



NEW WESTMINSTER  
PUBLIC LIBRARY



# STRATEGIC PLAN

# 2021-2025

# INTRODUCTION

This strategic plan was developed a year into the global COVID-19 pandemic, and was intended to focus on the priority strategic directions that the New Westminster Public Library (NWPL) should undertake to assist with the community's recovery needs and efforts. However, the strategic plan framework, i.e. the vision, mission, values, and goals are meant to guide NWPL's work over a longer term.

During the strategic planning sessions, the board clearly articulated a desire for NWPL to strive for innovation and excellence. The board believes NWPL has an essential role to play as an agent for social good, and that it needs to conduct its operation through a lens of anti-oppression, diversity, equity, inclusion and anti-racism. These strong sentiments are expressed in the set of values described below.

The board also recognized that changing from a more conventional approach to one that is based in innovation can be difficult and challenging, that NWPL may not get to perfection, but that it is important to acknowledge organizational weaknesses and to commit to addressing them. The board also recognized that while there is a strong role for NWPL to play in social justice, NWPL needs to continue to deliver excellence in its ongoing library services to its clients, as well as to support the community in COVID-19 recovery where it is able. At the same time, with the retirement of the longtime Chief Librarian and the hiring of a new one during the first phase of this strategic plan, organizational changes will require time for staff to learn and adjust amidst other priorities.

This ambitious strategic plan articulates a renewed vision, mission, values and goals. The "this means" statements articulate what success would look like for NWPL in the long term, and the strategic directions provide guidance for NWPL's work over the next one to five years; they are organized into three phases:

**PHASE 1** focuses on the next one to two years as NWPL recovers from COVID-19 impacts and rebuilds capacity, and continues the work with the City of New Westminster on existing diversity, equity, inclusion and anti-racism initiatives.

**PHASE 2** focuses on continuing to increase NWPL's capacity to deliver on those initiatives (years 3-4).

**PHASE 3**, identified as the "next" phase in the strategic plan, will be focused on implementing new strategic directions identified during the strategic planning process, but at a later date (e.g. 2024+).



## NWPL BOARD OF TRUSTEES

- Naomi Perks – Chairperson
- Rohan J. Singh – Vice-Chairperson
- Jane DePaoli – InterLINK Representative
- Elaine Su
- Norah Andrew – InterLINK Representative
- Stacy Ashton
- Mary Trentadue – City Council Representative

## NWPL STAFF LEADERSHIP TEAM

- Julie Spurrell – Chief Librarian
- Susan Buss – Deputy Chief Librarian
- Adam Farrell – Manager of Technology and Technical Services
- Christopher Koth – Manager of Programs and Community Development
- Shelley Wilson-Roberts – Manager of Public Services

# CURRENT SITUATION: WHERE WE ARE NOW

NWPL is considered one of the most important community-focused institutions in the City of New Westminster, and operates the Main Branch on 6th Avenue seven days a week and the Queensborough Branch six days a week. Supported by 60 staff members and a 2019 operating budget of \$4,5M, the Library provides an extensive range of collections, programs and services – in-person and online – for the diverse needs of the community. The following provides an overview of Library activities in 2019:

**ITEMS BORROWED 634,752**

**VISITORS AT BOTH LOCATIONS 322,894**

**PROGRAMS HELD 602**

**PROGRAM ATTENDANCE 12,100**

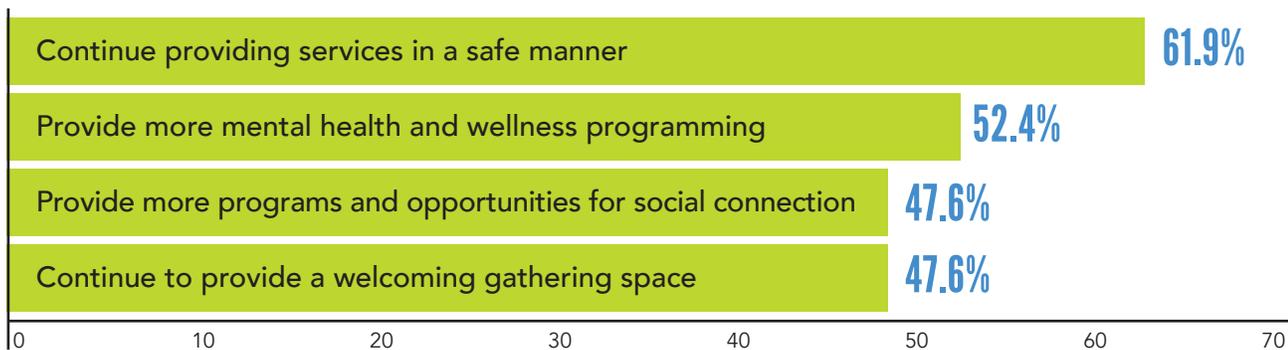
**USE OF PUBLIC INTERNET COMPUTERS 54,356**

The Library's Main Branch underwent a major renovation in 2017 and 2018, and reopened in April 2019, which resulted in upgrades to the structural systems and the addition of numerous design features such as the new 12-seat iConnect LAB used for technology instruction, three new Creation Stations that allow for digitizing older formats as well as providing a suite of creative editing Adobe products, a new Reading Lounge on the main floor of the Library, an expanded Teen and Children's area, and RFID self-checkout technology.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, NWPL was the first City facility to open for in-person services, helping to meet community needs for access to collections, programs and services, including supporting digital literacy in a rapidly changing digital world. A community survey conducted in January 2021 indicated that close to 60% of respondents felt that the Library has a role to play in supporting the community with pandemic challenges. The chart below provides the survey responses describing ways respondents felt the Library can help with those challenges.

## THE WAYS THE LIBRARY CAN HELP

Community survey responses indicating the role the Library can play in helping address challenges due to the pandemic.



Although the Library was closed to the public beginning in March 2020, through the use of eResources, virtual programming and a Take-Out service, the Library remained busy throughout this period. The Uptown Library reopened in August, the Queensborough Branch reopened in September, and both locations were able to offer many safe, in-person services.

Although use of the Library was certainly lower than in non-pandemic years, community members visited the branches 153,300 times in 2020, borrowed 464,000 items, and over 2,500 residents became new members.

# SWOT

A SWOT (strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, threats) analysis is a useful tool to identify the positive (helpful) and negative (harmful) factors that may have an impact on an organization. Developing a SWOT helps to understand the positive and negative factors that affect the landscape in which NWPL works. Understanding these factors can help with the identification of strategies that can:

- build upon the strengths of NWPL
- leverage or take advantage of external opportunities
- address the weaknesses and gaps that currently exist in the organization
- mitigate any external threats that may have negative impacts.

This SWOT was developed through a survey with the staff and Trustees, and additional input during the strategic planning sessions. A summary of the SWOT for NWPL is provided below:

## STRENGTHS

- Knowledgeable, committed, experienced staff; dedicated board
- Technological assets
- Broad collection; excellent programming
- Support of City Hall
- Excellent COVID-19 health and safety practices
- Ability to quickly change course due to COVID-19 requirements
- Partnerships and collaborations

## OPPORTUNITIES

- Improved transit routes and increased residential densities in City
- Desire for real information in light of the rise of fake news
- Rapid technological advances
- Increase in interest in digital literacy
- Increase in availability of home technology
- More City focus on the needs of vulnerable populations

## WEAKNESSES

- Not enough professional development opportunities
- Need greater opportunities to foster creativity/ imagination
- Lack of diversity among library users and board members
- Fines are punitive/restrictive
- Lack of high attendance for some types of programs
- Staff burnout, especially due to COVID-19-related stress
- Virtual work environment has impacted team cohesion
- COVID-19 health requirements have delayed other projects

## THREATS

- Technological advances outpacing capacity
- Continued economic downturn caused by COVID-19 pandemic
- Trend of misinformation, fake news
- Ongoing requirements for COVID-related health and safety measures that negatively affect service
- Widening economic, educational and social gap in the community

# WHO WE ARE

## OUR VISION

An inclusive and diverse community where everyone is learning, connected and inspired.

## OUR MISSION

To engage, strengthen and connect the community by inspiring exploration, imagination, creativity, and lifelong learning.

## OUR VALUES

We are committed to being an agent for social good, and to working through a lens of anti-oppression, diversity, equity, inclusion, and anti-racism.

We are committed to learning about and doing the ongoing vital work of reconciliation and decolonization.

We work to reduce barriers and provide equitable access.

We strive for excellence in our organization and in the way we support and serve our community.

We expand our capacity through partnerships.

We are creative and innovative in how we deliver our programs and services.

We are committed to intellectual freedom.

We continually identify our weaknesses and areas for improvement, and we strive to improve upon them.

We embrace continual growth and adapt to changing times.

# GOAL 1.



## CREATE INVITING AND SAFE SPACES WHERE EVERYONE IS WELCOME.

### THIS MEANS.....

- Library users reflect the diversity of the community, people are able to see themselves reflected when they visit, and our communications in different languages reflect this diversity.
- The Library is a welcoming place for everyone: regular users, non-traditional users, and those we haven't met yet. People who do not normally come to the library are re-introduced to it, and feel comfortable walking in.
- Barriers are removed as much as possible so that the Library is accessible to people of all abilities and needs.
- Artwork inside and outside the Library makes the space more vibrant; local and indigenous artists are supported to display their art.
- The Library supports civic engagement, and is a place for learning about, and participating in, democracy.

### HOW WE'LL DO IT (STRATEGIC DIRECTIONS):

#### PHASE 1

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1. Continuously ensure and demonstrate COVID safety procedures and a safe space for all.
2. Expand essential Library communications into non-English languages.
3. Develop capacity for providing Library and community support services to vulnerable populations.
4. Reconnect with our community, especially those who have lost touch during the renovations and during the COVID-19 pandemic.
5. Remove overdue fines as they serve as a significant barrier to library use.

#### PHASE 2

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6. Continually improve the delivery of programs, services and our physical spaces to ensure they are inclusive, welcoming, and meet the diverse needs of our community.
7. Showcase the diversity of our community through the library's public art programs and exhibition spaces.

#### NEXT PHASE

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1. Identify existing community-based communication corridors and partners and use their channels more effectively.

# GOAL 2.



## DELIVER A DIVERSE RANGE OF PROGRAMS AND SERVICES TO ENGAGE THE COMMUNITY.

### THIS MEANS.....

- The community has access to in-person and virtual programs and services.
- Library programs reflect the diversity, interests, and needs of the community.
- The Library strives to make resources, programs, and services as accessible as possible to everyone in the community, and seeks opportunities to offer library services and programs beyond the library walls.
- The Library is more visible in the community, increasing awareness and engagement.

### HOW WE'LL DO IT (STRATEGIC DIRECTIONS):

#### PHASE 1

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1. Regularly engage with the wider community, including those who are under-represented, in the development and delivery of programs and services.
2. Ensure there are sufficient staff, staff expertise, and resources to provide diverse programming that support COVID recovery and beyond.

#### PHASE 2

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3. Continually review and adapt the Library's collections to support a diverse community and foster inclusion.
4. Align our programming with other community organizations to optimize the scope of programs offered.
5. Expand our presence in the community by seeking opportunities to connect with non-library users.

#### NEXT PHASE

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1. Pursue opportunities to improve service to underserved neighbourhoods.

# GOAL 3.



## CONNECT THE COMMUNITY TO A WORLD OF IMAGINATION, DISCOVERY AND LITERACY.

### THIS MEANS.....

- The community has access to barrier-free opportunities for learning and growth, both in-person and virtually.
- All community members feel supported to foster their creativity, learning, and participation.
- The Library supports, inspires and celebrates creativity.
- Residents come to the Library as they discover, learn and explore, and their experience and stories of success influence the Library as it plans for the future.

### HOW WE'LL DO IT (STRATEGIC DIRECTIONS):

#### PHASE 1

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1. Identify needs of community members who face a digital divide and provide ways to support technological literacy.
2. Invest in digital and online resources that facilitate learning, content creation, and digital literacy that meet community needs.
3. Remove barriers to learning opportunities and the ability to access information.

#### PHASE 2

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4. Support local community groups and associations with their education and skills development needs.
5. Develop ways to increase online engagement and learning.

#### NEXT PHASE

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1. Provide opportunities for local writers and creators to showcase their work.
2. Expand offerings for all types of lifelong learning opportunities.

# GOAL 4.

## ADVANCE AND ADVOCATE FOR SOCIAL JUSTICE IN OUR ORGANIZATION AND IN OUR COMMUNITY.

### THIS MEANS.....

- The Library's collections and programs encourage users to expand their world view, and to actively and respectfully engage in essential conversations on contemporary issues.
- The Library is a resource and support for those working to advance social justice in our community.
- The Library Board and all Library staff are committed to equity, diversity, inclusion, and addressing social justice needs in our own work and in the community.

### HOW WE'LL DO IT (STRATEGIC DIRECTIONS):

#### PHASE 1

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1. Apply an equity and social justice lens in the curation, dissemination, and creation of diverse knowledge, programs, and experiences relevant to our community.
2. Seek and provide opportunities for staff and Trustees to engage in outreach, conversations and training in topics of diversity, equity, inclusion, anti-racism, and reconciliation.

#### PHASE 2

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3. Ensure that Library policies include a social justice lens for all Board governance, staffing and recruitment, collections, programs and all other areas of Library operations.

#### NEXT PHASE

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1. Provide the facilitated space and venues that allow the community to have civil and respectful conversations on meaningful and challenging topics.

# GOAL 5.



## FOSTER ORGANIZATIONAL AND COMMUNITY SERVICE EXCELLENCE.

### THIS MEANS.....

- Library Trustees and staff reflect the diversity of our community.
- The New Westminster Public Library is an employer of choice.
- Library staff are knowledgeable and up to date on the latest available Library information, and the Library is a trusted source for information.
- Library Board Trustees play an active role in advocacy and outreach that is visible, inclusive, and reaches diverse stakeholders.
- The Library demonstrates leadership in environmental practices.

### HOW WE'LL DO IT (STRATEGIC DIRECTIONS):

#### PHASE 1

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1. Continue to nurture a working environment where staff feel encouraged, supported and inspired.
2. Take the time to understand, embrace and work with the organizational changes that may come with a new Chief Librarian.
3. Improve our equitable and inclusive hiring policies and practices to ensure Library staff represent the diversity in our community.

#### PHASE 2

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4. Expand recruitment and transparency practices to ensure greater diversity on the Library Board.
5. Identify and address service gaps and continually seek efficiencies in service.
6. Continue to support, enhance and strengthen the Board, and support Trustees in their advocacy roles.
7. Find ways to support the City's Seven Bold Steps for Climate Action, including more energy efficient practices in the Library.

#### NEXT PHASE

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1. Strive for zero waste in all Library operations.

# GOAL 6.



## SUPPORT AND NURTURE CIVIC AND COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIPS.

### THIS MEANS.....

- The Library is a partner of choice for community groups that share our goals.
- Partnerships are mutually beneficial and help to create a better, more inclusive community.
- Local content is developed and shared as widely as possible.

### HOW WE'LL DO IT (STRATEGIC DIRECTIONS):

#### PHASE 1

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1. Continue to develop partnerships with groups and organizations who align with our vision, values and goals.
2. Support and work with the City on diversity, equity, inclusion and anti-racism initiatives.
3. Collaborate deliberately with those who have expertise in current social issues.

#### PHASE 2

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4. Partner with a variety of creators to develop the Library's capacity to support innovation and content creation.

#### NEXT PHASE

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1. Create opportunities for library users to access other civic services.
2. Work with service providers to identify and enhance alternatives to use of police in non-emergency situations

# IMPLEMENTATION AND MONITORING

This strategic plan identifies the goals and strategic directions for the NWPL over the next four years. Based on these strategic directions, staff will develop a detailed workplan with timelines, deliverables and responsibilities.

Progress on the strategic plan will be assessed and reported to the Board on a quarterly basis, indicating the actions delivered towards accomplishing the strategic directions and moving towards the goals.

Key performance indicators will be identified, and will be monitored and reported on an annual basis, where possible.

The strategic plan will be reviewed annually to assess changes to the current situation, including internal and external factors, and strategic directions will be updated if required.

We will also find ways to engage with the community to report on and check in on how we're doing. We welcome feedback from the community at any time!