

Kawartha Lakes Public Library Growth Strategy 2026–2036

# Leading with the Library: Preparing for Growth in Kawartha Lakes

Prepared for: Kawartha Lakes Public Library

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## Executive Summary

Public libraries are critical civic infrastructure – welcoming, reliable, and responsive to community needs. In the City of Kawartha Lakes, where rural service gaps, rapid urban growth, and changing needs intersect, the Library plays a unique and vital role. *Leading with the Library: Preparing for Growth in Kawartha Lakes* sets a clear direction for how the Library will continue to serve residents while preparing for the next decade.

With 14 branches in communities across the municipality, the Library is one of the City's few public institutions with a consistent, trusted presence in nearly every corner of the city. The Growth Strategy builds on these strengths to ensure the system is ready to grow. It lays the foundation for targeted investment in staff, services, and facilities, positioning the Library as a proactive partner in shaping the municipality's future. The plan affirms the Library's role as an essential public service – one that delivers equitable access, fosters civic connection, and supports community wellbeing.

## Strategy from the Ground Up

This Growth Strategy was built from the ground up – informed by extensive research, engagement, and collaboration across all levels of the organization and community. It reflects the voices of staff from all 14 branches, the Library Board, City partners, and residents, who shared their experiences, challenges, and hopes for the future of library service in Kawartha Lakes.



Development of the plan drew on multiple sources of evidence, including document review, benchmarking, site visits, surveys, and facilitated discussions. This mix of data and lived experience ensures the strategy is grounded in both research and reality. The result is a credible, evidence-based roadmap shaped by those who know the Library best – the people who lead, work in, and use it every day.

## Alignment with City Priorities

The Library is strongly aligned with the City of Kawartha Lakes' vision for connected and thriving communities. Through programs and services that support individual well-being and community resilience, it contributes to key municipal priorities – including community development, economic opportunity, rural service access, accessibility, and cultural vibrancy. This Growth Strategy builds on that alignment, ensuring the Library can continue supporting the City's long-term goals while responding to the evolving needs of its communities.

## Vision for Growth

The strategy is built around a clear vision that articulates how the Library will respond to growth. This vision serves as a touchstone for decision-making, ensuring that growth is guided by a shared understanding of the Library's role in the community – now and into the future.

**The Library is celebrated as a community hub that connects people, builds skills, and enriches life across Kawartha Lakes.**

Through convenient services and inspiring spaces, the Library connects communities across the municipality. Staff provide professional, personalized support – from answering everyday questions to guiding lifelong learning and specialized research – while programs and collections celebrate creativity, knowledge, and discovery. In doing so, the Library sustains the strengths patrons value today while serving as a key municipal partner in preparing Kawartha Lakes for the opportunities and growth of tomorrow.

The strategy also defines what success will look like across the Library's key areas of activity, describing how growth will strengthen capacity, expand access, and enrich community life.

- **Governance and Organizational Capacity:** Strong governance, leadership continuity, and equitable staffing are supported by clear communication, professional development, and a refreshed partnership with the City that provides a strong foundation for planning and shared service delivery.
- **Programs, Services, and Collections:** Programs and collections serve residents at every stage of life, reflecting the diversity of the community. Centralized coordination and branch-led service work hand in hand, supported by strong partnerships and a growing focus on digital literacy.



- **Library Engagement and Experience:** The Library is recognized city-wide as a welcoming, essential civic institution. Residents see all branches as part of “their” library, supported by consistent, high-quality service and vibrant partnerships that build civic connection.
- **Facilities:** Library spaces are modern, adaptable, and accessible. Facilities are aligned with population growth and community character, with larger urban branches complemented by smaller service points that maintain vital access across the system.

Together, these desired future states describe a Library that grows with its community – stronger, more connected, and more inclusive than ever before.

## Strategic Growth Priorities

Grounded in this vision, the strategy organizes recommendations into three interconnected Strategic Growth Priorities that together form a cohesive framework for the decade ahead. These priorities are not ranked in order of importance. Each depends on and strengthens the others, together forming a cohesive foundation for growth.

### Strategic Growth Priority 1: Build Capacity

**What this means:** Strengthen governance, leadership, staffing, and internal systems so the Library can serve residents equitably and adapt to change with confidence.

**How the Library will advance this priority:**

- Ensure strong governance and leadership.
- Invest in a skilled, well-supported workforce.
- Establish equitable service across the system.

**Key examples** include refreshing the Library’s MOU with the City; strengthening succession planning; investing in professional development; and developing a system-wide service model with clear criteria for different branch types.

### Strategic Growth Priority 2: Enhance Service

**What this means:** Deepen the Library’s presence in residents’ lives through inclusive programs, responsive collections, and strong partnerships.

**How the Library will advance this priority:**

- Deliver lifelong and inclusive programming and service.



- Embed the Library as an integral partner in education, civic life, and community development.
- Expand collections to reflect community identities and needs.
- Strengthen Library visibility to drive increased engagement and use.

**Key examples** include supporting digital literacy and tech support services; collaborating more with the City and other partners; expanding the range and availability of materials; and strengthening marketing, outreach, and promotion.

## Strategic Growth Priority 3: Improve and Expand Spaces

**What this means:** Ensure facilities are modern, adaptable, and aligned with community growth while maintaining equitable access across the system.

**How the Library will advance this priority:**

- Ensure facilities meet growing population and community needs.
- Provide functional, adaptable, and sustainable spaces.
- Create spaces that reflect local identity and celebrate the natural environment.

**Key examples** include building a new central hub branch to anchor the system; improving accessibility and flexibility of library spaces; and highlighting the local character of branches across the system.

## Putting the Strategy into Action

This strategy provides a clear and actionable framework to guide the Library's evolution over the next ten years. Implementation must balance ambition with practicality, ensuring that growth is achievable within available resources and aligned with City planning processes.

Success will depend on collaboration and shared commitment. Many actions – particularly those involving facilities and capital investment – will require close partnership between the Library and the City. Others will rely on the dedication, creativity, and initiative of staff across the system. Their continued involvement will be key to putting the strategy into action and keeping progress on track. Evidence-based decision-making, careful sequencing, and ongoing evaluation will help ensure the Growth Strategy remains responsive to change and aligned with community needs.

Through sustained collaboration, transparent planning, and shared dedication to equity and access, Kawartha Lakes Public Library will continue to be a trusted public service and vital civic institution – connecting people, building skills, and enriching life across Kawartha Lakes.