

**HALTON HILLS**  
PUBLIC LIBRARY



# **Halton Hills Public Library Strategic Plan**

**Approved by the Halton Hills Public Library Board  
June 23, 2004**

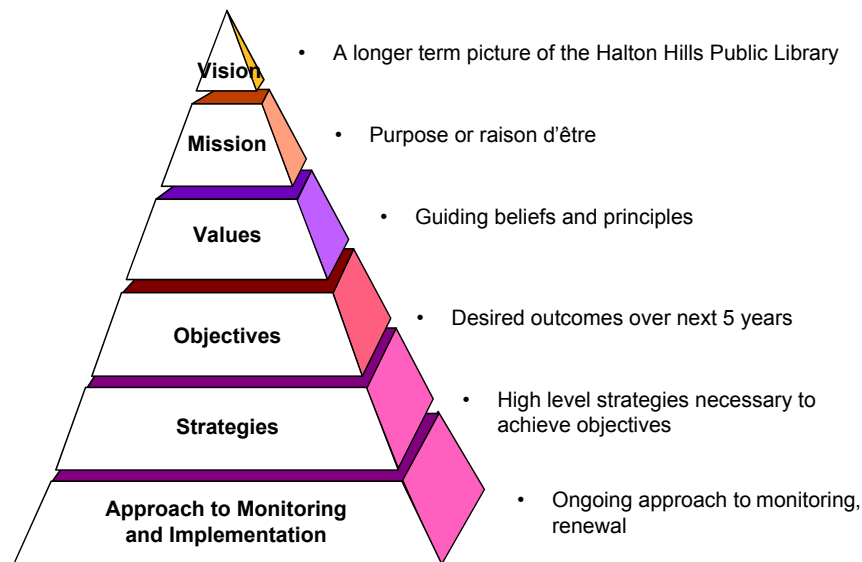
# Halton Hills Public Library Strategic Plan

June 2004



## INTRODUCTION

The Halton Hills Public Library began this strategic planning process in late 2003. The Strategic Plan includes:



This plan has been developed with input from patrons, staff, community leaders, representatives of the Town of Halton Hills, and groups of citizens including youth, seniors and other interested groups and individuals. The planning process has included the following steps:

- Involving the Library Board in a discussion of key strategic issues facing the Library
- Conducting an environmental scan (i.e. collecting trend data and information to better understand the changes occurring in the community and beyond which have implications for the Library)
- Conducting a survey of library users (November/December 2003)

- Engaging Library staff in a discussion of the Library's current situation and future directions (January 2004)
- Facilitating two workshops with a community-based Planning Team made up of approximately 30 community representatives
- Seeking input from and feedback from the community and staff, primarily through focus groups in May 2004.

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## 1. OVERVIEW OF THE HALTON HILLS PUBLIC LIBRARY TODAY

The Halton Hills Public Library provides a broad range of services to the community through two branches and its website ([www.library.hhpl.on.ca](http://www.library.hhpl.on.ca)). The branches not only serve the urban centres of Acton and Georgetown but also the surrounding rural areas. Anyone who lives, works, owns a business, or is educated in Halton Hills has access to a free library card.

At present, the Library offers the community a broad range of **services** including for example:

- Books representing a wide variety of topics and genres
- Magazines and newspapers
- Large print books
- Local history archives
- Delivery to homebound individuals
- Interlibrary loan (books from other libraries)
- Public Internet access
- DVDs/videos
- Books-on-Tape/CDs/Talking Books
- Music CDs
- Library's website
- On-line magazines and newspapers
- On-line local history databases
- On-line school projects database

The Library's ability to serve the community is currently constrained by the limited size and accessibility of its facilities. As illustrated in the chart on the following page, the Library is falling further behind the industry standard of 0.6 sq. ft./capita as the community grows.

Year	Population	Library Space Requirements (sq. ft.)	Library Space Deficit (sq. ft.)	Current Library Space (sq. ft.)	Actual sq. ft. per Capita
1981	35,185	21,111	5,308	15,803	0.45
1986	35,565	21,339	5,536	15,803	0.44
1991	36,816	22,090	6,287	15,803	0.43
1996	42,390	25,434	9,631	15,803	0.37
2001	49,000	29,400	13,597	15,803	0.32
2006	54,800	32,880	17,077	15,803	0.29
2011	60,000	36,000	20,197	15,803	0.26

\* Based on provincial standard 0.6 sq .ft. per capita

The **Acton Branch** is a stand-alone facility of 3,704 square feet, built in 1967. Based on current population served, the Acton Branch is 2,200 square feet below the recommended space standard, i.e. the branch needs to be 60% larger. Challenges include: little room for collection growth, no accessibility for persons with disabilities, inefficient two-floor arrangement, poor infrastructure for electronic resources.

The **Georgetown Branch** shares the facility with the John Elliott Theatre and the Gallery. It began in 1913 in what was formerly the Congregational Church. The space was expanded in 1981, and now occupies 12,100 square feet. The current population requires the Georgetown Branch to have an extra 11,400 square feet to meet the standard, i.e. branch needs to be twice the size. Challenges include: severe space restrictions for collections, reading/study spaces and office space; poor noise containment; fragmented layout due to design barriers.

The Library is governed by a **Board** that adheres to the Public Libraries Act and is composed of 9 members (eight from the public at large, one from Council, plus an alternate). The Halton Hills Public Library Board was established in 1974, being an amalgamation of three previously existing Library Boards in Acton, Esquesing and Georgetown.

The Library has a total of 25 full-time equivalent **staff** (45 individuals) and a total operating **budget** in 2003 of \$1,443,000. The Library has been experiencing relatively strong usage in spite of facility limitations. Here are some selected statistics for 2003:

- Library cardholders = 42,040 (up 7.6% since 2001)
- Circulation of materials = 298,419 items (up 3.0% since 2001)
- Reference transactions = 29,288 (up 7.7% since 2001)
- Program attendance = 8,891 (up 26.8% since 2001)
- Library visits made electronically = 4,959,834 (up 302.1% since 2001)

## **2. THE CHANGING ENVIRONMENT**

In considering directions for the future, the Library has reviewed key community needs and trends:

- **The Town is committed to preserving its small town character and rural feeling.** In addition, the Town of Halton Hills strategic planning document notes the following with respect to community services: *“The Town and its residents view community services as being fundamental to maintaining and enhancing the quality of life for all age groups. Residents provide vitality to our community with their commitment to volunteerism. As a result, Halton Hills enjoys a thriving arts community, local theatre and cultural events. These provide a balance with the abundance of recreational and leisure activities available. The Town also recognizes the need for new and enhanced community services and an improved physical infrastructure to support the existing, changing and growing population.”* The Library’s plans for the future will assist the Town in implementing many of the actions outlined in its strategic plan.
- **The Town has been experiencing rapid growth, and will continue to do so over the next 20 years or so:** During the 1991 to 2001 period, Halton Hills grew 30.9% - the largest population growth amongst Halton Region municipalities. Projections of population and employment growth for the future prepared by Halton Region suggest continued growth over the next 20 years. Over much of the next twenty years 1000 new residents will be added to the Town’s population each year. In addition, it is projected that the ratio of jobs to residents will grow from 35 jobs per 100 residents in 1996, to 42 jobs per 100 residents in 2021.

- **The Town continues to become more “urban”:** Over 4 out of 5 Town residents are considered to live in its urban areas according to the 2001 Census. The projected growth of local areas within Halton Hills will see further reinforcement of the urbanization of the Town. Georgetown is projected to grow by 55% from 2001 to 2021, Acton by 35% and the rural/hamlet areas by 25%.
- **The Town’s population is relatively young, but its older population (55+) is growing rapidly.** The Library must respond to the needs of both an aging population and a fast growing segment of youth:

**Population in Halton Hills by Age  
1996-2001**

Age	1996	2001	% Change
0-4	3,250	3,375	+3.85%
5-14	6,255	7,615	+21.74%
15-19	2,540	3,100	+22.05%
20-24	2,600	2,375	-8.65%
25-54	20,385	22,845	+12.07%
55-64	3,500	4,405	+25.86%
65-74	2,500	2,685	+7.40%
75 & over	1,360	1,785	+31.25%
<b>Total</b>	<b>42,390</b>	<b>48,185</b>	<b>+13.67%</b>

Source: Statistics Canada. Census 1996 and 2001

- **Literacy challenges.** There is a need within the Halton Hills community for literacy support. Data from the 2001 Census indicates that 1 in 5 adults aged 35 to 64 have less than a high school certificate. Also, according to the International Adult Literacy Survey, approximately 50% of those working in different occupations and industries within Halton Region do so using low literacy skills (IALS Levels 1 and 2). This means that they have serious difficulty dealing with printed materials and most likely identify themselves as people who have difficulties reading (Level 1) or they can deal only with material that is simple and clearly laid out, and material in which the tasks involved are not too complex. They read, but not well. (Level 2) (Source: The Halton Social Planning Council and the Peel-Halton-Dufferin Adult Learning Network, A Profile of Literacy Skills and Needs for Halton, 2002)

- **Some households living in poverty:** Libraries can be particularly important for those who cannot afford to purchase computers and books. According to the Region of Halton’s Urban Poverty Project Report (2000), the rates of poverty for households living in Halton Hills as follows:
  - 6.1% of all individuals in Halton Hills were living in poverty
  - 4.7% of economic families were living in poverty
  - 4.6% of couples were living in poverty
  - 25.2% of lone parents with children less than 18 years were living in poverty

Source: quoted in Town of Halton Hills, Municipal Housing Statement Update, 2002

While these rates were lower than regional and provincial averages at the time, they do indicate that there is a proportion of the population for whom meeting basic needs is a challenge.

- **English-speaking population still predominates.** Unlike many other growing GTA municipalities, the population of Halton Hills appears to be relatively stable in terms of the “mother tongue” of its population. In 1996 English was the first language learned and understood by 88.9% of the population. By 2001 English was the mother tongue for 88.2% of the population – a relatively small change. Information on the home language of the population cited in the Financial Post Markets – Canadian Demographics 2003 indicates that English is the home language for 96% of the population. Nevertheless, it will be important for the Library to monitor multicultural diversity as the community continues to grow and change rapidly.

A number of other powerful trends should also be considered in planning for the future of the Halton Hills Public Library:

- **Changing demands for library services:** Libraries across Ontario are experiencing growing expectations to meet school needs due to changes in the educational system. There is also potential for increasing demands for library services due to growth in: lifelong learning for an aging society; the knowledge economy; and small business and home-based businesses. There are growing expectations by customers for service and convenience.
- **Growing recognition of the important role of libraries in supporting an informed population:** There is growing disparity in society in general, and specifically between the “information rich” and the “information poor”. Libraries can play an important role in ensuring that all citizens, regardless

of their socio-economic status, have access to a wide variety of information resources. Increasingly, access to the Internet, computers and up-to-date information is a basic requirement for daily living, working and learning.

- **The growth and emergence of other competitors/providers including** virtual libraries, online content, and online bookstores and big bookstores
- **The profound impacts of technology** including keeping pace with the changes, upgrading skills and recognizing potential roles libraries can play in: providing training; facilitating electronic information access – particularly to licensed databases that individuals cannot afford to purchase access to individually; and being an information broker.
- **An expanded emphasis on partnerships** including growing emphasis on joint service delivery (with other public and private information providers) and growing opportunities to work with municipalities – particularly in e-services and acting as a community access point to government services.

### **3. VISION**

Ten or more years from now our vision is that the Halton Hills Public Library will be renowned for:

- **Being attuned to and responsive to the Halton Hills community:**  
The Library will know the community and its needs well, and it will have the capacity to be flexible and responsive to those needs.
- **Being a strong partner:** The Library will seek and sustain mutually beneficial partnerships both within and outside of the community.
- **Promoting a love of reading** through services and programs for children, for people with literacy challenges, and for those who simply want to read for pleasure, relaxation and education.
- **Connecting the people of Halton Hills to the world of information:**  
The Library will provide the skilled staff, a variety of access points and high quality databases so that all of Halton Hill's citizens to have the opportunity to connect to the Internet and other electronic resources. The Library will help bridge the "digital divide" between the electronically advantaged and disadvantaged.

- **Being a vital and vibrant “hub” in the community** where people of all ages and abilities can gather, share ideas and access information. The Library will be *“the first place to which a new resident in town would turn”*.
- **Providing easy and equitable access** to its services through technology, outreach services and convenient, fully accessible locations. The Library will be “barrier-free” in the broadest sense.
- **Preserving the heritage of Halton Hills** through the development and care of local history/genealogy collections and other “local treasures” and through facilitating access to these collections.

#### **4. MISSION**

Our core purpose, or reason for being is:

***To inspire and inform the citizens of Halton Hills  
by providing convenient and equitable access  
to high quality library services.***

#### **5. VALUES**

A number of core values will guide our work and decision-making:

- **Stellar Service:** We believe that citizens are entitled to Library service that is friendly, respectful, thorough, professional and efficient.
- **Responsiveness and Relevancy:** We believe in monitoring community needs on an ongoing basis, and in responding to those needs so that services remain relevant.
- **Intellectual Freedom:** We believe that Library users have the right to access all expressions of knowledge and creativity, and the right to express their opinions freely.
- **Lifelong Learning:** We believe in sharing and promoting the joy of reading, and in supporting learners of all ages.
- **Accessibility:** We believe in making all library services available to all citizens.

- **Innovation:** We are committed to exploring new ways to enhance and deliver Library services.
- **Building Community:** We believe in preserving and celebrating our community's unique heritage; in serving as a community meeting place, and in contributing to the social and economic well being of our community.
- **Partnership:** We recognize the power and benefits of partnership with others in and outside the community.
- **Strong Town Relations:** We view the Town of Halton Hills as a key partner, and strive for a supportive and harmonious relationship.
- **Staff Development:** We believe in keeping staff knowledge strong and current.

## **6. SERVICE RESPONSES**

The American Library Association (ALA), in *The New Planning for Results: A Streamlined Approach*, suggests ways in which a public library can serve its community. These are called service responses. Put simply, a service response is “what a library does for, or offers to the public, in an effort to meet a set of well-defined community needs”.

The library identified six high priority service responses:

### **Basic Literacy (for youth primarily)**

- Providing materials and programs for preschoolers through to teens that promote the joy of reading, and reinforce literacy skills

### **Current Topics and Titles**

- Fulfilling the need for in-demand recreational material, and for information about popular cultural and social trends

### **General Information**

- Meeting the need for information on a broad array of topics related to educational and personal pursuits

### **Lifelong Learning**

- Addressing the desire for self-directed personal development

**Local History/Genealogy/Cultural Awareness**

- Providing access to information on the community's heritage, and the history of the area's early inhabitants

**Small Business/Career Information**

- Providing resources to support the local small business community, and resources for those seeking employment or a career change

**Commons Area (if space becomes available)**

- Offering a variety of meeting/gathering spaces that provide a learning opportunity and invite conversation and discussion

## **7. STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES**

Four strategic objectives will guide our work over the next three to five years. Each is described on the following pages.

- A. *Increasing access***
- B. *Enhancing collections and services***
- C. *Increasing our connectedness to the community***
- D. *Ensuring our sustainability and accountability***

## **Strategic Objective A: Increasing Access**

***Increase accessibility to the Library's collections and services through targeted improvements to our facilities, and hours of service.***

*Our consultation and analysis clearly demonstrate the importance of enhancing the accessibility to our services. Halton Hills is growing and with this growth has come increased service expectations with regard to facilities, and hours of service. Although bigger and better collections and facilities have been identified as key priorities for improvement, significant collection development cannot occur without larger facilities. An interest in more generous open hours was also expressed.*

### **Potential Strategies:**

1. Develop a plan to **address Halton Hill's facility deficiencies** (i.e. space and accessibility).
  - a. Evaluate service delivery model options for the Halton Hills Public Library to identify the optimal branch configuration to serve the community's long term needs (e.g. central library and satellite branches model or community branches model)
  - b. Review options for the Acton Branch to increase the physical accessibility and space.
  - c. Develop a strategy for enhancing facilities and services in the Georgetown area. The strategy should include:
    - Exploration of potential partnership arrangements with other community facilities including Town facilities, schools and other community service providers
    - Investigation of appropriate sites
2. Evaluate approaches to **enhance and optimize hours of service** to the community – including addressing the need for Monday openings.

## Strategic Objective B: Enhancing Collections and Services

**Enhance the quality, scope and convenience of the Library's collections and services.**

*There is a clear need to update and expand our collections and services to meet the growing and changing needs of our community. In the short term, our capacity to expand our "physical" collections is constrained by the space we have available. Further extension of our electronic "virtual" services and collections will support the needs of our patrons for easy and convenient access to information.*

### Potential Strategies:

1. **Partner** with other groups in the community to **develop specific collections** including for example:
  - a. Working with local business organizations and the Town's Economic Development Office to strengthen the Library's business collection (both print and electronic), and to explore an electronic means of connecting citizens to the business resources available in the community.
  - b. Continuing to work with the local historical and genealogy groups on projects designed to preserve valuable documents and to improve access electronically.
2. Continue to develop and promote the Library's **readers' advisory service**, and to introduce other services that support reading (e.g. book clubs, the posting of book reviews).
3. Enhance the Library's **electronic services** by adding more databases of interest through cooperative purchasing, and by facilitating access to these databases.
4. Consider **new services and technologies that increase the ease and convenience** of using the Library - especially for those who are "short of time" or unable to get to the Library (e.g. drive-through/drop-off services, self check-out, online registration).
5. Prepare a plan for **building the Library's collection budget** incrementally, bearing in mind current space restrictions.
6. Evaluate and refine the **collection development process** with the goal of maintaining a fresh and relevant collection.
7. Develop **general interest programs for teens and adults** (through partnerships).

## **Strategic Objective C: Increasing our Connectedness to the Community**

***Increase the Library's profile and contribution to the community through enhanced partnerships, programming and marketing efforts.***

*The Library has much to offer the community, but many individuals and groups are unaware of the full range of the Library's services and its potential contribution to the community. The Library can enhance its contribution and profile by working closely with other key partners in the community including those in the business, education, culture/recreation, health and social service sectors. The Library's programming and marketing efforts can also be enhanced to build awareness of the Library. This is particularly important to serve the large number of "newcomers" to the Town.*

### **Potential Strategies:**

1. Continuing to **monitor changing community trends and needs** (e.g. development trends, age structure, multicultural diversity, etc.).
2. Research, evaluate, and initiate the **formation of productive partnerships** with the Town's departments (e.g. Parks and Recreation), businesses and social service, educational, cultural/recreational and health organizations in the community.
3. Strengthen **partnerships with local elementary and secondary schools**.
4. Capitalize on **partnerships to expand programming** to school-aged children, and to introduce programming to teens and adults.
5. Develop and implement a **marketing strategy** to:
  - a. increase awareness of low profile services (e.g. online services, homebound service)
  - b. encourage use by reluctant or non-users, who might benefit from the Library's services
  - c. develop broad support for the library's unique contribution to the community.
6. Increase **participation in community programs and events** (e.g. community awareness days, downtown summer festival, fairs).
7. Strengthen **ties with the local media** (e.g. new book lists in local papers).
8. Improve **signage and publicity**.

## **Strategic Objective D: Ensuring our Sustainability and Accountability**

***Ensure the Library’s sustainability and accountability, through targeted revenue diversification efforts and enhanced reporting to our supporters.***

*The Halton Hills Public Library is highly reliant on the Town of Halton Hills for its funding. While the Library is prohibited by legislation to charge for basic services, we recognize the need to look at new ways of raising funds to support special initiatives. At the same time we recognize the need to provide clear reporting to the taxpayer on our progress.*

### **Potential Strategies:**

1. Continue to work with the Town to ensure sufficient **operating and capital budgets to support core services**.
2. Meet with **service clubs and other local funders** to share information about community needs and potential projects requiring funding.
3. Work with the “**Friends of the Library**” to encourage fundraising for specific projects.
4. Develop a **planned giving program** and associated support systems.
5. Enhance our **annual reporting** to the community on our progress in implementing the strategic objectives.

## **8. SUGGESTED APPROACH TO IMPLEMENTATION**

This strategic plan will provide a blueprint for the work of the Halton Hills Public Library over the next three years.

An Implementation Plan will be developed and updated annually by staff for the Board's consideration. The Implementation Plan will identify the specific actions that need to be taken in order to accomplish objectives laid out in the strategic plan. The Implementation Plan will in turn be linked to the Library's annual capital and operational budgeting processes.

Each year, the Board and the Library's management team will monitor the overall progress relative to the objectives. This progress will be summarized in an annual report. The changing external environment will also be monitored and if conditions warrant, specific strategies may need to be revised or updated. In this way, this plan will become a "living document".