



Beverly Public Library

Strategic Plan FY2025 – FY2030

Approved by the Board of Library Trustees on September 19, 2023



A Note from the Library Director



Dear Beverly Public Library Patrons, Community Partners, and Friends,

It is with great excitement that I share with you our Strategic Plan for FY2025-2030. It is an ambitious plan that provides a framework for the library to meet the needs of our community and deliver high quality services. The plan was based on extensive research that included input from patrons, community members, city government, and library staff. The process allowed us to think about our current strengths, the opportunities ahead of us, and what we most aspire to do and achieve. We have set the bar high, and we know we can achieve it.

Above all, we want everyone to feel welcome in the library. Whether visiting one of our locations in person or online, we hope you find resources that inspire you and improve your life. How can we help you? Launching this plan is just the beginning of the important work ahead of us. Let's get started.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'A. Babin', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Allison Babin
Library Director

Our Mission



The Beverly Public Library serves all members of the community by providing materials, services, and programs that enrich people's lives, foster a love of reading, and provide access to information. The library is a forum for all points of view and adheres to the principles of intellectual freedom as expressed in the Library Bill of Rights formulated by the American Library Association.

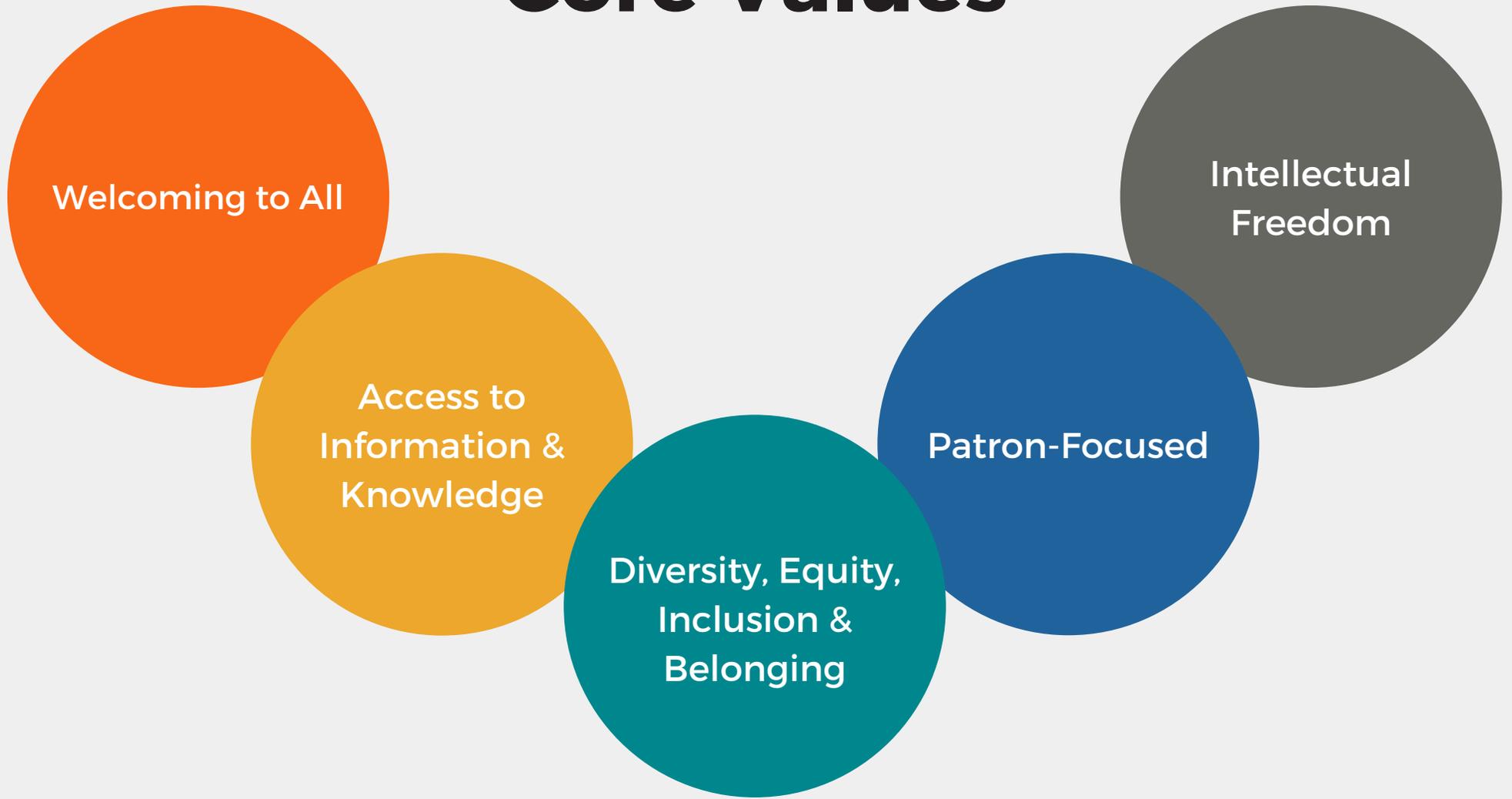




Our Vision

The Beverly Public Library inspires, engages, and connects the community, providing access for all with empathy and inclusion, through its expansive collection, exemplary customer service, and high quality programs and services.

Core Values



Key Focus Areas for FY25 - FY30



**Welcoming
Spaces**



**Collections
for Our
Community**



**Exemplary
Service**



**Engaging
Programs**



**Expanding
Our Reach**



**Adapting to
the Future**

A photograph of a children's library play area. In the foreground, a young boy is kneeling on a colorful rug, playing with a red and blue toy car. To his left, a woman in a plaid shirt is partially visible. In the background, several other children and adults are engaged in activities around a wooden table. The room has a drop ceiling with several pendant lights and a bookshelf in the distance.

Welcoming Spaces



Goal

The Beverly Public Library provides safe, respectful, and welcoming spaces.

Objectives for Welcoming Spaces



Advocate for funding to maintain, repair, and improve buildings and Bookmobile

Explore ways of reconfiguring spaces and improving wayfinding to meet current needs and increase accessibility

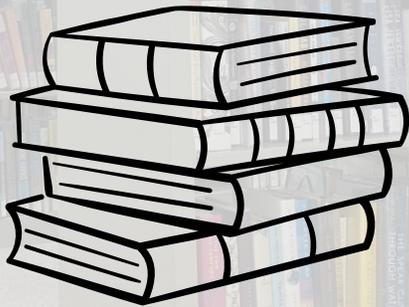
Foster an engaging and positive atmosphere that values diversity, equity, inclusion and belonging

Investigate additional ways to make the library safe and secure for patrons and staff, through technology, training, partnerships, and planning

Provide space for civic engagement and community gatherings



Collections for Our Community



Goal

The Beverly Public Library provides access to an expansive collection of books and materials to meet the needs of all members of our community.

Objectives for Collections for our Community



Using data-driven and responsive decision-making, develop the collection to meet and anticipate patrons' interests and needs

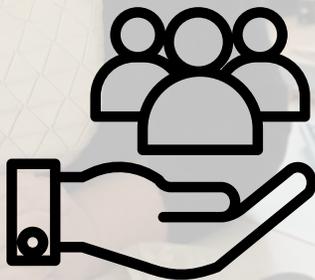
Promote literacy and the joy of reading through displays, reading celebrations, and special initiatives

Preserve and share the history of Beverly and the library through the library's special collections

Advocate for the community's right to read



Exemplary Service



Goal

The staff of the Beverly Public Library strive to provide exemplary service in all interactions, while delivering important services and providing pathways to inspiration.

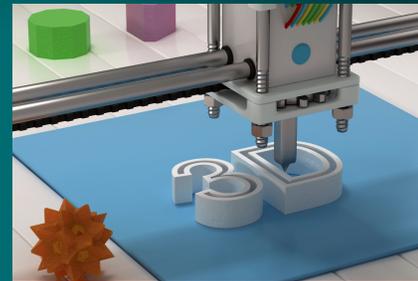
Objectives for Exemplary Service



Practice a patron-focused customer service approach, reflecting our commitment to diversity, equity, inclusion and belonging

Explore ways of reducing friction to improve patron experiences

Provide library staff with training and development opportunities to expand their skills, knowledge, and ability to innovate



Deliver services people want and need, such as providing access to technology (computers, 3D printer, etc.), reader's advisory, and reference assistance

Enrich the lives of patrons by providing arts and culture opportunities (e.g. art exhibits, museum passes, etc.)



A photograph of children interacting with a dog in a blue enclosure. A young girl in a white shirt and pink cap is petting the dog, while a young boy in an orange shirt looks on. Other children and an adult are visible in the background. The enclosure has a phone number (603) 923-... on the side.

Engaging Programs



Goal

People of all ages will have ample opportunities to enrich their lives, make connections, and learn through high quality programs.

Objectives for Engaging Programs



Create new documentation to standardize the delivery of high quality programs, incorporating core values of diversity, equity, inclusion and belonging

Identify barriers to program participation by collecting data to understand who participates in programs, who does not, and why

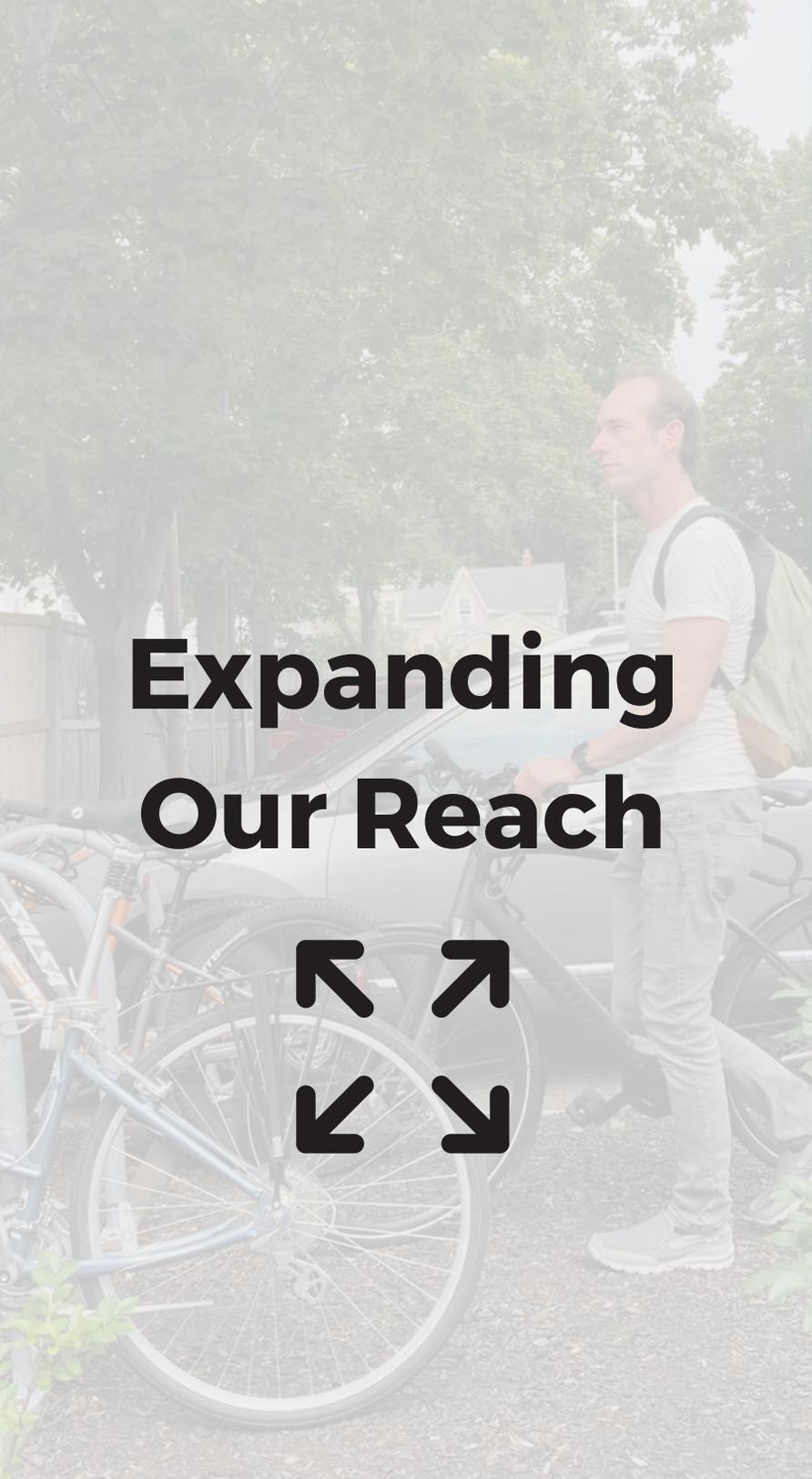
Explore ways of aligning program offerings to better serve all community members



Increase social components in library programs to better connect community members



Extend opportunities for residents to provide input to shape upcoming programs

A man with a backpack is standing next to a bicycle in a residential area. The background shows trees and a house. The image is overlaid with a semi-transparent dark grey rectangle on the right side.

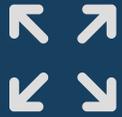
Expanding Our Reach



Goal

The library will aim to ensure that all residents understand what the library offers, and accordingly will seek out collaborations, partnerships, and feedback to better reach all residents.

Objectives for Expanding Our Reach



Raise public awareness of the library's resources and services through existing channels (e.g. social media, newsletter) and new methods

Work with appropriate agencies to improve alternative parking and transportation options for visiting the libraries

Maintain Bookmobile and home delivery service to reach residents who cannot otherwise visit the library

Collaborate with other organizations/schools on mutual goals





Adapting to the Future



Goal

The library will remain responsive and adaptive in its services, collections, and buildings as we experience changes in demographics, climate, and more.

Objectives for Adapting to the Future



Incorporate sustainability practices throughout library operations

Maintain financial stability through good stewardship of the library's budget and advocacy efforts

Research trends, collect data on library usage and the community, and make changes as needed in order to stay relevant

Investigate options for exporting library services, including virtually

Expect, and plan for, the unexpected



Appendix A: The Planning Process - Methodology



In early 2023, the Beverly Public Library embarked on a six-month long process of developing a new strategic plan. Following the COVID-19 pandemic, which coincided with a change in leadership, and with the previous plan set to expire, this was an opportune time for big picture thinking about the library's mission, areas of focus, and goals.

In consultation with the Library Trustees, especially Trustee Mary Behrle who served as facilitator/consultant, the Director instituted a data collection approach that included the following:

- **Collected and organized existing data.** A variety of information, including demographics, library statistics, and prior survey results, was collected and compiled into a printed Library and Community Profile. This would be used as a reference point throughout the planning process. Additionally it was distributed to participants in most exercises/conversations to provide context on the library's current offerings and the community at large.
- **Established a Strategic Planning Committee.** Made up of 12 community members with multifaceted roles, this group was designed to represent a wide range of stakeholders in the community. The committee met twice to participate in two exercises facilitated by Trustee Behrle: a SOAR (Strengths, Opportunities, Aspirations, and Results) and a Community Visioning. The SOAR helps assess the current environment, evaluate the present, and look to the future. The Community Visioning charged participants with brainstorming their visions for the city of Beverly at large. The group then consolidated statements, and voted on their favorite(s), paying special consideration to areas where the library can have an impact. Trustee Behrle compiled the results into a comprehensive document.

- **Launched a Community Survey.** The Community Survey contained a variety of attitudinal, awareness, and behavioral questions designed to obtain information about respondents' perceptions and preferences, awareness of offerings, and habits and behaviors. Optional demographic questions were included to help us learn how the library can better reach all members of the community. The survey was shared on the website and social media. Print copies were also distributed in the main library, Farms branch, Bookmobile, Senior Center and City Hall. In total, the library received 628 submissions.
- **Conducted a SOAR exercise and Values Discovery activity with staff.** The SOAR exercise previously done with the Committee was conducted with staff, and showed much overlap in content. The Values Discovery exercise invited staff to brainstorm core values as a team by thinking about our library and our role in the community. This allowed us to formalize long held ideals about how we serve the community. Once again, Trustee Behrle expertly compiled the results.
- **Held one-on-one conversations with stakeholders.** Conversations with individuals in key local government roles were held to both strengthen connections and to gather information from those with knowledge and authority on community trends, constituents' needs, and aspirations. Each of the nine Library Trustees was tasked with interviewing one of the nine City Councilors, and the Library Director met with Mayor Michael P. Cahill and Chief of Staff, Joscelyn Ruelle-Kersker.

All of the data collected was reviewed and analyzed by the Library Director and Assistant Director in the summer of 2023. Clear themes began to emerge. Relying heavily on Joy L. Fuller's [Strategic Planning for Public Libraries](#) and the Massachusetts Library System's Guide to Strategic Planning for Libraries, a draft plan was written. The new plan takes a more concise and colorful approach than those of years past, with the intention of being exciting, achievable, and adaptable. Action plans containing specific steps will be written annually to guide the library toward achieving the goals contained within.



Appendix B: Assessment of User Needs

Beverly, population 42,670, nicknamed the “Garden City,” is a historic seaside community with a diverse population. With four commuter rail stations and a walkable downtown arts district filled with thriving restaurants and shops, as well as public parks, gardens, and beaches, Beverly offers both natural beauty and urban amenities throughout its numerous neighborhoods.

A sampling of demographics from the 2020 United States Census show that:

- Beverly is 89.4% white. Further, [Beverly's Race Equity Audit Findings Report](#) shows that over the past 10 years, Beverly has steadily grown in both population and diversity, adding 3,200 residents to the city and nearly all new residents are non-white.
- The percentage of homes in Beverly with languages spoken other than English is 11.8%.
- 60.3% of housing units in Beverly are owner-occupied, with a median value of \$485,800. The median value is considerably higher than the state median of \$424,700.
- The median household income for Beverly is \$89,882, which is just slightly higher than the state average of \$89,026.
- 10% of Beverly residents live in poverty.
- 50.5% of Beverly adults aged 25 years and older have a bachelor's degree or higher.
- 88.8% of Beverly households have a broadband internet connection.

It was evident from the community survey and the discussions at the strategic planning committee meetings that the Beverly Public Library is perceived as a vital part of the community and plays an important role in creating connections among residents. The SOAR exercises conducted by the strategic planning committee members and library employees highlighted many of the same Strengths, Opportunities, Aspirations and Results.

The strengths of the library lie in its role as a community gathering space, a staff with a strong customer service ethic, a wide variety of programming, collaboration with other community groups, and promotion of arts and culture. Many respondents noted the value that the library's membership in the NOBLE network brings to Beverly residents. Strategic planning committee members, library staff, and survey respondents all point to the need to make sure that the library is welcoming to everyone, and that all residents know what the library offers.

There are many opportunities for the library in the years ahead. One staff member described a future in which no one would say “I didn’t know the library did _____,” while another librarian imagined annual survey results that would show 100% of respondents ranking the library’s customer service as Excellent or Good. Many survey respondents indicated that they would like to see an increased investment in the repair and maintenance of the library buildings, describing the walls as “looking really tired.” Additional feedback provided on categories including collections, programs, and services, will help shape key decisions in the coming years. For example, we know that people definitely want more eBooks, but they are still interested in print and physical collections as well. While many respondents indicated high satisfaction with the library’s customer service, others indicated areas for improvement in certain scenarios.

The library offers extensive programs. In FY2023, over 15,000 people attended 797 programs offered by the library. From story times for young children to a weekly speaker series geared to seniors, the library is known for its fun, educational, and creative programs. Many respondents indicated on the community survey that they are looking for more adult programming, while others are seeking more children’s programming at times when working parents can attend. One survey respondent wrote “the quality of the programming is very important to me. It’s not just about having ‘more.’” When asking survey participants to indicate how they agreed with the statement “The Beverly Public Library offers programs that appeal to me,” the majority of respondents (219) agreed, but we noted room for improvement. Comments generated topical ideas, such as movie screenings, activities/events for working adults as alternatives to bars, author talks, plant identification, birding, adult sketching, and opportunities to learn about sustainability. Comments on timing and format were also included, suggesting an ongoing need for evening and weekend programs, as well as a desire for the library to provide more virtual options. Many comments suggested an interest in the library offering more opportunities for folks to socialize and connect with others.

The strategic planning committee created a vision for our community: **Beverly provides access for all with empathy and inclusion.** The library can contribute to this ideal future in nearly endless ways: maintaining free services for residents, creating a welcoming environment, expanding efforts to reach everyone, and connecting community members.

Library staff have long operated under core principles of being welcoming, protecting intellectual freedom, and providing great customer service. However, these ideals had not previously been formalized into written core values. A brainstorming session allowed staff members to do just this, and will help inform how we operate in the next five years. Staff will be guided to embody these important core values in every aspect of their work.

If we learned anything from COVID-19, it’s that we must be adaptable and expect the unexpected. To that end, we will continue to solicit feedback through the next five years and remain poised to pivot as needed to best serve our community.

Acknowledgements

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Bruce Doig, Director of Community Services, City of Beverly

Wangari Fahari, Director of Diversity, Equity, Inclusion and Belonging, City of Beverly

Sue Gabriel, Executive Director, Beverly Bootstraps

Chris Gomez-Farewell, Council on Aging & Senior Center Executive Director, City of Beverly

Ashton Harville-Fry, Vice President, Teen Advisory Board of the Beverly Public Library

Erina Keefe, Sustainability Director, City of Beverly

Colleen Michaels, Director of the Writing Center, Montserrat College of Art

Beth Murphy, President, Friends of the Beverly Public Library

Alyssa Rayman-Read, Human Rights Committee Member, City of Beverly

Irena Sinclair/Kate Ingalls, Board Members, Friends of the Beverly Farms branch

The Staff of the Beverly Public Library & the entire Beverly community

THANK YOU!