

FORT ERIE PUBLIC LIBRARY STRATEGIC PLAN 2026-2030

A comprehensive roadmap to
better serve our community.



Strategic Overview

Five Pillars for Community Impact

Our strategic plan focuses on five interconnected areas designed to strengthen community connections, expand learning opportunities, and deliver innovative programming. These pillars were developed by the Fort Erie Public Library Board over several meetings where they reflected on community surveys results, staff feedback, and the mission, vision, and values of the organization. The Strategic Pillars, Mission, Vision, and Goals were approved at the March 2026 Board Meeting.

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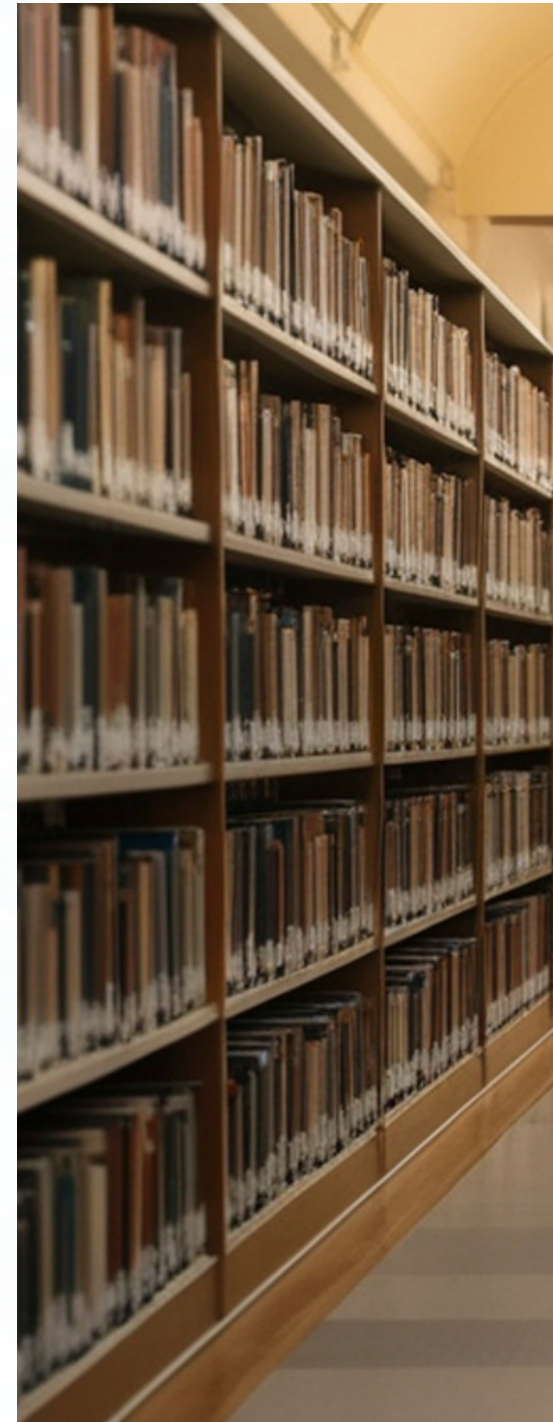
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ABOUT US

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The Fort Erie Public Library is a community-centered hub dedicated to fostering growth, inclusion, and innovation throughout our region. Our 2026-2030 Strategic Plan serves as a roadmap to elevate our services through five core pillars. By thoughtfully balancing our existing capacity with forward-thinking initiatives we strive to ensure the library remains a resilient, high-impact partner in our patrons' lifelong learning journeys. We aren't just a place for books; we are your partner in navigating "what's next".

CORE VALUES

Kindness

We cultivate a welcoming atmosphere by fostering meaningful, empathetic connections between generations and neighbors in every program we deliver.

Equity & Inclusion

We champion accessibility for all residents by expanding our collections and actively removing barriers through inclusive membership drives.

Expertise

We empower our team and community through continuous professional development and the delivery of high-quality, research-backed digital literacy and technology training.

Communication

We ensure clarity and connection by maintaining a vibrant digital presence and providing easy-to-navigate spaces and standard procedures for our patrons and staff.

Collaboration

We amplify our impact by working hand-in-hand with local schools, service clubs, and corporate partners to co-create a thriving community hub.

MISSION

Create learning and leisure experiences that engage, enrich, and empower our community members.

VISION

To be the trusted heart of the community. A safe haven where curiosity thrives and everyone feels welcome.

100,000+

ANNUAL VISITS

6,949

LIBRARY MEMBERS

Pillar 1: Community Engagement & Outreach



Connecting With Our Community

This pillar will ensure that the library is a vibrant hub that connects people and supports wellbeing. We are committed to expanding access, building partnerships, and ensuring every resident feels welcome. These goals will guide our outreach efforts over the next five years.



Partnership Growth

Establish new community partnerships with schools, nonprofits, and local businesses.



Membership Expansion

Increase library card holders by 30% by December 2030, focusing on underserved residents.



Balanced Outreach

Form partnerships to support our outreach efforts, ensuring that we form mutually beneficial partnerships.

Community Engagement & Outreach

Measurable Targets & Key Deadlines

Building stronger connections with our community through targeted outreach initiatives, partnerships, and inclusive marketing that reaches underserved populations.



Target: To cultivate a resilient and visible library presence by optimizing staff-led outreach, doubling down on digital engagement, and expanding corporate support to foster deep-rooted community partnerships.

The Community Engagement & Outreach pillar serves as the bridge between the library's internal resources and the evolving needs of the public.

By prioritizing intentional staff allocation and deepening ties with local service clubs and corporate partners, the library seeks to transition from a static destination to a dynamic community catalyst.

This approach emphasizes quality over quantity, ensuring that every hour of outreach and every digital interaction builds a sustainable, mutually beneficial relationship that expands our reach without overextending our personnel.

Success for this pillar means the library is recognized as a staple partner within the community, supported by a diverse pipeline of corporate sponsors and service club volunteers. Our digital platforms will function as thriving hubs for dialogue, while our physical outreach remains sustainable and high-impact. Ultimately, the community will see their own voices reflected in our collections and programs, cementing the library's role as a service designed in partnership with the community.

Community Engagement & Outreach

Approved Goals

- **Staff-Capacity-Balanced Outreach** – By summer 2028, redesign the outreach schedule so that the total number of outreach-related staff hours does not exceed 12 hours per week, while adding at least two new community-presence activities.
- **Digital & Social-Media Boost** – From May 2026 to April 2027, grow the library’s combined social-media followers (Facebook, Instagram) by 25% and achieve an average monthly engagement rate (likes, shares, comments) of $\geq 4\%$ on posted content.
- **Service-Club Partnerships** – Secure formal partnership agreements with at least three local service clubs by December 2026, each providing a minimum of 4 volunteer hours per month for library programs.
- **Corporate Sponsorship Pipeline** – Develop a corporate-sponsorship prospect list of at least 10 local businesses by July 2026, and obtain confirmed sponsorship commitments (monetary or in-kind) totaling a minimum of \$10,000 CAD by December 2027.
- **Community-Led Collection Development** – Launch a “Community Picks” program by April 2027 that solicits at least 100 patron suggestions for genre-specific collections, and allocate up to \$2,000 CAD (within existing acquisition budget) to purchase the top-ranked 30 titles by December 2027.

Pillar 2: Learning & Skill-Building



Empowering Our Residents

This pillar strives to strengthen the library's efforts to support all forms of literacy development. Our learning initiatives focus on digital literacy, workforce development, and lifelong education opportunities for all ages and skill levels.



Digital Literacy

Improve Digital Literacy resources and programs, supporting 25% more patrons annually by 2029.



Arts & Culture

Explore funding streams to expand our support of local history, art, & culture offerings.



Educational Support

Expand resources and programs to support learners of all ages.

Learning & Skill-Building

Measurable Targets & Key Deadlines

We aim to transform the library into a versatile community hub that provides targeted educational programming, ranging from local heritage preservation and artistic partnerships to essential career and language support.



Target: To empower our community through diverse educational pathways, including a dedicated career-support hub, expanded English as an Additional Language resources, and grant-funded arts initiatives.

The Learning & Skill-Building pillar positions the library as a lifelong educational partner, bridging the gap between traditional literacy and modern economic needs.

By formalizing partnerships with local schools and securing grants, we aim to provide high-quality programming in local history, digital fluency, and career readiness.

This pillar ensures that every resident, from students to newcomers, has the tools necessary to thrive in a competitive and digital-first landscape.

Success for this pillar means we are the primary destination for workforce development and local heritage education, sustained by a robust network of educational and provincial partners. We will have successfully integrated EAL support into our core service model, seeing a 20% increase in participation from community members.

Learning & Skill-Building

Approved Goals

- **Local-History Learning Culture** – By March 2029, develop a “Local Heritage Series” that delivers quarterly programs (e.g. author talks+hands-on workshops) focused on local history, arts, and culture, using no more than 6 staff hours per month and a total budget $\leq$ \$3,500 CAD (including modest honoraria and material costs).
- **Digital-Literacy & Career-Support Hub** – From May 2027 to April 2028, launch a Career-Ready Series that provides resume-building assistance, job-search skill coaching, and basic business-software tutorials.
- **Grant-Enabled Arts & Author Partnerships** – By September 2028, secure at least two external grants (e.g., Ontario Arts Council, Canada Council for the Arts) totalling $\geq$ \$7,000 CAD to fund a series of author-visit events.
- **School-Partnership Learning Programs** – By December 2026, formalize a partnership agreement with the nearest secondary school to co-deliver two curriculum-aligned programs per semester (e.g., “Local History Research Projects” and “Intro to 3-D Design”), using a shared staff commitment of 3 hours per week and no additional monetary outlay beyond existing supplies.
- **English-as-Additional-Language (EAL) Resource Expansion** – From June 2026 to May 2027, curate a dedicated EAL collection (books, audio, digital resources) of at least 150 items and conduct a monthly “EAL Conversation Circle” (30 min) led by a librarian or community partner, aiming to increase EAL patron visits by 20 % by year-end.

Pillar 3: Program Innovation & Diversified Offerings



Innovation Goals

Expanding our program portfolio to meet diverse community needs through creative partnerships and new service models. We want to modernize library services through creative design and high-impact, low-cost scheduling models. By integrating emerging technologies like AI and makerspace tools with community-driven co-creation, this strategy ensures the library remains a relevant, multi-generational destination for discovery and connection.



New Programs

Launch new programs & formats that align with community demand while ensuring equitable access.



Service Models

Increase attendance through innovative scheduling and optimised registration processes.



Community-Led

Leverage community partnerships to reduce duplication of services.

Program Innovation & Diversified Offerings

Measurable Targets & Key Deadlines

Innovative programs that respond to community needs and interests, creating memorable experiences. We will drive the evolution of library services by revitalizing physical spaces for hands-on creation and piloting programming that serves families in the ways that work best for them.

Target: To modernize the library experience through the launch of a permanent Makerspace, innovative "dual-track" family programming, and scalable digital-literacy kits.

Program Innovation & Diversified Offerings focuses on reimagining our physical and digital spaces to spark creativity and social connection.

Through the launch of a dedicated Makerspace and the introduction of AI-focused learning, we are moving beyond traditional lending to become a hub for creation and technical experimentation.

By piloting simultaneous adult-child programming and intergenerational projects, we make the library more accessible and relevant to modern, multi-generational families.

Success means our library will feature vibrant, high-tech creation zones where seniors and youth collaborate on storytelling and technology. Innovation will be "baked in" to our operations, with staff easily deploying standardized workshop kits that keep the community at the forefront of emerging tech trends.



Program Innovation & Diversified Offerings

Approved Goals

- **Makerspace Revitalization**– By March 2027, transform an under-used area of the library into a dedicated Makerspace (minimum 250 sq ft) equipped with a 3-D printer, laser cutter, and basic electronics kits, using a phased budget of ≤ \$12,000 CAD
- **Concurrent Children-Adult Programming Model**– From May 2026 to April 2027, pilot a “dual-track” schedule at the main branch where children’s and adult programs run simultaneously twice per month, using existing staff (max 2 hours of overlap per week) and no extra budget.
- **AI & Technology Mini-Series**– Launch a six-session “AI Basics for All” series (one 90-minute session per month) beginning September 2027.
- **Intergenerational Storytelling Project**– Create an intergenerational storytelling program that pairs senior patrons with elementary-school students for a 6-week collaborative project (one 1-hour session per week) beginning Jan 2027. The program will be coordinated by one staff member and will culminate in a public exhibition of the stories (digital archive and a small in-branch display).
- **Community-Co-Created Pop-Up Series**– By June 2027, launch a quarterly series (one 2-hour event per quarter) that is planned and hosted jointly with a local community group (e.g., a cultural association, seniors’ club, or youth centre). Planning and delivery will require ≤ 3 staff hours per event (including coordination, promotion, and on-site support) and a total budget ≤ \$500 CAD per event for supplies.
- **Digital-Literacy “Micro-Workshops”**– Develop a reusable “Digital-Literacy Micro-Workshop” kit (lesson plan, handouts, and a short video tutorial) by Jan 2029 The kit will enable any staff member to deliver a 45-minute introductory session on a selected digital skill (e.g., online safety, basic spreadsheet use) with ≤ 1 hour of preparation time per session. Deploy the kit at least six times by 30 Apr 2027.

Pillar 4: Access & Inclusion



Innovation Goals

We want to ensure that library services are available when, where, and how our residents need them most. By analyzing usage patterns and testing alternative service models like hold lockers and micro-kiosks, we are removing the physical and systemic barriers to participation. This pillar is dedicated to meeting people where they are, ensuring that every resident feels a sense of ownership and belonging within our system.



Service Hours

Complete a study on branch hours, peak demand, and alternative service models.



Program Demands

Analyse waitlist and attendance data to ensure that in demand programs types are being offered frequently.



Membership Drives

Incentivise communities to increase membership through giveaways and friendly contests.

Access & Inclusion

Measurable Targets & Key Deadlines

We will align operational hours with peak community demand and increasing membership through targeted outreach. This system will utilize data to refine program frequency, improve collection development, and to explore innovative delivery methods.



Target: To eliminate barriers to library usage by aligning branch hours with peak demand, incentivizing new memberships, and exploring flexible, tech-enabled service delivery models.

Access & Inclusion focuses on aligning operational hours with peak community demand and increasing membership through targeted outreach and "Library for All" incentives.

We will utilize wait-list data and survey data to refine program offerings, as well as completing a comprehensive feasibility study to explore innovative delivery methods like micro-libraries, outreach vans, and smart-hour access.

Success means access will no longer be defined solely by our front doors; through a mix of optimized hours and alternative service points, peak community demand will be met. We will have a clear, evidence-based roadmap for the future of "smart" library services and mobile outreach.

Access & Inclusion

Approved Goals

- **Branch-Hour Usage Assessment & Alignment** – By March 2027, complete a usage-pattern analysis for all three branches (collecting circulation, foot-traffic, and program attendance data) and adjust regular opening hours so that at least 80 % of peak-demand periods are covered.
- **Equitable Membership Drive** – Launch a “Library for All” campaign that offers a free-registration incentive (e.g., a reusable water bottle) and a contest rewarding the branch with the highest member growth. Target: increase total active memberships by >7%.
- **Wait-List Interest Gauge**– From Jul 2026 to Oct 2026, use the library’s existing wait-list system to capture patron interest for upcoming programs. Collect wait-list entries and analyse the data to identify the top 3 program types that generate repeat demand. Schedule at least 2 repeat-program slots per month based on this analysis, beginning Nov 2026.
- **Feasibility Study for Alternative Service Models**– Commission a feasibility study by Oct 2028 to evaluate alternative service options: (a) pop-up “micro-library” kiosks in community centres (b) extended “smart-hour” evenings (self-checkout + minimal staff presence), (c) hold lockers, (d) outreach van. The study will produce a recommendation report with cost-benefit analysis, required staffing, and an implementation timeline.

Access & Inclusion

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Pillar 5: Operations & Facility Excellence



Innovation Goals

The structural backbone of the library system, we will focus on internal efficiency and the physical optimization of branch spaces. Through standardized procedures, professional development, and strategic space planning, this pillar ensures that staff are empowered and facilities are designed to meet modern standards of comfort and functionality.



Digitisation

Digitise important planning & operational documents to improve response time on future planning initiatives.



Layout & Signage

Improve layout and wayfinding in branches, ensuring the space is used to maximum potential and easily navigated.



Improve Procedures

Develop easy to understand procedures to ensure a consistent service experience at all library service points.

Operations & Facility Excellence

Measurable Targets & Key Deadlines

We will develop the structural foundation required to deliver world-class service. By standardizing our operating procedures and refreshing our physical layouts for better flow and accessibility, we ensure a seamless experience for both staff and patrons.



Target: To achieve operational maturity through standardized staff training, modernized facility layouts, and data-backed planning.

This pillar aims to enhance service consistency by rolling out a system-wide handbook and refreshing branch interiors to improve patron flow and staff workspaces.

It emphasizes long-term growth-readiness through comparative research and the digitization of critical operational and planning documents to support future capital planning, professional development, and facilities growth.

This pillar commits to rigorous benchmarking against peer libraries, ensuring our facilities remain growth-ready and aligned with municipal best practices.

The library system will operate with peak efficiency, guided by clear policies and a framework that empowers staff. Our facilities will be universally accessible and optimized for modern use, backed by a growth-readiness plan that aligns with municipal priorities.

Operations & Facility Excellence

Approved Goals

- **Operational-Clarity & Staff PD Framework** – By March 2027, design and roll out a concise Standard Operating Procedures (SOP) handbook for the system and deliver a professional-development (PD) workshop that trains all customer facing staff on the SOPs and on emerging service-delivery innovations.
- **Way-Finding & Signage Upgrade** – Replace or augment existing directional signage with a unified, accessible signage system by December 2026.
- **Crystal Ridge Interior Layout Refresh** – Complete a phased interior-layout redesign plan for the Crystal Ridge branch (re-configure seating zones, add a quiet study alcove, and improve staff work-area flow) by Oct 2026.
- **Digital Blueprint & Space-Planning Repository** – Create digital copies of building blueprints and relevant space-planning documents for the three branches by Nov 2026.
- **Benchmark Research & Growth-Readiness Study** – Conduct a comparative research project on at least four similarly sized Ontario community hubs (population 20k-40k). Produce a 10-page report outlining best-practice facility layouts, staffing models, and capital-expense planning aligned with municipal budgeting cycles.
- **Ongoing Staff Development** – By Spring 2028, secure at least three external professional-development opportunities for staff (e.g., free webinars, low-cost online courses, or regional conference scholarships) that align with the library's five strategic pillars.