



Hamilton
Public
Library

Operating Budget

January 27, 2026



HPL's budget, context, community impact and next steps

1. BUDGET OVERVIEW

Request a Net Levy of \$39,449,273 a 5.25% increase. Operating approx. \$375K over direction. 10-Year Capital reduced by \$44.5M.

2. CONTEXT

How the Library Board's long-term business strategy aligns with current direction around: Operational Efficiencies and Cost Saving.

3. COMMUNITY IMPACT

Highlight how Hamiltonians support and benefit from HPL. Review how HPL compares to other large Ontario Library systems.

4. LOOKING AHEAD

Major initiatives and our current focus as we begin 2026 and look ahead to the next few years.

Hamilton Public Library Strategic Plan 2023-2026

OUR MISSION

**FREEDOM
TO BELONG AND
DISCOVER**

OUR VISION

**A vibrant and welcoming community
place where people learn, connect,
share and discover.**

OUR VALUES

Accountability | Inclusion | Innovation
Intellectual Freedom | Respect

2026 Budget Submission

A responsible budget built to meet community needs

Note: Information to be updated following budget revisions.

The 2026 Budget is a maintenance budget that reflects our responses to the realities we have been facing as an organization.

Operating Budget

Approved Requested Increase: ~~5.25%~~ **4.25%***

Increase Amount: ~~\$1,967,779~~ **\$1,592,964**

Total 2026 Operating Budget: ~~\$39,449,273~~ **\$39,074,458**

Capital Budget

Requested Change: **41.22% Decrease**

Decrease Amount: **\$44,458,900**

***At the February Library Board Meeting, Staff will present a revised budget that reduces the increase to 4.25% over 2025.**

Major pressures impacting our budget:

Mandated increases to employee related costs

Increases in cost allocations from the City, other inflationary pressures

Responding to serious social problems impacting our operations (in some places)

Current Budget Pressures Overview

We understand the current budget pressures City Council is facing and the affordability challenges residents are facing.

To obtain a budget increase over prior year of 4.25% HPL will need to **reduce its current 2026 operating budget request by \$375,000.**

We have made some difficult choices to get where we are. Staff will work with the Board to minimize the impact.

We have not received extra funding to address the impacts of the social crises the City is facing and is impacting us daily.

Expense Categories HPL Controls

- Staffing levels
- Collections and Programming
- Safety and Security
- Supplies at Branches - low already
- I.T. and Firewall Requirements – separating requirements from the City
- Additional \$66k monthly that is used for training – Members – office supplies – meetings – events for 23 locations

All expenses are critical to HPL's operations

Key elements of the directive guiding HPL's 2026 budget approach

All City departments are directed to meet a 4.25% budget target unless a compelling and urgent need is demonstrated. HPL has undertaken a **comprehensive review to stabilize the 2026 budget** and ensure that essential infrastructure and service levels are unaffected.

Review Operations

Leverage technology to streamline service and reduce desk-based staffing requirements

Central staffing/service review in 2025 to address urgent needs without increasing FTE count

2026 system-wide staffing/service review to open former Discovery Centre and address other gaps

Revenue Streams

Restored lost item fees in 2025

Revised Makerspace and printing services fees and rules

2026 planned focus on revenue generation, including merchandise sales and broader brand awareness initiatives

Review of Capital Projects

Conduct a full review of the 10-Year Capital Plan to ensure fiscal responsibility

Applied a “Renovate–Reuse–Revive” approach to existing spaces

Align capital priorities with current and future needs of Hamilton residents

HPL's Alignment with Council's 2022-26 Priorities

Demonstrating HPL's alignment with Council's priorities through services, partnerships and community impact

Council's three priorities are supported by 12 key outcomes

Priority 1: Sustainable Economic and Ecological Development

Modernizing processes through automation – HPL's embrace of self-service and task reviews

Expanding sustainable revenue streams such as Makerspace services and printing and products

Green bookmobile renewal, Mount Hope Branch renovations

Removing \$44.5M from capital planning.

Priority 2: Safe and Thriving Neighbourhoods

Expansion of library service hours system-wide in 2023, Rural Extended Access and Study Halls

Wholistic model including positive interventions and enhanced security

Supporting settlement, citizenship preparation, essential services navigation, and digital literacy

Expanding cultural, social and educational services through partnerships

Priority 3: Responsiveness and Transparency

Conducting comprehensive budget review and implementing operational efficiencies and stabilization measures

Responsiveness reflected in residents' satisfaction with HPL services

Thorough review of the 10-Year Capital Plan to align with community needs

Embrace of partnerships to extend service and meet residents' needs

HPL 2026 Budget Overview

Note: Information to be updated following budget revisions.

Key factors shaping HPL’s 2026 budget and service sustainability

- Requesting a ~~5.25%~~ 4.25% operating increase to maintain core services and meet growing community needs
- ~~People Costs account for 67.89% of the total increase, including investments required to safely and effectively provide services (TBD)~~
- Remaining pressures stem from City Recoveries and other non-controllable expenses that fall outside of HPL’s direct management

Categories	2025 Budget	2026 Budget	2026 \$ Difference	2026 % Difference
Grand Total of Expenses	\$40,018,640	\$41,687,510	\$1,668,869	4.17%
Employee Related Cost	\$27,063,157	\$28,399,023	\$1,335,866	4.94%
Material & Supply	\$3,819,559	\$4,044,870	\$225,312	5.90%
Reserves/Recoveries	\$3,298,435	\$3,579,504	\$281,069	8.52%
Contractual	\$2,503,505	\$2,554,081	\$50,576	2.02%
Building & Ground	\$2,282,257	\$2,211,101	-\$71,156	-3.12%
Financial	\$554,989	\$441,043	-\$113,946	-20.53%
Cost Allocations	\$391,510	\$382,182	-\$9,328	-2.38%
Vehicle Expenses	\$105,228	\$75,706	-\$29,523	-28.06%
Revenues / Funding Source	-\$2,537,146	-\$2,238,236	\$298,909	
Fees & General	-\$427,696	-\$438,786	-\$11,091	2.59%
Reserves	-\$800,000	-\$500,000	\$300,000	-37.50%
Grants & Subsidies	-\$1,309,450	-\$1,299,450	\$10,000	-0.76%
NET LEVY - City for Funding	\$37,481,495	\$39,449,273	\$1,967,779	5.25%

2026 Expense Increases

Note: Information to be updated following budget revisions.

Summary of major cost drivers shaping HPL's 2026 operating budget

Key Drivers of 2026 Expense Increases

People Costs:
+ \$1.3M (matching City increases, not more staff)

City Charges:
+ \$281K

Supplies (net of revenue):
+ \$225K

Reduced Reliance on Library Reserves:
+ \$300K

Total Cost Increase:
\$1,967,779

Cost Increase Distribution Chart



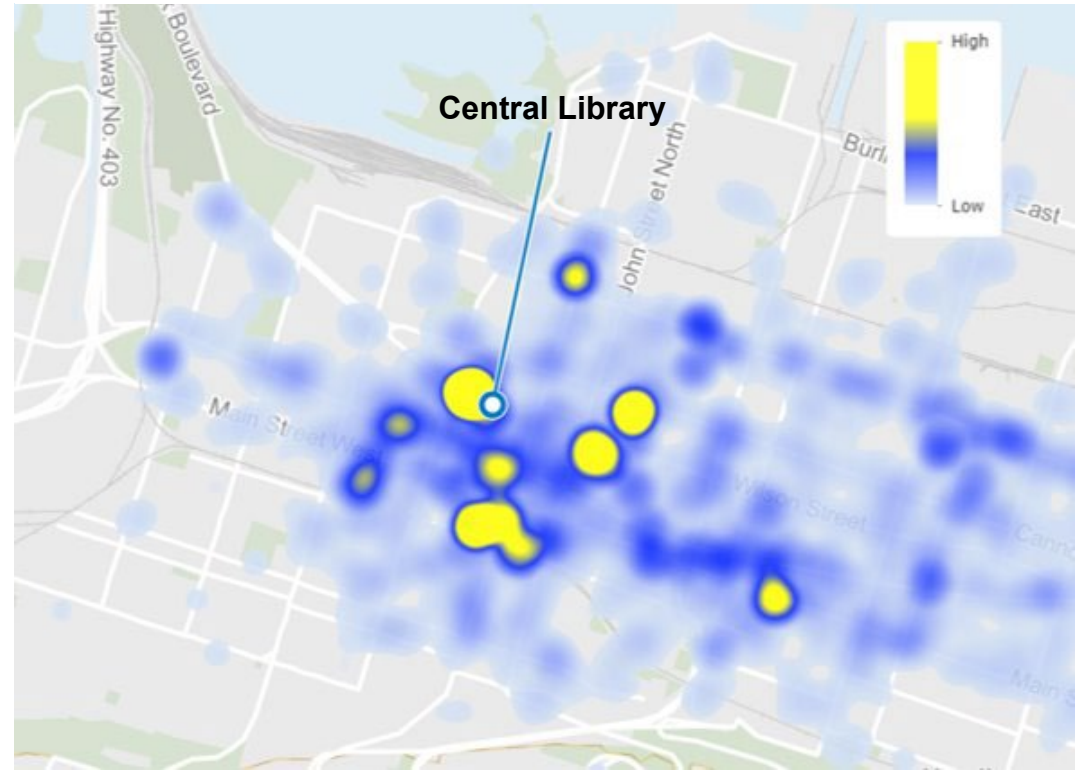
Opioid, Mental Health, Homeless Crises

The growing impact of mental health, opioid and housing crises on Central Library

- As a major downtown hub and daily gathering place, HPL's **Central Library** has been directly affected by the City declared crises
- Engaging **families with children at Central** is being undermined by the ongoing social disorder
- 911 calls are a regular occurrence due to drug overdoses
- Barton branch is the 2nd most impacted location
- HPL has embraced both **positive social interventions** and **increased security** to manage crisis as best we can

Concentration of Opioid Overdose 911 Calls

JAN 2017 - OCT 2025, Hamilton Paramedic Services



HPL is doing everything we can to eliminate drug use at the Central Library, however, until York Blvd is cleaned up, those efforts will have a limited impact.

COH Open Data Housing and Homelessness Dashboard

Current Monthly Inflow/Outflow

265/207

November 2025

Current Individuals Actively Homeless

2,023

November 2025

Current Systemwide Shelter Capacity

Total Individual Beds

547

November 2025

Total Rooms

69

November 2025

Community Safety Pressures

Note: Information to be updated following budget revisions.

Public Libraries are a **community service**, not a **social service**

- The investments we have been making are required to provide **as safe an environment as we can** for residents
- **Social Workers** contracted through the City, **Peer Support Workers** through the CMHA-Hamilton
- New internal **Community Connector** staff positions (*funded by removing other positions*) is part of the plan to reduce reliance on contract security overtime
- **“Roving”** is a safety measure we follow, where Management and Staff routinely walk all floors of Central Library to monitor activity

We see the inherent value of every person in our community. We are aligned with the Canadian library community asking, not to fund libraries to provide social services, but for governments of all levels to fund adequate services. Otherwise, we become a refuge for people with complex unaddressed needs. This impacts our ability to provide welcoming community space.

Expense Type	Budget 2026
Security Costs	\$720,000
Security Employees	\$200,000
Support Workers 1.5 FTE	\$150,000
Project Costs	\$150,000
Social Workers	\$75,000
Community Connectors	\$140,000
Roving Costs	\$174,800
Incident Reporting Costs	\$141,440
Total Costs	\$1,751,240

HPL Collections Spend Compared to Other Libraries

The need for high-demand physical and digital resources

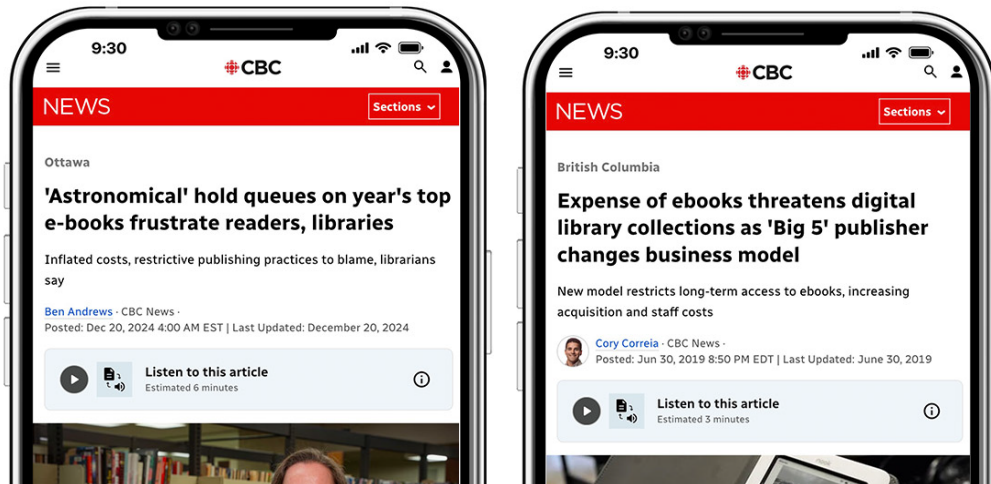
Maintaining excellent physical and digital collections has been HPL's commitment to residents

Rising eBook and eAudiobook costs are putting pressure on collections budgets

Growing demand for digital materials requires additional budget to sustain service

Increased investment will be essential to ensure **equitable access** to both physical and digital resources **for all residents**

City	Total Revenue	Materials	% of Materials to Revenue
Markham	18,855,170	3,609,436	19.10%
Mississauga	37,102,117	4,482,693	12.10%
Kitchener	14,212,626	1,615,191	11.40%
Ottawa	60,187,805	6,515,718	10.80%
Vaughan	23,220,285	2,361,053	10.20%
Brampton	22,903,301	2,286,893	10.00%
London	25,886,988	2,575,336	9.90%
Toronto	253,476,621	21,913,748	8.60%
Hamilton	37,579,923	2,959,710	7.90%



Responding to immediate pressures has constrained normal growth in our book budgets. We have flagged this as a priority to address in 2027 and forward.

*Source: 2024 Government of Ontario Ministry of Tourism and Culture

Renovate – Reuse – Revive Existing Assets – *The most sustainable building is one that already exists*

Staff worked with the Library Board to complete a full review of the 10-Year Capital Budget Plan

Removed **\$44.5M** from future capital commitments

Fewer new buildings, more focus on renovating and upgrading existing facilities.

Capital Project Highlights

Two New Electric Bookmobiles

Funding moved up to **2026** (from 2029).
\$1.1M reserves + **\$500K** climate grant.

Red Hill Renovation

Refresh in **2026** (paint, ceilings, carpet, shelving).
Avoids **\$14M** new build in 2028.

Saltfleet Renovation

\$750K refresh in **2027**; replaces **\$19M** new site plan. More seating and collaborative space.

Turner Park Renovation

\$1M update in **2027** for high-traffic branch.
Modern layout and furnishings.

Concession Renovation

\$700K refresh (main floor and workroom).
First update since 1994.

Facilities Van

Add electric van to fleet.
Net cost: **\$51K** (total \$100K, \$49K funded).

2026 Capital Budget Changes

A strategic approach to Capital Projects

HPL conducted a comprehensive review of 2026 capital projects, committing to:

- Align with budget direction by renewing and **optimizing existing assets** where no formal plans are currently in place.
- \$4.8M in reserves committed over 10 years to **maintain and extend asset lifespan.**
- **\$44.5M reduction achieved** in the 2026 Capital Budget submission through this strategic approach.

Expenditure Changes	Year	Cost (Reduction)
Bookmobile	2026	\$1,000,000
Red Hill Renovations	2026	\$700,000
Saltfleet Renovations	2027	\$750,000
Turner Park Renovations	2027	\$1,000,000
Concession Renovations	2027	\$700,000
Facilities Van	2027	\$51,100
Tech Collection Room Refresh	2027	\$100,000
Red Hill Branch Relocation	2028	(\$14,000,000)
Saltfleet Branch Relocation	2028	(\$19,400,000)
Children's Area and 5th Floor	2028	\$5,500,000
Lower City Expansion	2030	(\$10,360,000)
Ancaster Expansion	2031	(\$8,500,000)
Local History and Archives	2032	(\$2,000,000)
Net Difference		(\$44,458,900)

Budget Context and Long-term Board Direction

Operating Budget Direction Historical Context

Note: Information to be updated following budget revisions.

Guiding principles and evolving pressures shaping HPL’s 2026 budget

Over the past decade, HPL has aligned closely with the City’s annual budget direction, requesting a higher percentage increase only during extraordinary circumstances:

2022: COVID-19 pandemic

2025: Cyber-Security incident recovery

2026 Context: The ongoing opioid and homelessness crisis presents significant pressures on library operations, safety and security and community support services.

HPL’s Response: HPL has been proactive and collaborative, maximizing partnerships and available resources to maintain a safe, welcoming and educational environment for the Hamilton community.

Year	Direction	Library Request
2016	1.00%	1.00%
2017	1.80%	1.80%
2018	1.50%	1.80%
2019		2.40%
2020	2.00%	2.00%
2021	2.00%	1.50%
2022	2.00%	2.50%
2023		3.50%
2024		4.40%
2025		7.30%
2026	4.25%	5.25%

Library Staffing Levels

Note: Information to be updated following budget revisions.

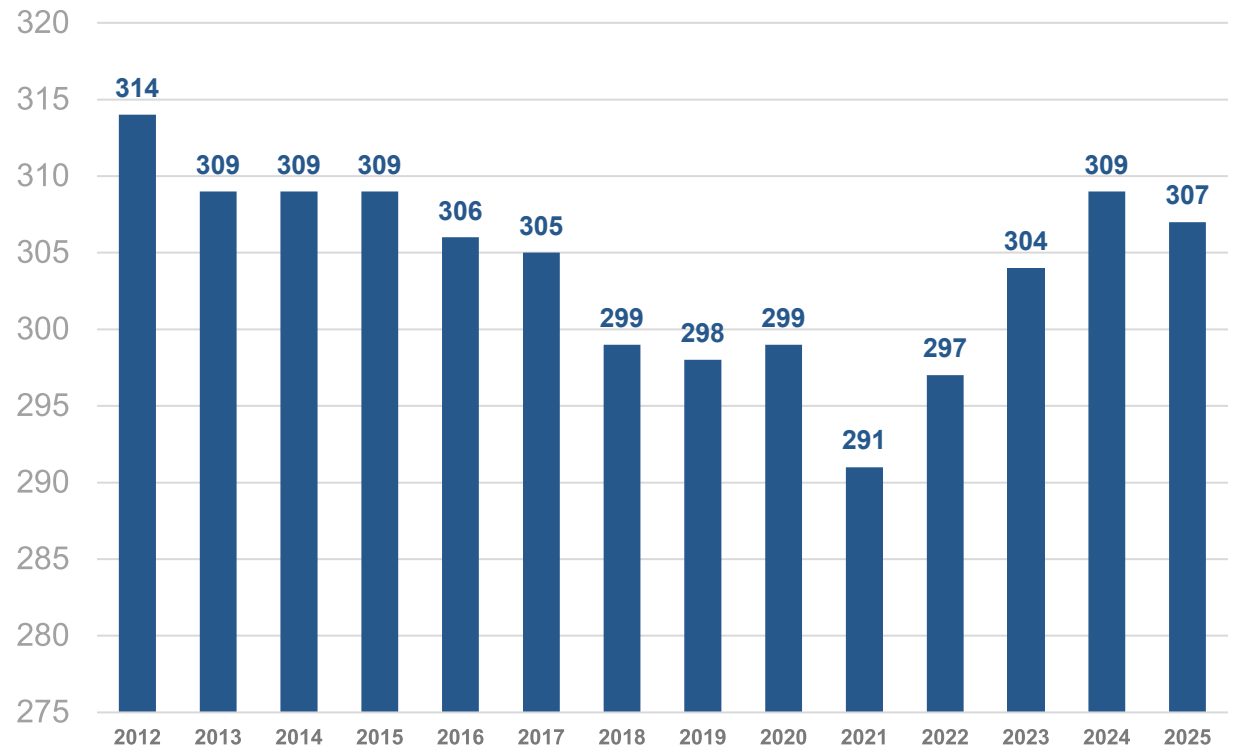
Building capacity through innovation

To meet past Council Budget directions, HPL embraced **process changes** and **self-service technologies** to improve customer service and shift to higher value work.

Our approach is to **equip existing Staff** to take on new challenges.

We control the FTE count through **attrition**, not laying off existing Staff.

We balance investments in service innovation with capacity creation.



HPL Staff FTE Count

2026 Operating Budget represents a 0.39 increase in FTE Count.

People Cost Comparisons Across Library Systems*

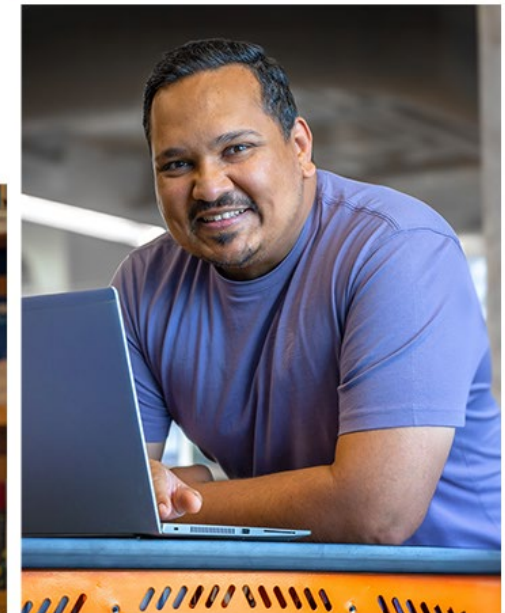
Maximizing service hours while maintaining efficient costs

HPL has consistently managed staffing costs efficiently, expanding services and hours through automation and technology rather than increased staffing.

City	Total Operating Expenditures	Total Employee Costs	Employee Costs % Operating Budget
Vaughan	23,652,661	18,000,999	76.1%
Toronto	252,557,612	184,205,847	72.9%
London	24,536,963	17,647,367	72.0%
Kitchener	14,288,868	10,224,762	71.6%
Brampton	22,191,711	15,853,728	71.4%
Markham	19,136,955	13,624,104	71.2%
Mississauga	37,333,505	26,197,197	70.2%
Ottawa	59,174,196	41,235,141	69.7%
Hamilton	37,579,923	24,748,148	65.9%

*Source: 2024 Government of Ontario Ministry of Tourism and Culture

FTE Increase Over Prior Year – 0.39



Dedicated HPL staff who help make our libraries welcoming and inclusive spaces.

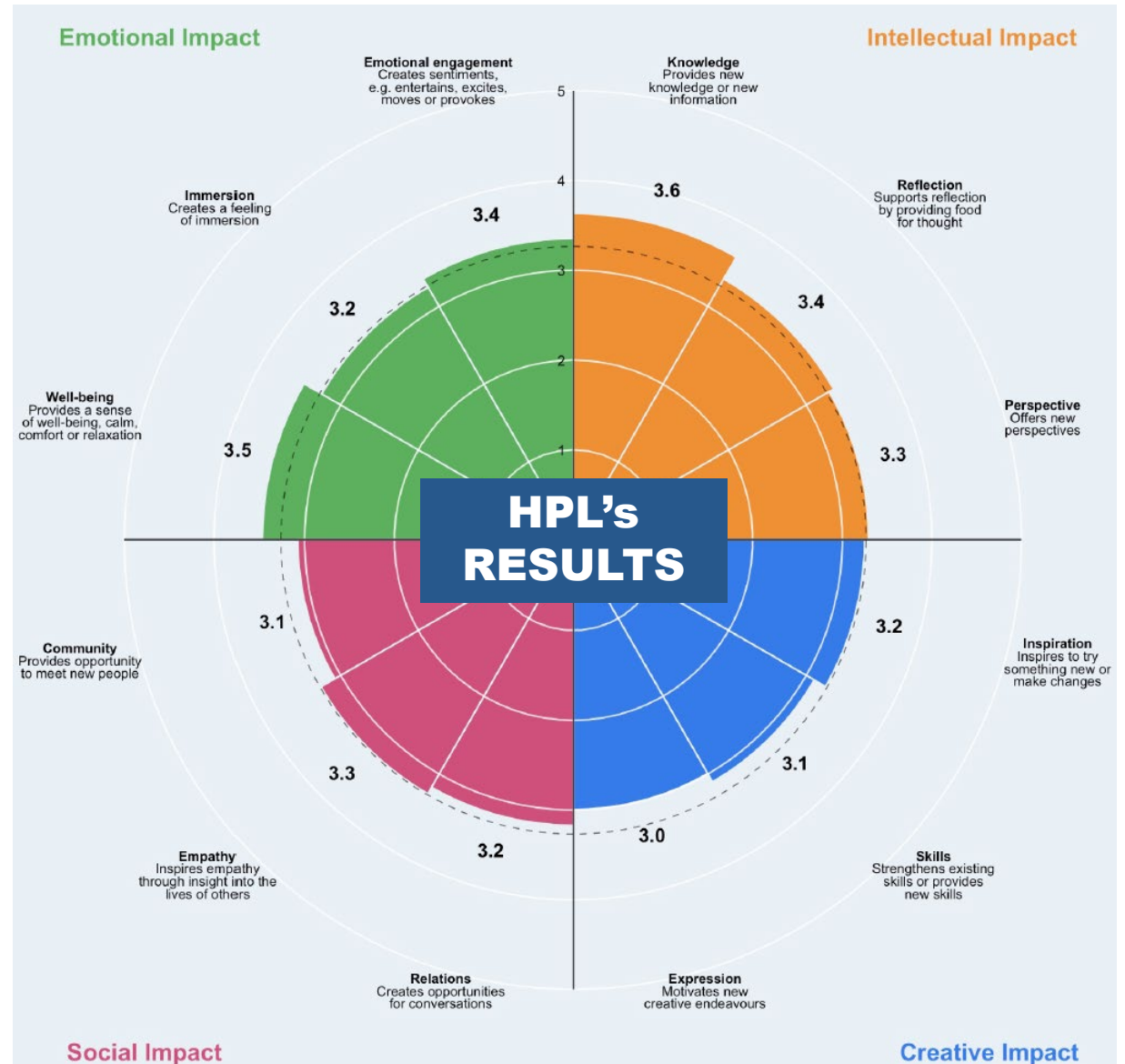
Community Impact

Measuring the Impact of HPL

Canadian Urban Library Council (CULC) Social Impact Study

- In 2025 HPL participated in both local and national **Social Impact Studies** looking at the 5 Pillars of Service
- HPL had positive impacts in all areas measured with the top impacts on residents: **Knowledge, Well-being, Emotional Engagement, Reflection, Empathy**

5 PILLARS OF LIBRARY SERVICE



Hamilton Residents Value Library Collections

Impact: HPL's role in meeting Hamilton's evolving reading and media needs

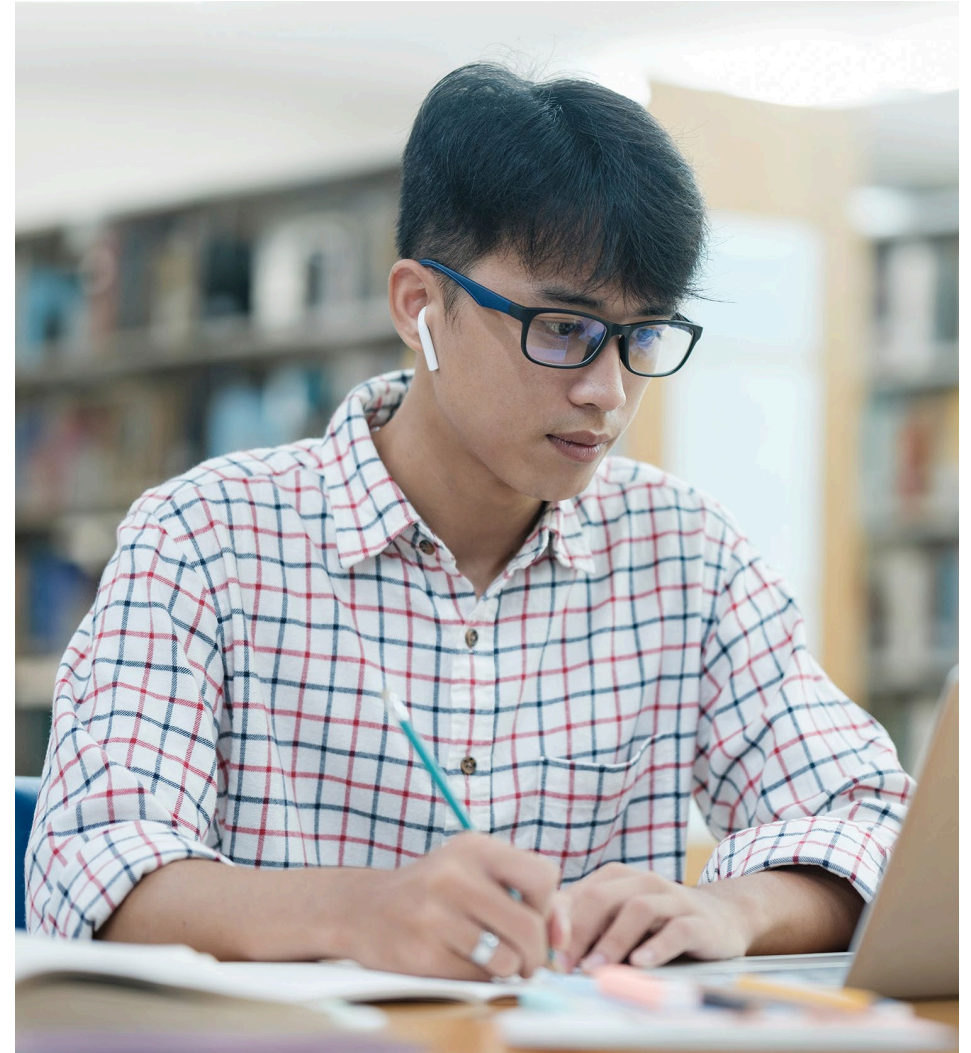
95% of Hamilton Residents surveyed* engaged with Library collections in the past year and generally experienced profound intellectual and emotional impact:

Changing Media Consumption Trends: Borrowing trends* remain strong with physical items accounting for 54% of circulation and digital formats representing 46%, with digital usage steadily increasing

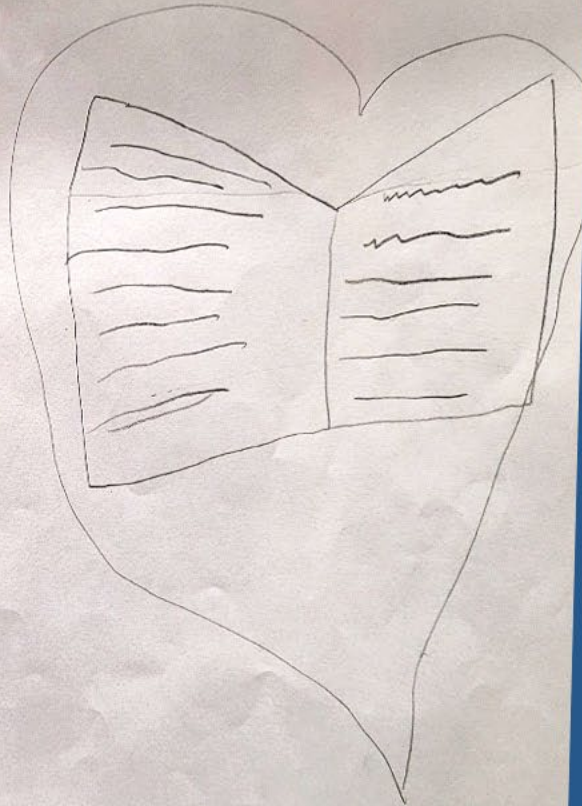
Digital Materials cost three to five times more than physical copies, making it difficult to keep pace with escalating material costs

Investing in Literacy for Future Generations: HPL's priority is to grow and maintain a balanced, diverse collection that meets the needs of Hamilton's growing and increasingly digital population

*Source: Canadian Urban Libraries Council (CULC) 2025 Survey Findings



Thank you for all
 the books to read and
 borrow our favourite
 books to read we
 really mean it thank
 when we say it thank
 you we learn from
 books but at libraries
 we can read without paying for
 books and thank you
 once again for the books
 to read.



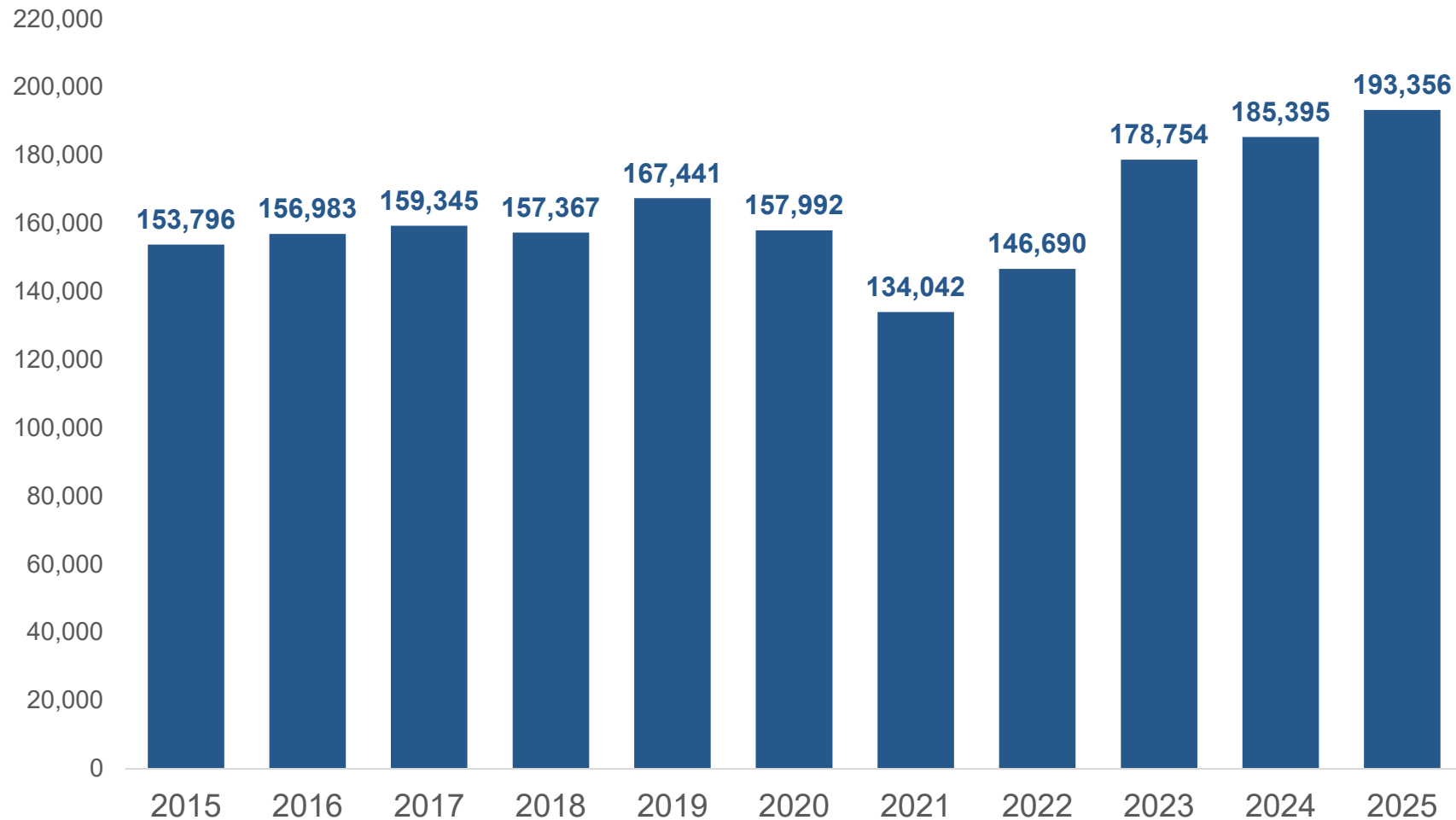
" Thank you for all the books to read and borrow our favourite books to read. We really mean it when we say thank you.

We learn from books but at libraries we can read without paying for books and thank you once again for the books to read. "

– Daniel, Young Reader from Westdale Branch

Library Membership

Residents love their library and are using its services in greater numbers



Teen Tech Tutor helps a Member build digital skills.



Attendees enjoy the Hamilton Reads launch event.



Storytime at the 1000 Books Before Kindergarten launch.

Programs Foster Community, Literacy, Connection

HPL offers programs for all ages that build literacy, support youth skills, enrich learning and encourage creativity



A creative young member displays their LEGO build.

Early Learning: Storytimes and STREAM activities that build literacy and curiosity.

Youth Skills and Engagement: Creative workshops, coding and digital learning.

Arts, Culture and Ideas: Author talks, arts programs and book clubs.

Wellness and Lifelong Learning: social connection, hobbies and healthy aging programs.

Newcomer Supports: Language learning, community orientation and service connections.

Makerspace and Technology: 3D printing, digital design and hands-on creation.

HPL Programs Compared to Other Library Systems

Benchmarking HPL's strong program participation and priority services across the system

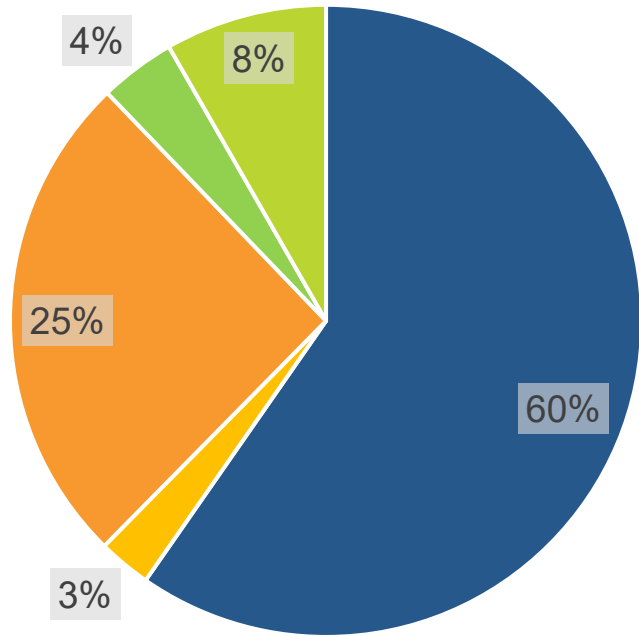
HPL's programs ensure residents benefit from free cultural, social and educational opportunities:

- Program attendance is very strong across ages and neighbourhoods
- Summer Reading Club enjoys top-ranked registration and program attendance
- Senior Programming is one of the highest in the sector
- Newcomer services remain a key strength despite reduced federal funding. HPL continues to invest internally to sustain these vital programs, spaces and services

City	Annual # of Programs	Annual Program Attendance	Summer Reading Club Attendance	Newcomer Focused Attendance	Older Adult Program Attendance	Culture Days, Poetry, Readings, Art Show Attendance
Hamilton	11,346	221,923	48,943	6,652	5,761	5,508
Ottawa	12,061	241,109	29,163	8,303	3,451	1,066
London	6,137	90,103	13,460	6,188	590	155
Brampton	5,214	117,571	9,553	5,533	0	0
Toronto	39,150	773,786	7,666	24,128	32,173	124,956
Vaughan	3,421	93,708	2,866	2,568	872	0
Markham	3,348	88,090	2,013	4,251	1,233	2,163
Mississauga	5,657	138,213	1,608	5,155	1,443	2,102
Kitchener	3,913	74,971	155	6,482	1,898	7,469

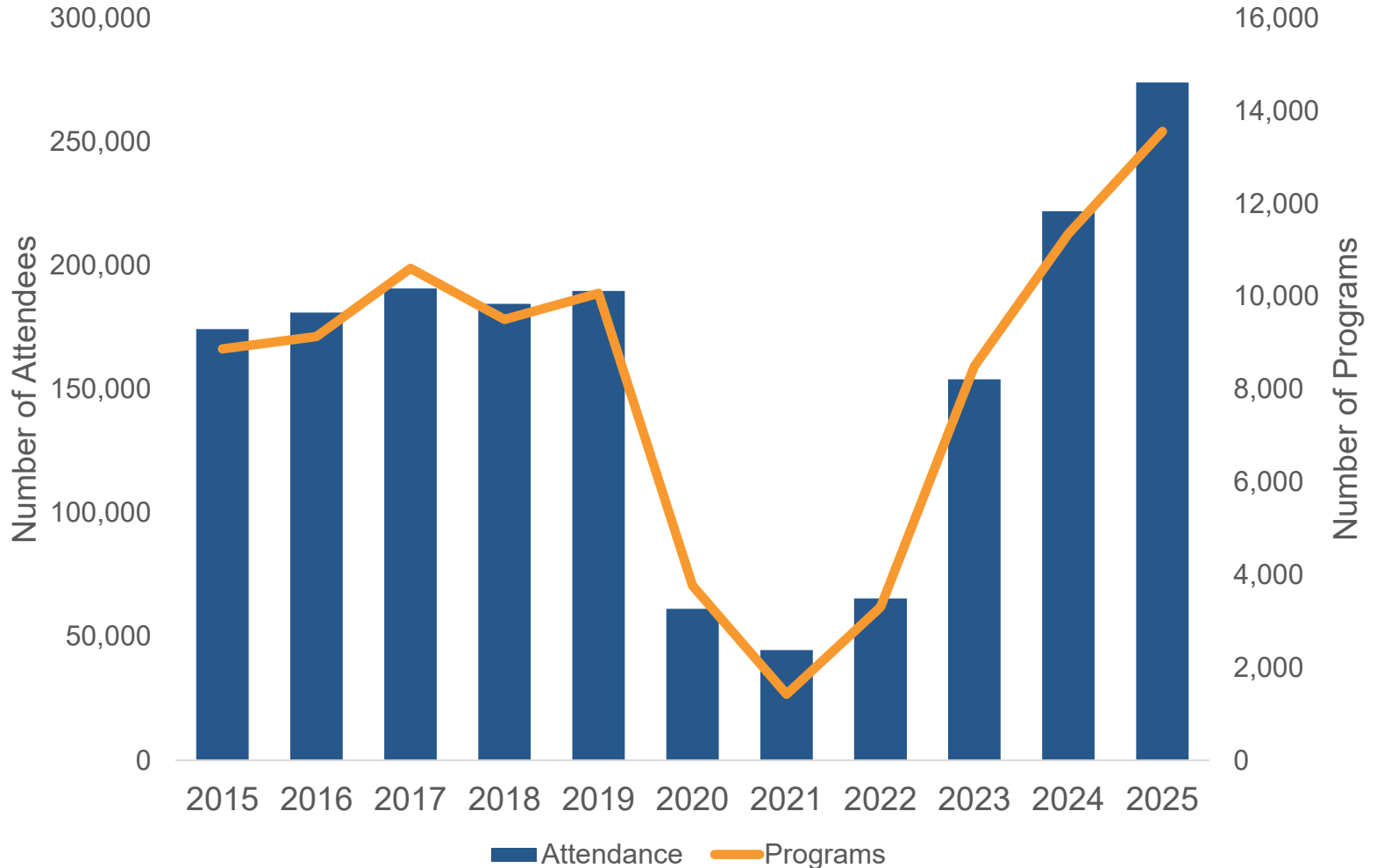
*Source: 2024 Government of Ontario Ministry of Tourism and Culture

Types of Programs 2025



- Children's Programs
- Teens Programs
- Adult Programs
- Older Adult Programs

Programs and Attendance



Increasing reach and strengthening community

By partnering with organizations that share our values, HPL expands services sustainably, reduces duplication, supports city-wide cultural and social initiatives, and enhances programs with specialized community expertise.

These partnerships enable HPL to reach a broad cross-section of residents in a highly cost-effective way.

Community Support

- 170+ partners support innovation, connection and expand access
- Government forms, English as a Second Language (ESL) help, tax clinics
- Senior support, school readiness
- Ontario 211 Red Book community services

Free Culture and Learning Initiatives

- Royal Ontario Museum (ROM) free entry passes
- Shaw Festival learning programs and workshops
- McMaster University educational programs and Writer in Residence
- YWCA settlement and citizenship support



Looking Ahead

Library Board is finalizing major priorities for 2026

CONTINUING IN 2026

- Mount Hope Branch renovations to start
- Continue network and IT infrastructure separation from the City
- Secure washrooms where required
- Complete a new Facilities Master Plan (FMP)
- Review results of the Canadian Urban Library Council (CULC) Social Impact Study
- New Policy Development Framework – clear language

MAJOR NEW PRIORITIES FOR 2026

1. Open the former Marine Discovery Centre as an **Indigenous Branch Library**
2. **System Level Review of Partnership Priorities and Role of HPL** — What scalable activities should we focus on (with partners) to advance our City?
3. **Staffing and Information Service Review** — Staff the new Indigenous Branch Library, optimize library services
4. **Enhancing HPL as a Safe and Welcoming Public Space** — Central Children's Area renewal

Discovery Centre Next Steps

Budget alignment, phased planning and community-led engagement

Reimagine a landmark site into a community, cultural and learning hub for future generations.



Bookmobile staff connect with the community at the Discovery Centre site.



Short-term Activation

Make needed improvements and investments to open the site as an Indigenous-focused Branch Library in 2026.

Long-term Vision and Study

- Fall 2025: Design and Development Study begins for Re-envisioned Site
- 2025-2026: Consultation and design work
- 2027: Study to Library Board and City Council

Engagement and Oversight

Indigenous-led engagement is central. Guided by a Steering Committee and Working Group (Indigenous Community Representatives, City Indigenous Relations Division/Facilities, HPL)

Community Input

Public meetings, workshops, and surveys inform the vision

QUESTIONS?

The Library Board and Senior Leadership Team Recognize:

- Council for your ongoing support; it enables us to provide Library services that bring our community together
- Library Board Councillors McMeekin and Kroetsch
- All our partners for enabling us to do great things together
- Staff for their dedication to residents, Library Members and each other
- 195,000+ Hamilton residents who are active Library Members