



Montague Public Libraries

Strategic Plan
2023-2028

Welcome to the Plan

The Montague Public Libraries serve Montague's 8,580 residents in three of the town's five villages: Turners Falls, Montague Center, and Millers Falls.

This Strategic Plan was developed over the course of months by the Trustees of the Montague Public Libraries and Library Director, Caitlin Kelley. The plan seeks to identify and prioritize the needs in the community that can be supported by library services, materials, and spaces.

These needs informed the creation of broad goals for the libraries, which have been narrowed into objectives to be met over the next five years. These objectives will be further refined into action items that the libraries plan to accomplish each year.

The Mission

The Montague Public Libraries offer materials, services, and programs to foster educational, cultural, and recreational enrichment in the community. Everyone is welcome through our doors.

Planning Methodology

The Special Services Subcommittee and Library Director used a multi-pronged approach to gather community feedback. A community survey was released online and in paper form in February of 2022. Several hundred copies were added as inserts to the local paper and copies were made available in English and Spanish at all library locations and many local gathering places. 185 responses were collected.

In April, MLS consultant Michelle Eberle conducted a focus group with a combination of library users and non-users, which included local service providers, town representatives, parents, a teen, retirees, and working adults. Through May, June, and July the Library Director conducted nine one-on-one interviews with local residents of diverse backgrounds and experiences.

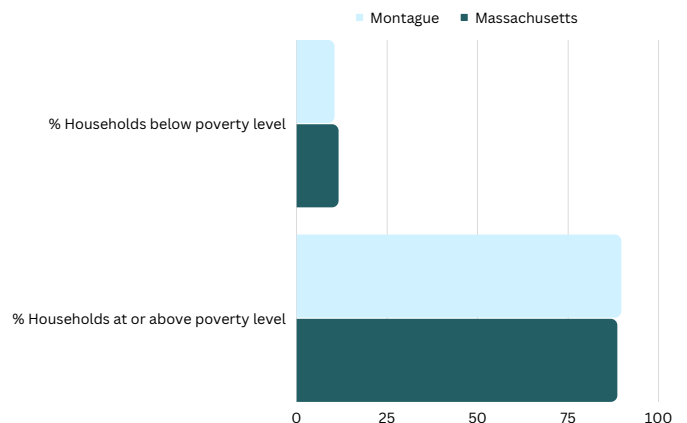
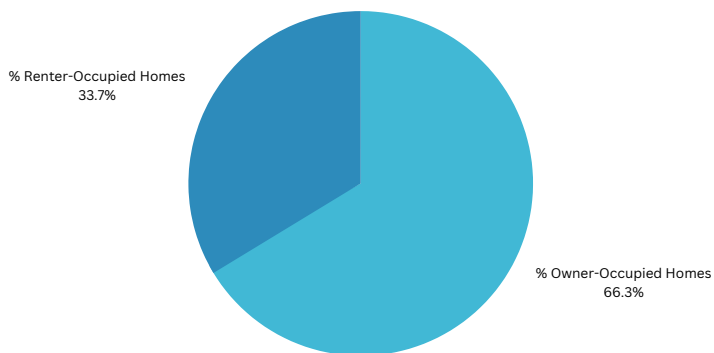
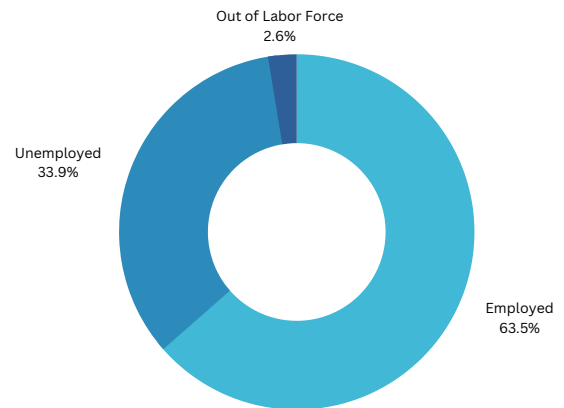
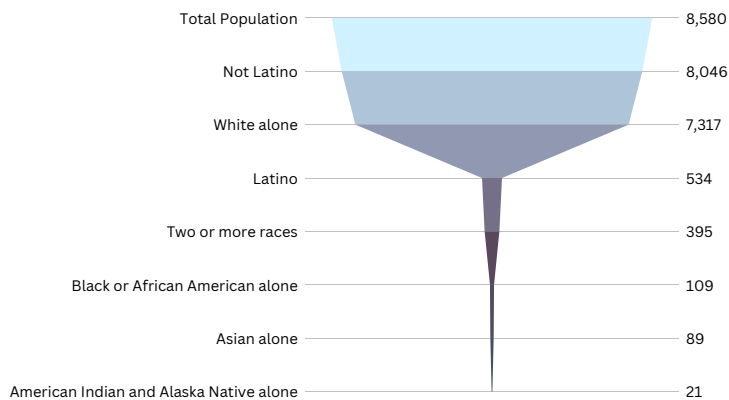
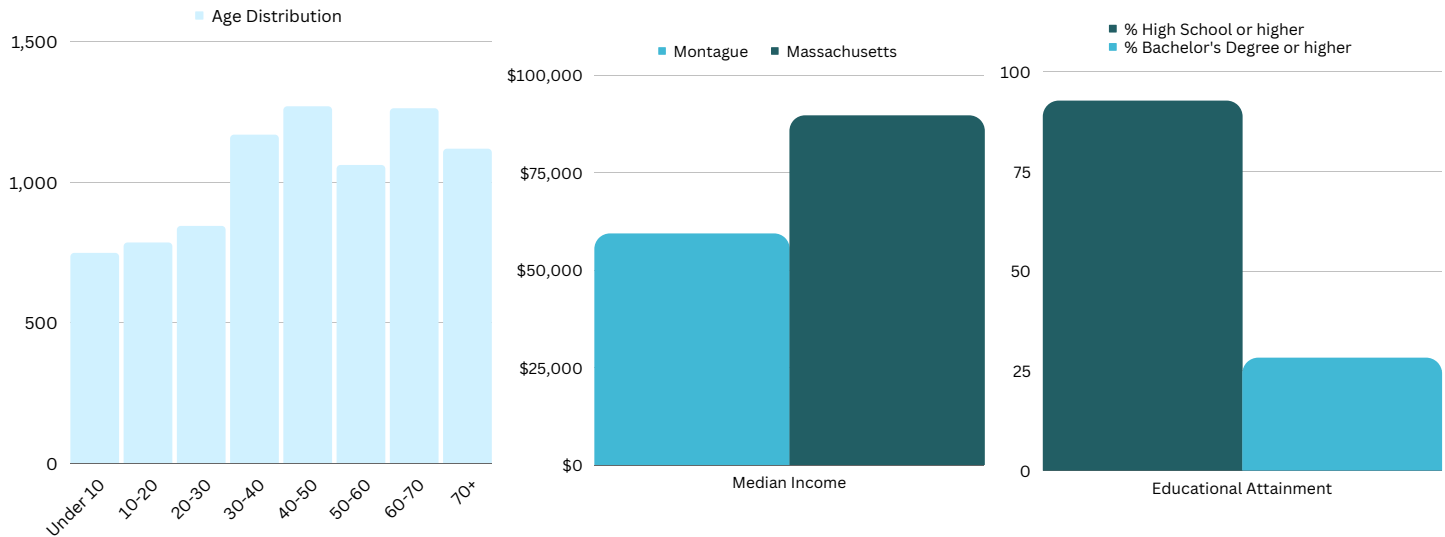
The survey, focus group and interviews, sought feedback on patron experiences in and visions for the Montague community, patron use of the library and library materials, library staffing, hours of operation, programming, library spaces, and future priorities.

In August and September, the Special Services Subcommittee met several times to review the data gathered over the year alongside US Census Bureau data, and a space consultation report, reviewing all three MPL library buildings, by MBLC consultant, Lauren Stara. The plan was completed in October and approved by the Trustees of the Montague Public Libraries on 10/24/2022.



"I love the public library! I use it all the time and feel it is one of the most valuable community resources. The staff are wonderful."

Montague: A Community Snapshot



28% of Montague Residents do not have a computer at home
47.4% of students in the Gill/Montague school district are economically disadvantaged

What we learned: the strengths

The Montague Public Libraries' greatest asset is its staff. The feedback that we gathered highlights this fact over and over again. 93.9% of survey respondents agree or strongly agree that the Montague Public Libraries have excellent customer service and 95.6% agree or strongly agree that they feel welcome when they visit Montague's libraries. A focus group participant commented, "staff are resourceful, helpful, really outstanding, a lifeline." A survey respondent similarly expressed, "excellent staff: helpful, friendly, informative, non-judgmental." Children's staff were given extra kudos for meeting the ongoing challenges of COVID 19 by providing take-and-make STEAM and craft kits and by moving a number of family programs outdoors.

Other strengths include access to the CW/MARS consortium, which allows patrons to borrow books from dozens of MA towns. Multiple interviewees remarked on the value of the libraries' local history collection and expressed their wish that it be more available to the public. Focus group participants noted that the libraries felt like a community gathering space, a neighborhood anchor where they could meet and engage with neighborhood friends and new people, too.

Patrons are pleased with the new variety of collections, including the Carnegie's seed library and the Library(ies) of Things. They want more programming on local history, gardening, and literature and they want to be able to find out about programs and library initiatives through multiple outlets. Many people expressed how much they value being able to walk to their local library. Patrons want to see the libraries collaborate with local service providers, the schools, and town departments.

"I moved to town about 6 months ago, and immediately fell in love with this little library. It provides such a valuable service, and I really appreciate the staff who work there."

What we learned: the barriers

Of the libraries' barriers, patrons noted that the Carnegie Library's hours are insufficient and the schedule is unwieldy and difficult to remember. Many requested additional branch hours as well. Both focus group participants and survey respondents lamented the lack of meeting space and comfortable seating that invites patrons to study, read, and stay a while. One survey respondent explained, "I am in Turners Falls and there are not many places in town that someone can go to work/study without spending a lot of money. The Carnegie library currently does not have a great setup for people to sit there and study. I have tried a few times before and it is very uncomfortable." Another patron commented, "provide a larger space in the children's area for families to hang out, read together, and utilize computers and other library resources." Survey respondents also noted the small size of the YA collection, that there is no teen area to speak of, and that our public computers are slow and lack privacy.

Of all the weaknesses listed though, what featured most prominently across the focus group, survey results, and interviews was the buildings' inaccessibility, specifically at the Carnegie Library. Noted was a lack of accessible parking, inaccessible and underutilized second floors at both the Montague Center Branch and the Carnegie Library, and inaccessible bookshelves. One interviewee did not mince words when they commented, "the physical layout is atrocious." Another lamented, "I stopped going to the library when I could no longer get my physically disabled child up to the second floor for the kid's programs. He's a social person and would love to participate in the community but access to your programs are difficult, never mind trying to maneuver an extended base wheelchair through bookcases." That 70% of survey respondents marked "providing safe, adequate, accessible, inviting library facilities that meet the needs of the community" as the libraries' first priority in the next five years really drives the point home.

"In the 22 years that I've been in TF, the libraries haven't changed a bit. A new, modernized building accessible to the entire community with actual space for community functions and events...is really needed. Turners has grown immensely, but the library hasn't been allowed to keep up with it."

Goals and Objectives

Goal:

Provide the Montague Communities with diverse, up-to-date, and relevant collections

Objectives:

- Collect and respond to data and patron feedback regarding the use of the libraries' collections
- Provide patrons with collections that inform and delight in a variety of formats
- Think outside the boundaries of traditional collections to provide patrons with inspiring experiences



The Carnegie's Library of Things



Goal:

Provide the Montague communities with library spaces that support resident needs

Objectives:

- Reconfigure public spaces for patron enjoyment
- Reconfigure public spaces for accessibility
- Promote patron use of library grounds
- Ensure good stewardship of library buildings
- Explore the library space needs of a changing, vibrant community
- Consider the construction of a new main branch to better meet the community's needs

Goals and Objectives

Goal:

Provide services and programming that serve community interests and needs

Objectives:

- Collaborate with local service providers, non-profit institutions, and town departments to provide relevant and responsive programming to residents of all ages, interests, and backgrounds
- Seek new connections for outreach and partnership opportunities
- Offer library programming and library experiences outside of library spaces
- Provide consistent and convenient hours of operation

"I have been visiting my local Montague Center library since I was small child in the early 70's. The Montague Center library is a part of what I consider to be my home town and I plan to keep visiting/using this library for many years to come."



Miller's Food Pantry

Goal:

Effectively communicate with the public

Objectives:

- Provide multi-point access to information about library programming, services, materials, and facilities updates
- Promote a clear and consistent organizational identity for the Montague Public Libraries
- Develop staff support for library communication to the public
- Increase community engagement with and knowledge of the library

Goals and Objectives

Goal:

Support the preservation of and facilitate public access to the libraries' local history collection

Objectives:

- Properly store and preserve local history materials
- Ensure accessibility and findability of local history materials to the public
- Build relationships with local history stakeholders to promote cultural heritage of Montague to the community

"There are a lot of people who are alone, but they come here and they find community and they find the resources they need to get online and find a job. You know, I see a lot of that over the years using these computers in order to get their first introduction to the local economy."

Goal:

Support technology access and technology literacy

Objectives:

- Offer guidance for public use of library technology
- Provide access to up-to-date and relevant technology for the public



Carnegie Seed Library

Goal:

Provide an enriching work environment for library staff, supporting growth and interests

Objectives:

- Develop and support regular staff training opportunities
- Establish staff supervision protocols