

# **St. Thomas Public Library**

Strategic Plan 2013-2017

**“Imagine the future”**

Approved by the St. Thomas Public Library Board, October 2013

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## Message from the Board Chair / CEO

The St. Thomas Public Library Board is excited to present *Imagine the Future*, the strategic plan that will guide the development of the Library 2013 to 2017.

In 2012, the Library returned to the permanent, and revitalized, location, and the Board initiated a strategic planning process to develop our course for the future, to ensure continuing relevance in our changing community and maintain service excellence. The intent of our Revitalization was to provide more flexible spaces, and meet the needs of a community that has vastly different needs and expectations from the users entering the building when it opened in 1974.

When we started the process, we recognized that the concepts established by the revitalized library could be further developed to provide the best possible service to our unique community. In developing our strategic directions, we met with representatives from the community, the City, our Board, staff, and our stakeholder groups. Thank you for your input!

In our planning, we incorporated changing influences in our community, and trends shaping libraries in the broader sense, as well as aligning with the City's Strategic Plan "*Our Community, Our Future, Our St. Thomas.*"

Our plan is flexible, and designed to develop and adapt. **Enduring Relevance; Creating Connections; Versatile Spaces, Service Excellence** - these four directions are the framework of our plan and will continue to provide direction over the five year time frame. To implement those strategic directions we developed short term action plans – covering twelve to eighteen months. Our action plan will be reviewed and adapted to ensure we continue to make progress. A short term action plan means that we will continually evaluate our successes and change tactics if needed.

In 2014, St. Thomas Public Library celebrates 130 years as a public library serving you, the community. Watch for information on the special events that are planned throughout the year.

St. Thomas Public Library Board and staff are committed to work with City Council and other stakeholders to implement our *Strategic Plan 2013-2017: Imagine the Future*, and to ensure that the Library remains a vital and essential part of our community, our future, our St Thomas.

Greg Grondin  
Board Chair

Rudi Denham  
Chief Executive Officer

## The Planning Context

### The Library

The Library has been on the current Curtis Street site since opening as a brand new facility in October, 1974. The library temporarily moved in March of 2011, to five storefronts in the Elgin Mall while a “Library Revitalization” took place. The 10-month project involved major interior demolition, construction and upgrades that included tripling the floor space of the Children’s and Teens’ Department by moving it to the ground floor. This area was renamed the “John and Dorothy Palmer Youth Library” in recognition of the generous endowment of \$300,000 to renew the department. The “revitalized” library now boasts a new, modern logo that reflects the colours in the revitalized library space and a new library card with a key fob.

The Friends of the St. Thomas Library are tireless fundraisers on behalf of the St. Thomas Library. Of the \$1.4 million cost for the Revitalization, the Friends raised 6%, the Business and Company donations contributed 6%, the Palmer Estate donated 18%, and the City of St. Thomas provided 70% of the necessary funds. The Friends of the St. Thomas Library shop is the only library presence remaining at the Elgin Mall.

The library is a busy location, and visitors come to the library as a “destination” in addition to borrowing materials or participating in programs. In 2012 one out of five residents of St. Thomas attended a Library program, the same number that used their wireless device while in the library. The computer workstations were used by 1% of the per capita population of the city. Patrons borrowed 412,835 items from a staff of 26 including three professional librarians– a significantly smaller number of Master of Library and Information Services (MLIS) graduates than any other library in our region. The library was open 65.5 hours weekly, longer than other single site libraries with comparable populations (e.g., Stratford, Woodstock). With over 17,410 active card holders (i.e., library card has been used within the last two years) from St. Thomas and Elgin County, St. Thomas Public Library tops the region in membership, but ranks third out of four in the amount spent on materials (Materials account for only 9% of operating expenditures in 2011). While both the operating budget and staffing expenditures increased, materials expenditures dropped by a whopping 44%!

#### **Sidebar - In 2011, St. Thomas Public Library launched:**

- A self-service check out
- “Express Reads” - favourite books on a shorter read time
- “Ready Set Read” - prefilled backpacks to promote literacy skills for young children
- New technology programs such as “Making Computers Click” for seniors and “Get your gadget”

## The City of St. Thomas

With a population of 39,000, St. Thomas relies on the local school boards, Formet, Presstran and the St. Thomas Elgin General Hospital as its largest employers. Until recently, St. Thomas has been dominated by the manufacturing economy but was hard hit by the closures of the Sterling truck plant in 2009 and of the Ford plant in Talbotville in 2011. As a result, the area unemployment rate is higher than the provincial average, and has a very high number of low income families, many of which are single parent families. The average household income is over \$20,000 less than the provincial average of \$102, 000.

Within our region, St. Thomas has the highest number of home schooled children reported, as well as the greatest number of English first language speakers (92.5%). Croatian and Polish are the highest of other first languages that are spoken at home.

The 2011 Census also points to some interesting trends in the ages of those who call St. Thomas home. Of the total population, 53.5% are between 25 and 64 years of age, with 16.4% of St. Thomas residents age 65 and older. In the region, St. Thomas boasts the largest number of children under age 5 and those of elementary school age. With a mean age of 40.7, 82% of the population of St. Thomas is over the age of fifteen.

### Sidebar - Influencing Trends:

- 78% of the population holds a high school diploma
- St Thomas and area have the highest number of low income families in the province, with 18% as single parent families
- At 8.5%, employment rates are higher than the provincial average of 7.9%
- St. Thomas boasts the largest number of children under age 5 (6.3%) and those of elementary school age (11.8%)

## Strategic directions and objectives

### Enduring Relevance

- Access resources and opportunities designed to enhance your quality of life
  - Develop services targeted to St. Thomas' unique community needs
  - Implement creative marketing campaign using "Library stories"
  - Enhance staff and board orientation and training

### Creating connections

- Experience the library as a hub that connects you to others, your community and the world
  - Engage in communication and interaction with users and non-users to ensure the library meets St. Thomas' unique community needs
  - Create opportunities that encourage interaction with people, information and ideas
  - Evaluate our relationship with existing partners, and identify new partnership opportunities to provide collaborative services
  - Expand electronic resources, access and opportunities

### Versatile spaces

- Find versatile spaces created to meet your evolving needs.
  - Create spaces, real and virtual, within the library and outside, that are targeted to St. Thomas' unique community needs
  - Investigate funding to expand and tailor service areas to meet evolving customer needs
  - Investigate additional library space

### Service excellence

- Experience responsive and dynamic library service
  - Offer services responsive to St. Thomas' unique community needs
  - Develop staffing plan that ensures we have the staff and skills to meet future needs
  - Investigate the usage and information needs of various community sectors

## Action Plan 2013-2014

### Enduring relevance

**Collection:** Study collection strengths and weaknesses, and adapt to meet local needs

**Programs:** Develop evaluation process for programming to ensure relevance and efficiency

**Technology:** Upgrade 5 public access computers annually

**Board:** Expand Board training and orientation

### Creating connections

**Programs:** Connect readers and community through book clubs, bookmarks, and networking opportunities

**Technology:** Record and expand social media usage to encourage reader-to-reader interaction

**Collections:** Interconnect different collections (such as fiction/non-fiction; print/ virtual) and the community

### Versatile spaces

**Facility:** Ensure spaces and meeting rooms are meeting community needs  
Investigate fundraising for outdoor space  
Document parking issues and options

**Technology:** Investigate technology options for meeting spaces  
Expand outreach services

### Service excellence

**All:** Achieve provincial accreditation  
Develop annual marketing campaign to highlight community impact

**Staff:** Work with staff to define service excellence  
Identify efficiencies and redundancies  
Develop staff training and succession plan  
Surpass accessibility standards with higher awareness and commitment

**Technology:** Initiate procedures and install processes to ensure safe, secure computing  
Investigate options for integrated library system

## St. Thomas Public Library Board Members

### Greg Grondin

- Board Chair; Retired educator – Special education, Thames Valley District School Board

### Martin Van Weert

- Vice Chair; Member, Personnel and Public Relations Committee; Retired Police College Instructor

### Lori Baldwin-Sands

- Council Representative; Member, Personnel and Public Relations Committee; Alderman; Local business owner

### Dave Warden

- Council Representative; Member, Finance, Building and Grounds Committee

### Deb Laverty

- Public School Board Representative; Member, Finance, Building and Grounds Committee; Educator

### Kelly Hoogstra

- Public Representative; Member, Personnel and Public Relations Committee

### Wendy Crocker

- Public School Board Representative; Member, Finance, Building and Grounds Committee

### Terry Metcalf

- Public Representative; Chair, Finance, Building and Grounds Committee; Local business owner

### Shirley Poirier

- Separate School Board Representative; Member, Personnel and Public Relations Committee; Retired educator

### Rudi Denham

- Chief Librarian / CEO, St. Thomas Public Library

## Our mission:

To inform, educate, and enrich our community