Report to:	Stratford Public Library Board
Meeting Date:	June 1, 2021
From:	Julia Merritt, CEO
Subject:	Strategic Plan 2019-2022 Update

Background

The 2019-2022 Strategic Plan is an acknowledgement of the landscape in which the Library operates; in particular, the need to address the issues of limited space and resources in a climate that will put a cap on these items for the short and mid-term future.

In the 2013-2018 Strategic Plan, Stratford Public Library achieved substantial improvement of performances in almost all major areas of operation. In order to achieve these milestones the staff re-organized internal processes for maximum efficiency; there is currently no capacity to add new initiatives, and anything new will need some other service to be reduced or discontinued. This would prove challenging to do given the strong use of services and community relationships being built/sustained. These service areas are still being refined as they resonate with the public, and internal changes are made on an ongoing basis to increase success.

In 2019, management was mindful of this reality and therefore based its approach to seek more information and draft decisions regarding future substantive changes.

In 2020, the objectives were shifted to be able to provide safe service and continuous employment for staff during the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic. In doing so, the staff were able to develop some meaningful and creative new ways to connect with people.

This report is a summary of select milestones of the 2019-2022 Strategic Plan to date and is submitted for information.

Strategic Direction #1: Enhance User Experience with Empowering and Inclusive Programs

Key elements:

- Attract new visitors, improve visitor experiences
- Build programs and services that empower users to build an inspiring and inclusive community

Landscape as of Dec 31, 2018

- Transformation of programs. Strong results related to increase in program attendance, positive press, positive responses from the public. Examples include:
    - Every Child Ready 2 Read/How Learning Happens curriculum
    - Recalibration of adult programs from informational to experiential
    - Re-start of teen/youth programs
    - MakerSpace launch – STEAM, experiential programs
- Increased volunteer involvement in meaningful contributions
    - Home Delivery; Reading Buddies; MakerSpace, TechTutors
- See Strategic Direction #2 for additional metrics on existing successes in this area.

2019 – 2021 Accomplishments

- 2019, a 25% increase in program attendance across all ages
- 2019, a 260% increase in Summer Reading Club participation. 71% of participants had never participated before.
- 2019, addition of advanced online education tools Gale Courses & Lynda.com
- 2019, material circulation continued to increase, in contrast to provincial trend
- 2019, increase in walk-in traffic over 2018
- 2019, New & expanded partnerships: hosting community art; Perth District Health Unit, Trashion Week, local breweries/restaurants, intergenerational programs
- 2019, Begin to livestream and provide on-demand recordings of programs
- 2020, Partnership with the Perth Community Futures Development Corporation that provides additional staff hours and technological resources to serve small businesses.
- 2020, shift all programming to online models (Children's, Youth, Adult, and MakerSpace). Trial the Library reading app "Beanstack" in lieu of Summer Reading Club.

- 2020, as part of various pandemic-related initiatives, participate in such initiatives as Lights On Stratford, United Way Perth Huron Covid-19 FB information page, Social Research & Planning Council survey administration, and ConnectedCommunity.
- 2021, hire new Youth Librarian to start February. By April, 15% of all program attendees are in the 12-18 age range.
- 2021, using new online programming model and with the help of grant funding, have 2 full-time summer students working on Summer Reading Club programs.

Strategic Direction #2: Lead Global Change with the Local Community

Key elements:

- Connection with all members of the community
- Lead change by collaborating with other local/global leaders

Landscape as of Dec 31, 2018

- 20%+ increase in foot traffic, questions asked, program attendance, etc.
- improving the Library's image in the community
- strong increases in customer service satisfaction (Counting Opinions survey)
- positive press in local media
- more substantive and varied partnerships with local organizations and individuals
- continued successful collaboration with PCIN

2019 – 2021 Accomplishments

- 2019, preliminary report to the PCIN Board regarding a strategic plan
- 2019, began a 3-year trial subscription to collectionHQ, software for maximizing collection funds with the PCIN consortium (goal 20% more efficient use of funds)
- 2019, Marketing using the theme of "staff as rock stars," have been featured on billboards, local restaurant table toppers, and the radio
- 2020, the Board suspended fines during the initial pandemic period and achieved funding for fines to be permanently eliminated for 2021
- 2020, PCIN Management team began a project to have a fulsome understanding of the collection development process at all 5 libraries, to see where it would be possible to build on the collectionHQ model.
- 2020, re-start and expand partnership with the Stratford Jail and its inmates.

- 2020, achieved just over 60% of 2019 use, despite being severely restricted by the initial lockdown and curbside service.
- 2021, doubled the number of wireless hotspots available for loan in the community and secured stable funding from the municipality for the same.
- 2021, staff collaborating with partner organizations to increase inclusivity eg the Kitchener-Waterloo YMCA Settlement Services program.

Strategic Direction #3: Firm Our Foundation of Resources and Staff

Key elements:

- Strengthen physical resources
- Strengthen personnel through skills training and managerial support

Landscape as of Dec 31, 2018

- All major interior spaces have been rejuvenated; maintenance planned as necessary.
- Staff re-organization in 2014; staff tasks and time were reassigned to achieve strategic directions. Significant successes achieved.
- Concerted development of both high-potential and struggling staff through non-traditional avenues of education.

2019 – 2021 Accomplishments

- 2019, with PCIN, recalibrate operations to adjust to provincial funding cuts for ILLO. New consortium agreements signed, van purchased, new staff hired.
- 2019, Pursued multiple streams of funding for a space needs study; gathered information regarding the scope of that project.
- 2020, Submit application to CRA to have the Library approved as a registered charity. Approved Feb 2021.
- 2020, staff undertake multi-day Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion training and begin work to apply these concepts more thoroughly in public service.
- 2020, undertake external recruitment or internal competitions for 7 staff positions at SPL, representing over 15% of the total staff complement.
- 2021, Additional parking spots set to be added to the shared rear lot
- 2021, Began a project with Garden Stratford to redesign and revitalize the front garden space to be an attractive and functional outdoor public space
- 2021, Work underway to construct a new public service desk on the Children's floor, for accessibility and ergonomics