



## Whitby Public Library and the Town of Whitby's Community Strategic Plan

The Whitby Public Library is closely connected to the Town of Whitby and as a result, works to support the Town's Community Strategic Plan (CSP). In 2024, the Library worked on a variety of projects and initiatives that support the success of the CSP. The following document outlines Library successes as related to the CSP's goals and objectives.

### Pillar 1: Whitby's Neighbourhoods: Safe, Healthy, & Inclusive

#### **1.1. Improve community safety, health, and well-being.**

1.1.1 Advocate for and secure property for a new hospital.

- The Library supported and amplified the **advocacy campaign** that was designed by the Town.

#### **1.2 Increase opportunities to acknowledge and celebrate diversity.**

1.2.1 Enhance Town-led and community-based events and festivals that celebrate diversity.

- Brought together 12 faith groups for **World Religion Day**, to celebrate diversity in faith, with over 150 in attendance. The event is shortlisted for the 2024 Angus Mowat Award for Excellence in library service (winner to be announced in early 2025).
- Hosted the annual **Drag Queen Storytime** event to celebrate and support the 2SLGBTQIA+ community and their allies. The event was made possible in collaboration with our community partner as well as the support of many community groups and organizations, including Whitby Fire.
- To commemorate **Islamic Heritage Month** the Library partnered with Islamic Circle of North America Sisters Canada to host an event and storytime at the Central Library and Brooklin Branch, with over 100 in attendance.
- In recognition of the increasing interest in digital items in various languages, the Library expanded its digital **World Languages** collection. The Library now has over 163,000 items in languages other than English in our digital collection, which compliments our physical World Languages collection of 7500 items. Additional languages, Gujarati, Hindi,

Tamil and Urdu, were also added to our print collection at the Brooklin Branch to reflect the changing needs of the community.

- Hosted local author, Venesse Lewis, to offer the program, **Celebrate Hair Diversity**, which explored the themes of cultural diversity and celebrated textured hair.
- Launched **Rainbow Recharge**, an inclusive crafting program for 2SLGBTQIA+ families and allies.
- Celebrated **National Indigenous History Month** and hosted Starlore and Constellations of Indigenous North America program, in partnership with Royal Astronomical Society of Canada.
- Staff became a member of the **Durham Pride Prom** planning committee, a regional event that supports local youth.
- Worked with the Town's **Diversity and Inclusion Advisory Committee (DIAC)** to host several events that celebrated diversity in 2024. Funding from DIAC helped to make the following events a reality: an author event to celebrate Canadian Black History with Channon Oyeniran, a Dreamcatcher Workshop with Métis Artist Kathy Morgan, and Starlore and Constellations of Indigenous North America.

### 1.2.3 Invest, promote, and strengthen the local arts, culture, heritage, and creative sector.

- Provided opportunities for community members to showcase their creative works through our **Art Rail** (gallery wall) and display cases. 10 local artists displayed their works in 2024. The Library has made connections with several local art associations, which has brought new artists to the Art Rail. Local artist, Robert McAfee, also reports that his annual exhibit at the Library routinely draws those who follow his art to the Central Library.
- **Discovery Zones** connect learners, creators, and entrepreneurs to tools, technology and each other. Special equipment and software are available at the Library, including a sound recording booth, a large format printer, button makers, Cricut machine, and Adobe Creative Cloud software. The Library saw over a thousand bookings in 2024, with the sound recording booth and large format printer being our most popular items.
- The **sound recording booth** was used by 5 local authors who were able to record an audio version of their book. A completed version of one of the titles was included in the Library's digital audiobook collection.
- Complimenting specialized equipment in our Discovery Zones, cardholders can also borrow equipment through **Discovery Kits** to use various tools, such as a sewing machine or digital camera, at home. This equipment and technology support users in exploring creative projects.
- The Library celebrated local writers through our **National Poetry Month Contest**, accepting submissions from teens and adults.
- The **Archives** at the Whitby Library acquires, preserves, interprets and makes available unpublished records that reflect the history, growth, diversity and development of Whitby. In 2024, the Archives hired an Archives Technician thanks to a generous anonymous donation. The Archive Technician processed the donated collection of 300

photographs and 1144 envelope covers, which will be [digitally available](#). The envelope covers inspired a virtual exhibit on the history of Whitby's postal service, including post offices, postmasters, and various types of mail and stamps through the years.

- The Archivist presented her **research** on two local historical figures, Alexander McPherson, Whitby's postmaster and May Irwin, a Broadway star. The presentation explored how and why certain historical figures are celebrated in our community. The Archivist's research sought to shed light on the problematic colonialist and racist attitudes and behaviours of both individuals. The presentation took place at the Oshawa Public Library in partnership with the Oshawa Historical Society.
- The Library promoted local artists and authors during our **FanCon event**, with 53 vendors in attendance who shared their work with the community.

### 1.3 Provide accessible and inclusive municipal services and programming.

1.3.1 Continue to collaborate with non-profit organizations to anticipate and deliver changing community program and service needs.

- **Newcomer Settlement Services** became available at the Central Library in 2023 in partnership with Community Development Council Durham (CDCD). The partnership aimed to fill a service gap in the Whitby area and support newcomers, immigrants and their families on their settlement journey. Supports include information on orientation in Ontario and Durham Region, immigration applications and documents, housing supports, English classes and much more. In 2024, they have assisted over 250 individuals, typically meeting with 30-40 clients per month.
- The Library partners regularly with **PFLAG Durham** to support 2SLGBTQIA+ community members. This includes providing space to host in-person meetings and to cross promote library initiatives.
- The Library partners with the Tri-Regional Infant Hearing Program to offer free **Infant Hearing Screening** at the Library. Early detection of hearing loss and intervention are critical for a child's language development. Over 600 appointments were seen at the Library in 2024.

1.3.3 Expand recreation opportunities and increase participation in recreation programs and activities, specifically for 55+ and youth.

- The **Senior Wellness Series** will bring 14 new programs geared towards Seniors to the Library in 2024-2025. These programs will focus on social and emotional well-being and to promote educational topics among seniors. This series was made possible in partnership with the Town's Accessibility Committee, 55+, and the Literacy Network of Durham, as well as with funding through the Seniors Community Grant. The first program of the series demonstrated the impact, with 90% of participants agreeing that it helped them increase their well-being and felt more engaged in the community.
- Continued to offer **recreational programs for teens** (through grades 7-12). In 2024, we offered over 100 programs, seeing over 1000 teens in attendance. In addition, we offer

volunteer opportunities for teens, such as supporting Library programs and events. Two Library teen volunteers were nominated for the **Town of Whitby's 2024 Youth Awards**.

- Partnered with the Town to use **Better Impact** to facilitate teen volunteer opportunities at the Library. This allowed us to streamline our processes and to better cross promote volunteer opportunities between the Town and Library youth volunteers.
- Partnered with **Ontario Tech University** to host the Durham Region White Pine Battle of the Books. In hosting this event for high school students at Ontario Tech University, the Library helped to connect students with the University and exposed students to the institution as a local option for higher education.

1.3.6 Work with partners to support and connect individuals experiencing homelessness with shelter and support services.

- Worked with the **Durham Region's Homelessness Outreach Team** to support community members at the Library.
- Offered the **Mobile ID and Benefits Access Hub** in partnership with the Durham Region, Canada Revenue Agency and Service Canada. The program provided identification assistance for those who need to access social insurance numbers (SINs), Birth Certificates, and other forms of ID. 280 adults attended this one-day event accessing a variety of services, such as issuing of birth certificates, social insurance numbers, tax returns filed, and registering for the Canadian Dental Plan.
- Senior staff attended an **information session** organized by the Durham Region Public Libraries to learn about supports available to assist those experiencing homelessness with the Durham Regional Police Services Wellness and Safety Unit. The session was arranged to cultivate a more intentional relationship with police and to allow greater understanding of their processes.

## Pillar 2: Whitby's Natural & Built Environment: Connected & Resilient

**2.1 Demonstrate environmental leadership in sustainability and addressing climate change.**

- The Manager of the Reference Department is a member of the Canadian Federation of Library Association's **Climate Action Committee**. This committee aims to support the Canadian library and information sector in responding collectively to the climate crisis.
- The Library's **Seed Share** has been in operation since 2021. In 2024, we saw 257 new users access the program, with a total of over 500 users, accessing over 2000 seeds. Complimenting the Seed Share, the Library also offered programming with community partners about sustainable gardening and the benefits of seed saving.

2.1.1 Develop community climate mitigation measures to achieve zero-carbon emissions by 2045.

- The Library converted our 2 gas fireplaces to electric in 2023; the only natural gas currently being used is for the boilers.

2.1.2 Explore partnership opportunities to advance alternate energy systems designed to reduce GHG emissions of new developments.

- The Central Library has converted 90% of our **fluorescent lighting** to LED and the conversion project will be completed in 2025.
- The Central Library is investigating other **energy saving changes** to our building functions (i.e. air handling units, heat pumps etc.).

2.1.3 Implement actions to increase community resilience to the impacts of climate change.

- Beginning in September 2024, the Library began using **Zoom Books**, a sustainable service that allows the library to dispose of items that no longer serve our collection. Our first shipment saved about 25 trees and saved approximately 9 cubic feet of landfill space.

## **2.2 Enhance community connectivity and beautification.**

2.2.3 Invest in public art

- The Library promotes public art by displaying the works of Durham Region artists. At our Central Library, our **Art Rail** (gallery wall), has displayed works by 10 local artists and 2 collaborations in 2024. Several artists book the space regularly to share their works with the community. These spaces allow for greater exposure and may lead to other opportunities for the artist.

2.2.4 Maintain and enhance parks, trails, tree canopy, and green spaces and identify opportunities to connect existing and currently underutilized open space areas

- The Library offered two offsite programs to promote local green spaces in Whitby. In partnership with the Central Lake Ontario Conservation Authority, community members explored **Thickson's Woods Land Trust** and learned about the local bird environment. At the **Heber Down Conservation Area**, the Library hosted a Forest Therapy Walk with the Town's Sustainability Committee to enhance physical and mental well being.

## **2.3 Invest in infrastructure and assets.**

2.3.8 Work with Metrolinx to finalize Bus Rapid Transit design for Dundas Street

- The Library regularly partners with **Metrolinx** to host information booths at the Central Library for community members to ask questions about the transit system. Additionally,

we have also partnered with Metrolinx to bring a special Storytime with Thomas the Train to educate on train and rail safety for children.

## Pillar 3: Whitby's Economy: Innovative and Competitive

### 3.2 Attract and retain businesses and industry

3.2.2 Develop tools to support collaborative workspaces and home-based businesses.

- The Library's **Discovery Zones** and **Discovery Kits** provide community members with access to specialized equipment and technology both at the Library and at home. This includes a sound recording booth, large format printer, Adobe Creative Cloud software, sewing machines, and digital camera. Access to this equipment not only supports creative pursuits, but enables individuals to explore the potential of a home-based business.

3.2.5 Implement initiatives that support our downtowns as thriving destinations.

- The Library partnered with the Downtown Whitby BIA to bring **FanCon** to Whitby, an event that celebrates all things in the comic arts – graphic novels, manga, anime etc. The event hosted a variety of vendors local to Durham Region and attracted over 1500 people to the Central Library.

## Pillar 4: Whitby's Government: Accountable & Responsive

### 4.1 Address community needs through collaboration and strategic partnerships.

4.1.1 Advocate for funding from upper levels of government and other partners to support and advance current and anticipated community priorities.

- Successfully secured provincial funding from the **Seniors Community Grant** to offer programming unique to seniors in the community. This will result in 14 unique programs for seniors and will allow for collaboration with the Town's 55+ Recreation Services.

4.1.2 Strengthen existing and build new partnerships.

- Strengthened and expanded several partnerships in 2024. We worked with the **John Howard Society** to expand the Harm Reduction Information Sessions to Employment and Housing Support Services at our Central Library. The Library now also works with the **GAP Committee** to raise awareness about homelessness and the work that the committee does through information booths at the Library.

- Continued to partner with the **Town of Whitby** on a number of initiatives and programs, such as working with 55+ Recreation Services on the Senior Wellness Series and to display their member's artwork annually. Further, the Library regularly partners with the Sustainability Team to bring initiatives such as the Repair Café to the Library as well as unique Library programs around Earth Day and Waste Reduction week that raise awareness on their important work in the community.

## **4.2 Be the organization that people want to join and build their future.**

### 4.2.2 Identify and implement training and professional development opportunities.

- Over 50% of Library staff completed **First Aid/CPR training** to support responding to medical emergencies at the Library.
- Completed Alzheimer Awareness training for staff, resulting in the Library becoming **Dementia Friendly Community Supporter**.
- Developed and delivered **Intellectual Freedom Training** to ensure understanding of this core Library value and to equip staff to respond to possible challenges to library materials and programs.
- Library staff participated in a **Mental Health** session designed for staff in the Durham Region public libraries.

### 4.2.3 Identify opportunities and take steps to establish a more diverse and inclusive workplace.

- Created the **Inclusion, Diversity, Equity and Anti-Racism (IDEA) Committee** at the Library to focus on fostering a more equitable and inclusive environment for all. The committee created an official statement for the organization and have focused on understanding the needs of staff to create a more diverse and inclusive workplace.

## **4.3 Deliver exceptional customer service and community engagement.**

### 4.3.4 Implement opportunities for Council to engage the community.

- The Library partnered to host **Coffee Talks with the Mayor** and the **Budget Roadshow** to support and facilitate engagement of the community with Mayor Roy. Community members had the chance to ask questions in an informal setting.