



Ajax Public Library Board

2018-2022 Legacy

Our Library

Legacy & Succession Planning

The 2018 - 2022 Library Board recognizes the value and importance of succession planning, and as per the endorsed work plan has created this Library Board Legacy Document.

Trustees submitted feedback via an anonymous survey, which has been compiled within, and is intended to assist in the recruiting and onboarding of new Library Board Trustees. This record of our accomplishments, challenges, and visions for the future of the Library and Board is designed to aid our successors in their own achievements and help ensure continuity.

Our Community Sees Us As...



Community Hub & Resource Centre

The Library is an integral part of the community that supports life-long learning, improves quality of life, and connects the community. The community sees the Library as essential to assisting with educational pursuits.

The Library is known for being an information and technology resource.



Safe Space

The Library is celebrated for being a place of refuge and safe haven. Library customers of all ages may visit to rest, recharge, or reconnect with the understanding that this is a place welcoming to all.



Community Leader

Separate from the municipality, the community sees the Library as an independent and objective community leader. The community recognizes the high-quality social, educational, and cultural contributions the Library makes to Ajax residents.

The Library is recognized as a responsible partner that assists the Town of Ajax in accomplishing strategic initiatives.

Our Board



Sandy Taylor,
Chair



Sepelene Deonarine,
Vice-Chair



Eesha Chaudhry



Noel Green



Rebecca Hayes



Sterling Lee,
Regional Councillor,
Ward 2



Deborah McDougall



Douglas Miller



Matthew Tapscott

Boards Ends

1. Customers will have access to valuable Library services that support their financial, physical, social, and mental well-being.
2. The Library will attract new customers and satisfy existing customers leading to an increased adoption of services.
3. The Library's collection will be current, relevant, and representative of the community.
4. Customers will have safe, welcoming, and inclusive spaces to meet, interact with others, read, work quietly, or simply be.
5. The Library will foster civic engagement and diverse discourse.
6. The Library will increase customers' transliteracy skills with inspirational and creative opportunities.

Our Board

Our Board is...

A Strong Governing Body

The Board governs through a well-established Policy Governance framework. This allows the Board to focus on achieving meaningful outcomes for our community and gives us tangible items to evaluate the Chief Librarian & Executive Officer's performance against.

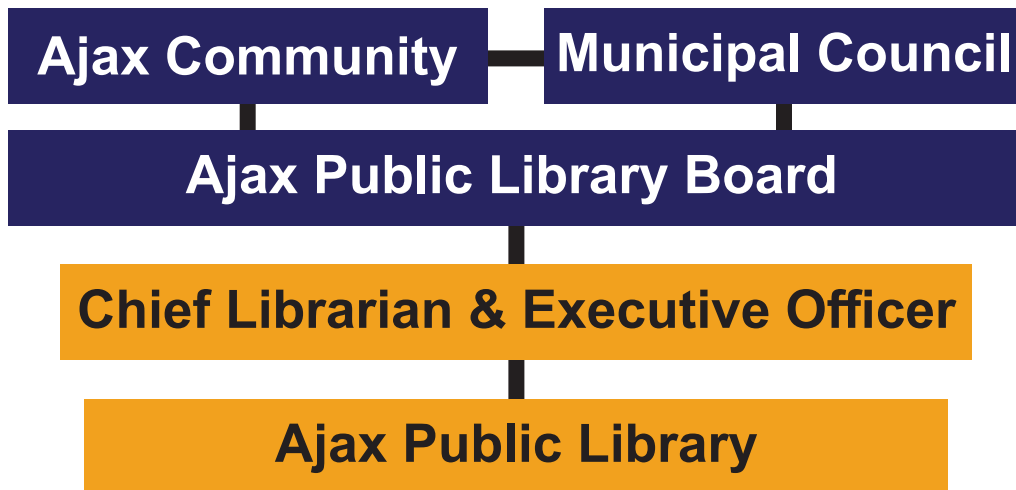
The Library Board is a diverse group, both in its demographic makeup, but also in background and experience. This diversity ensures that we are reflective of the Ajax community and makes us a sound governing body. It is our hope and expectation that the diversity is maintained in future appointments.

Dedicated to Enhancing Library Services

The Board recognizes that Library services must be as diverse and adaptive as the community it serves. It's important that the Library remain nimble and agile to respond to different needs. The Library has focused on contributing to the social and economic well-being of Ajax residents. Efforts like the Warming Centres, Tax Clinics, and our vast array of inclusion programming are highly regarded by interested parties from across the Town.

Committed to Supporting Intellectual Freedom

The Library Board has policies acknowledging the importance of intellectual freedom. Ensuring access to diverse materials with differing ideas, opinions, and topics is fundamental to public library values and educating our society.



Our Board should...

Foster Connections with Youth

The Library has a well-established Teen Advisory Council (TAC). The Board and TAC are currently piloting a project whereby a TAC member attends every Board meeting as a non-voting member. They are provided an opportunity to speak at each meeting. It is recommended that the Board explore further opportunities to engage youth in the community and expand this opportunity if possible.

Our Board

Our Board should...

Build Relationships with Local and Provincial Politicians

The Library's primary source of funding is approved by local municipal Council. As such, it is imperative that Trustees are viewed as accessible and trusted by Council members. Similarly, the Province provides funding opportunities through the public library operating grant and other ad hoc grants. Relationship building and advocacy with these parties should be something a new Board prioritizes.



Grand opening of Audley Branch, including Regional Councillor and Board Trustee Sterling Lee and previous Chief Librarian and Executive Officer, Donna Bright. November 2019.

Remain Committed to Intellectual Freedom

Providing a diverse collection with differing, and occasionally diverging social norms, is expected to become more challenging. Large urban libraries have been recently faced with cancel culture expectations. Library Boards and employees need to ensure that the public library dedication to intellectual freedom remains firm despite external pressures. This includes if pressures are from community partners with whom the Library usually aligns in terms of mandate and strategic focus.

Seek Additional Engagement and Retention Activities

A new Board may consider completing additional governance, leadership, or advocacy training. The Board may wish to be more active in advocacy and promoting the Library.

The Board must retain Trustees who are committed to taking on Board leadership roles, i.e. Board Chair or Vice-Chair. Without these roles the Board cannot function under the *Public Libraries Act*. The Board's effectiveness will also be impacted without committed Trustees in these roles.

To ensure that participating in Board meetings and activities is accessible and attractive, the Board may wish to continue offering a combination of in-person and virtual meetings. This allows for increased flexibility during hybrid meeting months while ensuring that the Board feels like a unified team. A new Board may also wish to conduct more regular self-assessments to ensure it is meeting the needs of its Trustees.

Remain Responsive and Adaptable

Library services have a history of evolution and adaptability. Recent international events (such as the COVID-19 pandemic and Black Lives Matter movement) have demonstrated that rapid responses may be required to align with legislation or to maintain relevance. Library services and the Board must remain flexible, adaptable, and prepared for change to ensure that the Library remains a community leader.

Our Term

Key Accomplishments

October 2019 ■ Closure of Village Branch.

November 2019 ■ Opening of Audley Branch.

December 2019 ■ Recruitment of new Chief Librarian & Executive Officer.

March 2020 ■ Pandemic protocols established and executed.
Transition to virtual platform for meetings and Board activities.

July 2020 ■ Issue statement condemning anti-Black racism.

November 2020 ■ Permanently adopt Fine-Free model.

January 2021 ■ Use of Library as temporary overnight warming centre space.

April 2021 ■ Adoption of Town of Ajax Land Acknowledgment statement.

September 2021 ■ Makerspace Strategy.
Anti-Black racism governance process policy review completed.

November 2021 ■ Library orientation for new Trustees developed and approved.

December 2021 ■ Adopt Reserve Policy in Memorandum of Understanding with Town of Ajax.
Space Needs Assessment.

February 2022 ■ Makerspace Funding approved.
Transfer of Town Archives to Library.

March 2022 ■ 5-Year Collection Review.

June 2022 ■ Library Board Legacy Document Compiled.

October 2022 ■ Library Board Recruitment.

November 2022 ■ Collection Diversity Audit.

December 2022 ■ 70th Anniversary Celebrations

COVID-19 Pandemic Response

Our Term

COVID-19 Pandemic and Recovery

In March 2020, the Library was forced to shutdown due to provincially mandated measures. This began an over two (2) year long period of modified services, which shifted as the pandemic situation evolved. At different periods, the Library was either fully closed, offering only curbside/pedestrian pick-up, providing limited access to computer or study spaces, offering virtual programming, or operating under limited capacities with provisional entry requirements (masking, vaccination requirements, etc.).

This created a number of operational and strategic challenges, which the Board addressed while learning new ways to discuss important issues and manage meetings in virtual formats. There was also continued challenges, such as budgetary impacts which resulted in compounded issues: a pre-existing surplus was ballooned by reduced spending due to mandated shutdowns.

In addition, it was important the Library was considerate of how pandemic decisions affected or aligned with counterparts at the Town of Ajax, other Durham Region Libraries, and of course, regional and provincial health mandates.

Although a challenging time, the Library and Board came through it #StrongerTogether.

Library employee Kim delivers items to a customer via contactless curbside pick-up at Main Branch. July 2020.

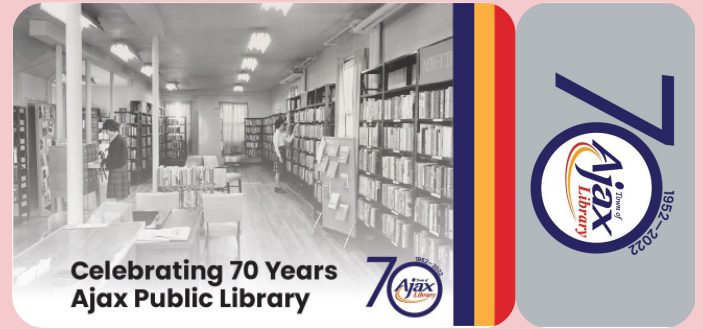


Celebrating 70 Years

Ajax Public Library was created after the forming of their first Board in December 1952. The end of the current Board term in 2022 marks the 70th anniversary of the Library, one which we hope will be reflective of the change and growth in the community, and the ways the Library has helped to create a strong, diverse, and informed citizenry.

The Library has developed a 70th Anniversary logo, is releasing limited edition 70th Anniversary Library cards and tote bags, and is planning special celebrations and commemorative activities for the latter half of 2022.

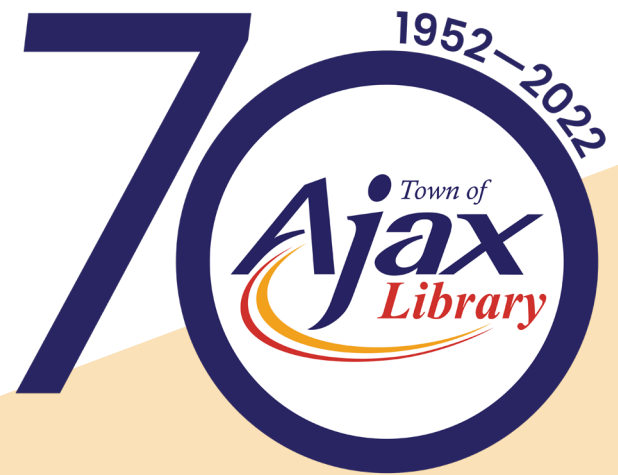
The Library has also dedicated to using the 70th Anniversary logo in all instances appropriate throughout 2022, and the use of archival/historic Library images as covers of the Library's primary publication (the 'What's On'). Social media posts highlighting #ThrowbackThursday have also been used/scheduled throughout the year.



A mock-up of the limited edition 70th Anniversary Library cards that will be used for the second half of 2022. Library customers will be able to switch their card to a 70th Anniversary card at no cost if they so choose. The silver key tag element is metallic - meant to mimic platinum for our Platinum Jubilee!



Board Members in 1952. Standing (l.to.r.): Paul Corbett, John Sherburne, Ian Hamer; Sitting (l.to.r.): Teresa Falby, John Cameron, and appointed librarian Tune Munro.



The Ajax Public Library Board, when it was first formed in 1952. The end of our current Library Board term (2022) coincides with our 70th anniversary.

Our Board has grown in size and diversity, reflecting the change and growth in Ajax as a community.

Our Term

Challenges Completed

Chief Librarian & Executive Officer Recruitment

The Library Board began the process of recruiting for a new Chief Librarian & Executive Officer in December 2019. After completing a competition that involved multiple rounds of interviews and a presentation on the future of Library services in Ajax, the successful candidate was selected in February 2020. The new Chief Librarian & Executive Officer, Sarah Vaisler, started in March 2020.



Sarah Vaisler
Chief Librarian & Executive Officer
sarah.vaisler@ajaxlibrary.ca
905-683-4000 ext. 8825

Black Lives Matter Movement

After the murder of George Floyd in May 2020, the Black Lives Matter movement returned to the forefront of international media. Recognizing that anti-Black racism is not isolated to the United States, the Library Board developed and published a statement condemning anti-Black racism and expressing solidarity with the Black community in the Town of Ajax. The Library also endorsed the Canadian Urban Libraries Council statement on Race and Social Equity.

Stronger Financial Position

The COVID-19 pandemic impacted the Library and its community in a number of ways, but also exacerbated pre-existing issues, and forced reconsideration of a number of processes, including addressing the budget surplus.

A surplus was inherited from the previous Chief Librarian & Executive Officer, and then further compounded by reduced spending due to forced shutdowns during the height of the COVID-19 pandemic. Working closely with the Town of Ajax, the Library Board has approved a strategy that ensures the Library minimizes potential for a budget surplus, while recognizing a need for flexibility due to unpredictable events and impacts. The resulting Reserve Policy and Memorandum of Understanding better position the Library to prepare for financial impacts and support long-term strategic initiatives, while remaining in alignment with Town of Ajax financial policies and processes.

The Future

Advocacy Opportunities

Library Space Needs

As demonstrated in the Library Space Needs Assessment conducted by Monteith Brown Planning Consultants in December 2021, Ajax Public Library is below benchmarks of space per capita, and below most comparative public library systems. Explorations to expand the Library's footprint, redevelop existing spaces to better use and prioritize spaces, or consider new Library builds need to be conducting alongside Council.

Building a Resilient Community

The Library will always participate in strategies and solutions that support the wellness and resiliency of Ajax residents. Offering temporary warming or cooling centres, connections with social services, and clinics to support health and wellness are all activities undertaken by the Library during the Boards' term. However, it is vital that Municipal Council seek longer term strategies and solutions that better serve those experiencing homelessness, food insecurity, mental health complications, and the opioid crisis.



Library Board Trustee Deborah McDougall at a celebration for Village Branch before its closure in October 2020.

The Future

Challenges

Space Constraints

As public libraries change and grow to meet the needs of their communities, an increased variety of demands on library spaces is being experienced industry-wide. There is simultaneously a need for both collaborative and independent work and meeting spaces, spaces where exuberant children can learn and play together or groups can study quietly. The Library's loaning collection remains popular, but spaces to house materials must be balanced with spaces to work for both customers and staff who are required to support the extensive services and resources provided.

In Ajax specifically, this is also affected by a dense urban population and municipality, where our square space per capita is below industry benchmarks, but there are limited opportunities to grow beyond our existing footprints.

Attracting Non-Library Users

Communicating the Library's value through marketing and promotion strategies is a key part of a modern public library. However, public libraries do not traditionally have the same resources (ex. staff, financial, etc.) as for-profit counterparts, and therefore competing in similar markets (ex. streaming services) is exceptionally difficult.

The breadth and variety of programming and services the Library provides is extensive, which means that those same resources are expected to stretch across multiple teams and departments, while maintaining consistency and balance in promotional efforts.

Trustee Turnover

It is vital that the Library Board consider strategies to ensure potential appointments are aware of the commitment and expectations of participating on the Library Board. While changing personal and work commitments may impact a person's ability to remain on the Library Board for the entire appointed term, every effort should be made to ensure membership is engaging and attractive.

Trustee turnover can result in information and/or engagement loss which hinders the Board's momentum and success.



Key report publications such as the Library Space Needs Assessment are available on the Library website: ajaxlibrary.ca/policies



Library Mission Statement

The Ajax Public Library is the gateway to information and resources that improve the quality of life, foster life-long learning, encourage community involvement, and meet the varying educational and social needs of all members of its communities.