



REPORT TO THE LIBRARY BOARD

MEETING DATE: MARCH 28, 2013

Session:	Public Session
Subject:	London Public Library Strategic Plan: Library Space as Community Place
Prepared By:	Josh, Morgan, Gloria Leckie, Susanna Hubbard Krimmer
Presented By:	Susanna Hubbard Krimmer
Purpose of Report:	For Receipt and Direction

RECOMMENDATION:

It is recommended that:

- **London Public Library (LPL) commence a strategic planning process to create a new three- year LPL Strategic Plan and that**
- **The Library Board approve:**
 - **The Strategic Theme: Library Space as Community Place;**
 - **“Guiding Principles and Assumptions” for the LPL 2013/2014 Strategic Planning Process to direct the work;**
 - **The recommended “Planning Process” outlined in this report.**

It is further recommended that Phases One through Four of the planning process outlined below be completed in 2013 and that Phase Five: Implementation of the Strategic Plan commence in 2014.

ISSUE/OPPORTUNITY

LPL is entrusted with the responsibility of providing relevant, accessible and high quality library services that enhance Londoners’ quality of life and capacity for success. The LPL Strategic Plan is the compass that sets the direction and maps priorities for the work of the Library in achieving its *Vision, Mission, Service Excellence Model* and *Strategic Plan*. The current plan, **2010-2013 London Public Library Strategic Plan: Enriching Lives & Empowering People**, was approved by the Library Board in September of 2010, with

implementation commencing in early 2011. Interim progress reports have been made to the Library Board relating to some *Strategic Initiatives* such as “Services to Seniors”, “Radio Frequency Identification” for collections, “Fund Development”, etc. The most recent update on the progress of the plan as a whole was received by the Library Board in December, 2012.

Current LPL Strategic Plan:

http://www.londonpubliclibrary.ca/sites/default/files/strategic_plan2010_13.pdf

This is a critical time to think about the future as LPL is in the 3rd year of its current Strategic Plan and soon will need to “set the compass” for the next plan. Thus, the purpose of this report is to:

- Provide background regarding the current *LPL Strategic Plan*;
- Recommend a single Strategic Theme for the planning process;
- Provide assumptions to guide the development of a new Strategic Plan; and
- Recommend a process for the development of the next Strategic Plan.

BACKGROUND

2010-2013 LPL Strategic Plan: Enriching Lives & Empowering People

The current *Strategic Plan* identifies six *Strategic Themes* which have been the focus of the organization’s work since September 2010. These themes are:

- Organizational Capacity Building;
- Financial Sustainability;
- Inclusive and Accessible;
- Information and Communication Technology;
- Environmental Responsibility and Innovation; and
- Government and Community Relations.

The vision for the London Public Library and the focus on the six *Strategic Themes* in the LPL 2010 to 2013 Strategic Plan was designed to produce four overall results:

- Relevant, accessible, high quality public library services;
- Engaged citizens and employees;
- Vital community with strong neighbourhoods; and,
- An accountable and fiscally responsible library system.

The planning process for the current LPL Strategic Plan included research, analysis of best practices and a review of the accomplishments of the previous two strategic plans. The “*One Library, Many Doors*” *Strategic Plan* resulted in a strong infrastructure foundation. The “*Imagine!*” *Strategic Plan* positioned LPL as the “**community hub**” and emphasized our mission to make a difference in the community by enriching lives and empowering people through relevant, high quality library services.

The current plan “*Enriching Lives and Empowering People*” built upon the foundation of the previous plans by taking our community engagement model to the next level. We “kicked it up a notch” and the public loved it! We then began to move into a community development model, resulting in the further growth of the library as a community gathering place, as an incubator, as “creator” space (in addition to our traditional role of providing access to creative works), a place for technological learning and innovation, facilitator for democratic participation, conduit for government services, and much more. We joined with the City of London and other partners in great network initiatives designed to build community, e.g. Child & Youth Network, Age Friendly City, Culture Plan, Rethink London, etc. We have also been stepping outside of our doors going into communities and into virtual space. We have become part of the virtual landscape of London.

Importantly, Library Staff have engaged individuals, community groups and library partners in the implementation of Action Plans for Strategic Initiatives for which it has been appropriate and feasible. Dialogue has occurred through various means, such as: one-on-one conversations, community forums, focus groups, advisory committees, action committees, public surveys, feedback forms, meetings, and delegations. This engagement process has ensured that the outcomes of the LPL Strategic Plan are the expression of the vision, ideas, needs and expectations of our community.

2014-2016 STRATEGIC PLAN

The majority of strategic initiatives outlined in the current plan are in the implementation and/or evaluation stage. As we move towards the drawing to a close of the current plan, we need to begin to begin the development of a new three-year plan for LPL. The basis of next steps is to articulate a Strategic Theme to set the direction for the planning process, agree upon assumptions and guiding principles to guide the development of the Strategic Plan, and determine the process for the development of the Plan.

Strategic Theme: Library Space as Community Place

It is recommended that the Library Board approve the Strategic Theme: Library Space as Community Place to set the compass for the development of the new LPL Strategic Plan.

There has been much discussion about the concept of “library as place” over the past decade. London Public Library has been on the leading edge since it launched its visionary “*One Library, Many Doors*” Strategic Plan in 2000. The strategies addressed both physical space (building, renovating and remodelling) and technology infrastructure (connectivity and bandwidth). The first built upon LPL’s longstanding history of community gathering place. The latter provided a platform from which LPL launched into the virtual world and set the foundation for what was to come in terms of the our web presence, digital collections and online services. Board, Administration and Staff, with input and validation

from the public and key community stakeholders, were visionary and dreamt big! LPL's focus on the Library as "Community Hub" has ensured that the Library has continued to evolve and to be a leader in terms of the "library as place".

The conversation about public places, in general, and libraries, specifically, has begun to grow in importance and volume again. The conversation about the future of libraries that took place with the advent of the Internet, i.e. "If everything is on the Internet, why do we need libraries at all?" is underway again. The functionality of "intelligent" high functioning computers and multipurpose, mobile devices; digitally-based creation of content (in addition to ongoing digitization of content in print and other formats); and the social media revolution is changing ideas about the potential role and value of libraries. Contrary to the debate of years gone by about whether or not the Internet would kill libraries, the current conversation is about opportunity. Libraries are being seen as an institution that can offer people relevant and accessible physical and virtual places in an age when the user experience is becoming more and more important.

Sessions with the topic of "library as place" are appearing at more and more at conferences (including conferences such as the Ontario Library Association conference dedicated specifically to this topic) and in the professional literature. There is a "buzz" about this. A number of libraries around the world have begun to ask the essential question: Why would someone in our community choose to spend their time in the library's physical and virtual space than somewhere else? Put another way: Why come to the library at all?

The immediate response to these questions is to ask more questions: What is the value of library as place? How can we reinterpret our definition of the "library as place" to ensure that the Library meets current, emerging and future community needs? How can we reinvent London Public Library's physical and virtual space to ensure that the Library remains relevant?

This raises a number of related questions that relate both to physical and virtual space: What do people want, need and value? What do they want from the library? What could/would people do in library space? What kind of environment will they find? What services will make them feel enriched and empowered? What kind of spaces will make them feel connected and comfortable? How will they find their way around? How will they access spaces, services and activities? How will they access content, expressions of creativity and thought? How will they create? Who will they create with? How will they participate in community? How will people interact with staff? How will staff interact with them? How will staff contribute to the physical and virtual space? How will partners use the physical and virtual space? How will they contribute to it?

There are no easy answers, no hard and fast rules! However, there are some leading edge libraries that are transforming and becoming transformational in their efforts to answer these questions in order to serve the needs and expectations of people in their

communities. They are blazing a trail. London Public Library needs to join these leaders and plan for the next iteration of our library as the community's place

Assumptions and Guiding Principles

It is recommended that the Library Board approve a set of “Guiding Principles and Assumptions” for the LPL 2013/2014 Strategic Planning Process to direct the work. The following are put forward for Library Board consideration.

The LPL Strategic Plan will:

- Be the expression of the vision, ideas, needs and expectations of our community;
- Be anchored upon core values of: universal access, inclusiveness, diversity, transparency, stewardship and accountability;
- Build on LPL's success in providing relevant, accessible, high quality library services, including areas in which LPL is the national/international best practice example;
- Support LPL's continued contribution to the City of London's vision of being “a city of opportunity” with a strong economy, a vibrant and diverse community, a green and growing city, a sustainable infrastructure, and a caring community;
- Enable LPL to remain relevant now and into the future by taking advantage of new opportunities; and
- Align with LPL's continuous improvement business model.

The planning process will:

- Draw upon the knowledge and professional expertise of Library Staff and the Board, along with that of LPL's partners;
- Include extensive community consultation soliciting input and validation;
- Take into consideration existing talents and assets:
 - Best practices from libraries across Ontario, Canada and internationally;
 - Best practices of selected organizations from across business, education, government and nonprofit sectors;
 - Sociological, technological and cultural creativity and innovation;
- Face potential challenges head on, such as:
 - Meeting the needs, expectations and demands for library services in a time of ongoing significant sociological, technological, cultural and economic change;
 - Ensuring that LPL's resource levels are sufficient and sustainable; and
- Utilize as many communications channels as possible including traditional channels along with social media.

As we implement the plan, Library Staff will further engage individuals, community groups, and Library partners in the research, planning and implementation of Strategic Initiatives, where appropriate and feasible.

Planning Process

It is recommended that the process outlined below be undertaken to create the new plan. This is the process that was successfully followed to develop the current Strategic Plan.

The work will be based on four questions:

- Where are we now?
- Where do we want to be?
- How will we know when we are there? and
- What action steps do we take to get there?

Planning will be comprised of 5 phases:

- Phase One: Research into Best Practices and the World of Opportunities;
- Phase Two: Engagement and Participation – Input and Validation by Stakeholders;
- Phase Three: Development of Strategic Priorities;
- Phase Four: Establishment Strategic Initiatives; and
- Phase Five: Implementation of the Plan by Undertaking Initiatives.

It is recommended that LPL undertake Phases One through Four in 2013 with Phase Five: Implementation commencing in 2014.

NEXT STEPS

Next steps, following approval and direction by the Library Board, will be to initiate Phase One: Research into Best Practices and the World of Opportunities. Staff will also begin to develop milestones and timelines for Phase Two: Engagement and Participation, along with a communication plan for this phase, to be brought back to the Library Board for its meeting of April 18th, 2013.