



## STAFF REPORT ACTION REQUIRED

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

**Date:** November 12, 2024

**To:** Strategic Planning Steering Committee

**From:** City Librarian

#### SUMMARY

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The purpose of this report is to present Toronto Public Library's (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, consultations and analysis, with nearly 4,700 library staff, residents, community partners and stakeholders participating in the process. Priority areas and outcomes have been refined based on feedback received.

The priority areas for the Strategic Plan 2025-2029 are:

1. Democracy, civic engagement and social connections
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.

To ensure TPL's new Strategic Plan aligns with broader goals, TPL hosted a forum with City of Toronto strategy leads to explore how the new Strategic Plan can best support the City's key strategies. Feedback from the forum reinforced the Library's priorities and outcomes are aligned with the City's initiatives. Library staff will incorporate this feedback into the implementation plan and ensure continued collaboration with the City to achieve shared outcomes.

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.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

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The City Librarian recommends that the Strategic Planning Steering Committee:

1. recommends the strategic objectives and sample key actions to the Toronto Public Library Board for approval as outlined in Attachment 2.

## 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.

## ALIGNMENT WITH STRATEGIC PLAN

TPL's 2025-2029 Strategic Plan will continue to fulfill its legislated mandate of providing a comprehensive and efficient public library service that reflects the unique needs of the community.

## EQUITY IMPACT STATEMENT

TPL's 2025-2029 Strategic Plan has been developed considering TPL's Equity Statement and the City's Equity Lens. This ensures ongoing integration of access and the removal of barriers for equity-deserving groups in the City of Toronto. Accessibility and engagement of equity-deserving groups are key components of the consultation and engagement process for the development of the Strategic Plan, ensuring that the broadest range of voices have been heard through the process, and that the Strategic Plan reflects the perspectives and needs of equity-deserving groups. The approach strives to achieve equitable outcomes for all.

## DECISION HISTORY

At its meeting on December 4, 2023, the 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 11, 2024, the Strategic Planning Steering Committee considered the [Strategic Plan 2025-2029: Environmental Scan Focus Areas and Consultation Plan report](#) and recommended that the Board approve the consultation plan and implementation.

At its meeting on January 29, 2024, the 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 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.

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.

## **ISSUE BACKGROUND**

TPL's vision is to be recognized as the world's leading library by informing and inspiring Toronto and its communities, making Torontonians more resilient, more knowledgeable, more connected and more successful. As the city

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continues to grow and evolve, the Library plays an increasingly important role in providing the vital ingredients that Torontonians need to thrive.

To advance its vision, the Library is developing a new five-year strategic plan that will guide and shape its work. The plan is informed by a comprehensive environmental scan, ongoing engagement and consultation with staff, the public, and stakeholders.

The Strategic Plan describes the value and outcomes that the Library will deliver to Toronto's residents and communities. It is developed based on the following strategic planning principles:

1. Grounded in TPL's vision, mission, values, Statements and brand;
2. Responsive to City and community needs;
3. Integrated with the community; and
4. Outcome-focused, actionable and drives continuous improvement.

On October 28, 2024, the Board received the second consultation phase results for information as outlined in the [report presented at the October 8 Steering Committee meeting](#), approved the priority areas and outcomes and directed staff to prepare a draft of the Strategic Plan with strategic objectives and key actions.

## COMMENTS

### **Consultation summary**

Building TPL's Strategic Plan was a collective effort over a year-long process involving nearly 4,700 library staff, Torontonians, community partners and stakeholders. Through surveys, staff forums, focus groups, interviews, stakeholder meetings and expert discussions, staff gathered valuable insights on how TPL can best support Torontonians and their communities now and in the future.

A comprehensive consultation approach was critical to an effective strategic planning process. The consultation consisted of two phases: the first phase identified focus areas, and the second phase validated and prioritized these areas to establish the priorities and potential action items for the Strategic Plan.

An overview of the consultation results for both phases is included in Attachment 1.

### **Strategic Plan 2025-2029**

The new Strategic Plan focuses on four priority areas that have been identified as areas where the library can have the greatest impact on Toronto residents over the next five years. This plan aligns with TPL's vision to be recognized as the world's leading library by informing and inspiring Toronto and its communities, making Torontonians more resilient, more knowledgeable, more connected and more successful.

Throughout the consultation process, residents very clearly expressed that they appreciate and value the excellent services that TPL provides. One of the key themes emerging from the consultation was also that they want more of those services, available in more neighbourhoods across the city, and that the Library can have an even greater impact by ensuring that more people know about, and use, the broad range of services that the Library offers.

The themes from the consultation also reflect that many of the focus areas that are part of the current Strategic Plan continue to be critical priorities for residents, particularly related to civic engagement, access to public spaces, and fostering digital literacy and workforce skills development.

At the same time, there are new challenges and opportunities that are unique to the current context that emerged through the consultation and research process, which are reflected in the new Strategic Plan priorities, including:

- An increasingly polarized environment driven by misinformation and rapid technological change such as the development of AI;
- Significant challenges related to loneliness and social isolation affecting health and community well-being;
- Widespread threats to democratic values and freedoms;
- A shortage of public spaces in Toronto;
- Setbacks in students' reading and math skills due to the pandemic; and
- Ongoing financial and social pressures from the rise of cost of living.

The impact of the overall plan is to create connection and belonging for Torontonians to thrive in every neighbourhood.

## **Priority areas and outcomes**

The priority areas and outcomes for the new Strategic Plan were approved by the Library Board on October 28, 2024. They have been refined based on feedback from the Library Board and the Strategic Planning Steering Committee.

The following is a summary of changes that were made:

- Changed the “awareness and access” priority to “awareness and availability” to better articulate the expansion and enhancement of services that is a critical part of creating greater access;
- Changed the overall outcome in the “democracy, civic engagement and social connections” priority to reflect TPL’s international leadership in this area; and
- Further refined the priority descriptions and outcomes to clearly define scope and highlight the library’s value and excellence

The priority areas for the Strategic Plan 2025-2029 are:

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

The plan also includes 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.

The new Strategic Plan describes how the Library will support Torontonians and their communities now and in the future. The overall outcomes for each priority are:

- TPL will be recognized internationally as the centre for social connections, community dialogue and strengthening democratic values;
- TPL’s physical spaces will be destinations of choice for work, study, collaboration, culture and learning;
- TPL will be the leading hub in Toronto for high-quality, self-directed and free lifelong learning; and

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

The customer and staff outcomes for the Strategic Plan 2025-2029 are included in Attachment 2.

### **Strategic objectives and example key actions**

Strategic objectives and example key actions have been developed for each of the priority areas to drive the desired outcomes. While the outcomes articulate what success will look like for Torontonians and the transformative change TPL aims to achieve over the next five years, the strategic objectives provide greater detail on how those outcomes will be achieved and will guide the specific actions TPL will take.

In each priority, four strategic objectives have been identified, including one strategic objective related to the focus on staff, for a total of 16 objectives. For each strategic objective, one to two key actions have been identified that provide examples of what initiatives will be delivered 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 plan is further developed. The objectives and example key actions are outlined in Attachment 2, which this report requests the Steering Committee recommend to the Board for approval.

These elements will be further developed in more detail as part of the implementation roadmap.

A key enabler of this effort is the Toronto Public Library Foundation, which plays a vital role in advancing and accelerating the objectives outlined in the Strategic Plan. Fundraising and donor support allows TPL to innovate, develop new programs and scale impact to meet community needs, faster.

### **Alignment with City strategies**

To ensure TPL's new Strategic Plan aligns with broader City goals, TPL hosted a forum on October 16, 2024 with City Strategy Leads to discuss how TPL's new Strategic Plan can best support and contribute to the City of Toronto's key strategies. A total of 44 participants, including library staff, exchanged ideas on how the Library can collaborate with City partners to achieve desired outcomes.

A summary of the themes and sample collaboration opportunities is included in Attachment 3.

The feedback from the forum reinforced the strong alignment of the Library's strategic priorities and outcomes with the City's strategies and priorities. Library staff will integrate this feedback into the Strategic Plan implementation plan and identify next steps for ongoing collaboration with the City to achieve shared outcomes.

### **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.

### **CONTACT**

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### **SIGNATURE**

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Vickery Bowles  
City Librarian

## ATTACHMENTS

Attachment 1: Strategic Plan 2025-2029: Consultation Results Summary

Attachment 2: Strategic Plan 2025-2029: Objectives and Sample Key Actions

Attachment 3: Strategic Plan 2025-2029: City Strategy Leads Forum Summary

Attachment 4: Strategic Plan 2025-2029: Creating connection and belonging for Torontonians to thrive in every neighbourhood Presentation

## Strategic Plan 2025-2029: Consultation Results Summary

Building TPL's Strategic Plan was a collective effort over a year-long process involving nearly 4,700 library staff, residents, community partners and stakeholders. Through surveys, staff forums, focus groups, interviews, stakeholder meetings and expert discussions, staff gathered valuable insights on how TPL can best support Torontonians and their communities now and in the future.

A comprehensive consultation approach was critical to an effective strategic planning process. The consultation consisted of two phases: the first phase identified focus areas, and the second phase validated and prioritized these areas to establish the priorities and potential action items for the Strategic Plan. Below is a summary of responses by respondent type and an overview of the consultation results for both phases.

<b>Respondent Type</b>	<b>Phase One (Feb - Mar)</b>	<b>Phase Two (Jun - Aug)</b>	<b>Total</b>
Library staff	461	401	862
Residents, community partners and stakeholders	3,020	815	3,835
<b>Total</b>	<b>3,481</b>	<b>1,216</b>	<b>4,697</b>

### Phase one consultation results

From February to March 2024, TPL hosted six Strategic Plan Staff Consultation Forums. The purpose of these forums was to gather ideas and input from library staff that will help shape TPL's next Strategic Plan. Over 400 staff members from across the organization attended these forums.

From March 6 to March 27, 2024, TPL conducted a survey and idea exchange using a digital engagement platform. The survey was open to all TPL customers, Toronto residents, community partners and stakeholders. Participants were encouraged to share their thoughts on how TPL can support them and their communities over the next five years. More than 3,000 participants took part in the survey and had the opportunity to share their thoughts and engage with those of others. Over 2,700 thoughts were shared, and more than 82,000 ratings were given, reflecting a deep level of engagement from the public.

The inputs from the environmental scan findings and the first phase of the consultations informed the development of eight focus areas, which were further explored in the second consultation phase. The focus areas are listed below.

1. Awareness and availability of library services
2. Cost of living, economic resilience and skills development
3. Democracy, civic engagement and information literacy
4. Environmental sustainability
5. Reading, learning and growth
6. Social connections and mental well-being
7. Technology and digital inclusion
8. Welcoming and inclusive public spaces to meet, study and do work

### **Phase two consultation results**

The purpose of the second consultation phase was to validate and prioritize the focus areas to identify the priorities and potential action items for the Strategic Plan. The target audiences for the second phase included all staff, underrepresented audiences from the first phase of public consultations, community partners, industry experts, and stakeholders. This phase took place from June to August 2024. Key activities included:

- A survey and idea exchange with staff and the public using a digital engagement platform;
- Local staff engagement sessions;
- Focus groups with targeted and underrepresented audiences, e.g. non-library users, equity-deserving groups, vulnerable persons;
- Expert forums on Digital Inclusion and Social Connectedness;
- Feedback sessions with Indigenous Communities; and
- Meetings with key stakeholders including Toronto Public Library Foundation Board and Toronto Public Library Workers Union Local 4948.

More than 1,200 Torontonians took part in the second consultation phase, with library staff successfully reaching underrepresented audiences highlighted in the first phase. The results of the second consultation phase validated and refined the scope and direction of the new Strategic Plan, providing valuable insights that shaped its priorities, outcomes and actions.

### Priority 1: 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 to sustain a healthy democracy.

**The need:** We live in an increasingly polarized world that is driven by rapidly changing technology and misinformation, where loneliness and social isolation are creating significant challenges to health and community well-being. TPL has a critical role in sustaining democracy in a time of widespread threats to democratic values and freedoms by invoking the strength of libraries as champions of intellectual freedom and equity, trusted sources of accurate information, and conveners for civic engagement.

#### What success looks like

**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.

<b>Objectives (what we want to achieve)</b>	<b>Key actions (some examples of what you'll see)</b>
Increase opportunities for greater social connection and community building	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Expand opportunities to promote how all TPL programs can build social connections and combat social isolation</li> </ul>
Widen participation in civic dialogue	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Develop targeted programs for children, youth, and newcomers that focus on understanding Canadian democratic processes</li> <li>• Develop and implement a vision and service model for a learning and engagement centre focused on democratic values</li> </ul>
Improve confidence with critical thinking and evaluating information	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Expand existing and offer new programs that help inform digital citizenship and develop essential skills to identify misinformation and disinformation</li> <li>• Support critical thinking with initiatives that enhance deep reading, writing and comprehension</li> </ul>
Enhance staff capability to foster civic engagement and social connections	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Equip staff with the competencies to facilitate conversations and cross-cultural dialogue about public issues</li> <li>• Provide staff learning opportunities on how to effectively support social health and foster social connections in their everyday interactions</li> </ul>

## Priority 2: 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.

**The need:** Toronto is facing a shortage of public spaces and as a result, there is an increasing need for shared community spaces. TPL offers access to welcoming, safe, inclusive, and free public spaces to connect, study, learn, and work.

### What success looks like

**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.

<b>Objectives (what we want to achieve)</b>	<b>Key actions (some examples of what you'll see)</b>
Accelerate enhancements of existing library spaces	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Develop a vision and implementation plan to meet TPL's Service Delivery Model standards in all neighbourhoods</li> </ul>
Create welcoming and collaborative spaces	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Develop branch-specific plans to coordinate and expedite accessibility enhancements to achieve AODA compliance, as part of the Multi-Year Accessibility Plan</li> <li>• Enhance outdoor spaces for greater public use, including reading gardens, community gardens, programming and community events</li> </ul>
Strengthen the sustainability and resilience of library spaces in response to climate change	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Broaden use of sustainable building technologies and practices to design branches that are energy efficient and resilient to extreme weather conditions</li> </ul>
Enhance staff capacity to provide welcoming spaces	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Foster a safe and welcoming environment by implementing TPL's Welcoming Spaces, Workplace Health and Safety, Workplace Mental Health, and Public Safety Programs</li> <li>• Enable and support staff in providing trauma-informed service, through policies, training and staff support including Library Safety Specialists and Mental Health First Aid</li> </ul>

### Priority 3: 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.

**The need:** During the pandemic, students experienced significant setbacks in their reading and math skills. TPL plays a crucial role in nurturing a passion for reading and supporting ongoing learning and development at all ages. This includes a strong focus on fostering digital literacy skills essential for thriving in the digital age. In addition, as the cost of living in Toronto continues to rise, libraries can serve as a navigator to help individuals access vital resources to help address affordability and offer programs to teach skills that address economic resilience, including job search supports and professional skills development.

#### What success looks like

**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.

<b>Objectives (what we want to achieve)</b>	<b>Key actions (some examples of what you'll see)</b>
Develop life skills and economic resilience	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Expand financial literacy services that provide essential tools and counselling to access financial support resources</li> <li>• Increase access to expert health programs and wellness and recovery supports and services</li> </ul>
Bridge the digital divide with new and emerging technologies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Expand AI skills program options and increase access to AI software and technologies</li> <li>• Add Digital Innovation Hubs to more branches</li> </ul>
Increase literacy rates among children and youth	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Implement initiatives that reignite the passion for reading and propel literacy growth, with a focus on children and youth</li> <li>• Expand and enhance literacy programs such as Leading to Reading in more neighbourhoods</li> </ul>
Equip staff with the skills they need to support development of multiple literacies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Create and implement structured learning pathways for core skill areas including digital literacy skills and emerging technologies like AI</li> </ul>

## Priority 4: 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.

**The need:** TPL offers many valuable services and resources to Toronto residents. However, we heard that we could do more to promote and raise awareness of these services so that more people can benefit from them. Additionally, the library should expand its services to ensure more people can access them equitably, regardless of their social or economic status and where they live in the city.

### What success looks like

**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 have the knowledge, tools and skills to deliver high quality, personalized service. They are aware of what the library has to offer and act as champions for the library in their communities.

<b>Objectives (what we want to achieve)</b>	<b>Key actions (some examples of what you'll see)</b>
Increase awareness and service use among current library users	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Create online environments that provide integrated customer experiences and easy access to timely, relevant information about a broad range of library services</li> <li>• Develop and implement a membership recruitment and retention strategy to actively engage all members</li> </ul>
Expand availability of library services in all neighbourhoods and online	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Increase library open hours to maximize access to in-branch services and spaces</li> <li>• Expand evening and weekend programming in all neighbourhoods</li> </ul>
Offer new and innovative collections and services to adapt to changes in community needs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Add new partners and venues to the tpl:map service</li> </ul>
Equip staff to champion and promote library services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Enhance staff knowledge and understanding of the breadth and depth of TPL services through enhanced training, communication, information-sharing and collaboration tools</li> </ul>

## Strategic Plan 2025-2029: City Strategy Leads Forum Summary

To ensure TPL's new Strategic Plan aligns with broader City goals, TPL hosted a forum on October 16, 2024 with City Strategy Leads to discuss how TPL's new Strategic Plan can best support and contribute to the City of Toronto's key strategies. A total of 44 participants, including library staff, exchanged ideas on how the Library can collaborate with City partners to achieve shared outcomes.

Shawn Mitchell, TPL's Director of Policy, Planning, & Performance Management, shared an overview of the library's strategic planning process and draft priority areas. Pam Ryan, TPL's Director of Service Development & Innovation, shared an overview of key collaborations between TPL and the City of Toronto that emerged from the Library's 2020-2024 Strategic Plan.

The roundtable discussions that followed explored two questions. The questions and a summary of the key themes and sample collaboration opportunities are provided below.

### Discussion questions

#### 1. How do TPL's draft priorities align with your division's strategy/initiative?

- Where is there opportunity to collaborate? This could either be building on existing collaboration or a new opportunity.

#### 2. The City has identified four priorities in its Corporate Strategic Plan. Where are the greatest opportunities for TPL to contribute to the following two City priorities most relevant to the library's draft priorities?

- Invest in people and neighbourhoods
- Tackle climate change and build resilience

### Key themes and sample opportunities

#### 1. Libraries as trusted information sources

- Leverage the trust residents have in TPL to provide reliable information about the democratic process
- Engage youth in civic participation through TPL networks, such as Teen Councils, to instill democratic values early on

- Increase awareness of City services by training library staff to share information and refer regular library visitor, particularly newcomers

## **2. 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
- Increase programming targeting equity-deserving groups, particularly in areas outside the downtown core

## **3. Shared and expanded community spaces**

- Develop outdoor library spaces, such as reading gardens and communal areas that can be animated with community events
- Explore innovative uses of library spaces, like providing charging stations for electric vehicles
- Offer space to community partners and grassroots organizations to provide services to customers

## **4. Skills development through programming**


- Provide digital literacy programs for seniors and youth
- Develop programs focused on AI skills development
- Create workforce pathways specifically targeted at youth

## **5. Community building and resilience initiatives**

- Prepare for global conflicts and their impacts on Toronto residents
- Help build awareness of the need for community resilience to the impacts of climate change and extreme weather
- Take a localized approach to develop programs and services that address diverse community needs
- Offer intergenerational programming to foster connections across age groups

## **Conclusion**

The feedback from the forum reinforced the strong alignment of the Library's strategic priorities and outcomes with the City's strategies and priorities. Library staff will integrate this feedback into the Strategic Plan implementation plan and identify next steps for ongoing collaboration with the City to achieve shared outcomes.



# strategic plan 2025-2029

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

**Strategic Planning Steering Committee Meeting**

November 12, 2024

# agenda

1. Progress update
2. Strategic priorities and outcomes recap
3. Strategic objectives and sample key actions
4. Alignment with City strategies
5. Discussion
6. Next steps

# 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

## November meeting

- Strategic Plan with strategic objectives and key actions



## priorities and outcomes recap

**800+**

TPL staff  
consulted



**100+**

expert forum  
participants



**3900+**

survey responses

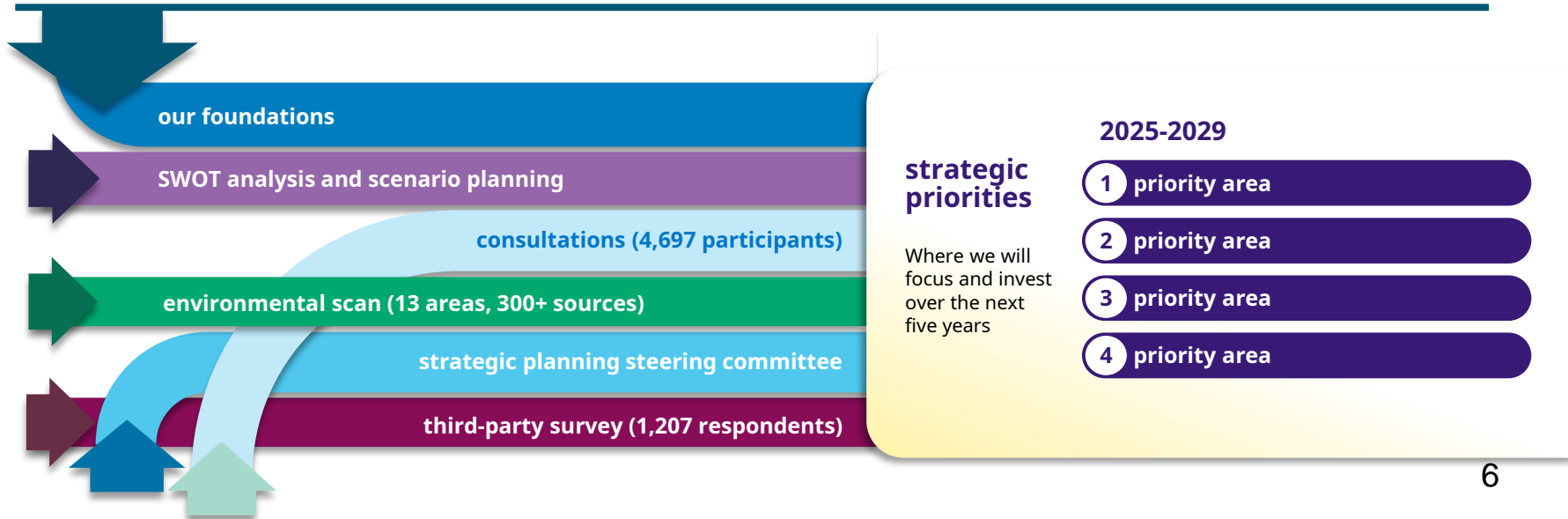


**300+**

sources  
consulted



# strategic plan development process



Overall Ranking	Focus Areas (inputs)	Strategic Priority Areas				Sustainable Development Goals Commitment Statement
		Democracy, civic engagement and social connections	Shared community spaces	Learning and growth	Awareness and availability	
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						7

# 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 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



# discussion questions

- 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?

## next steps

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



**thank you**