



Milton Public Library

Library Master Plan Update (2021-2023)

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Prepared by:





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I. Introduction

I.1 Purpose of the Plan

Serving one of the fastest-growing municipalities in North America, Milton Public Library (MPL) is an award-winning public library system focussed on innovation and service excellence. The Library's updated service delivery model is founded on community-led concepts and partnerships and has been highly effective, to the point that MPL now has the highest rate of active cardholders of any large Canadian Library (71% of residents are active members!). MPL's third branch, Sherwood, opened in the fall of 2019, enhancing access for many Miltonians.

These accomplishments are notable and are the result of careful planning and strong leadership. Guided by its leadership team and Library Board, MPL has achieved the majority of the directions contained in its 2015 Library Master Plan, which expired in 2018. The updated plan covers a three-year period (2021 to 2023) and aligns with the Town of Milton Council-Staff Work Plan (2020-2023). In 2023, it is anticipated that MPL will launch a comprehensive planning process along side other town-wide planning initiatives to establish longer-term priorities.

The purpose of this Master Plan is to establish short-term priorities that focus MPL's efforts as it responds to changing needs and supports sustainable public library services. As an effective and high performing public institution, there is a continual need for the Library to review its current practises, examine new initiatives, and illustrate alignment with the objectives of key partners, such as the Town of Milton.

The actions proposed in this Master Plan update align with MPL's current vision, mission and values statements, which have been well received by the community and remain appropriate for the current planning term. Key study inputs include a review of MPL and Town policies and reports, discussions with MPL administration and staff, local and sector-wide data and trends, and demographic and growth forecasts. Consultation with the public and stakeholders is outside the scope of this assignment.

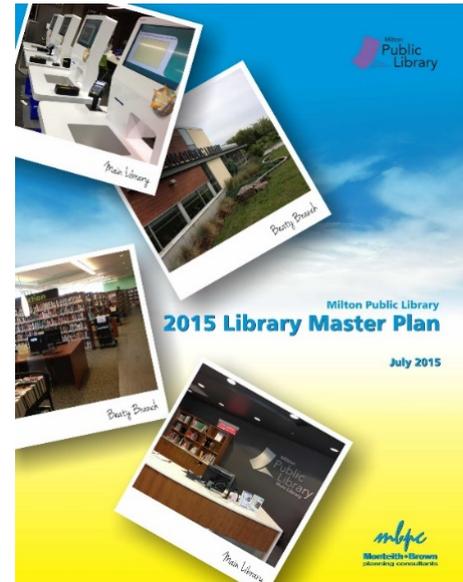
The COVID-19 pandemic has created a number of new challenges and realities for public libraries. To the degree possible, these impacts have been considered within this Plan; however, it must be recognised that this is an evolving and unprecedented event that requires continual assessment. At the appropriate time, MPL may wish to revisit the findings and directions of this plan in light of implications resulting from COVID-19.



1.2 Building on the 2015 Library Master Plan

The Library's previous Master Plan contained 50 action plans with short- and long-term implementation schedules needed to achieve MPL's vision for the future. Since the 2015 Plan was prepared, 17 of the actions (34%) have been implemented in full, while 31 of the actions (62%) are in various states of implementation (most are best practises intended to provide ongoing guidance to the delivery of services). Only 2 of the Master Plan's 50 actions are incomplete, with one (the development of an emergency communications plan), slated for initiation in 2021.

Grounded by the Library's vision, mission and values, the past few years have seen considerable change within MPL. The Library has transformed its services and organisational structure by placing a renewed emphasis on organisational efficiency and community engagement, as seen through its community-led approach, refined board responsibilities, new training opportunities, policy refinement, branding initiatives, opening of a third branch, and more. During this time, MPL has become a multi-award winning, internationally-recognised library service with the highest active cardholder rate of any public library in Canada.



Most notably, the community-led model informs all aspects of service development and ensures that MPL is responding quickly and effectively to the evolving needs of the town's increasingly diverse population. Formal and informal community consultation happens on a regular basis and engenders support from our citizens and partners.

MPL has also become a much leaner organisation. Despite opening a third branch (with a 0% increase to its operating budget in 2019 and 2020), the Library has reduced its staffing complement by 20%. A new staffing model and a management team are now in place, all with a view to ensuring ongoing customer satisfaction and public library service excellence. This is supported by meaningful staff training that builds professional competencies and expectations, including recent training initiatives related to anti-racism and Intellectual Freedom. While the 2015 Master Plan has been an effective tool for the Library, its partners, and the community, the time has come to develop a new plan that builds on this progress and continues to implement MPL's vision of inspiring through discovery, collaboration, and creation.

Many Reasons to Celebrate!

2019 John Iliff Award for Innovation from the Public Library Association for the development and success of the Quest Milton app (recipient: Mark Williams, MPL Chief Library and CEO)

2019 Presidential Citation for Innovative International Library Projects from the International Relations Round Table of the American Library Association for the Quest Milton app

2020 John Cotton Dana Library Public Relations Award from the American Library Association for its new branding and development of the 'bee' logo

2020 Top Innovator Award from the Urban Libraries Council in the category of "Communicating the Library's Value" for MPL's rebranding efforts



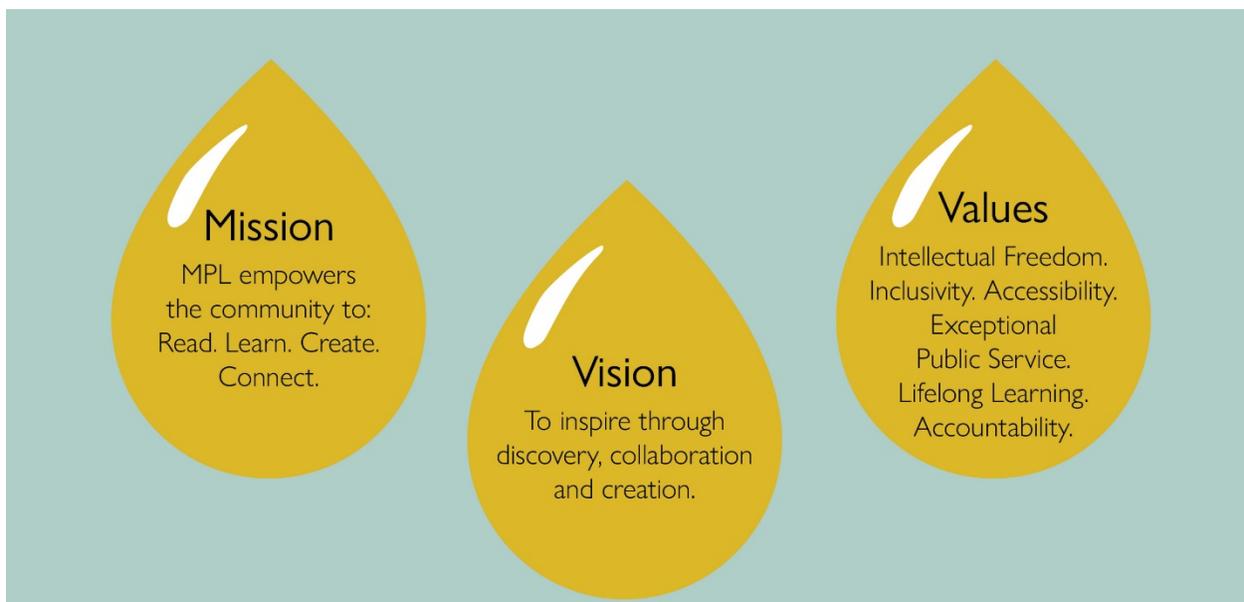


2. Plan Foundation

In order to look ahead, we must first understand where we are and where we've been. This section identifies key inputs to the Master Plan process, including the Library's strategic framework, key figures and comparisons against other library systems, and contextual information pertaining to the Town and demographic profile of Milton residents.

2.1 Strategic Framework

The MPL Board adopted the following Vision, Mission, and Values Statements in 2014. These statements continue to reflect the approach to library service delivery and will be used to guide this Master Plan Update.



The Milton Public Library values:

Intellectual Freedom: Supporting the principles of free thought, belief, and expression.

Inclusivity: Empowering Milton's diverse community.

Accessibility: Providing free and equitable access.

Exceptional Public Service: Ensuring responsive customer service.

Lifelong Learning: Promoting literacy, discovery, and creativity.

Accountability: Prioritising transparency and fiscal responsibility in decision-making.



2.2 Milton Public Library Profile

Facilities, Services and Usage

The Milton Public Library operates out of three physical locations, including the Sherwood Branch which opened in late 2019 along with the attached community centre. In addition, MPL maintains Web/Virtual Services, a Rural Library Service, and a Homebound Service.

The following table illustrates key metrics relating to MPL facilities and services from 2019. Usage data for Sherwood Branch represents a period of approximately three months and – if extrapolated across a full year – would make the branch the second busiest facility behind only the Main Library.

Table 1: Service Snapshot – Milton Public Library Facilities (2019)

Subject	Main Library	Beaty Branch	Sherwood Branch (opened Sept. 29 2019)
Address	1010 Main Street East	945 Fourth Line	6355 Main Street West
Year Constructed	2011	2009	2019
Size (Sq Ft)	29,586 (two levels)	11,251 (one level)	12,500 (one level)
Meeting/Activity Room Space	group study room, silent study rooms, computer lab, children's programme room, programme room, lounge areas	group study room, silent study room, programme room and lounge	group study room, silent study rooms, programme room, lounge areas
Key Facility Characteristics	Co-located with Milton Centre for the Arts and MPL Administration/ Technical Services	Stand-alone Building	Co-located with Sherwood Community Centre
Weekly Hours of Operation	65	46	65
Collection Size	108,745	42,393	24,251
Annual Circulation	618,685	159,874	185,964*
In-Library Visits	304,340	99,483	196,928*
Internet Workstation Sessions	92,696	45,288	9,132*
Wi-Fi Sessions	66,398	19,361	38,020*
Programmes Held Annually**	1,435	749	Most programming did not begin until January 2020
Annual Programme Attendance**	44,430	10,667	
Questions Answered	80,427	20,557	

Source: Milton Public Library, 2020

* Partial data for Sherwood Branch from 2019 has been pro-rated over 12-months to allow for data comparison

**Programmes can be ongoing, in a series, or one-time events



The following table examines trends in specific MPL usage metrics between 2014 and 2019, aligned with the master plan development cycle. Supported by Milton’s strong population growth, most usage statistics have increased over the past five years.

Table 2: Service Snapshot Comparison – Milton Public Library 2014 v. 2019

Subject	Total – 2014	Total – 2019	Overall Trend	Per Capita Trend
Population	101,270 (2015)	126,355 (2020)	↑	n/a
Collection Size	254,406 (incl. 25,859 eBooks and eAudiobooks)	260,685 (incl. 85,296 eBooks and eAudiobooks)	↑ (↓ at Main and Beaty)	↓
Annual Circulation	1,041,443 (incl. 77,916 eBooks, 15,710 eMusic, 1,190 eMagazines, 1,595 eVideos)	932,472 * (incl. 89,268 eBooks, 2,901 eMusic, 6,638 eMagazines, 8,615 eVideos)	Comparison incomplete (but eResources ↑)	
Uses of Online Resources	238,432	311,472	↑	No change
In-Library Visits	391,448	453,055	↑	↓
Virtual Visits	430,379	947,046	↑↑	↑↑
Internet Workstation Sessions	97,387	140,267	↑	No change
Wi-Fi Sessions	28,018	95,264	↑↑	↑↑
Programmes Held Annually**	2,246	2,213	No change	No change
Annual Programme Attendance**	40,030	56,054	↑	No change
Questions Answered	99,922	108,848	↑	No change

Source: Milton Public Library, 2015 & 2020

* The 2019 circulation data no longer includes in-house usage nor use of online databases, which were counted in 2015

**Programmes can be ongoing, in a series, or one-time events



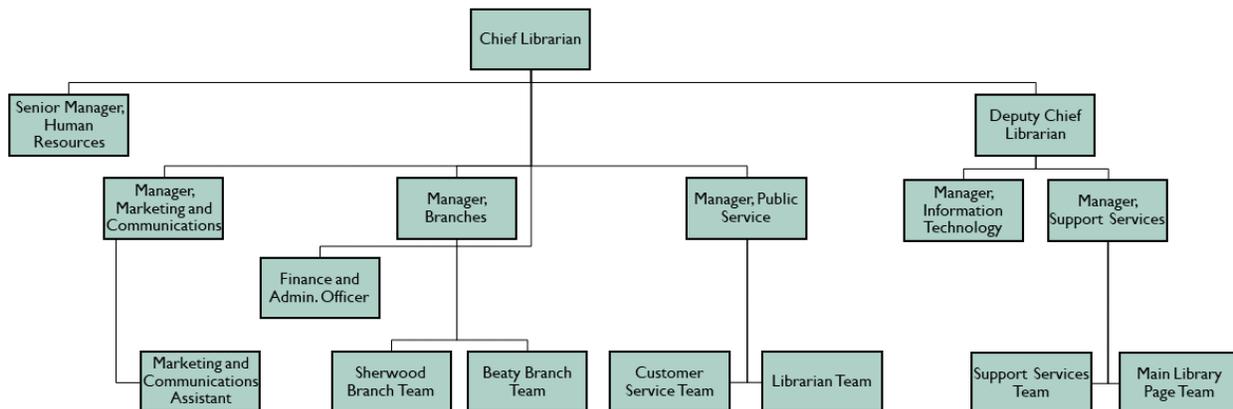
Governance and Staffing

The Public Libraries Act is the legislative framework that guides library services in Ontario. The Act supports provision of equal and universal access to information and ensures free and equitable access to public libraries for all members of the community. Among other items, the Act specifies that there are to be no charges for admissions to library, in-library use of materials, borrowing / reserving materials nor for information services.

Under the Act, Ontario Public Libraries are required to be operated under the management and control of a public library board. The responsibilities of the Milton Public Library Board have recently been refined to ensure that the Board is focussed on policy and financial oversight that is consistent with their renewed governance mandate.

In July 2018, Milton Public Library embarked on a major staff re-organisation initiative, resulting in an enhanced and community-focussed library service in Milton. The Leadership Team is comprised of the Chief Librarian, Deputy Chief Librarian, and Senior Manager (Human Resources). The broader Management Team was re-organised and expanded from three to five managers. All public-facing staff positions were re-organised to provide for a customer and community-focussed delivery of service. Technical Services was disbanded and the department re-organised into Support Services. The current organisational structure is shown in the figure below.

Figure 1: Milton Public Library, Organisational Chart (2020)





2.3 Benchmarking Exercise

To inform the analysis, comparisons have been made to ten other library systems in Ontario. Library systems were selected because:

- they are commuter communities that have been subject to rapid growth and development;
- their population is of similar size to Milton's, either now or in the next ten years;
- their library branch profile is similar to Milton's, either now or in the next ten years; and/or
- they were included in the comparator group from the previous Library Master Plan.

Based on 2018 statistics¹ for the 11 benchmarked libraries (including MPL, prior to opening Sherwood Branch; detailed data tables are contained in **Appendix A**), on a per capita basis Milton Public Library ranks:

Above Average

- 3rd in circulation of physical holdings (MPL = 11.03/cap; Avg. = 9.27/capita)
- 3rd (tied) in programme attendance (MPL = 0.43/cap; Avg. = 0.30/capita)
- 4th in holdings (MPL = 2.13/cap; Avg. = 1.67/capita)

Average

- 5th in number of programmes (MPL = 17.3/1,000; Avg. = 14.1/1,000)
- 6th (tied) in turnover rate, defined as the number of times on average that each physical holding circulates (MPL = 5.2; Avg. = 5.5)
- 7th in public access workstations (MPL = 0.41/1,000; Avg. = 0.58/1,000)

Below Average

- 8th in municipal revenue (MPL = \$39.71/cap; Avg. = \$42.93/capita)
- 8th in operating budget (MPL = \$42.43/cap; Avg. = \$46.00/capita)
- 8th in material expenditures (MPL = \$4.78/cap; Avg. = \$5.63/capita)
- 9th in staffing (MPL = 0.34 FTE/1000; Avg. = 0.43 FTE/1000)
- 9th in e-visits (MPL = 2.33/cap; Avg. = 6.27/capita)
- 10th in floor space (MPL = 0.34sf/cap; Avg. = 0.49sf/capita)
- 11th in in-person visits (MPL = 3.13/cap; Avg. = 5.95/capita)

Recognising that this represents a snapshot in time and that the Town is still very much in a growth stage, Milton Public Library is generally performing well in relation to many provincial guidelines and comparisons, particularly circulation and programming. Specifically, the data supports the finding that MPL's staffing is lean and efficient, and that – despite high levels of community satisfaction – revenue and spending levels are below average.

MPL is lagging behind in terms of space provision, which may be one reason that visitation levels are also well below average. As this data pre-dated the opening of the Sherwood Branch, it is likely that these two measures have since improved. The number of cardholders also increased notably in 2019, while municipal revenue stayed the same.

¹ 2019 statistics have not been published at time of writing.



2.4 Community Profile

Milton “is truly a place of possibility, located in a world-class technology cluster with access to outstanding natural assets and community infrastructure, and home to a highly skilled workforce. Its family- oriented neighbourhoods, location and labour pool makes the community one of the top places for real estate investment in the province.”

- Town of Milton Council-Staff Work Plan 2020-2023



Population

Milton’s current population is estimated to be 126,355 (2020 year-end)². Milton continues to exhibit some of the fastest residential growth rates in the country, with the population doubling nearly every ten years, a trend that is expected to continue with a forecast of 238,000 persons by 2031.³

Table 3: Town of Milton Forecasted Population

Year	Population
2020 (estimate)	126,355
2031 (projection)	238,000

Sources: 2020 – 2021 Town of Milton Proposed Capital and Operating Budget.
2031 – Town of Milton Official Plan Amendment 31

It bears noting that the 2031 population figure differs from forecasts previously used in the 2015 Library Master Plan and are subject to change as the Region of Halton completes its Integrated Growth Management Strategy, which will update population forecasts to 2051.

Urban Structure

Milton has experienced rapid growth since the turn of the last century. The town has grown around an established urban area generally bound by Steeles Avenue, Thompson Road, Derry Road and Bronte Street. Areas outside the urban core were characterised by rural communities and small settlements such as Campbellville, Moffat and Brookville are considered as being part of the ‘Existing Urban and Rural Area’; these settlements have experienced limited development in accordance with Provincial Policy and growth directed through the Region of Halton and Town of Milton Official Plans.

The Bristol Survey (also known as the Bristol Secondary Plan area) was the first major expansion of the urban residential area, and was followed by the Sherwood Survey that directed development west of the established core. The Boyne Secondary Plan area is presently the focus of short and medium-term land development activities, situated in between the Louis St. Laurent Avenue and Britannia Road corridors.

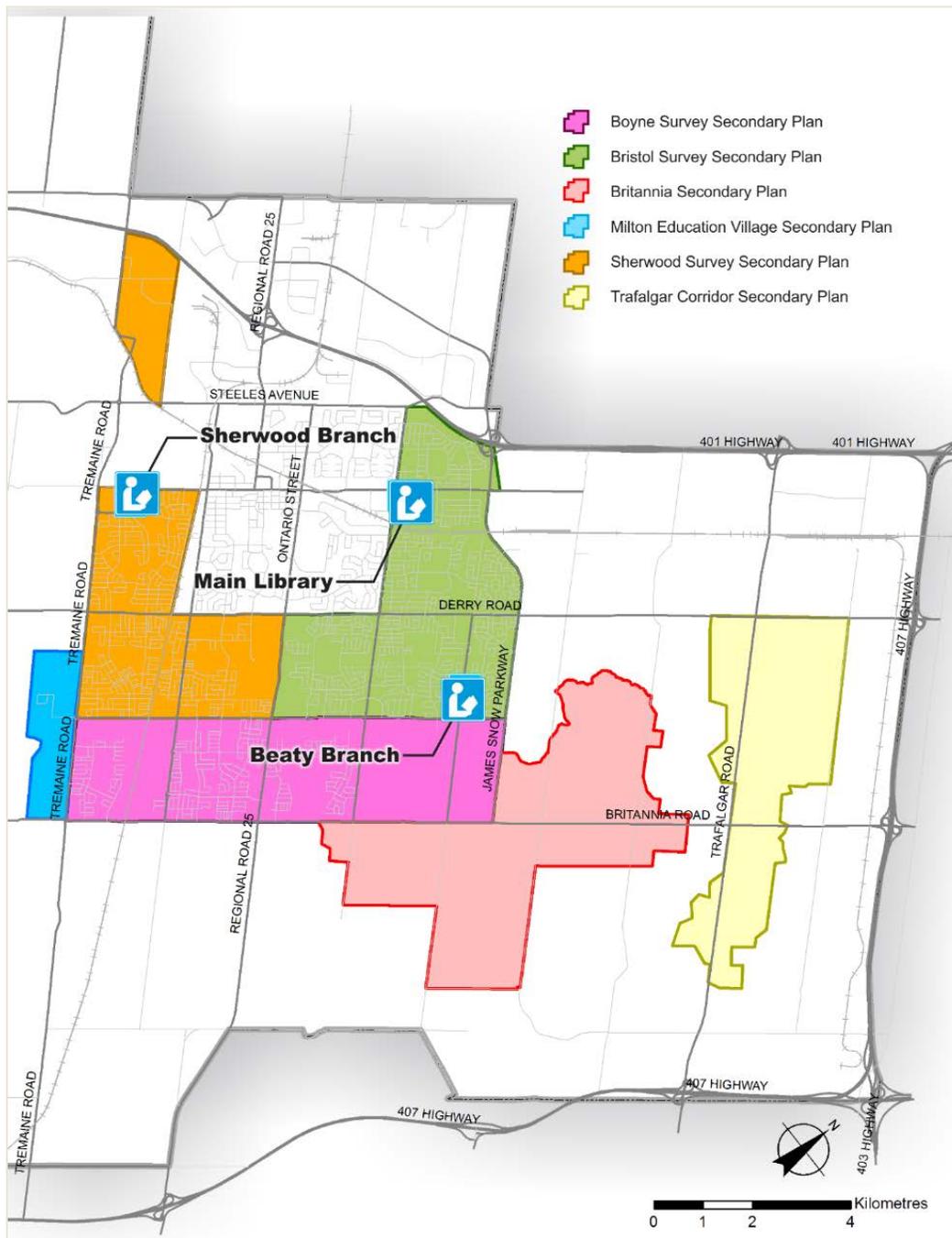
² Town of Milton. 2021 Proposed Capital and Operating Budget. https://www.milton.ca/en/town-hall/resources/16.0_Supplementary_Information_2021_Proposed_Capital_and_Operating_Budget_Book.pdf

³ Town of Milton. 2018. Staff Report PD-029-18: Official Plan Amendment (OPA 31) Conformity Update – Regional Modifications. Appendix 2. Section 2.1.4.2, Figure 1.



The Town has adopted the Trafalgar and Agerton Secondary Plans (note: Agerton is comprised largely of employment lands) in 2019, followed by the Milton Education Village Secondary Plan in 2020. The Town has recently initiated planning to define an urban structure and policies directing growth for a Britannia Secondary Plan, located to the south-east of the existing urban boundary. Development activities for these secondary plan areas are expected to commence after growth is sufficiently absorbed in the Sherwood and Boyme Secondary Plan areas, and infrastructure servicing is extended.

Figure 2: Town of Milton Established Area & Secondary Plan Boundaries (excluding employment lands)





Age Structure

In terms of both absolute and proportionate growth between the 2006 and 2016 Census periods, Milton has seen the greatest increases in residents ages 0-9, 10-19, and 35-49 years. With rapid population growth, Milton continues to draw a considerable number of young families to the area, with many settling in newer areas of the town.

Ethnic Origin, Immigration, and Mother Tongue

Milton's ethnic origin continues to shift from traditional Eurocentric roots to a more globally diverse community composition. Building upon past trends and looking to the future, a more ethnically and linguistically diverse population is anticipated in Milton.

The number of immigrants to Canada living in Milton grew to 39,100 people as of 2016, representing 36% of the total population. Nearly one-third (30%) of the immigrant population has been residing in Canada for 10 years or less, making them relative newcomers to the country. In line with the doubling of the town's population between 2006 and 2016, the immigrant population also doubled with the addition of more than 13,000 newcomers. The majority of the town's recent immigrant populations have roots in Pakistan, India and the Philippines.

Similar to the ethnic origin and immigration figures, there has been an increase in residents with knowledge of non-official mother tongue languages. In 2016, the most dominant non-official language spoken in Milton was Urdu (widely spoken in Pakistan and India), which was spoken by 8,200 residents (7.5% of Town residents).

Income & Employment

Milton is a comparatively affluent community, with an average household income of \$120,157 in 2015. Two out of every three private households (66%) earned over \$80,000 in 2015 while more than half of households (53%) earned over \$100,000. Despite higher than average income levels, there are a number lower income households in Milton that benefit greatly from affordable and accessible public library services including the 8,855 residents (8.8% of the total population) living below Statistics Canada's Low-Income Measure After Tax (LIM-AT).

The top five industries through which the town's labour force is represented consist of retail trade, manufacturing, professional/scientific/technical services, health care and social assistance, and educational services. Each of these industries experienced strong growth between the 2006 and 2016 Census periods.

Educational Attainment

Milton is home to a highly educated base of residents. Nearly three out of every five Milton residents (59%) over the age of 15 have attained a college or university degree/diploma, higher than the provincial rate of 49%.

Commuting

A large proportion of Milton's employed labour force (73% of those with a usual place of work in 2016) commute to jobs outside of the town, with the large majority of these commuting beyond Halton Region. One out of every three commuters spends more than 45 minutes on their daily commute. As a result, demand for services is greatest on evenings and weekends.



2.5 PEST Analysis of External Factors

Based on the research conducted for this Plan, the following is an objective analysis of external issues that may influence MPL's future priorities and initiatives. This analysis helps to evaluate how MPL's decisions may align with outside factors, such as the overall priorities of the Town of Milton. The considerations are not listed in any particular order.

Political Considerations
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• improvements to GO transit service• Milton Education Village Innovation Centre – attraction for entrepreneurs, tech-intensive startups and small businesses• Town promotes a culture of innovation• no Library representative on Town Senior Management Team• Library's capital plan approved by Town and some projects influenced by community centre timing• recent change to Development Charges Act increases rate from 90% to 100% for eligible services• Town adopted three-year Council-Staff Work Plan in 2020• municipal elections in fall 2022• provincial and federal governments – COVID-related grants, rising debts
Economic Considerations
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Town is fiscally conservative – among the lowest taxes in the GTA• evolving labour market• economic development is a high priority for the Town• unemployment rate has risen as a result of COVID-19; economy may be slow to recover• Town has encouraged MPL to find new revenue and maintain existing operating budgets• inability to substantially increase MPL revenues (Public Libraries Act); reliant on outside funding• supply chains disrupted by pandemic; volatility in exchange rates (US vendors)
Socio-Cultural Considerations
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• many daily routines disrupted by pandemic – uncertainty over longer-term implications• continued rapid population growth• growing diversity of residents, new languages• higher densities in major nodes and corridors• highly educated and relatively affluent public; vulnerable populations are largely invisible• commuter culture, but work-from-home options are becoming more common
Technological Considerations
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• increasing automation• pandemic has improved digital literacy and comfort• social media continues to explode



2.6 SWOT Analysis of Internal Factors

Based on the research conducted for this Plan, the following is an objective analysis of what MPL does well, needs to do better, and other factors that may influence its future priorities and initiatives. The considerations are not listed in any particular order.

MPL Strengths
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• very high levels of community satisfaction, trust and confidence• community engagement – loyal and growing base of patrons (highest active cardholder rate)• sustainable capital funding due to community growth and development charges• library facilities are new, in good condition and with extensive hours of operation• MPL has created a culture of innovation, strong leadership• community-led librarianship model and community partnerships• robust programming offerings and attendance – well above benchmarking average• knowledgeable and educated staff; high employee engagement• lean and efficient staffing – levels below benchmarking average• growing multi-lingual collections, technology resources• strong social media presence and communications• self-serve technologies and lending options are popular
MPL Weaknesses
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• limited budget – lower than average per capita funding support from both Province and Town• service to the rural population has been challenging• Main Library needs to be expanded – leads to ineffective space design and crowding• library space is lagging behind growth and similar systems on a per capita basis
MPL Opportunities
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• growing teen population and associated library usage• virtual programming has been enhanced through the pandemic• bookmobile service for rural areas and new communities• facility development in new growth areas (Boyne, Trafalgar Corridor, Britannia, etc.)• success of “Sherwood model” supports roll-out to existing branches• growing community outreach, pop-ups, etc.• Wi-Fi use and virtual visits are in demand and growing fast; new website / technology capabilities
MPL Threats
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• COVID-19 pandemic and related uncertainty• high reliance on funding from Town – funding has been stable last few years, yet needs growing• influence with Town – no MPL representative on senior management team• increasing community expectations• competition from alternate providers (streaming services, online retailers, etc.)• technology can quickly become outdated• balancing demands for new and traditional formats; eCollection pricing models



3. Service Area Assessments

This section contains a critical analysis of MPL’s various service areas based on input and research collected for this project. In doing so, recent accomplishments are identified, potential implications from the pandemic are discussed, and short-term strategies are developed.

Figure 3: Master Plan Service Areas

Customer Experience	Collections	Facilities	Programming	Staffing & Training
Technology	Advocacy & Governance	Communications & Marketing	Collaboration & Partnerships	Funding

The proposed recommendations are consistent with MPL’s vision, mission, and values and reflect the Library’s strong reputation for innovation and growing community demand.

3.1 Customer Experience

Enhancing the experience for library patrons through a “service-first” philosophy and responsive programming and collections has been a key point of emphasis for MPL in recent years. And the Library has seen results – 71% of the town’s population is an active library cardholder (accounting for more than 78,000 persons), the highest recorded percentage in Canada. MPL’s renewed focus on service, embedded within its community-led approach, has allowed the Library to provide more of what the community wants.

One of the benefits of the customer-focussed service delivery model adopted by MPL in 2019 is that it provides one point of contact for meeting patron needs. Not only has this helped MPL activate its stated value of “exceptional customer service”, but the Library did so while reducing the overall staffing complement and opening another library branch. The Sherwood Branch represents a new customer experience for patrons, with laptop lending, self-directed printing, and access to library materials even when the library is closed. Many of these features will be rolled out to other library locations over time.

Literacy for all ages is at the core of everything MPL does, whether it is learning to read, information, new skills, digital technologies, about the community, and more. It is through discovery and imagination that MPL strives to inspire and inject fun through the learning journey. Traditionally, the Library served a large number of parents with young children, older adults and seniors, but as Milton’s demographics shift, MPL is welcoming more teens and newcomers that see the Library as a safe and inclusive “third place” where they are accepted and inspired to reach their fullest potential. MPL must continue to conduct research, surveys, and community conversations to identify the most effective ways to engage all audiences.



It is evident that the community values MPL's accessibility, convenience, affordability, and range of resources. The large majority of users are coming to the Library to read or borrow print material, though this is evolving as more people are exposed to digital media resources and information technologies. Although MPL has been responding to growing demand, digital and virtual services represent a significant and ongoing opportunity for growth. Given the pace of technological transformation as well as changes brought about by the pandemic, conditions are right for continued investment in bold and innovative initiatives and creative delivery models that strengthen MPL's relevancy and reach.

With such high usage rates, extended operating hours are a frequent request at the Milton Public Library. Supported by the 2015 Master Plan, hours have been modified at the Main Library and open hours for Sherwood Branch are aligned to peak times with the community centre. "Exam Cram" times are also offered during the high school exam period. Expanding services out into the community – such as through pop-up libraries at the hospital, transit hubs, community events, teen groups, schools and newcomer centres – also helps MPL to extend its reach and serve residents in new ways that are most convenient for them.

Pandemic Analysis – Customer Experience

MPL has adhered to all public health guidelines throughout the pandemic. Major impacts have included capacity restrictions, temporary closures, event cancellations, new virtual programmes, and enhanced operational and cleaning protocols.

An eventual return to unrestricted in-person service may bring new expectations and protocols around public health and safety, such as cleaning and sanitisation, load capacities, services for vulnerable populations, etc. Contact-free services and experiences will likely be in demand; MPL's self-serve features will play an important role in this regard.

Due to the pandemic, more people are now working from home and, for some, this may become permanent. This – along with other societal changes and expectations – will strengthen the role of the library as a third place. Usage patterns may change as people try to avoid peak times and have more flexibility in their day.



Actions – Customer Experience

1. Continue to embed a "service-first" philosophy in all the Library does. Prioritise accessibility, diversity, inclusion, and convenience in our services and spaces.
2. Work towards offering extended Sunday hours at Main Library and evaluate needs for later evening hours on Friday and/or Saturday.
3. Expand services beyond the Library's walls.



3.2 Collections

Borrowing remains the primary reason for visiting the Milton Public Library and MPL's circulation levels are strong, illustrating that the Library's collections are current, diverse, and responsive. MPL regularly monitors collection trends and reallocates funding towards materials that are growing in popularity. A series of evidenced-based tools – combined with the Library's community-led approach – help inform MPL's collection decisions to ensure they react to the needs of the community as much as possible. This approach to collection development is illustrated through Sherwood Branch, which has notably higher collection turnover rate.

Demand for both print and digital materials is increasing. The shift toward digital items is evident in the Library's holdings, a trend that is expected to continue. For example, eBook usage increased by 18% between 2018 and 2019 (with greater gains through the pandemic), while streaming is becoming more popular at the expense of CDs and DVDs. Reference transactions continue to trend downward as the Library finds new ways to activate its role as a provider of reliable information sources. Reciprocal borrowing agreements with other public libraries in the region help to address peak demands and specialised interests, while a book alert service keeps patrons apprised of available resources.

The overall decline of MPL's physical collection in response to borrowing trends is beginning to slow. This can be attributed in part to the thorough weeding that has already taken place, as well as to the opening of Sherwood Branch in 2019. Circulation of the physical collection has recently increased, suggesting that efforts have been successful.

A recent focus for MPL has been on expanding multi-lingual resources, which increased by 172% between 2019 and 2020 and now represents nearly 15% of the collection. The 2015 Master Plan noted that the Library's multilingual resources were insufficient to address growing community diversity. Continued demand for ethno-cultural collections can be expected; MPL should seek out and leverage qualitative and quantitative data (evidence) that supports their collection and other investment decisions.

In response to demand, MPL has broadened its non-traditional circulating collections to include items such as headphones, charging cables/plugs, cognitive care kits, pedometers, appliance monitor kits, and more. MPL's community-led approach will continue to inform the evolution of lendable items.

Pandemic Analysis – Collections

MPL played a critical role in the cultural life of the town during the pandemic. Despite restricted hours and services, MPL's circulation of physical items declined by only 20% during the active pandemic stage as many patrons shifted their borrowing to online holds and curbside collection. Use of digital collections – most notably eBooks – increased by 60% and it is likely that strong demand for non-physical resources will continue.

Looking ahead, it is acknowledged that many households have been affected financially by the pandemic. This could lead them to seek out affordable options (such as borrowing instead of buying) and MPL is well positioned to address many of these needs.





Actions – Collections

4. Continue to place a focus on popular materials that respond to community needs and strive to build neighbourhood-specific collections at each branch.
5. Utilise evidence-based tools to support collection decisions, including those relating to multi-lingual resources.

3.3 Facilities

MPL’s facilities are hubs for discovery, learning, and community connections. There are currently three physical full-service locations: Main Library; Beaty Branch; and Sherwood Branch. The latter is the newest branch, which opened in September 2019 in combination with the Sherwood Community Centre. Through its “discovery layout”, the 12,500 square foot Sherwood Branch emphasises a customer-centric and user-approach that leverages retail principles and new technologies; it will become the standard for all new and refurbished MPL branches. Notably, this branch was opened with no additional operating dollars, made possible through a staff re organisation exercise.

More library space is required in both the short and long-term to accommodate community needs. Unfortunately, the delivery of capital projects identified in the previous Master Plan have been delayed due to funding availability and market conditions. Facility development is the responsibility of the Town and is dependent on financial resources and partnership opportunities.

Based on a current population estimate of 126,355 persons and a total of 53,337 square feet, the present day rate of provision amounts to 0.42 square feet per capita. This level falls below MPL’s target of 0.55 square feet per capita and lags industry standards. There is a need to extend facility development into Milton’s new communities and to address growing space constraints at the Main Library.

The following table applies the recommended space provision target to the Town’s population forecasts to reveal space requirements over time. At present, Milton requires an additional 16,158 square feet to meet the 0.55 sf/capita target. With continued population growth, this shortfall is expected to climb to 77,563 square feet by 2031. The Town and Library are encouraged to work towards this target gradually and incrementally.

Table 4: Forecasted Library Space Requirements

Year	Population	Library Space Needs (based on 0.55sf/capita)	Additional Space Required (53,337 sf at present)
2020	126,355	69,495	16,158
2031	238,000	130,900	77,563

MPL’s facility model consists of a Main Library and a growing supply of community branches, each of which will generally be 12,000 to 18,000 square feet in size. The Library’s facility provision approach targets facilities in appropriate locations that are aligned with Milton’s phased residential areas. The intent is to locate branches so they can be conveniently accessed by multiple neighbourhoods as the community grows around them. It is anticipated that future library branches would be co-located with other community



facilities and services (e.g., recreation, culture, civic space, schools, post-secondary institutions, etc.) that strengthen their role as community hubs, although MPL is open to considering alternative facility models to best address resident needs.

Now that a library has been constructed in the Sherwood area, the focus shifts to the Boyne Survey, to be followed by the Trafalgar Corridor area. Secondary Plan studies envision a 17,000sf library branch to serve the Boyne Survey and a 18,000sf library branch to serve the Trafalgar Corridor area. More detailed study is required to confirm these sizes, locations, and partners. Timing of these developments would be dependent on funding and residential growth.

Suggestions for existing and future branches are identified below.

- a) The **Main Library** was designed as a phased project, with the second phase still outstanding, but largely “development-ready”. A larger Main Library would have a dramatic impact on the full range of intended functions (e.g., programming space, teen area, quiet space, etc.) and layout improvements would provide an opportunity to align with MPL’s new service delivery model. The expansion project is identified within the 10-year capital forecast, with a scheduled ground-breaking of 2027. Efforts to advance this expansion project to 2022-24 should be supported.
- b) The **Beaty Branch** is located in a maturing community. It was recently reconfigured (and the collection size reduced) to address the evolving needs of this area. Additional updates (post-2024) to implement elements of the “discovery layout” at Sherwood Branch are recommended, as well as other physical changes that may emerge from pandemic learnings.
- c) Capital funding was recently allocated for a **bookmobile** that will help to enhance access for hard-to-reach communities – such as areas of residential intensification and rural locations – and provide a stopgap measure in advance of library branch development, effectively boosting the Library’s service offerings without adding additional space. External service delivery options are emerging as a trend in many communities as it offers more flexible alternatives to traditional bricks-and-mortar libraries.
- d) The **Boyne Branch Library** and Community Centre (a shared project with the Town, similar to the Sherwood facility) is identified within the current 10-year capital forecast with an anticipated ground-breaking in 2024. The 2015 Library Master Plan identified a minimum requirement of 17,000 square feet. However, due to the pandemic, this project is likely to be delayed to 2026 at the earliest. In its place, MPL is seeking to advance the Main Library expansion project as its highest priority capital project.
- e) A fifth public library facility has been identified in the **Trafalgar Corridor Secondary Plan**. This project – and possible **future opportunities** in the Milton Education Village and Britannia Secondary Plan areas – has not yet been incorporated into MPL’s 10-year capital forecast.



Pandemic Analysis – Facilities

The pandemic may create a delay in planned capital projects (e.g., Boyne community facilities) and service initiatives as the Town and MPL reallocate funding to priority areas. Conversely, economic stimulus to the sector – possibly in the form of expanded senior government grants – may allow the Town and Library to address needed infrastructure improvements that focus on resilient services and infrastructure. Complete communities that provide easy access to schools, jobs and the services we need the most are excelling during the pandemic, emphasising the need to continue to provide library branches that are accessible to all residents.

In terms of existing facilities, an emphasis on good building design is critical. Flexible, accessible and resilient spaces are required. Specific responses may include (but are not limited to):

- fewer desktops and more laptops, something MPL has been actively implementing
- movable, cleanable and durable furniture
- enhanced air exchange and connections to outdoors
- less congested / more open public areas – this could lend support to larger library footprints
- reconfigured staff workspaces
- larger, accessible washrooms with more touchless features

Lastly, with the realisation that some activities may be safer outdoors than indoors, this may lead to more outdoor reading areas, pop-ups in parks and public spaces, and other outreach or programme opportunities.



Actions – Facilities

6. Establish a service model for the proposed bookmobile (in service by 2023), which is intended to provide service to fast-growing neighbourhoods, areas of residential intensification, and rural locations.
7. Work with the Town of Milton to prioritise the expansion of the Main Library (approximately 15,000 additional square feet) in the short-term (2022-24).
8. Collaborate with the Town of Milton on the development of the Boyne Library and Community Centre project. Move forward with this project after the Main Library expansion project is completed (2026 or beyond).
9. Monitor growth forecasts to enable future planning, including long-term facility needs in Trafalgar Corridor, Britannia and/or Milton Education Village, in concert with other community uses.
10. Ensure that library facilities respond to changing needs and function as true community hubs. This includes a re-imagining of space at Beaty Branch to instill elements of the successful “discovery layout” from Sherwood Branch.



3.4 Programming

Programmes are MPL's primary means to create a safe, inclusive, community hub and to market collections in a manner that is responsive and meaningful – they animate resources and support lifelong learning. Recent improvements to online registration (including the MPL Mobile App) have made it easier than ever for patrons to register for programmes. To ensure that they are responsive, MPL uses many tools to gather feedback on programming and services from residents; examples include surveys, community conversations and consultations, as well as targeted demographic focus groups.

Programming is a noted strength of the Milton Public Library – amongst the comparator group of libraries, MPL ranks fifth in programme offerings and third in attendance on a per capita basis. The Library provides a wide range of programmes for diverse populations, including children and families, teens, adults, older adults and seniors, and newcomers to Canada. With many other service providers in town, MPL strives to complement existing offerings by focusing on their literacy and community development mandate. Early literacy, early learning, children's, summer reading, STEAM, and community development programmes are amongst the most well attended, underscoring the positive impact MPL has on Milton's youngest generation.

Some of MPL's recent and notable successes relating to programming include:

- launching of storytimes in multiple languages; these have proven to be very popular for residents of all backgrounds;
- creation of a sensory garden and beehives at Beaty Branch; these features will help to support Library programming and encourage patrons to more fully engage with nature;
- partnering with Maplehurst Correctional Complex to support the literacy of the children of inmates; and
- growth in teen programme attendance, which increased by 64% between 2018 and 2019.

While MPL's core programming is well subscribed, the Library must continue to **push boundaries through innovative activities** that address emerging interests and fill gaps within Milton. Increasingly, MPL should strive to provide programmes that are community-led and incorporate new and innovative technology. To continue its efforts to move beyond the ordinary, MPL is encouraged to identify local needs and then look to some of the more progressive library systems around the globe for inspiration. Where interest is uncertain, low-cost pilot projects can be a good way of testing demand.

Some possibilities for expanded programming are identified below; this is not intended to be an exhaustive list:

- extended virtual programming (or a hybrid of in-person and virtual), which many patrons have become comfortable with during the pandemic;
- a broader range of children's and teen programmes to support the town's demographic profile; expanding spaces, programmes and collections relating to video games may help keep teens engaged;
- continued expansion of multi-cultural programmes, including those focussed on newcomers (e.g., guided orientation of the Library and its services, settlement services, ESL, etc.); and
- supports for lower-income and vulnerable populations, including employment support (e.g., tax clinics, resume building, etc.).

Further, the community-led librarianship approach has resulted in an expanded partnership network, allowing for greater opportunities to develop programming that is relevant to the communities MPL serves. Many programmes are delivered in partnership with others, including joint programming with the



Town at shared facilities. Of MPL's over 400 programmes (and over 2,000 sessions), nearly on-half are offered in partnership with other community collaborators. Taxpayers expect there to be a strong working relationship between the Milton Public Library and the Town of Milton (most notably the Community Services Department) to make the most efficient use of funding and public space while providing coordinated services that address community-driven priorities.

Pandemic Analysis – Programming

With in-person events and programmes cancelled, MPL was one of the first public library systems in Canada to pivot to virtual programming when the pandemic began. Nearly all of the Library's programmes are available online – from storytimes to book clubs to STEAM activities and more.

The Library's Social Distance Book Club has hosted high-profile authors such as Iliza Shlesinger, Jann Arden, and Clara Hughes. The Laurier Milton Lecture Series has been particularly well attended and many people have found these to be more convenient options, which may support ongoing investment in virtual programming.

Many parts of the education sector have also shifted to virtual learning and this trend may continue into the future in some capacity. This will lead to greater demand for supports to students, distance learners, and home school networks. Demand for job-seeking assistance and resources may increase in response to more volatile unemployment rates. The addition of "Zoom rooms" to libraries may be one response.



Actions – Programming

1. Amplify the level of innovation in library programming, with an emphasis on experiential learning and community-led activities for all ages.
2. Explore options for sustainable virtual programming and/or hybrid models.
3. Coordinate programming with other providers to maximise resources and community participation, particularly for programming serving newcomers, low-income residents, and vulnerable populations.

3.5 Staffing & Training

MPL's staffing structure has undergone significant change of late to support the Library's community-centred approach, serve an increasingly diverse population, and address the changes brought on by technology. In 2019, MPL implemented a new staffing model and overhauled the management team structure. This process has created greater in-house knowledge and capabilities, resulting in increased efficiencies, improved customer service, new career development opportunities, and an improved internal reporting structure. Human resources policies were also refined and pay equity and job evaluation exercises completed.



To support a culture of innovation, MPL has built a workforce that is represented by professionals, specialists, innovative thinkers, and risk-takers – including many skilled candidates from outside the library sector. Flexibility and a willingness to adapt is key. Roles have been expanded and staff feel empowered by these changes and, as a result, are doing great things! MPL is quickly becoming an “employer of choice” within the industry. This should position the Library to recruit and inspire new leaders who have knowledge in a variety of areas, such as customer service, literacy, programming and emerging technologies.

With that said, the opening of Sherwood Branch with zero net operating budget tested the Library’s resources. While MPL was up to the challenge, additional staff will be needed to keep pace with Milton’s growth, with new positions added to operate new branches. The Library’s staffing levels (0.34 FTE per 1,000 residents) are well below the average of the benchmarked systems. The development of a Human Resources Strategy would help to define these needs, address succession planning, promote diversity on the workplace, and inspire employees to strive for new heights. Technical / IT services and marketing / communications were two areas that were identified as needing additional resources moving forward.

Compared to the library of only a few years ago, automation and self-serve technologies have freed up staff to tend to other duties. Staff must also have the skills and training to confidently respond to customer requests for information and technical assistance. Training (and re-training) is critical as technologies change and user assistance becomes more complex. Quality service is the Library’s competitive advantage over other sources of information and must continue to be MPL’s ultimate priority.

“Though new technology continues to drive change in CULC / CBUC, the shift towards a more decisively inclusive service model within a social justice framework also lies behind much of the change in what librarians now do.”

- 8Rs CULC / CBUC Human Resources Study
(May 2020)

All staff need the skills, knowledge, and resources to deliver high-quality library services that respond to community needs. Through its tangible efforts, MPL has illustrated its emphasis on ongoing staff training and development. A recent focus has been placed on training around topics such as intellectual freedom, anti-racism, and maximising the service delivery model at Sherwood Branch. A mix of formal and informal training approaches are used, including opportunities through the weekly and monthly team meetings. MPL is currently developing a training plan that will seek to activate the Library’s values through meaningful, concrete examples.

As Milton grows, its population will become more diverse, with vulnerable groups becoming more visible. The development of an Equity, Diversity and Inclusion Plan would help to support and maintain sensitive approaches and practises. To be a leader in inclusion and belonging, MPL must facilitate and defend access to information and encourage all persons to engage in civic life.



Pandemic Analysis – Staffing & Training

MPL redeployed its staff team to support priority areas during the pandemic, which saw an increased demand for virtual programming and curbside pick-up, among other services. Accurate and timely communication – both internally and externally – became more important than ever, and the Library’s social media presence expanded considerably.

Enhanced training and re-training of staff is expected to be a point of emphasis coming out of the pandemic. The health of staff – which was always a priority – will continue to be a focus, along with modified workplace arrangements (where necessary and in keeping with the collective agreement). The changing nature of programming and technology – which expanded rapidly during the pandemic – may create the need for expanded skills amongst some staff positions.



Actions – Staffing & Training

14. Ensure that MPL’s hiring practises reflect the community it serves as it strives to be known as an “employer of choice” in the library industry.
15. Develop a Human Resources Strategy to identify future staffing requirements, address succession planning, promote diversity in the workplace, and inspire employees.
16. Support MPL’s progressive and customer-focussed staff team through the development of a Training Plan that activates the Library’s values through meaningful and concrete examples.
17. Create an Equity, Diversity and Inclusion Plan to support and maintain appropriate approaches and practises for serving diverse, vulnerable groups.

3.6 Technology

This is a period of rapid technology innovation, enabling MPL to meet the needs of its patrons in new and exciting ways. Not only can technology introduce the community and staff to new possibilities, it can also streamline and improve existing processes. As a result, technology procurement, renewal, systems data analysis, and related programming have become a key focus for the Library in recent years.

To illustrate its commitment to technology and patron convenience, MPL recently:

- launched a new online card renewal portal;
- developed an award-winning mobile library app that provides patrons with quick and seamless access to all of MPL’s services;
- transitioned to a new eBook platform (cloudLibrary);
- released a unique gaming app (Quest Milton) and a Virtual Reality programme for seniors;
- installed children’s touch screen activity tables, 3D printing and scanning; and
- provided a self-serve laptop lending kiosk at Sherwood Branch, a model that results in additional circulation and frees up floor space that would previously have been used for fixed workstations.



In addition, the COVID-19 pandemic has brought the need for self-serve technologies to the forefront, a service that has been trending upward for several years. Features such as self-checkout and laptop lending allow patrons to operate with little to no human interaction. This will likely remain in high demand through and even beyond the active pandemic stage. Patrons are also increasingly accessing the internet wirelessly with their own devices. The emergence and dominance of mobile technologies and personal devices introduces exciting opportunities to increase accessibility, convenience, and seamlessness for MPL and its users, as witnessed through the introduction of the MPL Mobile App which now can be used for self-checkout. At the same time, it is important to be mindful of the digital divide in the community; individuals without access to the internet can easily be overlooked. To help address this gap, MPL anticipates expanding its self-serve laptop lending kiosks to all branches in the future. As a safe, trusted, and connected service provider, MPL also has a role to play in reducing digital exclusion.

To support growing interests in digital systems and new technologies, a proactive Technology Renewal and Acquisition Plan should be developed to establish priorities not only for public-facing elements, but also technology that supports staff and internal functions (e.g., records management, etc.). The plan should promote relevant and outcome-driven investments that provide staff with timely access to both popular technologies and emerging opportunities, along with adequate training to leverage these resources.

Pandemic Analysis – Technology

During the COVID-19 pandemic, many patrons have engaged with the Library through remote means. This led to increased demand for online resources, particularly eBooks and virtual programming – a trend that should continue into the future. To maintain support, ongoing investment is required in digital/IT infrastructure, staff training and retraining, online tools and subscriptions, tech support and virtual customer service, etc. One way that MPL has responded has been to enable the self-checkout feature on the mobile app to allow for touch-free service.



Actions – Technology

18. Continue to invest in technology to support community-based learning, digital literacy, and improve accessibility.
19. Develop a Technology Renewal and Acquisition Plan to identify priorities, training and funding requirements that will allow MPL to sustain and evolve its digital library experience for both patrons and staff.



3.7 Advocacy & Governance

Strong leadership and effective governance are the cornerstones of any successful organisation. Since the 2015 Master Plan was developed, MPL has established a new Leadership Team and has supported the Library Board's transition into a governance board through updated orientation materials and policies. Refined Library Board responsibilities ensure that the Board is focussed on their mandate – governance (policy and financial oversight) and not operational issues – which is supported by a set of distinct policies that are reviewed annually.

The Library Board has an important role in advocating for Milton Public Library, including nurturing collaborative working relationships with the Town and community partners. The Town is the Library's principal source of funding and MPL contributes to several important shared service objectives. Notably, the critical role that MPL has played during the pandemic provides an opportunity to position the Library as an essential community service.

Successful advocacy requires a planned long-term approach to develop support and it is recommended that the Library continue to implement its multi-faceted Advocacy Plan to provide guidance in this area. With MPL being recognised through several high profile national and international awards within the library sector, it is clear that MPL has many compelling success stories that need to be told locally.

Pandemic Analysis – Advocacy & Governance

Advocacy, long-term planning and strategic investment are vital to support the significant role that public libraries play in our personal, social, and economic recovery and revitalisation. The pandemic has created considerable uncertainty, and we must plan for a range of scenarios over the short-term. Through its staged re-opening, MPL has shown that it is creative and up to the task of engaging the community and keeping them safe as they access public library services.



Actions – Advocacy & Governance

20. Continue to actively seek opportunities to illustrate to the public and its partners the many community benefits delivered by Milton Public Library. Link these achievements to common objectives that benefit Milton residents and the local economy.

3.8 Communications & Marketing

With its historically high active cardholder rate, MPL's efforts to communicate its services to residents have been highly effective. The importance of marketing and communications have been reflected through MPL's new staffing model, which includes dedicated (part-time) positions that support external and internal communications.

Aided by its new branding – with the “bee” logo representing the Library as a “hive” of activity and teamwork, where the community comes together to be inspired – MPL is quickly building a recognised and valued brand that supports a new approach to customer service excellence. MPL has been rewarded



with high profile national and international awards from library associations in recognition of its successful re-branding initiative.

Part of this success can also be attributed to the exponential growth in social media and online services, which has led to increased visitation to MPL's website. Online platforms are integral to promoting MPL's programmes and services, as well as broader community engagement. Improving MPL's media presence has been a particular area of emphasis in recent years. The Library has a social media policy and workplan that guides its growing base of followers across four key platforms. In addition, MPL has partnered with the Town of Milton on their Let's Talk Milton initiative to broaden opportunities for community engagement. The development of a new MPL website is a high priority in the near term, with improved navigation and greater integration with the Library's current service model.

Recognising that not everyone relies on social media, MPL is also a regular contributor to local radio and cable television. In addition, the Library's eNewsletter is received by just over 40% of active patrons each month (around 35,000 people). Roadside signage, websites, and outreach through partners also help to spread the word.

Furthermore, MPL uses many tools to gather patron feedback on programming and services. Examples include surveys, community conversations and consultations, targeted demographic focus groups, social media, comment forms, "Happy or Not" kiosks, etc. In support of its community-led model, MPL held a series of community conversations with local residents in 2019 to better understand and respond to the issues affecting Miltonians. These conversations have led to new initiatives such as a series of virtual lectures and events under the "Speak for the Bees" banner.

Internal staff communication has been enhanced through monthly town halls, additional training opportunities, comment boxes in staff rooms, and dedicated email addresses for every MPL staff member. While the methods may change over time, MPL is committed to providing responsive opportunities for gathering staff input and enhancing transparency and buy-in. MPL's management team is highly engaged with various professional library associations and peer networks within Canada and internationally, which helps to improve inter-library communication and promote information sharing.

Pandemic Analysis – Communications & Marketing

With COVID-19, the community is looking to the internet and social media for ways to engage and learn not only about the library, but also resources to help with their virtual learning efforts, leisure activities and general interest. More and more people are experimenting with apps and increasingly streaming television, movies, and music from home. Nevertheless, patrons that are less tech savvy may require additional assistance or alternative options. As a trusted provider, MPL has a role to play in connecting residents to both online/virtual and in-person resources.

As residents return to in-person services, extra effort will be required to communicate new protocols to the public and gain their confidence, possibly including real-time reporting of capacities and occupant densities. Social media strategies have become more robust during the pandemic and will continue to be a key communication medium, along with traditional media sources.





21. Communicate intentionally and frequently with the public, partners and staff. Employ a variety of tactics and mediums to maximise the Library’s reach, supported by appropriate resources and policies.
22. Continue to leverage targeted marketing opportunities to get the right information to the right people at the right time.
23. Update MPL’s website to further refine and enhance functionality.

3.9 Collaboration & Partnerships

Public libraries are vital to community building. MPL has an especially important role to play in creating social connections amongst both long-time residents and newcomers to the Town, including vulnerable populations. MPL understands the need for collaboration in activating its mandate and recognises that creative relationships are increasingly important to delivering quality and fiscally responsible services.

MPL connects regularly with the community and its partners across various sectors, particularly those that share common goals. This allows the Library to generate awareness of library services and to tailor them to the specific needs of Miltonians, filling gaps along the way. The number of community partners wanting and willing to work with MPL is growing, allowing the Library to serve new patrons; some examples include the LGBTQ community and lower-income residents.

As a result of its community-led approach, MPL has engaged a wide range of new partners that have helped the Library support a wider sector of the community. For example, in collaboration with their partners, MPL has recently:

- developed cognitive care kits as a resource to help support caregivers and patrons with dementia and other forms of cognitive impairment;
- implemented inclusive programming for newcomers and children with special needs using the top five languages read in the home locally (Urdu, Hindi, Arabic, French, and Spanish); and
- developed sensory kits that assist patrons with sensory processing disorders to activity participation in their community.

MPL is one of the founding members of the “One Page initiative”, hosted by the Toronto Public Library, in which readers from across the globe can access MPL’s online programmes. Additionally, MPL is one of two public libraries in Canada to support the “Internet Archive”, a programme that makes digitised texts available to readers and researchers world-wide.

MPL is in the process of developing metrics that speak to the qualitative aspects of its work, including the positive impact of partnerships and community collaborations.

Moving forward, MPL should continue to pursue partnerships with community groups and organisations where there is a logical and needed fit with the Library’s goals and directions. This may include collaborations that connect vulnerable populations to services (e.g., settlement and/or employment services, etc.) as this group emerges. Furthermore, future partnerships for the joint delivery of space may involve co-locations with the Town, schools, post-secondary institutions, and other organisations.



Pandemic Analysis – Collaborations & Partnerships

At the start of the pandemic, MPL quickly reacted to a need and partnered with Inksmith, an education technology company, to create face shield headbands for PPE masks using their 3D printer.

The COVID-19 pandemic has impacted many community service providers – both positively and negatively. If the recent uncertainty has taught us anything, it is safe to suggest that continually shifting needs and resources are likely to lead to potential partnerships that are not yet evident. As a nimble and community-led service provider, Milton Public Library is poised to leverage these future opportunities.



Actions – Collaborations & Partnerships

24. Work collaboratively with partners on shared initiatives that advance the Library's mission, vision, and values.
25. Continue to foster community connections that expand the community-led approach in the delivery of library services.

3.10 Funding

Public libraries are a community service, similar in many ways to parks, trails and recreation services in that they offering wide ranging public benefits and are thus subsidised by local tax funding. MPL takes the responsibility of bring a public service very seriously, and looks for value in everything it does. By successfully opening the Sherwood Branch without any additional operating dollars, the Library has shown its strong commitment to fiscal responsibility. Moving forward, these efficiencies will be more difficult to find as MPL's staff complement is lean and additional resources will be required to open future branches or expand services.

Like other public libraries, Milton Public Library is heavily dependent upon the Town for annual funding – in 2019, 94% of MPL's \$4.79 million operating budget came from the Town of Milton. Provincial public library operating and pay equity grants (which accounted for 1.5% of MPL's operating budget in 2019) have been fixed since the mid-1990s when Milton was a much smaller community, giving MPL one of the lowest per capita provincial contribution rates in Ontario.

The balance of MPL's operating budget (approximately 4%) is derived from direct revenues (e.g., fines, exam proctoring fees, etc.). Free and equitable access is the foundation of public libraries as libraries are prohibited from charging for admission, use of materials, borrowing, or information services. At the discretion of the Board, fees may be charged for additional services, such as overdue materials, non-resident library use, certain administrative services, room rentals, programme materials, and performance fees. As a result, cost recovery philosophies being employed by many municipal departments are not easily applied to libraries.



To maximise its impact while delivering financial value, MPL will continue to pursue grants and donations, something that the Library has been successful in over recent years. Revenue-based opportunities (within the bounds of the Public Libraries Act), such as vending/café options in an expanded Main Library, will also be explored.

In terms of the capital budget, growth-related funding is largely provided through Development Charges and planned via multi-year capital projections. With Milton's strong and sustained growth – coupled with recent changes to the Development Charges Act that support 100% funding for eligible growth-related items – the Town is well positioned to develop new and expanded library branches in a phased manner, generally in line with residential growth.

Pandemic Analysis – Funding

Over the longer-term, we are confident that MPL's services will play a critical role in the recovery of Milton's residents and the community's economic revival. Access to public library services is a fundamental service for Canadians, especially children, seniors, and marginalised populations. To respond to the needs of citizens, investment in public libraries must continue.



Actions – Funding

26. Support the Town's identified goals by providing efficient and effective services in a fiscally responsible manner.

27. Review, refresh, and redevelop the Library's fundraising and donation strategies.



4. Relationship to Town of Milton Work Plan 2020-2023

In July 2020, Town of Milton Council adopted the Council-Staff Work Plan 2020-2023. By identifying what matters most to the Town of Milton, this Work Plan is to be used as a priority setting tool for the balance of this term of Council. The Work Plan was supported by extensive community and stakeholder consultation.

While there is no direct mention of the Milton Public Library within the Council-Staff Work Plan, there are many areas where the Library can work independently and collaboratively to achieve common objectives. Alignment between common goals helps to avoid duplication of efforts and supports consistent and high quality service delivery to residents.

Areas of focus for the Town of Milton include:

- Planning for Growth
- Increasing Revenue Potential
- Community Attractiveness & Competitiveness
- Service Innovation

4.1 Desired Future State for the Town of Milton

Within the Council-Staff Work Plan, the Town identified the following themes as describing the type of community they see as successful in two decades. As a prominent public-facing service provider in the town, MPL can help the Town achieve these outcomes through a variety of means.

Table 5: Key Areas of Alignment Between Milton Public Library and Town of Milton

Key Aspect of the Town's Desired Future	How MPL Can Contribute
A balanced, complete community where residents can live, work and play	Great communities have great libraries! MPL is a vital contributor to the town's social infrastructure, enabling all residents to read, learn, create, and connect.
A post-secondary partnership that is fully operational in the Milton Education Village and Innovation Centre	MPL is open to exploring opportunities for a joint library project with Wilfrid Laurier University. MPL currently supports post-secondary students in many ways, including offering free access to a wide variety of informational resources, study space, and programs that inspire through discovery, collaboration, and creation.
A community that is affordable for residents	Free and equitable access is one of MPL's core values, as is fiscal responsibility. The Library is committed to providing value to taxpayers through efficient and innovative service delivery approaches.



Key Aspect of the Town's Desired Future	How MPL Can Contribute
Infrastructure that is in a good state of repair across neighbourhoods	All of MPL's facilities are less than ten years old and are well cared for by the Town and Library. Future neighbourhood branches will be planned in collaboration with the Town and other civic partners.
Thriving businesses in new office space and business parks	MPL addresses the needs of local business leaders and entrepreneurs in several respects. One example is MPL's partnership with the Milton Chamber of Commerce, which connects businesses with library resources and facilitates stronger networking.
A vibrant, safe, and healthy community with adequate schools, hospitals, parks, and innovative recreational facilities	Public libraries contribute to healthy communities in so many ways, including providing year-round, accessible, safe places for all. Libraries are agents of placemaking that enable individual and community wellbeing in all they do.
A community that is a sustainability leader with walkable neighbourhoods and green technologies	MPL supports the Town's environmental and sustainability goals through its practises and programs. For example, MPL's "Speak for the Bees" Lecture Series invites participants to engage with speakers and become informed about environmental issues.
Strong municipal services and high resident satisfaction	Resident satisfaction is core and central to all MPL does, as evidenced by its "customer-first" service model and community-led approach. With the highest active cardholder rate of any large Canadian Library (71%), it is evident that MPL's services are highly valued by Miltonians.

Additional areas of alignment between the Town's four areas of focus and this Library Master Plan Update are explored below.



4.2 Planning for Growth

Town of Milton Goal

We will plan and build our community to accommodate growth while managing new service and infrastructure demands and balancing taxpayer affordability.

Ways that MPL can support this goal

- Support planning for library facilities in the town’s new residential communities.
- Encourage co-located facilities (e.g., libraries, community centres, schools, post-secondary, etc.) that are community-responsive and benefit from economies of scale.
- Develop operational, staffing and collection plans for expanded and new branches that reflect the Library’s new service model, with a focus on efficient and effective customer service.
- Use evidence-based tools and community-led approaches to inform capital projects and acquisition priorities.
- Reinforce communication between MPL and the Town on matters concerning capital projects and funding.

MPL and the Town of Milton work very closely in the planning, budgeting, development, and operation of library and other community facilities. These collective efforts ensure that growth-related capital projects are delivered in a timely fashion and in a form that maximises access and convenience to Milton’s residents.

MPL’s 2021-2023 Priorities

- Seek opportunities to offer extended library hours that respond to the needs of the growing community.
- Contribute to an understanding of future library facility needs within secondary plan areas.
- Purchase and outfit a bookmobile to extend service to growing communities, areas of intensification, and rural areas.
- Develop a Human Resources Strategy to identify staffing requirements to support an expanded network of facilities.
- Initiate design and tendering of an expansion to the Main Library, which is a “development-ready” opportunity to addressing public library space needs.



4.3 Increasing Revenue Potential

Town of Milton Goal

We will achieve sustainable new revenue streams.

Ways that MPL can support this goal

- Continue to prioritise transparency and fiscal responsibility in decision-making. By doing “more with less” – such as opening the Sherwood Branch without additional operating funding – MPL has demonstrated that it values efficiency, cost effectiveness, and service excellence.
- Continue to support volunteerism, community collaboration, and external partnerships that enhance services while offsetting costs, resulting in a savings to taxpayers.
- Demonstrate the universal public benefit associated with municipal funding requests. MPL is committed to “evidence-based” decision-making to guide policy and practise, and to illustrate community benefits.
- Evaluate value-added services that may bolster Library revenues, while ensuring affordability and accessibility for core services consistent with MPL’s mandate and provincial legislation.
- Pursue grant and external funding opportunities to maximise value to taxpayers, including support for sector-wide advocacy efforts to update the provincial library grant formula.

In 2015, MPL completed an economic impact analysis that found for each \$1 invested in MPL, there was a \$5.67 return on investment to the taxpayer. These figures indicate a very strong return on investment for library service.

MPL’s 2021-2023 Priorities

- Continue to place a priority on delivering efficient and effective services in a fiscally responsible manner.
- Work collaboratively with volunteers and community partners on initiatives that leverage outside resources and provide value to residents.
- Update the Library’s fundraising and donation strategies.
- Continue to support the local economy and business growth through sector-specific resources and services (e.g., employment assistance, resume building, etc.).
- Explore revenue-based opportunities, such as vending/café options in an expanded Main Library.



4.4 Community Attractiveness and Competition

Town of Milton Goal

We will improve Milton’s attractiveness for prospective talent and investment.

Ways that MPL can support this goal

- Contribute to the town’s high quality of life by enhancing access to library services.
- Provide innovative library facilities and community-responsive collections and programming.
- Support and encourage a smart, knowledgeable community by enabling the educational and lifelong learning goals of residents.
- Work with local organisations and community business on areas of common interest.
- Inform and inspire Milton and its residents, making us more resilient, knowledgeable, connected and successful.
- Solidify MPL’s reputation as a progressive library system that is an “employer of choice” in the library industry.
- Demonstrate leadership in inclusion and social responsibility by acknowledging and valuing diversity.

Employers are looking for diverse communities that support a broad range of opportunities for all. MPL strives to be a safe place and reflect the diversity of Milton’s residents. The Library values the perspectives and contributions of all people, and seeks to incorporate these viewpoints into all aspects of its services. For example, MPL has responded to the social justice movement by providing a platform for education and discussion, as well as staff training related to anti-racism and intellectual freedom.

MPL’s 2021-2023 Priorities

- Provide meaningful, accessible and inclusive lifelong learning opportunities for all residents.
- Respond quickly to changing community needs and foster social discourse through MPL’s community-driven approach.
- Create an Equity, Diversity and Inclusion Plan to support services to diverse, vulnerable groups.
- Review hiring practises, resources, and training to support the Library’s goal of being an “employer of choice” in the library industry.
- Communicate with Town Officials and Staff, employers, and residents about the importance and value of public library services.



4.5 Service Innovation

Town of Milton Goal

We will deliver services that address increased expectations and service requests and manage the need for new investment.

Ways that MPL can support this goal

- Invest in initiatives that strengthen MPL’s modern, dynamic, agile, and responsive “service-first” philosophy.
- Continue to collect feedback from residents on their service priorities and tailor services to the highest priority needs of the community (in keeping with MPL’s community-led approach).
- Promote a culture of innovation, embrace change, and view challenges as opportunities to encourage creativity, experimentation, and the generation of new ideas.
- Seek opportunities to maximise convenience, service, and learning through technology (e.g., self-service, online, experiential technologies, etc.).
- Prioritise programming partnerships with the Town and other like-minded partners to realise efficiencies.
- Build and enhance evidence-based tools to support decision-making.

MPL embraces innovation, creativity, and boldness in everything it does. The Library has worked hard in recent years to establish a progressive service model, embed a culture of innovation, and enhance its focus on outcome-driven decision-making. The Library’s recent awards have brought recognition as many other library systems now look to MPL for guidance. Strong leadership, empowered staff, and community engagement allow MPL to regularly sets and exceeds its lofty goals.

MPL’s 2021-2023 Priorities

- Adopt alternative service options, such as implementation of the bookmobile initiative.
- Amplify the level of innovation in library programming and explore options for sustainable virtual programming and/or hybrid models.
- Continue to invest in technology to support community-based learning, digital literacy, and improve accessibility.
- Develop a Technology Renewal and Acquisition Plan to identify priorities, training and funding requirements.
- Update MPL’s website to enhance functionality and integration.



5. Implementation

Planning is not a static process. Milton Public Library will regularly monitor and review the actions identified in this Master Plan Update to ensure they remain reflective of local conditions and are responsive to community needs. In many cases, more detailed implementation strategies will be required. Implementation is an iterative exercise that should be embedded within the Library's regular course of business, such as through management team and planning meetings.

Major directions requiring funding should be revisited each year prior during the development of Library's capital and operating budgets. It is recognised that there are many factors that may influence priorities, such as:

- funding availability;
- capital lifecycle and considerations of safety;
- legislation and mandated requirements;
- changes to service standards;
- public input and community interests;
- emerging trends and changes in use;
- participation of partners; and
- socio-demographic changes and growth forecasts.

To assist with implementation and illustrating the true impacts of its services, MPL is encouraged to develop metrics that speak to the qualitative benefits of its services. Qualitative measures that illustrate impact and outcomes must continue to be emphasised to support the case for investment and innovation.

Actions – Implementation

28. Undertake a complete review and update of the Master Plan in three years' time (2023 to 2024), ideally coinciding with related Town-led planning initiatives.
29. Develop evidence-based metrics that illustrate the qualitative benefits of MPL's services.



Appendix A: Comparator Library Data

Library System Benchmarking (2018) - Table 1

Library System	Population	Total Sq. ft. per capita	Public Access Workstations per 1,000	Total Staff (FTE) per 1,000
Mississauga	775,000	0.45	0.40	0.48
Brampton	642,800	0.32	0.73	0.25
Hamilton	563,480	0.70	0.99	0.50
Markham	348,718	0.44	0.51	0.51
Vaughan	334,499	0.52	0.22	0.31
Richmond Hill	215,316	0.46	0.58	0.44
Oakville	201,200	0.48	0.37	0.54
Burlington	176,120	0.61	0.77	0.57
Cambridge	135,060	0.68	0.46	0.55
Ajax	127,400	0.39	0.35	0.26
Average	351,959	0.49	0.58	0.43
Milton (2018)	120,500	0.34	0.41	0.34

Library System Benchmarking (2018) - Table 2

Library System	# of Library Programmes Per 1,000*	Programme Attendance Per capita*	In-person Visits Per capita	E-visits per capita
Mississauga	9.5	0.20	6.99	1.29
Brampton	10.0	0.23	3.35	8.67
Hamilton	16.9	0.33	6.66	8.04
Markham	23.3	0.43	7.95	8.19
Vaughan	10.1	0.25	5.42	8.40
Richmond Hill	17.6	0.31	4.48	7.06
Oakville	N/A	N/A	8.08	8.58
Burlington	22.0	0.46	6.48	6.11
Cambridge	20.1	0.57	5.34	5.62
Ajax	13.8	0.30	4.44	1.77
Average	14.1	0.30	5.95	6.27
Milton (2018)	17.3	0.43	3.13	2.33

* Programmes can be ongoing, in a series, or one-time events.



Library System Benchmarking (2018) – Table 3

Library System	Holdings (Items) per capita (physical and eResources)	Annual Circulation per capita	Turnover Rate
Mississauga	1.28	7.85	6.2
Brampton	0.99	6.66	6.7
Hamilton	1.85	11.83	6.4
Markham	2.50	14.07	5.6
Vaughan	1.87	9.71	5.2
Richmond Hill	2.78	9.76	3.5
Oakville	1.55	8.87	5.7
Burlington	2.14	10.13	4.7
Cambridge	1.72	7.16	4.2
Ajax	1.64	6.34	3.9
Average	1.67	9.27	5.5
Milton (2018)	2.13	11.03	5.2

Library System Benchmarking (2018) – Table 4

Library System	Municipal Revenue per capita	Materials Expenditures per capita	Operating Budget per capita
Mississauga	\$34.26	\$4.60	\$36.82
Brampton	\$26.19	\$3.53	\$29.84
Hamilton	\$57.63	\$6.10	\$53.54
Markham	\$46.06	\$9.93	\$50.82
Vaughan	\$50.28	\$7.24	\$61.17
Richmond Hill	\$52.74	\$5.32	\$55.93
Oakville	\$44.19	\$4.74	\$50.15
Burlington	\$60.84	\$6.21	\$64.81
Cambridge	\$49.53	\$5.26	\$54.72
Ajax	\$36.97	\$5.83	\$38.59
Average	\$42.93	\$5.63	\$46.00
Milton (2018)	\$39.71	\$4.78	\$42.43

Sources: Province of Ontario, Ontario Public Library Statistics (2018); square footage calculations supplemented by Monteith Brown Planning Consultants