

BOARD REPORT

Subject: Strategic Plan 2021 Accomplishments
Report #: CEO-002-22
From: Margaret Wallace, Chief Executive Officer
Date: February 3, 2022

Background

In 2021, Whitchurch-Stouffville Public Library (WSPL) continued to use our five-year Strategic Plan to develop goals and objectives which advance the WSPL's Vision of "Inspiring Curiosity, Embracing Innovation, Engaging the Community."

Description

Throughout 2021 the Library adapted to many unexpected changes. Programs continued to be predominantly virtual, customer service was offered remotely, and our digital collections became big movers. We approached every challenge with enthusiasm and a commitment to service.

When the pandemic forced us to close our doors from January to June, we switched to curbside service. Public appreciation for the service is reflected in the comments from our curbside survey:

"You have truly been such a bright spot in this pandemic. The [curbside] service has been a lifesaver for us- thank you!"

During the closure, the Library helped to reduce barriers in the community by partnering with community groups to offer a call-in service where staff assisted with booking vaccine appointments. We also printed out vaccine certificates at no cost.

The Library's collection went "Beyond Books," providing customers with the ability to borrow laptops, snowshoes, walking poles, and passes to cultural amenities. These non-traditional collections were highlighted in a new, illuminated glass case.


Of course, we cannot forget the biggest story of the year: the merger of the Library and the Latcham Art Centre under a single CEO and Board. It was a complex and challenging endeavor, and upon completion has generated dynamic synergies such as joint programming efforts.



2021 ACCOMPLISHMENTS

1. Be known as the most innovative, accessible, and inclusive learning environment.

<p>a. Actively utilize partnerships to increase program offerings that align with our mission and vision.</p>	<p>Partnered with:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ontario Parks to offer passes to provincial parks. The passes have been a huge success and are in high demand. • The Whitchurch-Stouffville Museum and Community Centre to offer cultural passes which allow our customers to explore their community free of charge. • Bike Asylum, Stouffville BMX, Whitchurch-Stouffville Fire and Emergency Services, and York Regional Police to launch “Cycle into Spring: A Family Virtual Livestream Event.” This event featured bicycle safety videos and was sponsored by Tiny Seedlings. • Idea Lab Kids to offer STEM programs, including summer camps. This greatly increased our ability to meet the programs needs of the community. • Tiny Seedlings for sponsorship of an annual subscription to Brainfuse, a homework help and live tutoring software product designed to support K-12 learners.
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<p>b. Provide high-quality, innovative, forward-looking, and creative programs for all ages.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Offered our Summer Reading Club (SRC), a popular and long-running program that encourages children to read over the summers. The event was sponsored by Tiny Seedlings • Celebrated Ontario Public Library Month and Ontario Public Library Week by offering new customers a thank you as an incentive for joining the library. • Welcomed Indigenous author Brian Thomas Isaac for a virtual chat about his debut novel <i>All The Quiet Places</i>. • Reopened the Makerspace with a new layout and furnishing for a look that is fresh and functional. Digital Discovery programs offered in the Makerspace include 3D printing and scanning, using the Cricut, and sewing. 
<p>c. Rebalance programming to ensure alignment with community needs and target audiences.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • After reopening, we adjusted our programming schedule to include both in-person and virtual programs. Our virtual programs included storytimes for children, cooking programs for teens, and book clubs for adults. In-person programming included children’s book clubs and teen craft programs. • Moved teen programs outdoors to the “Creativity Tent” during the summer months, allowing us to welcome more participants in a fun and safe environment. • Created a master list of our monthly displays for the year, ensuring good coverage of topics and events, and alignment with the library’s many promotional endeavors.
<p>d. Increase community outreach through programing in off-site locations.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Offered several “storywalks,” allowing families to read a story while staying active in local parks. • Raised the library’s profile by meeting with local parents at the Tween TikTok event, sponsored by Tiny Seedlings

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Found new ways to stay engaged with the public, such as participating in outdoor community events like as the Chamber’s Halloween Trick or Treat drive-thru and the Town’s Stouffville Holiday Market.
<p>2. Increase marketing and social media capacity to achieve optimal connection to our community.</p>	
<p>a. Strengthen our brand to ensure that Whitchurch-Stouffville Public Library remains top-of-mind as a place to go for innovative learning, creativity, reading, and fun.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Employed our social media channels to a greater degree, sharing crucial information and using them as a platform for our virtual programs. • Reinstated our monthly eNewsletter, which provides recipients with quick information on upcoming programs, new services, and special events.
<p>b. Enhance our website and our social media channels as priority digital communication tools</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Posted service updates to the Library’s website and social media, ensuring that the public had up-to-date information about our hours, programs, and services. • Shared Library information and supported a valuable community resource by adding blog posts and events to the Chambers refreshed website, www.discoverstouffville.ca • Submitted monthly content to the Stouffville Review
<p>c. Investigate and implement additional marketing tools, such as podcasts and video.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assisted the Town by providing recording space for the Talk of the Town podcast; ensured that Library content is featured. • Utilized digital and online tools such as Linktree, Facebook Live, iMovie, Youtube and Zoom to create, promote, and provide programs.

3. Adapt to the many changes in our evolving global environment to prepare Whitchurch-Stouffville Public Library and our community to be ready for the future.

<p>a. Offer a wide variety of technology training and online learning initiatives.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Launched a social media campaign entitled “Make a Connection.” This campaign promoted the fact that customers can access the Library’s wi-fi from outside the building, giving them continued access to a vital resource. • Began to offer virtual cards, a new kind of membership that allows our customers to access digital media without ever having to enter the facility. • Reallocated funds to electronic materials. eBook circulation rose dramatically during the COVID era; as of early December 2021, it had surpassed over 330,000 transactions—an increase of over 200%.
<p>b. Expand credentialed program offerings.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Postponed due to COVID-19.
<p>c. Expand our program portfolio to support all ages of formal and life-long learning.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assisted in securing speakers for the Stouffville Life-Long Learning’s 2021 Virtual Lecture Series, helping community members meet their learning goals. • Offered our popular iPad for Seniors and Grad School programs, empowering seniors to improve their technology skills.
<p>d. Create a focused series of programs and services to support small and medium-sized enterprises, consultants, commuters, homeworkers, and entrepreneurs in Whitchurch-Stouffville.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Added the digital products Comics Plus, which provides remote access to comics and graphic novels, and NewsStand, which offers topical information in over 50 languages.

<p>e. Strategically expand our partnerships with schools and daycares in Whitchurch-Stouffville to capitalize on the engagement of kids, tweens, and teens.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • [See 1b]
<p>4. Enhance our operational and fiscal effectiveness.</p>	
<p>a. Improve our use of data collection and key performance indicator monitoring in order to assess and improve our operations.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Launched a curbside service survey. Over 400 surveys were distributed, with an 80% return rate. The majority of customers rated their experience as Satisfied or Very Satisfied, and the feedback was extremely positive.
<p>b. Communicate the high social and economic return on investment of WSPL to our community.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The CEO's 2021 budget presentation to Council highlighted the high return on investment that the library offers. Council applauded the Library and its successes in 2021.
<p>c. Use metrics as a foundation to set goals for seeking additional operational funding, more open hours, etc.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • [See also 4b]
<p>d. Increase our financial reserves for strategic initiatives in the future.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • With the loss of significant revenue sources due to the pandemic, the Library Board ensured a fiscally responsible approach to finances throughout 2021. • This approach has resulted in the Library completing the year in the black, with no need to draw from reserves this year, despite heavy revenue shortfalls.

<p>e. Support staff in ongoing development and training to meet the priorities and goals of the strategic plan.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All staff participated in the First Nation University of Canada’s “4 Seasons of Truth and Reconciliation” course. The Library Board also participated fully in this Truth and Reconciliation Training, confirming their commitment to TRC in the community. • Kept staff informed of relevant information via an all-staff meeting • Attended Ontario Library Association’s Superconference, the largest library event in Canada. Afterwards, staff shared their new knowledge with fellow staff members. • Attended The Ontario Association of Library Technician’s conference. • Helped to ensure a positive and consistent experience for new hires by launching a <u>New Employee Onboarding Checklist</u> for staff and a <u>New Employee Guidebook</u> for those who are joining us. • Revamped and relaunched Safe Zone training. The Board participated in the training, demonstrating their support for the principles of diversity, equity, and inclusion.
<p>f. Review Facility and Staff models for enhancements and improvements.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Adjusted staffing and services in response to changes in the province’s COVID Steps and protocols. • Took advantage of the COVID-19 related closures to reorganize our collections based on usage patterns and patron needs. We also added all crisp new signage to help our patrons find what they’re looking for. • Added upgraded furnishing to the public areas, including computer stands and stools.

Respectfully Submitted by:

Margaret Wallace

Chief Executive Officer