



The Elizabeth
Peabody House

2026-2030 Strategic Plan



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2026–2030 Strategic Plan

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The Elizabeth
Peabody House

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A Message from Our Board Chair

In the late 1800s, when the Elizabeth Peabody House (EPH) was founded, the settlement house movement challenged conventional wisdom. Building community across economic and ethnic lines — by sharing knowledge, leveraging cultural resources, and forming supportive relationships — was a radical response to the poverty, public health crises, and poor working conditions facing immigrants in industrial America. EPH led the way, creating a vibrant community through nutrition programs, early education, youth enrichment, and the arts.

Today, valuing the strengths of diverse communities is mainstream. Somerville illustrates this vividly: a retiree whose family has called the city home for generations may live next to newly arrived immigrants, a professor, or young professionals with their first child. EPH touches all these lives, forging connection and opportunity.

As our founders knew, knowing your neighbors and valuing their gifts breaks down isolation and creates a true safety net of relationships and resources.

Building on this legacy, we engaged EPH families, alumni, staff, and our school and community partners to reflect on our work and chart the future. The result is a strategic plan that strengthens programs, expands opportunities for children and families, and positions EPH to meet community needs with flexibility and purpose.

Grounded in our values and mission, this plan guides all we do.

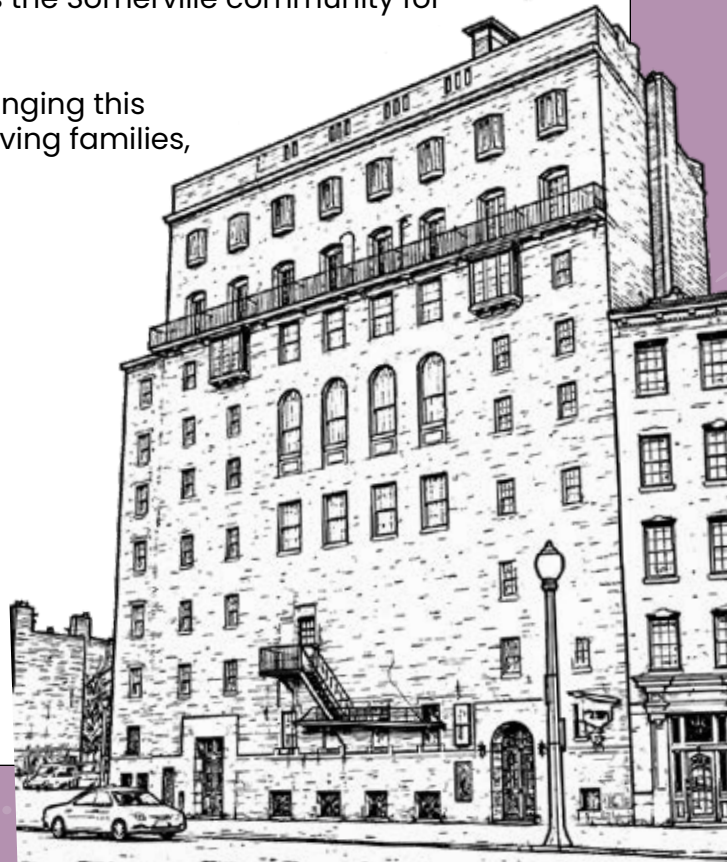
As we expand programs and respond to evolving community needs, our historic building offers exciting opportunities to serve more children, families, and neighbors. By restoring and repurposing underutilized facilities and creating thoughtfully designed classrooms and flexible multipurpose spaces, we can create new learning experiences, host community activities, and grow programs for more members of our community. These improvements will allow EPH to deepen connections, enrich program offerings, and extend our impact across the Somerville community for years to come.

On behalf of the board, I invite you to join us in bringing this plan to life — helping ensure thriving children, thriving families, and thriving communities.

Sincerely,



Kaitlin Gastrock
Board Chair



Our Foundations

Mission: Thriving Children, Thriving Families, Thriving Communities.

The Elizabeth Peabody House equips the members of our community with the resources and opportunities they need to thrive.

Vision: Inclusive, Equitable, Resilient Communities.

We envision a future where Somerville and its surrounding communities are inclusive, equitable, and resilient — one where every child can learn, grow, and succeed from cradle to career, every family has the resources to build a thriving family life, and every neighbor belongs to a caring community.

Approach: Programs. Partnerships. Possibility.

EPH delivers educational programs that lay the foundation for children's success and creates solutions to meet unmet needs and expand opportunities for families and neighbors.

Values: People. Purpose. Partnership.

At the heart of our organization are **five core values** that guide everything we do:

Belonging

We are committed to creating an environment where everyone feels valued, respected, and encouraged to bring their authentic selves.

Empowerment

We believe in the power of people — empowering everyone with the tools, resources, and opportunities to meet their needs and realize their aspirations.

Excellence

We strive for the highest standards in our work and partnerships.

Flexibility

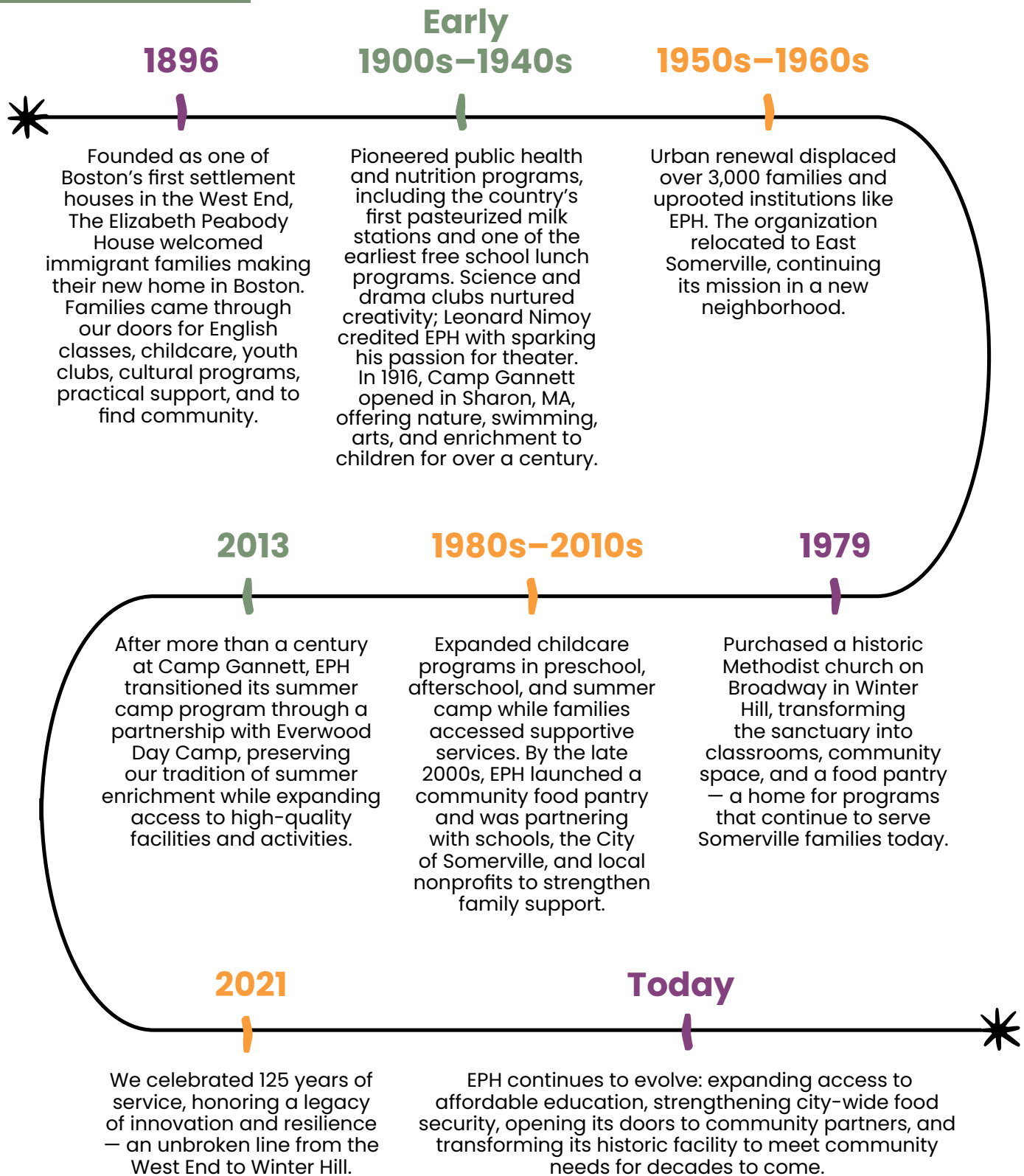
We listen, learn, and adapt — thinking creatively and acting with intentionality.

Collaboration

We know that meaningful change happens through partnership — committing to working hand-in-hand with families and the broader community.

Our mission and values are rooted in over a century of history, shaping how EPH has responded to community needs and guiding our work today.

Our History



From Boston's West End to Somerville's Winter Hill, EPH has walked alongside families for more than a century – adapting, pioneering solutions, and remaining a trusted partner. This history underpins our mission, vision, values, and programs.

Our Work

At the heart of our work is a commitment to creating pathways for children to thrive and opportunities for families to achieve stability and mobility.

Early Learning

EPH's early learning program serves children up to 2 years and 9 months in a nurturing environment with thoughtfully curated spaces and materials that promote exploration, social-emotional growth, and the foundational skills to engage with their peers and prepare for preschool.

Preschool

EPH's preschool program serves children aged 2 years, 9 months to 5 years, in an environment that cultivates students' academic, social-emotional, and physical development. Through a blend of teacher-led activities, student-driven exploration, and opportunities for free play, the program cultivates the skills and mindsets needed for success in Kindergarten and beyond.

School-Age

EPH's school-age program provides out-of-school-time academic support, enrichment, and civic learning for elementary- and middle-school students. Project-based learning and collaborative activities build skills, curiosity, and confidence, and create enduring relationships with peers.

Summer

EPH's summer programs extend learning beyond the school year through hands-on activities, movement, creativity, and exploration. Programs are offered both on-site in Somerville and in a traditional day-camp setting in Sharon, MA.

Youth Engagement & Workforce Development

EPH engages high school students and young adults through paid roles and mentorship opportunities within its early childhood education and school-age programs. This work builds skills, confidence, and early workforce exposure while strengthening long-term connections to EPH.

Over time, EPH will expand opportunities for youth ages 16–21 by developing a distinct youth program focused on leadership, community engagement, and career exploration. Together, these efforts form a critical bridge between childhood, adolescence, and young adulthood within EPH's Theory of Change.

Food Access

EPH's food access program provides consistent access to nutritious groceries while supporting long-term food security. In addition to weekly food distribution, the program offers SNAP navigation and enrollment assistance and partners with community organizations to strengthen neighborhood-based food access.

Together, our education, youth, and food access programs form a unified ecosystem of support — ensuring children can learn, families can meet their basic needs, and our community has the stability required to thrive.

Our Community

Community at the Center

From our founding to today, The Elizabeth Peabody House has believed in the power of community to uplift, empower, and transform lives. That vision continues to guide us.

Language & Culture

Somerville is home to a vibrant immigrant community: nearly 40% of households speak a language other than English, and roughly 50% of children have at least one immigrant parent. Our programs reflect this diversity. Families at EPH come from Haitian, Portuguese, and Spanish-speaking communities.

Economic Need

Roughly 1 in 8 Somerville residents live below the poverty line, and 2 in 5 students face economic challenges. At EPH, approximately 75% of families qualify as low- to moderate-income, and many rely on our food pantry.

Generational Reach

Our connections run deep. Parents and grandparents who once attended our programs now bring their children and grandchildren through our doors. Today, 1 in 5 employees grew up in EPH programs themselves — evidence of the lasting impact and strong bonds forged here.



These interwoven stories of language, culture, and resilience reflect the community we serve and provide the foundation for our work. Understanding these challenges shapes our approach and directly informs the Theory of Change that guides all we do.

Our Planning Process

This strategic planning process was grounded in the voices of the people who know EPH best. Over several months, we engaged families, staff, board members, school partners, community organizations, and funding partners to understand emerging needs and aspirations for Somerville's children and families.

Across conversations, families called for expanded programming, particularly infant and toddler care and more opportunities for teens, as well as accessible community gathering spaces where they could connect, learn, and support one another. Community partners echoed these needs and emphasized EPH's strong reputation and unique position to provide free or low-cost multipurpose rooms, communal kitchens, and flexible spaces. These themes directly shaped the priorities and investments in this plan.

For generations, families in Somerville have faced challenges that demand creative, compassionate solutions. Today, rising costs, widening inequities, and shifting community needs require a response that is agile, purposeful, and guided by shared direction. This strategic planning process is more than a roadmap — it's a bold recommitment to our purpose. It asks: *How can we do more? How can we do better? How can we walk alongside families as they build the futures they deserve?*

Our Plan:

- **Clarifies our vision** for long-term impact and organizational sustainability.
- **Identifies strategic priorities** that will guide our work over the next five years.
- **Ensures alignment** across our programs, operations, and partnerships.
- **Strengthens our ability to measure success**, communicate impact, and adapt to change.

This plan amplifies the voices of families, staff, board members, and community leaders, and is rooted in both research and lived experience. It is a roadmap. It is actionable, measurable, and responsive to community needs.



What We Heard

From Our Families

Families consistently reported that reliable childcare provides stability, allowing them to work, attend school, and plan ahead. They recognized the strength of EPH's staff, highlighting the trusting relationships teachers build with children, alongside a holistic approach to learning centered on social-emotional development, play, and outdoor time. Families also expressed strong interest in a broader continuum of care as EPH grows, particularly for infants, toddlers, teens, and young adults.

From Our Community Partners

Community partners described EPH as a trusted, relationship-driven institution that meets families where they are and responds to the full context of their lives. As needs increase across Somerville and beyond, partners emphasized the importance of aligned pathways across early childhood, school-age, and youth programs, as well as continued coordination and expansion of wraparound family services.

From Our Civic and Funding Partners

Civic and funding partners emphasized EPH's unique role in advancing stability and opportunity for children and families facing economic and systemic barriers. They noted EPH's effectiveness in supporting school readiness, easing transitions into public schools, and complementing citywide prevention and equity efforts. Partners underscored the importance of strong infrastructure, responsive facilities, and data-informed practice to support growth and long-term impact.

Theory of Change

Context

Families face high costs for housing, childcare, and food, leaving them with too little for basic needs and forcing impossible trade-offs, which fall even harder on lower-income households. These pressures don't just strain parents — they widen the opportunity and aspiration gaps children carry into school. Too many arrive without the stability, early learning experiences, or confidence they need to keep pace with peers. Over time, these gaps compound, limiting opportunities that should be open to every child.

Families don't just struggle with costs — they navigate systems not built for them, often without a strong community safety net.

Assumptions

Our work is grounded in three convictions:



We believe families — and their access to opportunity — must remain at the center of program design and decision-making.



We believe children can only thrive when their basic needs are met and their families are supported.



We believe strong bonds among families, neighbors, and institutions are the foundation of lasting community change.

Aspiration

Every child enters school ready to learn, every family has the stability to pursue education or work, and every neighborhood benefits from the breadth of traditions and assets its members bring, including the strength and resilience of immigrant and low-income families. EPH aims to close opportunity gaps so children advance with the skills, confidence, and ambition to pursue bold futures.

By delivering high-quality, community-informed programming rooted in trust, equity, and innovation, EPH helps create thriving children, resilient families, and stronger communities. These insights directly shaped the priorities and strategies outlined in this plan.

Operationalizing the Theory of Change

This Theory of Change is realized through complementary programs working along a clear continuum of care. Early learning, school-age enrichment, and youth leadership reinforce one another, while food access and wraparound supports stabilize households and strengthen family engagement. Community leadership, strong facilities, and sustainable operations strengthen program quality and amplify impact. Together, these elements align EPH's work and lay the foundation for the strategic pillars that follow.

Logic Model

Inputs

- Skilled staff and volunteers
- Curriculum and program models for early childhood education and OST
- Historic building with classrooms and community spaces
- Consistent funding support
- Partnerships with schools, municipal agencies, and local nonprofits
- Food access initiative
- Evaluation tools and data systems
- Program assessments and stakeholder feedback

Activities

Education for Success

- High-quality early education, school-age, and summer programs
- Teen engagement

Building Sustainably

- Deeper relationships with funders, partner agencies, and supporters
- Facility transformation

Driving Change

- Develop leaders internally and externally
- Advocate and share knowledge

Feedback for Continuous Improvement

Outcomes

- Children 0-5 achieve developmental and school readiness milestones.
- School-age children demonstrate growth in academic, social, emotional skills.
- Youth are more prepared for work or further education.
- Families have reliable access to food, resources, and other supports.
- Leaders emerge from within the community
- Coalitions and partnerships form to advocate for identified needs.

Impact



- **Thriving Children**
- **Equitable Opportunities**

- **Strong Families**
- **Resilient Communities**
- **Systems Change**



Strategic Pillar 1: *Education for Success*

Our Belief

High-quality education, supportive infrastructure, and strong connections empower children and families to thrive.

Our Commitment

EPH will ensure equitable access to early learning, school-age enrichment, and youth development opportunities, prioritizing children and families who historically face barriers to educational resources.

Strong Foundations

Each child experiences early learning that builds confidence, curiosity, resilience, and knowledge, ensuring they enter school ready to succeed.

From School to Career

Youth programs that extend this foundation through hands-on learning, leadership development, and early career exploration.

Family Partnerships

Families, seen as essential partners, are empowered to actively support their children's education, strengthening confidence, skills, and engagement at home.

Continuous Improvement

Evaluation data, stakeholder feedback, and family engagement are used within a comprehensive system to measure outcomes, refine curricula, and design services that remain responsive, equitable, and aligned with community needs.

Strategic Pillar 1: Education for Success

Indicators of Success

These indicators serve as directional targets and will be refined as baseline data are established during the plan's first year.

- Children ages 0–5 meet or make progress toward developmental milestones and school readiness benchmarks
- K–8 students demonstrate measurable growth in core developmental domains and skills
- High school students engage in leadership and career exploration opportunities
- Families report confidence in supporting their children's learning and actively participating in their children's education

Data, Evaluation, and Oversight

Two standing committees — the **Early Childhood Education Committee** and the **Out-of-School-Time (OST) Committee** — will oversee efforts to assess program performance, establish baseline data, and refine indicators of success.

Indicators will be formally adopted after baseline assessments and summary reports are completed in year 1. Annual summary reports will inform subsequent year targets and continuous improvement plans.

Systemic Impact

By fostering school readiness, youth development, and family engagement, EPH contributes to greater educational equity, helping reduce early opportunity gaps and supporting children and young people on pathways toward long-term success.

Strategic Pillar 2: *Building for Sustainability*

Our Belief

Strong programs require robust systems, sustainable funding, and well-designed facilities to deliver real and lasting impact.

Our Commitment

EPH will strengthen infrastructure, operations, and systems so every family benefits from high-quality, safe, and adaptable spaces and programs.

Operational Excellence

Efficient operations, balanced budgets, and clear workflows enable staff to focus on delivering high-quality services.

Physical Infrastructure

Accessible, flexible facilities support high-quality programs, allow simultaneous use for learning and enrichment, and create welcoming spaces for community connection.

Financial Health

Diversified revenue streams and long-term funding commitments strengthen EPH's ability to sustain programs, adapt to change, and plan for the future.

Responsible Resource Stewardship

Manage funding, facilities, and staff to maximize impact, sustain program quality, and ensure long-term organizational stability.

Continuous Improvement

Evaluation, feedback, and learning are critical tools for refining systems, strengthening performance, and remaining aligned with evolving community needs.

Strategic Pillar 2: *Building for Sustainability*

Indicators of Success

These indicators serve as directional targets and will be refined as baseline data are established during the plan's first year.

- Priority facility improvements are completed, including second-floor renovations, outdoor learning spaces, and accessibility upgrades
- Revenue streams are diversified, with no single funding source exceeding 30% of total revenue and multi-year commitments forming a growing share of annual funding
- Balanced budgets are maintained annually alongside growth in net assets and operational reserves

Data, Evaluation, and Oversight

The ***Finance & Audit Committee, Building Transformation Committee*** and a new ***Fundraising Committee*** will guide financial, operational, and facility oversight. These committees will establish baseline metrics, assess capital needs, and refine indicators to support continuous improvement.

Indicators will be formally adopted after baseline assessments and summary reports are completed in year 1. Annual summary reports will inform subsequent year targets and continuous improvement plans.

Systemic Impact

By strengthening its operations, finances, and infrastructure, EPH can scale its programs and ensure children and families have reliable access to high-quality opportunities and supports.

Strategic Pillar 3:

Driving Change as a Community Anchor

Our Belief

Lasting change happens when people and communities are connected, all voices are heard, and institutions work in partnership with the community to address shared challenges.

Our Commitment

EPH will strengthen its role as a trusted community anchor by cultivating leadership, deepening partnerships, and sharing knowledge to advance equitable outcomes for children, families, and neighborhoods.

Community Leadership

Invest in staff, youth, and caregiver leadership to amplify community voices and build local capacity for change.

Advocacy and Civic Engagement

Engage in advocacy and civic partnerships to ensure policies, systems, and resources reflect the needs and priorities of EPH's community.

Stakeholders and Partnerships

Strengthen relationships with families, community partners, funders, and public agencies to improve coordination, reduce duplication, and expand access to resources and pathways to opportunity.

Knowledge Sharing

Share learning, expertise, and space to support collaboration, build collective understanding, and extend impact beyond direct programs.

Community Voice and Accountability

Center community input in decision-making to ensure programs, partnerships, and priorities remain responsive and equitable.

Continuous Improvement

Use reflection, feedback, and evaluation to adapt strategies, strengthen community impact, and sustain trust over time.

Strategic Pillar 3: *Driving Change as a Community Anchor*

Indicators of Success

These indicators serve as directional targets and will be refined as baseline data are established during the plan's first year.

- Staff, youth, and caregivers assume leadership roles within EPH and across the community, and report growth in confidence and leadership capacity
- Local and regional coalitions demonstrate stronger coordination and shared advocacy that advances priorities for children and families, with EPH serving in a leadership role
- Partnerships expand coordinated pathways connecting families to essential resources and opportunities that support long-term economic stability and mobility
- Community members meaningfully shape programs and influence organizational priorities through a Community Advisory Committee and feedback loops

Data, Evaluation, and Oversight

The new **Community Advisory Committee** will guide efforts to strengthen leadership development, partnership coordination, and community influence across EPH's work. The Committee will also help center community voice in decision-making and support the development of evaluation systems to assess EPH's effectiveness as a community anchor institution.

Indicators will be formally adopted after baseline assessments and summary reports are completed in year 1. Annual summary reports will inform subsequent year targets and continuous improvement plans.

Systemic Impact

By investing in leadership, advocacy, and knowledge-sharing, EPH strengthens local service ecosystems, reduces duplication, and promotes more equitable outcomes for children and families.

Bringing Our Plan to Life

This strategic plan reflects the insight, experience, and aspirations of the families, staff, board members, partners, and community organizations who helped shape it. We are deeply grateful for their honesty, wisdom, and belief in EPH's mission.

Over the next five years, we will bring this plan to life with care and accountability — setting measurable goals, reviewing data regularly, and grounding our decisions in community voice. Our standing committees and cross-functional teams will guide implementation and monitor progress, ensuring that we remain aligned with our values and responsive to the needs of children and families.

We will share clear annual progress updates with our community and board, highlighting achievements, lessons learned, and course corrections.

Thank you for your partnership and for the trust you place in EPH. Together, we will continue building a community where every child can learn, every family can thrive, and every neighbor belongs.



The Elizabeth
Peabody House