

# BOARD REPORT

Subject: Strategic Plan 2020 Accomplishments  
Report #: CEO-001-21  
From: Margaret Wallace, Chief Executive Officer  
Date: February 4, 2021

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## Background

Throughout the summer of 2019, WSPL together with Lighthouse Consulting Inc. conducted a comprehensive community engagement process and gathered data from library users, non-users, and stakeholders, to identify library needs and wants among the residents and businesses of the Whitchurch-Stouffville community. Through this process, service priorities and goals were identified that now make up a new five-year WSPL Strategic Plan. The new Whitchurch-Stouffville Public Library Strategic Plan 2020-2024 was created with a vision of the Library as one of the most dynamic community resources and essential partners in Whitchurch-Stouffville – a place to learn, grow, play, connect, engage, and enhance the quality of life.

## Description

2020 proved to be a year of struggle and crisis for our community. On March 11<sup>th</sup>, 2020, the World Health Organization defined COVID-19 as a pandemic. At the end of the day on March 13<sup>th</sup> the Library closed its doors to the public, and quickly shifted to embrace new and innovative ways to serve our residents.

The staff of the Whitchurch-Stouffville Public Library, through commitment and hard work, successfully implemented dynamic Strategic Plan initiatives for 2020. Attached, please find the 2020 Strategic Plan results.

Respectfully Submitted by:

*Margaret Wallace*

**Chief Executive Officer**



# 2020 ACCOMPLISHMENTS

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

<p><b>a. Actively utilize partnerships to increase program offerings that align with our mission and vision.</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• A partnership was formed with local community group Tiny Seedlings which enabled us to expand our services to the public. This organization sponsored:<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>a. The creation of the Winter Wonderland display in the library courtyard</li><li>b. The purchase of <i>Beanstack</i> which is software that allows the library to offer virtual reading programs such as the Summer Reading Club</li><li>c. The purchase of <i>Brainfuse</i>. <i>Brainfuse</i> is a homework help and live tutoring software product designed to support K-12 learners, something which is more important than ever during COVID-19.</li><li>d. <i>Where the Wild Books Are</i>, our winter reading challenge for kids and teens that keeps children reading and engaged during the long winter months.</li></ul></li></ul>
<p><b>b. Provide high-quality, innovative, forward-looking, and creative programs for all ages.</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• With the <i>Books on Wheels</i> service halted due to COVID-19, this service was modified to become a Community Check-In where staff were able to contact our customers via phone to answer their questions and check in on their general well-being.</li><li>• Our <i>Summer Reading Club</i> (SRC) is a popular and long-running program. With the help of sponsorship from Tiny Seedlings we were able to convert programs to a virtual format. Staff adapted to the new reality by creating innovative programs that allowed our younger customers to express their love of reading and their creativity, from the safety of their homes. We used the <i>Beanstack</i> app to keep track of the participants' reading,</li></ul>

	<p>participation, and successes. As the participants read during the summer months, they recorded their reading time each day, completed challenges, made crafts, joined virtual programming, and wrote book reviews. Throughout the summer, we were able to maintain some in-person interaction with the addition of take-home branded swag bags that included activity sheets, pencils, “plantable” bookmarks, and Summer Reading T-shirts. The Stouffville Lions Club donated prizes to serve as incentives to reading.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• WSPL launched a dedicated Minecraft server in July 2020. The goal was to facilitate a virtual hangout space for children and teens, where they could create their own Minecraft world and stay connected with other online during the Pandemic. WSPL utilized over 10 teen volunteers and their Minecraft expertise to organize and moderate the WSPL Minecraft server. In doing so, the teens were able to gain community service volunteer hours.</li> </ul>
<p><b>c. Rebalance programming to ensure alignment with community needs and target audiences.</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Without the ability to offer in-person programs, WSPL purchased the necessary resources to offer virtual programs that allowed us to maintain our vital connections with our customers. For children and families, this included Facebook live storytimes, craft videos posted to YouTube, and the continuation of our popular Summer Reading Club. For teens, our Teen Advisory Group (TAG) continued virtually, and for adults our electronic resource training programs continued in a new format.</li> <li>• With the onset of COVID-19 coinciding with March Break, we worked with our sponsor, the Stouffville Lions Club, to reschedule our March Break programming to October, where it became part of our Ontario Public Library Week (OPLW) celebrations. This allowed us to shift our programming to a virtual format, enhance programming content for OPLW, and continue to provide our sponsor with a meaningful presence in our schedule.</li> <li>• WSPL staff transitioned the popular New Horizons for Seniors (NHS) programs to a virtual format. This allowed us to assist seniors as they strove to improve their comfort and skill level with crucial, Internet-based technologies. With the grant funds, we were able to purchase additional iPads that could be lent to</li> </ul>

	<p>seniors, ensuring that they would have the tools they needed to attend the virtual classes. The NHS programs not only teach new technology-based skills, they also alleviate social isolation by providing a weekly social outlet for many seniors.</p>
<p><b>d. Increase community outreach through programing in off-site locations.</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Visiting with daycares is a great way for the Library to expand our programming outreach to children who might otherwise not be able to visit on-site. Prior to pausing the service in March due to COVID-19, we were able to provide eight daycares with weekly storytimes. After pivoting to virtual programs, we were able to offer Zoom storytimes to two daycares.</li> </ul>
<p><b>2. Increase marketing and social media capacity to achieve optimal connection to our community.</b></p>	
<p><b>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.</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• COVID-19 gave us an opportunity to strengthen our brand by incorporating the hashtag #YourVirtualWSPL for virtual programs.</li> <li>• With families unable to attend the Library and participate in our much-loved early literacy programs, we quickly moved our storytimes to the next best thing: Facebook Live. This format allows for the immediacy of a storytime while still maintaining safety protocols.</li> </ul>
<p><b>b. Enhance our website and our social media channels as priority digital communication tools</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• With facility usage and services in flux, all service updates were posted in a timely and consistent manner on WSPL’s website and social media, ensuring that the public had up-to-date information about our hours, programs, and services.</li> <li>• With social media taking a greater and greater role in COVID-19 era communications, staff took on various communications duties to ensure that our online messaging was professional, clear, and consistent.</li> <li>• We continued to keep the community informed by submitting monthly content to the Stouffville Review newspaper.</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To provide clearer and more efficient links/pathfinders to the programs that we promote via Instagram, we integrated the popular Linktree service. Linktree allows users to easily link to our online content.</li> <li>• The WSPL YouTube channel was revamped so that we could offer the public a convenient place to access the increasing amount of virtual programming content that we were creating as a result of quarantine closures.</li> <li>• For 2020’s Ontario Public Library Week we celebrated with a virtual variety show for families, sponsored by The Stouffville Lions Club. The event featured comedy, magic, music, ventriloquism, and puppets, and was posted on the Library's social media platforms so that the public could view the performers from the comfort and safety of home. [See also 1c]</li> </ul>
<p><b>c. Investigate and implement additional marketing tools, such as podcasts and video.</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Enhanced social media tools and strategies were implemented throughout 2020 to ensure that the WSPL was able to maximize its reach to the community. This included adding Zoom, Linktree, Beanstack, Facebook Live, YouTube, and iMovie.</li> <li>• To make the best use of these tools, the Library created learning opportunities to build staff’s capacity and skills.</li> <li>• [See also 1c]</li> </ul>
<p><b>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.</b></p>	
<p><b>a. Offer a wide variety of technology training and online learning initiatives.</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• As more and more people have come to rely on Internet-based technology for personal communications and as a source for information, technology training programs for the public became a high-priority focus. Programs such as New Horizons for Seniors, and its follow-up “Grad School,” were modified to an online format. This work included modifying schedules, instructing the attendees in the use of video</li> </ul>

	<p>conferencing, and providing them with additional equipment to facilitate the online learning.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• In an ongoing effort to help our customers connect with both local and international news, we launched the PressReader database which provides them with a wide range of newspapers from around the world and in multiple languages.</li> <li>• To improve remote access to our resources, we launched online registration so that community members can access digital eBooks and eAudiobooks, magazines, newspapers, and databases, while our facility was closed due to the pandemic.</li> <li>• [See also 1a and 1c]</li> </ul>
<p><b>b. Expand credentialed program offerings.</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Postponed due to COVID-19.</i></li> </ul>
<p><b>c. Expand our program portfolio to support all ages of formal and life-long learning.</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• WSPL, as a partner with the Stouffville Lifelong Learning group, assisted with modifying their lecture series to a virtual format in 2020. This partnership allows the community of Whitchurch-Stouffville to benefit from continuous, life-long learning. We are also able to showcase speakers that we have had at the Library to a wider audience, solidifying the Library's position as an innovative, collaborative, and inclusive learning environment.</li> <li>• Our switch to virtual programs inspired a new set of programs for adults. This series, which included cooking and American Sign Language (ASL), was designed to inspire, and inform our community.</li> <li>• Services to teens were modified to a virtual format. Teens very happy to maintain their connection with the library via our Teen Advisory Group, volunteering, and programs.</li> </ul>
<p><b>d. Create a focused series of programs and services to</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• COVID-19 changed the way the world lives and works. As our customers did not have consistent access to our facility and</li> </ul>

<p><b>support small and medium-sized enterprises, consultants, commuters, homeworkers, and entrepreneurs in Whitchurch-Stouffville.</b></p>	<p>collections, the WSPL looked for ways to improve our virtual services to community members. These efforts included:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Launching the PressReader multilingual, online newspaper service so that our customers can keep up with the news from around the world.</li> <li>○ Offering online registration so that our customers can access our services and collections remotely.</li> <li>○ Increasing our digital collections to ensure that there are sufficient resources for those accessing remotely.</li> <li>○ Providing access to the Brainfuse homework help and online tutoring service. Brainfuse was sponsored by Tiny Seedlings.</li> </ul>
<p><b>e. Strategically expand our partnerships with schools and daycares in Whitchurch-Stouffville to capitalize on the engagement of kids, tweens, and teens.</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• [See 1d]</li> </ul>
<p><b>4. Enhance our operational and fiscal effectiveness.</b></p>	
<p><b>a. Improve our use of data collection and key performance indicator monitoring in order to assess and improve our operations.</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• As the Library pivoted to virtual programs and services in 2020, we used metrics and KPIs to assist in the launching and assessment of new initiatives. For example: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Analyzed usage patterns to determine the optimal operating hours for the curbside delivery service.</li> <li>○ Utilized statistics and operational service needs to determine fiscally responsible staffing levels.</li> <li>○ Database usage increased 46% over the previous year.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Through expansion of our CloudLibrary eBook and eAudiobook collections, we increased usage of these resources by 140% over the previous year. The addition of the PressReader newspaper services contributed highly to this notable increase.</li> </ul>
<p><b>b. Communicate the high social and economic return on investment of WSPL to our community.</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The CEO’s 2020 budget presentation to Council highlighted the high return on investment that the library offers. Council applauded the Library and its successes in 2020.</li> </ul>
<p><b>c. Use metrics as a foundation to set goals for seeking additional operational funding, more open hours, etc.</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• [See also 4b]</li> </ul>
<p><b>d. Increase our financial reserves for strategic initiatives in the future.</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• With the loss of significant revenue sources due to the closure and pandemic, the WSPL Board ensured a fiscally responsible approach to finances throughout 2020. 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.</li> </ul>
<p><b>e. Support staff in ongoing development and training to meet the priorities and goals of the strategic plan.</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To improve the WSPL’s services to diverse community members, the CEO undertook Diversity and Inclusion training, which will be rolled out to all staff in 2021.</li> <li>• As part of our ongoing efforts to improve staff skills, build networks of communication, and stay up-do-date on library trends, staff attended professional development conferences throughout the year: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ The American Library Association’s Public Library Association Conference, the largest public library event in the world.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>



	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ The Ontario Library Association’s Superconference, the largest library event in Canada.</li> <li>○ The Ontario Association of Library Technicians conference.</li> <li>● Staff undertook Standard First Aid and CPR certifications, as well as COVID-19 health and safety procedures training.</li> <li>● [See also 2c]</li> </ul>
<p><b>f. Review Facility and Staff models for enhancements and improvements.</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Facility usage, desk schedules, workspaces, and staffing models were rapidly, responsibly, and responsively adjusted as needed so that WSPL could continue to offer safe, vital, high quality services during the various stages of COVID-19.</li> <li>● WSPL was very responsive to changes made to Provincial Orders, ensuring that we were able to offer the best services possible within the limitations of the Orders. For example, when the public were not able to enter the facility, curbside service was launched. When the public were able to re-enter, all required safety protocols were put in place. WSPL underwent several health and safety risk assessments, investigated, and purchased appropriate PPE, modified workplace furniture, and trained staff in health and safety practices related to COVID-19.</li> <li>● As the public were not able to access the 3D printer and considering the shortage of PPE for the health field, WSPL loaned two 3D printers and filament to a local health care clinic so that they could create their own much-needed PPE.</li> <li>● Taking advantage of the COVID-19 related closures, the library was refreshed with new paint and wall signage, allowing us to continue to offer a refreshed and welcoming environment to the public.</li> <li>● [See also 4a]</li> </ul>

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## **Vision Statement**

*Inspiring curiosity, embracing innovation, engaging the community!*

## **Mission Statement**

Whitchurch-Stouffville Public Library, as an innovation and inspiration hub, provides a positive impact on the quality of life in our community through the delivery of dynamic resources, engaging technologies and vibrant programs.

## **Core Values**

### Literacy and Life-Long Learning

The Library values literacy and life-long learning and is committed to providing services, resources, programs, and events that foster literacy and the life-long pursuit of knowledge.

### Service Excellence

The Library strives to meet the needs of our ever-changing community and achieve excellence in our services. We are committed to providing responsive, reliable, and knowledgeable services to our customers.

### Innovation and Creativity

The Library values and fosters innovation and creativity. We are committed to empowering our residents with new technologies and methodologies, while creating spaces for creativity in its many forms.

### Intellectual Freedom

The Library protects and fosters intellectual freedom. We are committed to providing a safe space where information is not censored, and different points of view can be explored.

### Accessibility

The Library is committed to ensuring equitable access to information and services.

### Community Engagement

The Library is committed to its role as a community hub and gathering place, while also actively engaging outside library walls with our Whitchurch-Stouffville community.

### Integrity and Accountability

The Library is committed to providing an environment of trust, respect, accountability, and integrity. We will ensure that Library services are relevant and that our resources are managed effectively and ethically.