



**Hamilton Public Library Board  
Strategic Plan 2018-2021**  
December 2020

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## **MISSION**

“Freedom to Discover”

## **VALUES**

**Intellectual Freedom** – Provide equitable access to and support for knowledge and creativity.

**Inclusiveness** – Support inclusion by creating trusted services and spaces that welcome everyone.

**Innovation** – Anticipate and respond to changing needs and technology.

**Respect** – Support the value and dignity of all individuals.

**Accountability** – Ensure that library services remain relevant and vital and that resources are managed effectively and ethically.

## **STRATEGIC PRIORITIES**

### **Community Beacon**

The Hamilton Public Library will be a source of pride in the community. The library system will act as a unifying force by welcoming everyone. Our physical and digital spaces will be inviting and accommodating. We will be a leader in fostering community engagement and participation.

### **Relevant and Responsive**

The Hamilton Public Library will continue to advance core library values as we embrace our evolving role in supporting access and literacy. We will support people in their lifelong learning journey by helping them thrive today as they prepare for tomorrow. We will maintain strong physical collections as we grow digital services. We will be a national library leader, working collaboratively to create policies and agreements that ensure access to intellectual property in all formats.

### **Learning and Innovative Organization**

The Hamilton Public Library will continuously seek new ways to assist the learning and growth of all individuals. The library will support staff to be engaged in their roles and in the library profession. We will provide staff with opportunities to continually enhance their skills and develop new competencies, so they can meet changing technology and information needs. We will focus on ensuring we reduce barriers to using our services as we promote awareness of the Library in the communities we serve.

## **NOTE ABOUT “LETTERS FROM THE BOARD”**

When the Library Board approved the Strategic Plan in February 2018, it was decided that annually the Board would approve a “Letter from the Board”, to provide updated context on the Strategic Plan. This letter instructs staff and in years when a new Board is appointed by Council, the letter serves as a legacy document, allowing the outgoing Board to collectively provide advice for the new Board to consider.

Paul Takala, Chief Librarian/CEO

## 2021 LETTER FROM THE BOARD

December 2020

The onset of the COVID-19 pandemic in early 2020 has brought a level of disruption to our community that is without precedent. Since the beginning of the pandemic Library staff and the Library Board have been focused on ensuring HPL keeps staff and Library members safe while ensuring we play a positive role in helping Hamilton respond. We are proud of the leadership and innovation that HPL has demonstrated during the crisis. We extend our deep appreciation to Library staff for your resilience during the pandemic. We encourage you to continue to respond effectively to changing circumstances and to work closely with the Library Board to ensure we use the coming year to lay the foundation for a future where HPL's relevance and impact are assured for years to come.

HPL has adapted well to the challenges of the pandemic. We encourage staff to utilize the new resources and technology that are now available to build and refine services and programs. We congratulate staff for a year of tremendous growth in usage of digital content. We encourage you to continue to monitor usage to ensure we are getting value and look for ways to improve member's experiences with these resources. The pandemic will have likely changed some usage patterns that will be lasting in nature. Staff should be proactively looking for these trends and shifting collections budgets allocations where appropriate.

The COVID-19 pandemic has created a public health and economic crisis that will require HPL to work in partnership with other allied groups and organizations to ensure the recovery creates a more inclusive and sustainable prosperity. A recent report from the *Canadian Urban Institute (CUI)*<sup>i</sup> 200 days into the pandemic identified several core challenges facing Canadian cities. These include:

- First, our main streets, local economies and downtowns are severely threatened.
- Second, systemic urban inequality is continuing to deepen.
- Third, the finance and governance arrangements for local governments are broken.

Helping people and the community get through the pandemic will be a critical focus of the coming year. As we get closer to the final stages of the pandemic, HPL will be shifting its focus to supporting the recovery. Challenges to learning, digital access and social isolation are some of the core community challenges that HPL has an important role to play in addressing.

HPL has a long history of successful partnerships. That experience should be utilized to build new strategic partnerships to ensure our programs and services complement the efforts of other trusted partners. We commend staff for the progress they have made with the **Hamilton Red Book**<sup>ii</sup>. HPL has taken on this commitment because we want to ensure there is a comprehensive and up-to-date source of information about services and supports available to residents of Hamilton. Connecting people with resources and supports is a core role of a public library. Actively embracing that role will be important as residents experience challenges during the pandemic and post pandemic recovery period. We also look forward to working with staff to advance important partnerships advancing reconciliation with Indigenous communities and bringing access to cultural and learning experiences for all Hamiltonians.

The generous and consistent support from the City of Hamilton enables us to realize our mission. We appreciate that support and are mindful that the City of Hamilton, like other municipalities, is facing serious burdens that will strain its ability to provide enough funding. We encourage HPL to

continue to work with the broader library community to advocate for increased permanent funding from higher levels of government to offset the burden on local tax payers. The Board will also continue our ongoing practice of working with staff to ensure that the funding we receive is diligently managed and leads to services and programs that have the maximum positive impact on our members.

As HPL strives toward increasing its positive impact we encourage staff to work with each other and management on applying past successful strategies to new opportunities and challenges. This includes continually working towards measuring the value of work and basing service decisions on research and collective impact. It means meeting new priorities by shifting current resources and using technology and process changes to improve how the work is done. It also includes working with academic partners committed to helping us better understand what factors lead to meaningful impacts. We look forward to learning more about the research that HPL is involved with in advancing youth literacy, digital literacy and helping seniors stay socially engaged and healthy. We encourage HPL to continue to support innovative programs like City Labs.

2021 promises to be an exciting year for facility renewal. We look forward to the completion of the Greenville and Parkdale branches in Q1. That will be followed by the Carlisle TD Bank renovation and by the new Valley Park branch later in the year. We also look forward to receiving the Mount Hope feasibility study and finding a path forward for that location.

The Board is proud that HPL is an internationally recognized innovative leader in public library service. We are proud of the work staff have done during current challenges. We encourage you to continue to work together and to support each other. Please continue to follow public health guidance to reduce the risk of COVID-19 spread and keep everyone safe, as you also provide as much assistance and service to community members as you safely can. Remember, the work we do during the pandemic will impact our post-pandemic relevance and support.

## 2020 LETTER FROM THE BOARD

January 2020

On February 21, 2018, the Library Board adopted a new Strategic Plan for the period 2018-2021. That plan was built on a strong foundation of research and community engagement. We encourage the new Library Board to take time to understand the context with which that plan was developed and understand some of the longer-term opportunities and challenges that face public libraries in the 21st Century.

Much was accomplished during the previous strategic plan and we anticipate the new Library Board will ensure that HPL continues to remain relevant to the communities we serve. During this term, 2015-2018, the Library Board has enhanced its annual business planning process. That process aligns with the City of Hamilton multi-year business plan process and will be an important tool for the Library Board to direct the discretionary efforts of the organization.

From our extensive community outreach to develop the Strategic Plan, we learned that there is a high level of satisfaction with HPL and that there is strong community alignment with the values we are committed to as a public library. We hope the new Board will continue to build on the work we have done to improve library service hours, programs and spaces.

We see that more work needs to happen around improving awareness of library services and breaking down barriers to using HPL. One issue that was a point of discussion of this Board was how the Library Board should address issues like library fines that in some cases cause barriers to residents. We were unable to reach consensus on this issue and advise the new Board to carefully examine the implications of changes to the fines structure and take a step-by-step approach, ensuring that the implications of changes are understood.

As HPL strives toward increasing its positive impact we hope the new Board will ensure that past successful strategies will be applied to new opportunities and challenges. This includes continually working towards measuring the value of work and basing service decisions on research and collective impact. It means meeting new priorities by shifting current resources and using technology and process changes to improve how the work is done.

The Board is proud that HPL is an internationally recognized innovative leader. HPL will continue to adopt new technologies and seek out new services and partnerships to more effectively serve our communities. Through these priorities we will continue to be forward-looking, responsive, and accountable. We wish the new Library Board every success!

## **2019 LETTER FROM THE BOARD**

January 2019

On February 21, 2018, the Library Board adopted a new Strategic Plan for the period 2018-2021. That plan was built on a strong foundation of research and community engagement. We encourage the new Library Board to take time to understand the context with which that plan was developed and understand some of the longer-term opportunities and challenges that face public libraries in the 21st Century.

Much was accomplished during the previous strategic plan and we anticipate the new Library Board will ensure that HPL continues to remain relevant to the communities we serve. During this term, 2015-2018, the Library Board has enhanced its annual business planning process. That process aligns with the City of Hamilton multi-year business plan process and will be an important tool for the Library Board to direct the discretionary efforts of the organization. From our extensive community outreach to develop the Strategic Plan, we learned that there is a high level of satisfaction with HPL and that there is strong community alignment with the values we are committed to as a public library. We hope the new Board will continue to build on the work we have done to improve library service hours, programs and spaces.

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## 2018 LETTER FROM THE BOARD

February 2018

In preparation for developing the 2018-2021 Strategic Plan the Library Board sought to understand broad trends impacting society and public libraries, as well as, specific challenges and aspirations of the communities we serve. The Board looked at the *Our Future Hamilton Community Vision* and conducted a community survey that received over 7,000 responses. That process has informed the new Strategic Plan and the annual business plans that will follow.

The community has told us that there is a high level of satisfaction with HPL and that there is strong alignment with the values we are committed to as a public library. We also learned that we could do a better job of informing people about our services and that there are groups that we could better serve. As we continue to improve our service hours, programs and spaces we will focus on breaking down barriers to use. We will also focus on improving access to collections, in particular our selection of eBooks.

As we strive toward increasing our positive impact, the Library Board expects that we will continually work towards measuring our value and basing service decisions on research and collective impact. We will meet new priorities by shifting current resources and using technology and process changes to improve how we do our work. Staff will use the annual business planning process as a way to identify new opportunities to meet the Board's priorities.

The Board is proud that HPL is an internationally recognized innovative leader. HPL will continue to adopt new technologies and seek out new services and partnerships to more effectively serve our communities. Through these priorities we will continue to be forward-looking, responsive, and accountable.

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<sup>i</sup> <https://canurb.org/wp-content/uploads/FINAL-Signpost-200-Sept-28-2020.pdf>

<sup>ii</sup> <https://redbook.hpl.ca/redbook>