

# Stratford Public Library

---

**STRATEGIC PLAN**  
2019 – 2022



## INTRODUCTION

**Libraries are changing rapidly to meet the evolving challenges of the information economy, and SPL is no different.** The Library is proud of the work that's been done over the course of the last Strategic Plan 2013-2018, including the refresh of the interior spaces, the creation of the MakerSpace, a new philosophy of services, and re-energized staff. We have been thrilled by the enthusiastic response; the community is using the services more than ever before. We continue to be amazed at the wonderful range of outcomes – everything from success in new jobs and businesses to the forging of new friendships. And the importance of public libraries in creating these community connections is something that's only just beginning to be explored.

In 2018, the Library Board has recognized the need for a new, adaptable, flexible plan that is responsive to social and economic changes. During this strategic planning process, the Board has been very deliberate about developing strategies based on an in-depth community consultation, review of the external factors, and a forecasting process to test its goals against possible challenges that may arise in our disrupted world.

The Library is confident that the redefined goals in this plan will be pivotal in ensuring that our community's needs continue to be met. In the spirit of the original Mechanics' Institute of 1846, we hope that the Library will continue to be a place where people go to make their lives better, and where hope drives connections between people, education, and prosperity.

**On behalf of the Stratford Public Library, welcome to the future!**

**Julia Merritt**

CEO | Stratford Public Library

## OUR MISSION

**We are an equitable, safe, and welcoming community where everyone can explore, learn, create, connect, and be inspired.**

## OUR VISION

**We are a place where hope and wonder fly.**

**We envision a library which connects people;  
inspires learning, literacy, and curiosity;  
and sparks change for a better community.**

---

## CONTENTS

- 02** Introduction
- 03** Vision/Mission
- 06** Our Strategic Goals
- 08** Obstacles
- 12** Action Streams



Ever. Wonder.







---

**“This is very socially minded. Stratford has some big challenges that are easy not to think about, but it feels like there is a lot of alignment around the Library as having a role in solving that. That’s a differentiator from other communities.”**

PARTICIPANT IN STRATEGIC PLANNING SESSION





# Our Strategic Goals

---

In the next four years,  
Stratford Public Library will...

---

"I love the ease with which I can have access to books that thrill, entice, inform and entertain. When I moved to Stratford three years ago the Library was my first stop."

COMMUNITY MEMBER IN ONLINE SURVEY

## STRATEGIC GOAL 1

# Enhance User Experience with Empowering and Inclusive Programs

The Library will experiment with bold new ideas and methods to attract new visitors and improve visitors' experiences within existing and potential new Library spaces. The Library will continue to provide programs and services which empower users to build the inspiring and inclusive community in which they want to live.

---

## STRATEGIC GOAL 2

# Lead Global Change with the Local Community

The Library will continue to maintain a strong, positive connection to all members of the community and recognize each individual's influence on the Library. The Library will also proudly wear its role as a leader of change and convener of change makers. This will help to strengthen the Library's assertiveness in developing new connections with the community—to collaborate with local and global leaders and influence change within the community and beyond.

---

## STRATEGIC GOAL 3

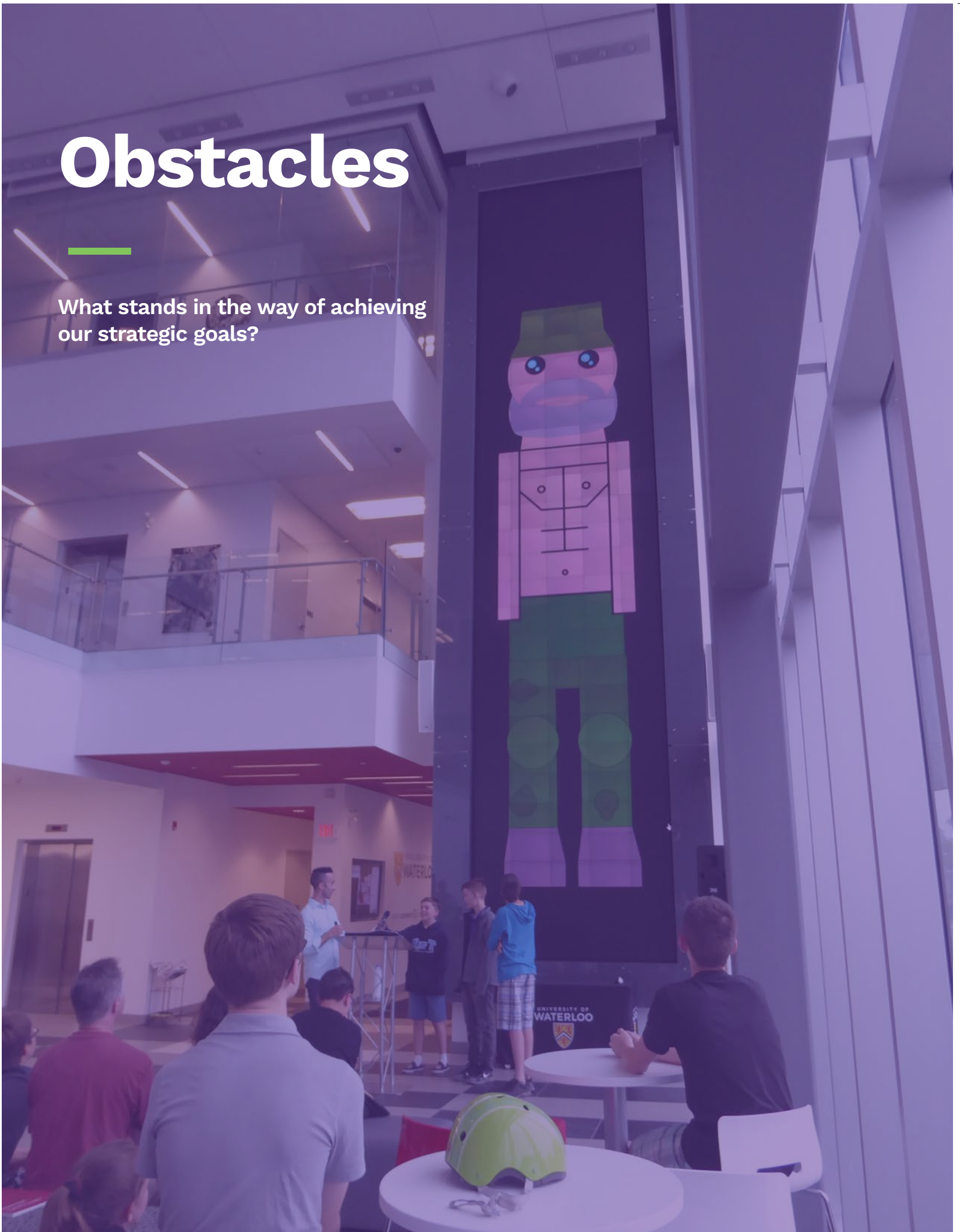
# Firm Our Foundation of Resources and Staff

The Library will strengthen its physical resources and personnel in order to move forward and succeed with everyday projects. In particular, the Library will support and train a team of knowledgeable and highly skilled staff, which will position the Library as the community's first choice for learning, expertise, enjoyment of reading, and customer service. This will impact the Library's standing as a leader in the library and information services industry.

---

# Obstacles


What stands in the way of achieving  
our strategic goals?






## OBSTACLE 1

# We Face Social and Political Resistance

- Breakdown of social conscience
  - Volatile political climate
  - Isolating effects of technology
  - Technology will not solve all problems
  - Dissolution of trust between people and experts
  - Provincial gutting of social services
  - Youth disinterest
  - Difficulty overcoming negative impressions of the Library and community
  - Sector-wide resistance to change
  - Difficulty cutting red-tape
- 


## OBSTACLE 2

# Who are we?

- Need for more vision at the board
  - Need for a clearer identity
  - Need for more succession planning
  - Need to increase staff buy-in
  - No consensus on fundraising and alignment
  - Need more confidence—be bold!
  - Linear approaches miss opportunities
  - Need for more room/time for visionary thinking
  - Being everything for everyone holds us back
  - Need greater willpower to make decisions
  - Risk of too much community consultation
- 


### OBSTACLE 3

## We Struggle to Straddle Past and Future

- Lack of cross-training
  - Stereotypes about libraries
  - Community attachment to Carnegie building
  - Unwelcoming staff
  - Lack of diversity in the library sector
  - Lack of depth of knowledge among staff
  - Complacency among the Library and the public
  - Staff turnover
- 

### OBSTACLE 4


## Misperceptions of the Library Decrease our Value

- We are not in the driver's seat with city council
  - Competition from other community needs
  - Not on community radar
  - Lack of time to change public perception
  - Staff overwhelmed by change
  - Territorialism of Library and community
  - Visible security makes the Library appear unsafe
  - Lack of attendance at programs
- 




## OBSTACLE 5

# We Lack A Concrete Plan

- Limited space in current facility
  - Building cannot sustain more technology
  - Lack of business planning
  - Not filling staff needs
  - Lack of parking
  - Stratification limits community fundraising opportunities
- 

## OBSTACLE 6

# We Have Communication Breakdowns

- Difficulty engaging the next generation
  - Focus on disenfranchised people comes at the expense of traditional patrons
  - Challenge to afford the speed of technology innovation
  - Inability to forecast trends
  - Competition with just-in-time expectations
  - Lack of strategic partnerships
  - Incompatible volunteer skills and availability
  - Festival is disinterested in partnership
- 

A woman with dark hair tied back is sitting on the floor, smiling and playing with two young children. The children are also sitting on the floor, and the woman is holding a small white block. In the background, another child is standing near a table. The entire scene is overlaid with a semi-transparent blue filter.

# Action Streams

---

Action Streams provide a focus for our efforts and can be built out into work plans that include actionable steps, timelines, key players, tasks, and measurable outcomes.

**To achieve our strategic goals, we will:**

---

“I’d love to take my kids on a trip around the world to each country and immerse them in culture. I’m on a budget, so I use the Library to do that.”

COMMUNITY MEMBER IN ONLINE SURVEY



ACTION STREAM 1

## **Advocate for the Library and Community**

---

ACTION STREAM 2

## **Strengthen the Library Internally**

---

ACTION STREAM 3

## **Connect Strategically and Be a Space to Connect the Community**

---

ACTION STREAM 4


## **Develop and Clarify our Plans**

---

ACTION STREAM 5

## **Promote the Value of the Library to the Community**

---



**This Strategic Plan has been developed collaboratively  
with Stratford Public Library and Overlap Associates**

**OVERLAP ASSOCIATES INC.**

305 King Street West, Suite 1002,  
Kitchener, Ontario N2G 1B9

**Better is  
absolutely  
possible.**

[overlapassociates.com](http://overlapassociates.com)