



## STAFF REPORT ACTION REQUIRED

### Strategic Plan 2025-2029: Creating connection and belonging for Torontonians to thrive in every neighbourhood

**Date:** December 2, 2024

**To:** Toronto Public Library Board

**From:** Strategic Planning Steering Committee

#### SUMMARY

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The purpose of this report is to request the Toronto Public Library Board's approval of the Strategic Planning Steering Committee's recommendations in the Strategic Plan 2025-2029: Creating connection and belonging for Torontonians to thrive in every neighbourhood report.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

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The Strategic Planning Steering Committee recommends that the Toronto Public Library Board:

1. approve the strategic objectives and sample key actions outlined in the [report presented at the November 12, 2024 Steering Committee meeting](#).

## FINANCIAL IMPACT

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This report has no financial impact beyond what has already been approved in the current year's budget.

The Director, Finance & Treasurer has reviewed this financial impact statement and agrees with it.

## DECISION HISTORY

At its meeting on December 4, 2023, the Library Board approved [Creating a New Strategic Plan: 2025-2029](#), including the terms of reference for the Strategic Planning Steering Committee and the Roadmap for development of the next Strategic Plan.

At its meeting on January 29, 2024, the Library Board received the areas of focus for the environmental scan as outlined in the [Strategic Plan 2025-2029: Environmental Scan Focus Areas and Consultation Plan report](#) and approved the Steering Committee recommendations for the consultation plan and implementation.

At its meeting on April 15, 2024, the [Strategic Planning Steering Committee received the Strategic Plan 2025-2029: Environmental Scan Summary and Internal Consultation Phase One Results report](#) for information.

At its meeting on May 3, 2024, the Strategic Planning Steering Committee considered the [Strategic Plan: External Consultation Phase One Results and Phase Two Consultation Plan report](#) and recommended that the Board approve

the focus areas for the second consultation phase resulting from the May 3, 2024 strategy session for implementation.

At its meeting on May 27, 2024, the Board received the environmental scan summary and the internal consultation phase one results as outlined in the [report presented at the April 15, 2024 Steering Committee meeting](#) and the external consultation phase one results as outlined in the [report presented at the May 3, 2024 Steering Committee meeting](#), and approved the focus areas for the second consultation phase for implementation.

At its meeting on October 8, 2024, the Strategic Planning Steering Committee considered the [Strategic Plan: Phase Two Consultation Results and Priority Areas report](#) and recommended that the Board approve the priority areas and outcomes and direct staff to prepare a draft of the Strategic Plan with strategic objectives and key actions.

At its meeting on October 28, 2024, the Board approved the priority areas and outcomes recommended by the [Steering Committee at their October 8, 2024 meeting](#), and directed staff to prepare a draft of the Strategic Plan with strategic objectives and key actions.

At its meeting on November 12, 2024, the Strategic Planning Steering Committee considered the [Strategic Plan: Creating connection and belonging for Torontonians to thrive in every neighbourhood report](#) and recommended that the Board approve the strategic objectives and sample key actions.

## COMMENTS

At the November 12, 2024 meeting, the Strategic Planning Steering Committee members reviewed TPL's 2025-2029 Strategic Plan, which includes priority areas, outcomes, strategic objectives and sample key actions. The development of the plan was based on extensive research, analysis, consultations and a third-party survey, with nearly 6,000 library staff, residents, community partners and stakeholders participating in the process.

Priority areas and outcomes have been refined based on feedback received from the Strategic Planning Steering Committee and Library Board. The priority areas for the Strategic Plan 2025-2029 are:

1. Democracy, civic engagement and social connection
2. Shared community spaces
3. Learning and growth
4. Awareness and availability

The plan will also include a focus on staff within each priority. TPL will invest in staff to deliver the services the community needs by providing them with the necessary tools, learning and collaboration opportunities to achieve the Library's organizational priorities.

Strategic objectives and sample key actions have been developed for each priority to drive implementation and achieve the desired outcomes, outlining the transformative impact TPL aims to achieve over the next five years. These objectives and sample key actions are presented to provide a general indication of the intended direction, with specific language to be refined as the implementation plan is further developed.

The Steering Committee members provided their input and feedback, which is outlined below.

The questions asked at the session were:

- Do the objectives and sample key actions clearly reflect the needs and opportunities we've heard in the consultation process?
- What ideas do you have for effectively engaging our diverse audiences — such as staff, residents, community partners, and stakeholders — in the Strategic Plan?

The Steering Committee commended library staff for developing a clear and impactful Strategic Plan that effectively responds to both the consultation feedback and Toronto's current needs.

The Steering Committee asked questions about the following:

- Whether the priority areas remain relevant given the evolving context since the process began. It was emphasized that they are still crucial. These priorities highlight the continued importance of democracy and civic engagement, the need for upskilling to enhance economic resilience, and the availability of welcoming, inclusive public spaces that foster a sense of belonging among residents.
- Whether the Strategic Plan aligns with the goals of the Toronto Public Library Foundation. The Foundation representatives at the meeting expressed that the plan provides a strong framework for their ongoing work in the community. Foundation staff feel they have been engaged throughout the process and are confident in their ability to continue to collaborate effectively to support and accelerate the initiatives outlined in the new plan.

The Steering Committee suggested the following:

- Leverage online and social media platforms to engage Toronto's evolving, diverse demographic, with a particular focus on youth.
- Build in a structure for regular opportunities to review the Strategic Plan to ensure it remains relevant to changing community needs. While public feedback indicated a desire for the library to continue and expand services, rapid changes in the world require the library to remain adaptable and responsive. This review could be integrated with the presentation of the annual Enterprise Balanced Scorecard and action plan.

### **Next steps**

The next steps for the Strategic Plan include further development of the implementation plan, communication plan, and a robust measurement framework to track progress, evaluate outcomes, and ensure accountability. Library staff will incorporate the Committee's feedback into the implementation and communication plans.

## CONTACT

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## SIGNATURE

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Vickery Bowles  
City Librarian

## ATTACHMENTS

Attachment 1: Strategic Plan 2025-2029: Creating connection and belonging for Torontonians to thrive in every neighbourhood Presentation



# strategic plan 2025-2029

## creating connection and belonging for Torontonians to thrive in every neighbourhood

**Library Board Meeting**

December 2, 2024

# progress update

## Phase 1 Inputs

1. Environmental Scan Findings
2. Staff Consultation Themes
3. Top Public Issues
4. Public Consultation Themes

## Phase 2 Consultation

- Focus Areas

## October meeting

- Review results of phase two consultations
- SWOT analysis and Scenario Planning results
- Strategic Priorities

## December meeting

- Strategic Plan with strategic objectives and key actions



## **priorities and outcomes recap**

**800+**

TPL staff  
consulted



**100+**

expert forum  
participants



**3900+**

survey responses



**300+**

sources  
consulted



# strategic plan development process



		Strategic Priority Areas				
Overall Ranking	Focus Areas (inputs)	Democracy, civic engagement and social connections	Shared community spaces	Learning and growth	Awareness and availability	Sustainable Development Goals Commitment Statement
1	Awareness and availability of library services <i>(staff, public, internal analysis)</i>				✓	
2	Reading, learning and growth <i>(staff, public, internal analysis)</i>			✓		
3	Welcoming and inclusive public spaces to meet, study, and do work <i>(staff, public, internal analysis)</i>		✓			
4	Democracy, civic engagement and information literacy <i>(public, internal analysis)</i>	✓				
5	Social connections and mental well-being <i>(staff, internal analysis)</i>	✓	✓			
6	Technology and digital inclusion <i>(staff, public, internal analysis)</i>			✓		
7	Cost of living, economic resilience and skills development <i>(staff, internal analysis)</i>			✓		
8	Environmental sustainability <i>(internal analysis)</i>		✓			✓
		Focus on staff				

# strategic priorities

## key elements

1. Outcomes (what success looks like)
  - Overall outcome (TPL will....)
  - Customer outcomes (So that Torontonians can.....)
  - Staff outcome
2. Strategic Objectives (what we want to achieve)
3. Actions (how we will achieve this)
4. Key Performance Indicators (how we will measure the change)
5. Alignment to City of Toronto strategies

# current needs & challenges

- Increasingly polarized world that is driven by rapidly changing technology and misinformation
- Loneliness and social isolation are creating significant challenges to health and community well-being
- Widespread threats to democratic values and freedoms
- Toronto continues to face a shortage of public spaces
- Students experienced significant setbacks in their reading and math skills during the pandemic
- Cost of living in Toronto continues to create financial and social pressures

## our vision

Toronto Public Library will be recognized as the world's leading library by informing and inspiring Toronto and its communities, making us all more resilient, more knowledgeable, more connected and more successful.

## our 2025-29 strategic plan overall outcomes

### Democracy, civic engagement and social connections

**TPL will be recognized internationally as the centre for social connection, community dialogue and strengthening democratic values.**

### Shared community spaces

**TPL's physical spaces will be destinations of choice for work, study, collaboration, culture and learning.**

### Learning and growth

**TPL will be the leading hub in Toronto for high-quality, self-directed, and free lifelong learning.**

### Awareness and availability

**TPL will deliver exceptional value to all residents through increased awareness of services that are easy to access and well used.**

# priority areas

Priority 1	Priority 2	Priority 3	Priority 4
<p><b>Democracy, civic engagement and social connections</b></p> <p>We will embed opportunities for social connection, civic dialogue and critical thinking in everything we do, so that residents have the skills to sustain a healthy democracy.</p>	<p><b>Shared community spaces</b></p> <p>We will accelerate the enhancements of our physical spaces to establish more welcoming, safe, inclusive, and sustainable multi-use environments that build resilience and belonging in every neighbourhood.</p>	<p><b>Learning and growth</b></p> <p>We will expand learning opportunities for all ages to develop multiple literacies and personal and professional skills, so that residents can thrive, build economic resilience, and adapt to new technologies, such as AI.</p>	<p><b>Awareness and availability</b></p> <p>We will increase awareness and availability of library services, so that residents in every neighbourhood have equitable access to services that meet their changing needs.</p>

## Focus on staff

Staff are key to achieving our organizational priorities. We will invest in staff to deliver the services our community needs by providing them with the necessary tools, learning and collaboration opportunities.



## **objectives and sample key actions**

## Democracy, civic engagement and social connections

We will embed opportunities for social connection, civic dialogue and critical thinking in everything we do, so that residents have the skills required to sustain a healthy democracy.

### Outcomes

TPL will be recognized internationally as the centre for social connection, community dialogue and strengthening democratic values.

### So that...

- Torontonians are more connected to each other and their communities, and have a strong sense of belonging.
- Torontonians are well-informed, able to engage in civic dialogue and empowered to participate in community decision-making, contributing to a free and just democratic society.
- Torontonians can navigate various information sources and apply critical thinking skills to assess the accuracy, reliability, and credibility of the information.
- Our staff have the skills they need to facilitate opportunities for social connection, to support information literacy in the digital age and to champion democratic values.

# priority 1 objectives & sample key actions

Expand opportunities to promote how all TPL programs can build social connections and combat social isolation

Develop targeted programs for children, youth, and newcomers that focus on understanding Canadian democratic processes

Develop and implement a vision and service model for a learning and engagement centre focused on democratic values

Expand existing and offer new programs that help inform digital citizenship and develop essential skills to identify misinformation and disinformation

Support critical thinking with initiatives that enhance deep reading, writing and comprehension

Equip staff with the competencies to facilitate conversations and cross-cultural dialogue about public issues

Provide staff learning opportunities on how to effectively support social health and foster social connections in their everyday interactions

**Increase opportunities for greater social connection and community building**

**Widen participation in civic dialogue**

**Improve confidence with critical thinking and evaluating information**

**Enhance staff capability to foster civic engagement and social connections**

## Shared community spaces

We will accelerate the enhancements of our physical spaces to establish more welcoming, safe, inclusive, and sustainable multi-use environments that build resilience and belonging in every neighbourhood.

### Outcomes

TPL's physical spaces will be destinations of choice for work, study, collaboration, culture and learning.

### So that...

- Torontonians have access to up-to-date multi-use library spaces that cater to diverse needs in every neighbourhood in the city.
- Torontonians feel welcome, included and safe in library spaces that provide the social infrastructure to gather, collaborate, and build connections.
- Torontonians have sustainable library spaces that are built and maintained to reduce greenhouse gases and are resilient to the risks posed by our changing climate.
- Our staff have the supports, partnerships and expertise they need to make our spaces more welcoming and inclusive. They have the spaces and support they need to collaborate, learn and thrive.

## priority 2 objectives & sample key actions

Develop a vision and implementation plan to meet TPL's Service Delivery Model standards in all neighbourhoods

Develop branch specific plans to coordinate and expedite accessibility enhancements to achieve AODA compliance, as part of the Multi-Year Accessibility Plan

Broaden use of sustainable building technologies and practices to design branches that are energy efficient and resilient to extreme weather conditions

Foster a safe and welcoming environment by implementing TPL's Welcoming Spaces, Workplace Health & Safety, Workplace Mental Health, and Public Safety Programs

Enhance outdoor spaces for greater public use, including reading gardens, community gardens, programming and community events

Enable and support staff in providing trauma-informed service, through policies, training and support including Library Safety Specialists & Mental Health First Aid

**Accelerate enhancements of existing library spaces**

**Create welcoming and collaborative spaces**

**Strengthen the sustainability and resilience of library spaces in response to climate change**

**Enhance staff capacity to provide welcoming spaces**

## Learning and growth

We will expand learning opportunities for all ages to develop multiple literacies and personal and professional skills, so that residents can thrive, build economic resilience, and adapt to new technologies, such as AI.

### Outcomes

TPL will be the leading hub in Toronto for high-quality, self-directed, and free lifelong learning.

### So that...

- Torontonians have easy access to in-person and online learning opportunities to develop skills that support their personal and professional goals.
- Torontonians have the digital literacy skills they need to adapt to changes in technology and thrive in the modern world.
- Children and youth have the literacy skills required to succeed and thrive.
- Our staff have the knowledge, tools, training and supports they need to support the development of multiple literacies and skills that our customers need.

## priority 3 objectives & sample key actions

Expand financial literacy services that provide essential tools and counselling to access financial support resources

Increase access to expert health programs and wellness and recovery supports and services

**Develop life skills and economic resilience**

Expand AI skills program options and increase access to AI software and technologies

Add Digital Innovation Hubs to more branches

**Bridge the digital divide with new and emerging technologies**

Implement initiatives that reignite the passion for reading and propel literacy growth, with a focus on children and youth

Expand and enhance literacy programs such as Leading to Reading in more neighbourhoods

**Increase literacy rates among children and youth**

Create and implement structured learning pathways for core skill areas including digital literacy skills and emerging technologies like AI

**Equip staff with the skills they need to support development of multiple literacies**

## Awareness and availability

We will increase awareness and availability of library services, so that residents in every neighbourhood have equitable access to services that meet their changing needs.

### Outcomes

TPL will deliver exceptional value to all residents through increased awareness of services that are easy to access and well used.

### So that...

- Torontonians are aware of what we offer and use a broad range of library services.
- Torontonians can conveniently access library collections, programs, spaces and services equitably in neighbourhoods across the city where, when, and how they want to.
- Torontonians have a rich selection of innovative collections and services that reflect our customers' evolving interests and needs.
- Our staff are have the knowledge, tools and skills to deliver high quality, personalized service. They are aware of what the library offers and act as champions for the library in their communities.

## priority 4 objectives & sample key actions

Create online environments that provide integrated customer experiences and easy access to timely, relevant information about a broad range of library services

Develop and implement a membership recruitment and retention strategy to actively engage all members

**Increase awareness and service use among current library users**

Increase library open hours to maximize access to in-branch services and spaces

Expand evening and weekend programming in all neighbourhoods

**Expand availability of library services in all neighbourhoods and online**

Add new partners and venues to the tpl:map service

**Offer new and innovative collections and services to adapt to changes in community needs**

Enhance staff knowledge and understanding of the breadth and depth of TPL services through enhanced training, communication, information-sharing and collaboration tools

**Equip staff to champion and promote library services**



**alignment with City strategies**

# city strategies in current plan

TPL strategic priorities		public space	digital inclusion & literacy	workforce development	a democratic society	public service excellence
City of Toronto Key Strategies	City of Toronto Corporate Strategic Plan	✓		✓		✓
	Raising the Village	✓	✓			
	Smart CityTO	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
	TOcore	✓				
	Toronto Action Plan to Confront Anti-Black Racism	✓		✓		✓
	Toronto Civic Engagement Strategy	✓			✓	
	Toronto Newcomer Strategy	✓	✓	✓	✓	
	Toronto Poverty Reduction Strategy	✓	✓	✓	✓	
	Toronto Resilience Strategy	✓			✓	
	Toronto Seniors Strategy	✓	✓			
	Toronto Strong Neighbourhoods Strategy	✓	✓	✓	✓	
	Toronto Youth Equity Strategy	✓	✓	✓		
	Toronto's Recovery and Rebuild Strategy	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
	Transform TO	✓				

## Long-term city impact

- Reduce poverty
- Improve community safety
- Contribute to low-carbon city
- Increase equity
- Increase democratic participation
- Grow Toronto's economy

# city strategies developed since 2019

- Community Crisis Service
- ConnectTO
- CreateTO
- Action Plan for Toronto's Culture Sector
- Action Plan for Toronto's Economy
- Gender Equity Strategy
- Our Health, Our City Strategy
- Multi-year Accessibility Plan
- My Local Government – Its for Me
- Official Plan
- Reconciliation Action Plan
- SafeTO
- Toronto Seniors Strategy



# city strategy leads forum themes and opportunities

## Libraries as trusted information sources

- Leverage the trust residents have in TPL to provide reliable information about the democratic process

## Support for vulnerable populations and equity-deserving groups

- Expand outreach services and community librarians to connect with vulnerable populations, such as seniors in care homes

## Shared and expanded community spaces

- Develop outdoor library spaces, such as reading gardens and communal areas that can be animated with community events



# city strategy leads forum themes and opportunities

## Skills development through programming

- Provide digital literacy programs for seniors and youth
- Develop programs focused on AI skills development

## Community building and resilience initiatives

- Take a localized approach to develop programs and services that address diverse community needs
- Offer intergenerational programming to foster connections across age groups



## next steps

- Further development of the implementation plan
- Communication plan
- Robust measurement framework



**thank you**

**tpl:**