

## Hamilton Public Library Board

### Strategic Plan 2018-2021

Updated January 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”, that would provide updated context on where we are with the Strategic Plan. This letter provides instructions to 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

## **2020 LETTER FROM THE BOARD**

December 2019

The 2019 – 2022 Library Board first met in June and is focusing a part of each meeting this year building on its initial orientation. The Board has also organized special training sessions around indigenous reconciliation, cultural diversity and awareness of 2SLGBTQ+ concerns. The goal of these sessions is to provide insight into different perspectives as the Board engages in a review of its policies around inclusion, programs and space. The Board wants to ensure we continue to carefully consider important policies in a proactive manner.

Currently the Library is mid-way through its 2018-2021 Strategic Plan. The plan, approved in early 2018, was built on a strong foundation of research and community engagement. From that process 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 also learned that more work needs to happen around improving awareness of library services and breaking down barriers to using HPL.

Looking back, much has been accomplished in the last two years, but much work remains. The facility renewal continued with the completion of the Binbrook and Dundas projects in 2018. In 2019 the renovations of Locke and Westdale, and Central window replacement were all completed. Valley Park, Greensville and Carlisle are progressing, and the Board approved a feasibility study for Mount Hope, the last library facility without a plan to bring it up to current standards. We are pleased that the potential neighbourhood branch in Parkdale, in partnership with Indwell, is advancing.

Our primary funder, the City of Hamilton, is facing several budget pressures. The Library Board is proud of our consistent and long-term track record of effective financial management and meeting budget targets. Staff are encouraged to continue to work collaboratively with the broader library community on advocacy of the Ontario and Federal governments. It is important that those efforts advocate thoughtfully on issues of critical importance to libraries while remaining non-partisan. We need to strive for broad support for the important work that public libraries do to create and support communities.

We encourage staff to continue to look to innovation and partnerships, with aligned organizations, to ensure we are maximizing our positive impact on the communities we serve. We congratulate staff for working with us to take responsibility for the Red Book of community services. We encourage you to continue to integrate that work into your operations. We 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. We look forward to working with staff on advancing our partnership with the Internet Archive to make important local collections more accessible to researchers and learners everywhere.

We want to acknowledge the work of the staff of HPL, who bring to their work a deep commitment to the values of HPL and strive to provide great service. We also thank volunteers who support HPL staff by working with individual newcomers, seniors and other learners. We encourage the management team to continue to focus on creating meaningful staff development opportunities and ensuring staff are engaged in developing new library services and programs.

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.

The Board is proud that HPL is an internationally recognized innovative leader. We look forward to working with staff to continue to more fully realize our mission and strategic priorities. We encourage staff to continue to explore ways we can reduce barriers to our services and programs and increase awareness of our services in the community.

## **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.

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!

## **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.