

Hamilton Free Public Library

Strategic Plan

2021-2025

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Hamilton Free Public Library Board of Trustees

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Introduction

We live in a rapidly changing world. This statement has never been truer. The year 2020 changed almost every aspect of life in our community: the way we live, work, learn, and socialize. Some of these changes may be temporary and fleeting, other changes may shape our futures.

Throughout the current pandemic, Hamilton Free Public Library has responded to changing directives and restrictions, with innovations in service and a strong commitment to reaching and serving our community. While these past months have shown us that it is impossible to plan for everything, they have also shown us that dedication to our vision and mission can guide us through any situation.

The leadership of Hamilton Free Public Library believes that a successful strategic plan provides the framework for organizational change, service enhancement, and innovation to guide us to be the best possible Library for the community. It is our challenge and privilege to present this strategic plan at this moment in our local and national history.

Background

It is readily apparent that Hamilton treasures its Library, and views it as a valuable resource. Use continues to rise every year. In 2019, the Library hosted over 46,500 computer users and 489,898 visits to the Library (the equivalent of 5.6 visits per Hamilton Township resident). A total of 40,466 reference questions were answered. Over 52% (41,311) of Hamilton Township residents aged 10 and up hold Library cards. Book and ebook circulation was 171,446, an average of 4.2 books per card holder. In addition, over 39,990 people attended meetings in Library meeting rooms in 2019. (Or the equivalent of more than half of the population came to the Library for a non-traditional reason).

Hamilton Township and the Friends of the Hamilton Public Library provide robust financial support, and the Library is fortunate to be the recipient of private monetary and property donations, both restricted and unrestricted. We are committed to providing the best possible service to our community because it deserves nothing less. Over the next five years, the Library will continue to enrich its service offerings while examining and improving its internal processes in order to ensure the best allocation of resources and the best delivery of services to a demanding public.

Library Profile as of Fiscal and Calendar Year 2020

GOVERNANCE

The municipal Library is governed by a nine-member Board of Trustees, seven appointed by the Mayor with consent of Council, and one designee each of the Mayor and Superintendent of Schools. The Board has a Committee on Policy.

FACILITY

The Library building is a 55,000 square foot, standalone, three-level structure. Groundbreaking was in 1973. The Library grounds are used as an integral part of the Township's efforts to foster the arts.

HOURS of OPERATION

Current operating hours are 9 a.m. to 8:30 p.m. Monday through Thursday and 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. Friday and Saturday.

CURRENT SERVICES

The Library offers traditional circulation and reference services; programs for children and teens; online databases and instructional, test preparation software; faxing and notary service; online Internet access (filtered and not filtered); and color and black and white printing. Wifi is accessible everywhere within the facility and parking lot. All online services are available with a Library card all the time from any computer. Meeting rooms with a computer projector and public address systems are available for large and small groups.

STAFFING

Current personnel are Director, six full-time librarians, two part-time librarians, thirteen full-time clerks, one part-time clerk, one historian, and two full-time maintainers. All Library employees are unionized and contracted with their Township employee counterparts. The Library contracts with the Township for legal, accounting, and human resources support. Technology is maintained by a consultant with Microsoft and Cisco certifications.

FUNDING

Annual funding is over \$3.02 million (Note: This figure is down from the \$3.27 million in funding the Library received in 2010). Funding of needed equipment is supplemented by the Friends of the Library book sales. The Library has no grant funding but is the recipient of approximately \$1,000 per year in restricted donations which are maintained in a trust account. The Library has designated over 75% of its surplus funds to future capital improvements.

Our Levels of Service and Planning Indicators

The Library's level of service and trends in specific areas is as follows:

- Ebook circulation over the past three years has grown rapidly from 18,657 (2017), 20,314 (2018), to 26,648 (2019).
- Wireless computing sessions increased from 11,998 in 2016 to 12,376 in 2018, to 14,170 in 2019.
- Public Internet sessions increased significantly between 2016 (29,708) and 2018 (34,139), but decreased in 2019 (30,307), possibly due to the large increase in wireless computing sessions (above).
- Reference questions in the last three years went from 46,297 (2017), to 40,419 (2018), to 40,466 (2019). This decrease from 2017 may be attributable to the increases in use of wireless computing, and public Internet sessions, as patrons seek answers online.
- Program attendance in the last three years went from 43,726 (2017), to 42,259 (2018), to 39,991 (2019). This decreasing trend may be due to increasing access to entertainment and programming online.

- Library visitors in the last three years went from 541,938 (2017), to 529,262 (2018), to 489,898 (2019). This decreasing trend may be attributable to the increases in use of online resources, such as ebooks.
- Children attending the Summer Reading Program in the last three years went from 444 in 2017, to 459 in 2018, to 317 in 2019. The Library is looking into the decline in participation in 2019.

Core Values

Quality, Innovation, Inclusion, Integrity, Diversity, Stewardship, Tolerance, Collaboration, Respect, and Community. These values are incorporated into the vision, mission and strategic initiatives as well as the goals and objectives. They are the bedrock of this plan.

Our Vision

Hamilton Free Public Library embraces the rich heritage and vibrant future of our community. We aspire to be the best possible Library for Hamilton Township and its residents. We create opportunities for our residents to participate, connect and discover by:

- Encouraging lifelong learning.
- Responding to the needs of our diverse community.
- Ensuring freedom of access to information.
- Offering space for people and ideas to come together.
- Providing materials and programs that entertain and inspire.
- Committing to excellent service to the community.
- Maintaining excellent stewardship of the physical and financial assets entrusted to the Library.

Our Mission

Hamilton Free Public Library enhances the quality of life in our community by providing the resources and services for lifelong learning and enjoyment, the space and opportunities to gather and connect, and by fostering a love of reading.

Strategic Initiatives

Strategic Initiative #1: Service Excellence

Hamilton Free Public Library exists to meet the needs of the community. We are focused on the customer experience and anticipate user needs. We provide consistent, convenient, friendly, knowledgeable services. We recognize that an important part of our job is to communicate effectively so that the community is aware of and can take full advantage of Library services, resources and programs. We actively seek out best practices and adapt to the needs of Hamilton.

Goal: Offer customer-focused service throughout the organization.

OBJECTIVES

- Evaluate workflow, staffing levels and budget allocation to maximize customer satisfaction with resources and services.
- Provide clear and accessible communication with Library visitors and patrons, both physically and digitally.

Goal: Strive to provide service excellence, keeping up with current trends, and evolving community needs.

OBJECTIVES

- Incorporate continuous improvement and ongoing evaluation into all Library operations and services.
- Gather, evaluate and implement best practices from other libraries, and adapt them to our operation, as appropriate.
- Evaluate Library policies and procedures against current trends and evolving community needs to improve the experience of all Library users.

- Create innovative services and programs and share with other libraries and our community.

Strategic Initiative #2: Access to Information

The free exchange of ideas and access to information are fundamental tenets of a democratic society. The Library is committed to the principles of intellectual freedom. We provide free access to information and resources that our users need and want. We respect and protect the privacy and confidentiality of our users. We affirm the American Library Association’s “Library Bill of Rights.”

Goal: Make the Library easier to use for everyone.

OBJECTIVES

- Evaluate policy, economic, language, cultural, and physical barriers to reduce or eliminate barriers to access.
- Explore techniques to better market and promote the collection.
- Reach out to special client groups such as youth, teens, seniors, persons with disabilities, English language learners, underserved communities, etc., to meet their needs.

Goal: Increase staff and public awareness of what we do and what we have.

OBJECTIVES

- Raise public awareness by promoting services, materials, and programs.
- Ensure that all staff are fully conversant with Hamilton Free Public Library’s collections, resources, policies, and procedures.
- Share the Library’s core values with staff and community.
- Improve and increase outreach efforts.

Goal: Create ways to reach patrons who cannot or do not visit the Library.

OBJECTIVES

- Continually assess the needs of our Hamilton resident population, including nondrivers and homebound residents.
- Create partnerships with government entities and nonprofit organizations to provide access to Library collections and services.

Strategic Initiative #3: Learning Organization

We believe that we provide the best possible Library services when we are engaged in professional development. We consciously and continuously seek to gain new knowledge and skills. We are in a state of continuous assessment and adaptation. Everyone's contribution is valued. There is a clear, shared, inspiring vision, and a strong sense of shared purpose.

Goal: Be a responsive, evolving organization.

OBJECTIVES

- Recognize exceptional individual and group performance, innovation, collaboration, creative problem-solving, and continuous learning.
- Create the optimal workforce for the Library's future; identify appropriate workload staffing levels necessary for running operations; strive to attract and retain a staff that reflects the diversity of our community.
- Share knowledge throughout the organization, and encourage staff to avail themselves of both onsite and offsite professional development opportunities.
- Actively practice open, honest communication.
- To the extent that it is fiscally possible, financially support professional development of staff.

Strategic Initiative #4: Lifelong Learning and Enjoyment

Hamilton has a proud heritage of diversity and inclusion, and is strongly committed to education and learning. The Library has an important role in providing services and resources to people of all ages and abilities. We promote early literacy through innovative and creative children's programming. We work with educational institutions to ensure academic success for all. We reach out to teens, adults, seniors and special client groups to make sure we are meeting their needs. We instill a love of reading by demonstrating and communicating our own enthusiasm and joy. We provide materials, programs and resources that entertain, inspire and inform all members of the community.

Goal: Promote literacy and the love of reading and learning for all ages.

OBJECTIVES

- Develop opportunities for staff and the public to cultivate and share their love of reading.
- Develop programs in support of, and in coordination with, the collection.

Goal: Build, manage and evaluate our collection in order to meet the educational, recreational, and cultural needs of the community.

OBJECTIVES

- Evaluate community and patron desires and make sure they are reflected in our collection.
- Define the role of the collection and the appropriate balance for types of materials, including formats, age levels and subjects.
- Provide easy, user-focused access to the collection.

Goal: Use technology to provide innovative Library services and to reach out to remote users.

OBJECTIVES

- Evaluate our integrated library system to ensure optimum customer service and financial stewardship.
- Use the interactive potential of the catalog and website to get feedback from our users.

Strategic Initiative #5: Cultural Center

Hamilton is a dynamic hub of cultural activities and civic engagement. The Library builds and engages in mutually beneficial relationships with other community groups and organizations to create a vibrant web of community activity. We are a full partner in finding solutions for community problems that are consistent with our Mission and willingly accept our role in community improvement and government. We are a physical place and a virtual destination where people and ideas connect. We are a repository of local history and heritage. We are a clearinghouse for community information.

Goal: Offer programming which serves the needs and interests of the Hamilton community.

OBJECTIVES

- Improve Library-wide coordination, planning, and evaluation of programming.
- Work in collaboration with other organizations (libraries, schools, businesses) and cultural institutions to develop, co-sponsor and publicize programs.

Goal: Optimize the use of meeting rooms.

OBJECTIVES

- Maintain a centralized listing where all events and programs held in the Library can be posted.

- Communicate to the community the availability of and limitations on the use of meeting rooms.

Strategic Initiative #6: Stewardship

The township of Hamilton, its residents and businesses provide us with the funds to operate the Library and expect us to maintain the highest levels of efficiency and integrity. We practice transparent governance and align our financial resources with our institutional goals and priorities. We recognize that our financial resources are finite and we actively pursue alternative sources of funding.

Goal: Develop a comprehensive plan to maintain and upgrade Library infrastructure (building, grounds, technology) to ensure safety, efficiency and the delivery of excellent Library service.

Balance opportunities for improvement against costs.

OBJECTIVES

- Determine and plan for upkeep-, upgrade- and replacement-costs for all systems on a continuing basis.
- Explore with the Township of Hamilton, opportunities to reduce the environmental impact of the Library.

Goal: Make the best use of available space.

OBJECTIVE

- Regularly evaluate the use of Library spaces, making changes as needed, within fiscal limitations.

Goal: Align our budget with institutional goals and priorities, and ensure our budget process is open and transparent.

OBJECTIVES

- Develop a budget process that actively encourages staff and public input.

- Raise our cost consciousness and encourage staff participation in cost containment efforts.
- Demonstrate operating efficiencies to the community.

Goal: Broaden our resources.

OBJECTIVES

- Maintain a centrally coordinated volunteer program that includes training and recognition of volunteers.
- Explore ways to increase resources through community and Library partnerships, fundraising and grants.