspiration on location and display.
4. Determine a simple way to catalog the collection so it is easily accessible to World Language speakers.
5. Ensure viability with options; more browsable collections in native languages.
6. Invite feedback; develop flyers in multiple languages describing the collections, encouraging use, and suggestions for additional titles.
7. Copy process for youth collections for consistency.

**GOAL 5:** Ensure staff is well-trained and fluent in analytic resources to provide the best collection of materials for the community.

**Objective 1:** Evaluate and standardize Collection Development practices.

Actions:

1. Investigate hiring a Collection Development Specialist Librarian.
2. Create monthly reports of items routed to Needham from other libraries; use this information to identify gaps in the collection.
3. Create a quarterly report of subscription database use; adjust selections and promotion efforts accordingly, precisely in line with teen and senior populations.
4. Create an annual circulation report by statistical categories (SCATs) to determine high and low circulations per number of holdings; use the information to adjust selections, building heavily used areas and relying on the network for less popular areas.
5. Evaluate and standardize action items 2-4 into a Collection Development SOP.

**Objective 2:** Reduce wait times associated with popular physical and digital materials.

Actions:

1. Review and record data on wait times across collections for an accurate starting point; aim to reduce wait times at a specific percentage.
2. Explore/investigate offering a sub-collection to allow access to new titles and best sellers without waiting on holds.
3. Study other libraries' methodologies on multiple copy purchasing.
4. Relevant staff should take specific training on Overdrive Advantage and cost-per-circ purchasing options and become fluent in Boston Public Library's e-card benefits.

**Objective 3:** Clarify the process and create an SOP for patron requests for purchase.

Actions:

1. Train staff on the process for handling patron requests.
2. Publicize SOP for transparency and consistency.
3. Regularly promote the most read and requested titles in Needham.

**Objective 4:** Ensure library staff is fluent in statistical analysis for all circulation functions.

Actions:

1. Revise and document Collection Development standards, and create maintenance schedules.
2. Relevant staff should train on Minuteman's statistical analysis tools.
3. Work with Minuteman to utilize geo-mapping tools for circulation and census data and analyze results related to using the Library.
4. All staff are up to date on all Collection Development tools offered by Minuteman Library Network (i.e., Create Lists).

**GOAL 6:** Allocate time and resources to explore the future use of interior and exterior space and design.

**Objective 1:** Audit interior and exterior use of space.

Actions:

1. Audit for Accessibility & Safety, specifically for disabled and senior patron usage.
2. Evaluate tech and wireless capabilities in the building (ports, outlets, etc.)
3. Hire a space planner to investigate upgrades to interior and exterior spaces. Ideas include: taking better advantage of light and windows, condensing adult collections to one floor, more study rooms, and designated areas with tech capabilities for teens.

**Objective 2:** Reorganize the Children's Room.

Actions:

1. Explore systems within Children's Rooms at area libraries to determine a plan to consolidate CR sections/call numbers into an approachable system. Identify priority areas to begin implementation.
2. Evaluate the reading level, call number relationship, and micro-collections such as J Collective Biographies, J PIC Caldecott, J MBCA, etc., for maintenance, consistency, and alignment with ARIS reporting.

**Objective 3:** Emphasize sustainability in any plans.

Actions:

1. Investigate the potential for solar panels.
2. Install electric vehicle charging stations in the parking lot.
3. Research steps and requirements to become a zero-waste library.
4. Connect sustainability to grant and funding opportunities.
5. Investigate and join Town-led initiatives for sustainability and waste reduction. (See Goal 2; Objective 2)

# Acknowledgments

The Needham Free Public Library would like to thank the following individuals for their support and feedback during the strategic planning process:

The Library Staff who took the time to participate in the focus group and share their honest and helpful feedback about the Library, particularly behind the scenes.

Town Department Directors and representatives who participated in a focus group  
All the community members who responded to the “Needham Free Public Library Strategic Planning Survey.”

All the focus group and interview participants were engaged in the process, thoughtful in their responses, and generous with their time.

Sarah Breen, Ran Cronin, & Danielle Tawa compiled an in-depth community and demographic profile of Needham.

## Board of Library Trustees:

Kathleen Cahill Allison, Chair

Anna Giraldo-Kerr, Vice Chair

Jay M. Fialkov, Secretary (Strategic Plan Working Group)

Thomas M. Harkins

Robert Petitt (Strategic Plan Working Group)

Carol J. Thomas

Erhardt Graeff

## Library Administration:

Kim Hewitt, Director

Demetri Kyriakis, Assistant Director

Facilitator: Kelly Linehan





# Community Profile: Needham, Massachusetts

Prepared by Sarah Breen, Ran Cronin, & Danielle Tawa

Incorporated in 1711, Needham is a town in Norfolk County in the suburbs of Boston. According to the 2020 US Census, the population of Needham was 32,091, with a median household income of \$174,707. Primarily a commuter town with easy access to the MBTA's Commuter Rail, Needham has grown recently to attract some large companies such as SharkNinja and TripAdvisor and housing several large media firms such as WCVB (Channel 5). Needham is also the home of Olin College.

## Education Information<sup>6</sup>

### General Enrollment

- 2021-22 Total Enrollment, Needham Public Schools: 5,515
- Total Needham Population: 32,091
- Public School Students as a Percentage of the Population: 17.18% (Massachusetts: 13.05%)
- Private school attendance: 1,241<sup>7</sup>

Enrollment by Race/Ethnicity	District	State
African American	3.1 %	9.3%
Asian	10.8%	7.2%
Hispanic	6.6%	23.1%
Native American	0.1 %	0.2%
White	73.6 %	55.7%
Native Hawaiian, Pacific Islander	0.1 %	0.1%
Multi-Race, Non-Hispanic	5.8 %	4.3%

### Enrollment by Gender

Gender	District	State
Male	2,721; 49.3%	442,763; 48.5%
Female	2,781; 50.4%	467,772; 51.3%
Nonbinary	13; 0.2%	994; 0.1%





### High Needs Population & Disabilities<sup>8</sup>

The number of “High Needs” students in Needham (27.4%) is lower than in Massachusetts (55.6%) as a whole. According to the United States Department of Education, “High Needs Students” are defined as “Students at risk of educational failure or otherwise in need of special assistance and support, such as students who are living in poverty, who attend high-minority schools (as defined in the Race to the Top application), who are far below grade level, who have left school before receiving a regular high school diploma, who are at risk of not graduating with a diploma on time, who are homeless, who are in foster care, who have been incarcerated, who have disabilities, or who are English learners.” The percentage of students with disabilities is less than the state average (Needham: 18.2%; Massachusetts: 19.1%).

### English Language Learning and Non-Native English Speakers <sup>9</sup>

- 3.2% enrolled in Needham’s English Language Learning program, compared to 11.0% registered across Massachusetts.
- 11.1% of Needham students speak a language other than English at home, compared to 23.9% across Massachusetts.
- The two most common languages besides English spoken are Chinese (20.9%) and Russian (18.1%).

### Economics of Students <sup>10</sup>

The number of economically disadvantaged students enrolled in Needham (8.4%) is vastly lower than in Massachusetts (43.8%).

- Needham had a dropout rate of 0.1% for the 2020-21 school year, much lower than the dropout rate for Massachusetts (1.5%).
- The graduation rate in 2021 for Needham (97.4%) was much higher than the state graduation rate (89.8%).
- 91% of Needham’s graduates planned to attend college in some form. This includes private and public as well as four-year and two-year institutions and is much higher than the 72% of Massachusetts graduates planning to attend higher education institutions in 2021.
- 90% of Needham’s graduates planned to attend a four-year college (private or public) compared to 58.3% of Massachusetts graduates.
- According to the Census Quick Facts 2021, 97.9% of Needham’s population aged 25 years or more attained a high school degree or higher. This fact shows a percentage higher than the average in Massachusetts, which is 91.1%.
- 81% of Needham’s population, aged 25 years or more, attained a Bachelor’s degree or higher compared to Massachusetts’ population at 44.5%.

### Race/Ethnicity<sup>11</sup>

- White only: 26,297 (82%)
- Black or African American only: 484 (1.5%)
- American Indian or Alaskan Native only: 26 (<1%)
- Asian only: 3,045 (9.5%)
- Hispanic: 1,331 (4.2%)<sup>12</sup>
- Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islanders only: 3 (<1%)
- One other race: 401 (1.25%)
- Two or more races: 1,835 (5.7%)

## Economics, including Employment, Income<sup>13</sup>

- The median household income for Needham, according to 2021 ACS, is \$182,813, more than double the median income for Massachusetts (\$89,026).
- 1.8% of Needham households bring in an income of \$10,000 or less, well below the 5.4% of Massachusetts households making the same amount.
- 67.2% of Needham's population is part of the civilian workforce. (Massachusetts: 67.1%)
- 3.8% of Needham's population identify as Veterans (Massachusetts: 4.2%). The majority of the Veterans identify as Vietnam War Veterans (29.3%).
- According to the ACS, the unemployment rate for Needham was 3.3% in 2021 (Massachusetts: 3.6%).
- There is no government career center or unemployment office in Needham. The closest centers are located in Cambridge, Boston, and Framingham.
- According to the ACS, 2.3% of Needham's residents live below the poverty line (Massachusetts: 9.9%).
- A more significant number of people living below the poverty line in Needham are 65 and older.
  - Under 18 years old: 0.8% (Massachusetts: 12.6%)
  - 18-64 years old: 2.4% (Massachusetts: 9.6%)
  - 65 years and older: 4.6% (Massachusetts: 10.6%)
- Ethnic minorities make up the next portion of Needham residents living below the poverty line:
  - African-American/Black: 2.5% (Massachusetts: 16.7%)
  - Asian: 5.4% (Massachusetts: 11.4%)
  - Hispanic/Latino(a): 0.5% (Massachusetts: 22.5%)

## Housing/Household/ Family Information<sup>14</sup>

- There are 11,260 housing units in Needham, according to the 2021 American Community Survey (ACS).
- Most household units in Needham are 1-unit houses, with 82.9% of residential buildings having one unit. (Massachusetts: 57.3%).
- 84.4% of all housing units are owner occupied, with 15.6% being rental occupied units (Massachusetts: owner occupied 62.4%, renter occupied 37.6%)
- 53.5% of all owner-occupied units have a value between \$500,000 - \$999,999.
- 41.4% have a value of \$1,000,000 or more.
- 42.3% of households have one or more people under 18. (Massachusetts: 28.0%)
- 45.9% of households have one or more people 60 years and older. (Massachusetts 42.4%)<sup>15</sup>

## Aging<sup>16</sup>

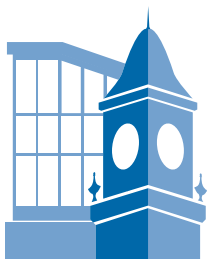
- The median age for Needham is 43.9.
- Needham's two largest age groups are 10-14 at 8.9% and 55-59 at 8.2%.
- According to the Metropolitan Area Planning Council, the number of residents aged 65 and older will continue to increase, with 59% projected to increase between 2010 and 2030.

## Endnotes

- 1 <https://www.libraryjournal.com/story/three-trends-future>
- 2 <https://www.libraryjournal.com/story/three-trends-future>
- 3 <https://needhamlibrary.org/trustees-commitment/>
- 4 <http://designthinkingforlibraries.com/>
- 5 “Can design thinking redesign higher ed?” Lee Gardner, Chronicle of Higher Education, September 15, 2017, available from <https://www.chronicle.com/article/Can-Design-Thinking-Redesign/241126>.
- 6 <https://profiles.doe.mass.edu/general/general.aspx?topNavID=1&leftNavId=100&orgcode=01990000&orgtypecode=5>
- 7 <https://profiles.doe.mass.edu/statereport/schoolattendingchildren.aspx>
- 8 <https://www.ed.gov/race-top/district-competition/definitions> & <https://app.powerbigov.us/view?r=eyJrIjoiZDcyMjUxYmUtOWFkYS00NWQ2LTllMjltMWE2Yjc4ZDQyYTY2IiwidCI6IjNlODYxZDE2LTQ4YjctNGEwZS05ODA2LThjMDRkODFiN2IyYSJ9>
- 9 <https://app.powerbigov.us/view?r=eyJrIjoiZDcyMjUxYmUtOWFkYS00NWQ2LTllMjltMWE2Yjc4ZDQyYTY2IiwidCI6IjNlODYxZDE2LTQ4YjctNGEwZS05ODA2LThjMDRkODFiN2IyYSJ9>
- 10 <https://app.powerbigov.us/view?r=eyJrIjoiZDcyMjUxYmUtOWFkYS00NWQ2LTllMjltMWE2Yjc4ZDQyYTY2IiwidCI6IjNlODYxZDE2LTQ4YjctNGEwZS05ODA2LThjMDRkODFiN2IyYSJ9>
- 11 <https://datausa.io/profile/geo/needham-ma>  
<https://data.census.gov/cedsci/all?q=Needham%20town,%20Norfolk%20County,%20Massachusetts>
- 12 <https://data.census.gov/table?q=Needham+town,+Norfolk+County,+Massachusetts&tid=ACSDP5Y2021.DP05>
- 13 <https://data.census.gov/cedsci/table?q=Needham%20economic>
- 14 <https://data.census.gov/cedsci/table?q=massachusetts%20family>
- 15 <https://data.census.gov/cedsci/table?q=massachusetts%20family>
- 16 <https://data.census.gov/cedsci/table?q=Needham,%20ma&tid=ACSST5Y2020.S0101>







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