

Stratford Public Library and the Grand Trunk Renewal Site



NEW LIBRARY PROPOSAL

September 2024



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The Need for A New Library

Stratford Public Library (SPL) is a bustling community hub. As a key contributor in our community's wellbeing and quality of life, SPL consistently ranks as one of the Ontario's busiest medium-sized public libraries in terms of circulation, program attendance and number of visitors.

Research shows that people from every neighbourhood within Stratford regularly visit the library. In 2023, over 11,000 visitors came through its doors each month, borrowing over 463,400 items.

Since the library's construction in 1903—121 years ago—Stratford's population has tripled. A 2022 update to SPL's 2003 space needs assessment reconfirmed that the library is significantly undersized for both current and future populations. In 2023, addressing this space deficit became a top priority in the Stratford Public Library Board's new Strategic Plan.

It's evident that SPL has outgrown its existing building. While there have been additions in 1926 and 1975, there has been no significant capital investment in the past 50 years. Since that time, collection formats, technology usage, programming formats and community usage has grown and changed considerably. More public space is required for reading areas, technology use, creative spaces, programming, and meeting rooms to accommodate Stratford's growing population.

Approximately 34,000 square feet is needed to operate an efficient and effective library for Stratford's current population, and 44,000 square feet is needed for the expected population in 20 years. The current space is only 12,472 and is located on a landlocked site where expanded services and future growth is not possible. Parking cannot be expanded or placed on a level access. Additionally, the multi-level layout of the library has led to inefficiencies in staffing and customer service, and provides significant accessibility challenges for users of all ages.

A 2013 building condition survey showed that by 2030 it would cost \$1.8 million in capital expenditures to upkeep the facility, systems and components. This would not result in any benefit or improvement to the library services. Over \$1.6 million has been spent in capital expenditures over the past 10 years, with an additional \$500,000 anticipated in the next 5 years. The building has been well maintained by the Library and the municipality, but it does have ongoing issues that will need to be addressed such as areas with asbestos, drafty wood framed windows, inconsistent heating and ventilation throughout, an elevator which is over 20 years past its replacement date, and the front steps are an ongoing concern. An updated building survey will be underway in Fall 2024.

A new Stratford Public Library would become a vibrant, modern community gathering place in downtown Stratford, potentially seeing up to 19,000 visitors each month. This new development would become a city landmark in the heart of Stratford's downtown—a source of civic identity and pride.

Vision

GRAND TRUNK RENEWAL SITE

A redeveloped Stratford Public Library will be part of the larger vision to repurpose the Grand Trunk site in downtown Stratford. In partnership with the YMCA of Three Rivers and the City of Stratford, this presents the best opportunity to define and enhance the Grand Trunk site as a true community hub for Stratford residents.

A library at the Grand Trunk site has significant potential. By being located alongside the YMCA of Three Rivers, there are opportunities to share space and services, in turn reducing individual footprints and operational costs.

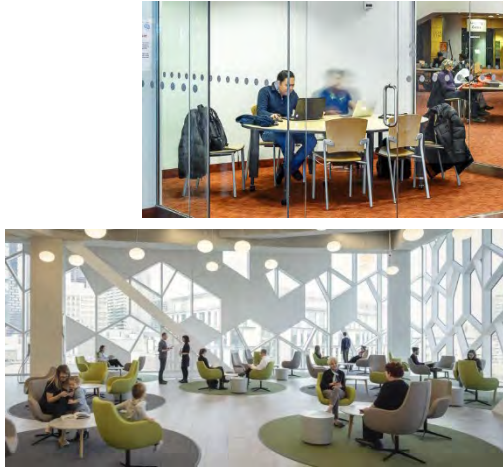


BENEFITS FOR THE LIBRARY

- Sufficient space to build a library which is adequate for today and can properly serve future generations
- Opportunity to work more closely with the YMCA, nurturing both bodies and minds
- Provide space to work more fulsomely with our many other community partners
- Is located downtown which has been communicated to us as being important by the community
- Close to transit for better access and accessibility
- Opportunity to generate revenue streams through a retail space and space rentals

BENEFITS FOR THE GTR

- SPL is a welcoming and trusted community asset. The library would capture resident's imagination and garner significant community support.
- SPL serves everyone in our community: all ages and backgrounds, embracing and advocating for diversity, equity, inclusion and belonging
- Libraries are a year-round destination, seeing over 130,000 annual visitors
- SPL is a proven community partner and connector. SPL believes community connections are vital in all that it does
- A city with amenities is a vibrant and attractive one and libraries are part of that package
- With 40 staff members and dozens of volunteers, in addition to the thousands of monthly visitors, the halo effect of use and spending will be beneficial to the site as whole



BENEFITS TO THE COMMUNITY

The library would be accessible and optimized for patron use and material flow. It would have adequate seating and collection space as well as more suitable space for entrepreneurs and local creatives to work in the MakerSpace. The library would provide both public and private space for the community: meeting rooms, reflection space, an auditorium for performances and theatre, and flexible space for people to be and enjoy being with others in the community. And parking would no longer be a concern for those with accessibility issues or for young families. The Library would be not only energy efficient, but designed with sustainability and environmental awareness at the core. And most importantly, the design will be flexible and adaptable to change over time as our community changes.

JOINT FACILITY

There are many mission alignments between the library and the YMCA and the City of Stratford Community Services department, where we could all benefit from colocation, including a joint lobby, restrooms, flexible auditorium space, community kitchen, increased programming opportunities, and shared facility and maintenance staff. In addition, the library has dozens of partnerships with other community organizations. The synergies created by these partnerships will generate incredible impetus towards our shared goals and contribute to the financial sustainability of the library.

QUIET SPACE

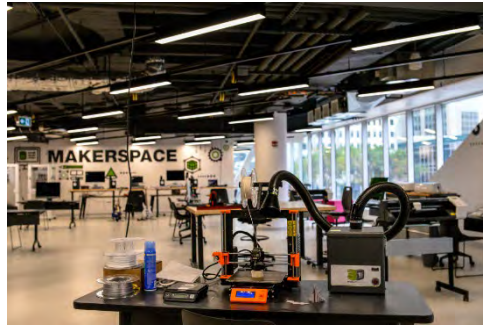
Despite being a vibrant community hub, a library must also serve as a space where the community can find a place of solace. A place where students can find a quiet area to study or entrepreneurs can work, and community partners can meet with clients. Meeting rooms and study pods throughout will serve this need.

COMMUNITY SPACE

A library needs adequate seating and space for the community to gather and use as their third space. Public seating will grow 400% and will be spread throughout the building, providing both space for groups, but also for people to focus on their work. There will be a children's area for young families to gather and children to play, as well as dedicated programming space for storytimes and various children's programming. A teen zone for youth to hang out will provide opportunities to make friends through books, games and programming.

ACCESSIBLE

The new library would be properly accessible for young families, people with assistive devices, and all those in between. Shelving of collections will be at an accessible height and aisles will be wide enough for assistive devices. Additionally, being close to the transit hub will support active transportation, while also improving our parking situation.



EXPERIENCE SPACE

A full-scale MakerSpace and innovation lab will provide greater access to technologies such as 3D printers, laser cutters, sewing machines, podcasting booth, video editing stations, large scale printer and other technologies and tools, allowing us to better serve Stratford's creatives. This space will also allow for small business to prototype products, and create promotional materials.

INCLUSIVE SPACE

Public libraries serve all members of a community. The new SPL would offer inclusive spaces for members of local Indigenous communities (such as spaces for Indigenous art and a sharing circle), reflection space (prayer room), and space for new parents (including a space for nursing and stroller parking).

REVENUE POTENTIAL

The retail space would be dedicated to host fundraising activities and book sales. With dedicated programming and meeting space, revenue may be generated through space bookings by the community.

ENGAGEMENT SPACE

Imagine a Library with flexible space to engage the community, host speakers and performances, and showcase arts and culture groups. There will be space for community partners and social service organizations to join us to offer complementary programs and services.

ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY

As a public institution, libraries have a responsibility to be sustainable in their design. The library will be built using sustainable design principles, with an aim to be carbon neutral or better.

ESTIMATED SQUARE FOOTAGE REQUIREMENTS

A facility planning tool was created by Lemay Architects as part of the 2022 Library Space Needs study to help determine future square footage needs. This planning tool uses library design standards developed by the Administrators of Rural and Urban Libraries of Ontario as well as provincial and local accessibility design standards.

At the GTR site, collocating alongside the YMCA and other potential partners, there are opportunities for shared facilities such as a lobby, café, meeting rooms, and washroom facilities. While a new standalone library would require upwards of 52,100 gross sqft, sharing such facilities reduces the anticipated library space need to approximately 40,900 gross sqft.

In the greater Grand Trunk Renewal site, there would be opportunity for shared outdoor areas such as vehicle parking, bike racks, stroller parking, and exterior engagement space. For the purposes of this report, these numbers have not been included in the space calculations.

	Library Needs	Shared Space
Collections	10,035	
Core program space	2,100	
Visitor Seating	5,920	
Staff Spaces	3,380	
Logistical Spaces	2,800	200
IT & Building Infrastructure	650	1,600
Innovation Space	2,050	
Community Rooms	1,150	2,870
Retail / Café	500	1,600
Circulation Space – 30%	8,576	1,881
Total Square Feet	37,161	8,151

Funding Model, Economic Impact and Benefits

The costing and financial projections included in this report are preliminary and based on the best available information we have at this time. They should be regarded as ‘educated guesstimates’.

COSTING & FUNDING SOURCES

The cost of a new library is difficult to accurately assess, especially with the potential reuse of parts of the Grand Trunk train shed, collaboration with partners, and an unknown ownership model at this time.

However, using the 2024 Altus building costs for a new public library, the average cost for a new library across Canada is \$550 per square foot. With the need of approximately 37,000 sqft, the anticipated cost for a new build would be a minimum of \$20,350,000.

By working with community partners such as the YMCA and the City of Stratford to identify shared space and reduce duplication of efforts, initial estimates show there is an opportunity to share a minimum of 9,000 sqft. This in turn would decrease our initial building costs as well as long-term operational costs.

MUNICIPAL FUNDING

Public libraries are part of the core municipal mandate and are an essential service for Stratford residents. A new Library may be an ideal fit for matching federal-provincial-municipal capital programs. These programs often require municipal sponsorship and the Library Board may seek such support once the project is ready.

Additionally, Development Charges are available to contribute to the cost of a new library. According to the City of Stratford’s 2022 Development Charges report, DC funds may be used towards the acquisition of land, the acquisition, lease, construction or improvement of buildings and structures, as well as to acquire, lease, construct or improve buildings and structures. The Development Charges Study shows 5% of a new build cost may be recovered through development charges.

With a new build costing approximately \$20,350,000, \$1 million may be funded through Development Charges.

PROVINCIAL AND FEDERAL FUNDING / GRANTS

SPL will be exploring funding sources at the provincial and federal levels. Grants such as the Green Municipal Fund and Canada Community Building Fund are prime opportunities. SPL will also explore other funding opportunities to raise both large and smaller sums.

FUNDRAISING

The Stratford Public Library Board has charitable status and intends to embark on a major initiative to raise funds from the community through a variety of means.

The Library will also conduct traditional fundraising initiatives to attract major private donors and explore corporate sponsors and donors to augment our fundraising potential.

CURRENT ASSETS

SPL’s current building and property at 19 St. Andrew Street will need to be leveraged to contribute to the capital cost of the new build space. In Spring 2024, an appraisal of the property was conducted by Otto & Company and a conservative value of \$2,000,000 was provided at the time.

Additionally, the library has begun the contribution of funds into a reserve to contribute to the costs of a new building as of 2024.

OTHER OPTIONS

Other funding options available to the library are long-term debt, special levies, or a combination of the two.

ONGOING OPERATIONAL COSTS

The current library is relatively expensive to operate. Due to the multiple floor layout and entrance/exit design of the building, a higher number of staff is required to operate the library. The increased staff numbers are necessary to maintain a safe space for the community and safe working environment. Initial calculations show that despite an increase in space, staffing needs, in a new efficiently designed Library, will not increase.

With an aim of improving the environmental efficiency and sharing facility staff and expenses with other partners, it is anticipated that facility operating costs will remain cost neutral if not decrease.

ECONOMIC IMPACT

In 2023, an economic impact study of the library was completed and results showed that for every municipal dollar invested in the library, there was a Social Return on Investment of \$6.48 per person, with a total economic benefit of \$17,547,252.

Unsurprisingly, the value with the largest SROI was entertainment and leisure with a value of just over \$10 million. But there were also substantial impacts on local economic development with a value of just under \$2.9 million, educational development with a value of 2.2 million, and inclusion and wellbeing of \$422,000.

Long after construction is complete, public libraries continue their contribution to the economy by:

- Providing the mechanism for life-long learning to support a knowledge-based economy
- Bringing thousands of people each day into the heart of the city to create a vibrant retail and service environment
- Delivering programs and services that support caregivers and give children the tools they need to learn and be ready to go to school
- Engaging small business in the potential of greater success through access to information
- Supporting employment and career development with the opportunity to use technology and information resources to enhance skills

Background Information

PAST PLANS AND STRATEGIC HISTORY

2003: Space Needs Study, prepared by the Ventin Group

This report found that at the time, SPL required a facility which was 60% larger than it currently was. Looking ahead, Stratford would require a library facility which was 27,000 net sqft or 35,100 gross to meet the needs of the population of Stratford in 2027.

2022: Space Needs Report, prepared by Lemay Architects

This report found that SPL requires a library facility of 34,000 gross sqft to meet the needs of the current population. Looking at the population forecast for Stratford 20 years, the report recommended a 44,000 sqft facility. The report additionally endorsed the library provide space for social services agencies to co-locate at a joint facility, resulting in an overall recommendation of 60,000 sqft. Recommendations included a new build with affordable housing, a retail conversion, or a heritage site transformation.

2023: 2023-2026 Strategic Plan

The library board made it a priority to address the space needs of the Library in these Strategic Plan. One of the primary directions is “Align Space with Demand” where SPL will plan for enough space to accommodate the program, services, and resources offered, with room for the library to continue to grow in the future.

February 2024 – the Library requested City Council consider them as an anchor tenant at the Grand Trunk Renewal site. The Library was referred to the Grand Trunk Advisory Committee for consideration.

March 2024 – The Library shared their request with the Grand Trunk Advisory Committee.

SATELLITE LOCATION

A multi-branch library system has been suggested as a solution to the Library’s space constraints, however it is not being recommended at this time. The position of the Library Board is that the priority needs to be on creating an efficient, effective library with centralized administrative functions.

There are a number of reasons for this:

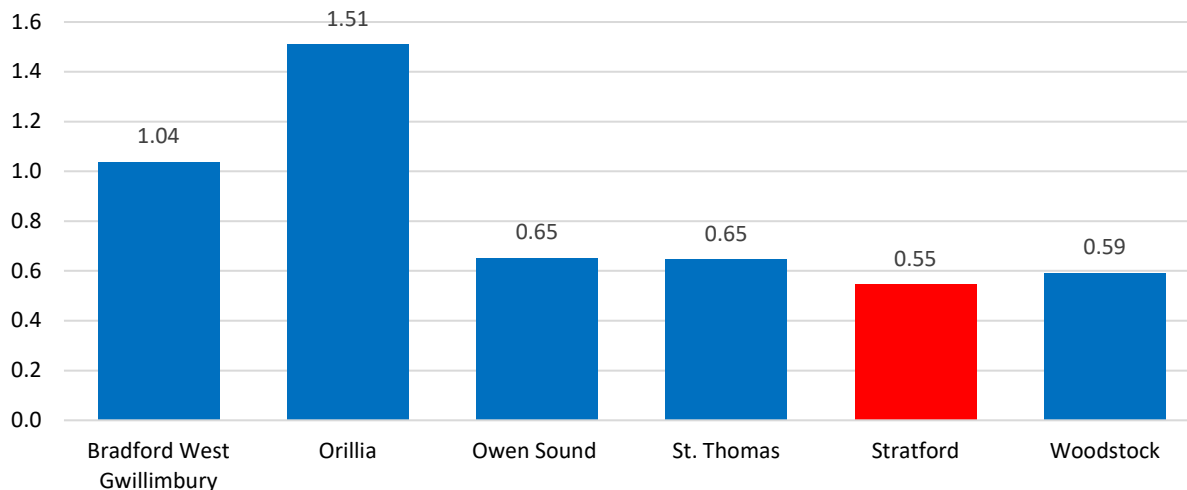
- The Library’s current staffing complement is designed for a single location. A satellite location would require increased staffing, loanable materials, and technological equipment, causing a substantial increase to operating costs.
- A second location would represent a significant investment in the capital costs associated with library services and would increase the burden on the infrastructure by adding another facility with long-term maintenance needs.
- The original Carnegie library building would still require upkeep in the long term and the current staffing model will need to be maintained.

SPACE COMPARISONS

SIZE OF THE LIBRARY BY SCENARIO

	Status Quo Scenario	Scenario 2	Scenario 3
Description	Status Quo – St. Andrew Street location	St. Andrew Street location and branch at the GTR	New Main library at GTR with shared space ⁺
St. Andrew Street	17,202 gross	17,202 gross	
Grand Trunk		12,000 gross	40,000 gross
Total	17,202 gross	29,202 gross	40,000 gross
2024 Population Served	33,232	33,232	33,232
Space Deficit *	-16,028	-4,030	0
2044 Population Estimate	44,000	44,000	44,000
Future Space Deficit *	-26,798	-14,798	0
* based on standard of 1 sqft per resident per Administrators of Rural and Urban Public Libraries of Ontario guidelines for Rural/Urban Public Library Systems			
*including sharing lobby space, washrooms, auditorium, reflection room, exterior space			

Square Footage per Resident of Libraries Serving Communities 30-40,000 Population



JOINT LIBRARY / YMCA / MUNICIPAL FACILITIES

Collocating libraries with other facilities is a well-established practice. By sharing spaces such as lobbies, restrooms, and meeting rooms, as well as maintenance staff, libraries can significantly reduce operational costs. Moreover, this proximity facilitates collaboration on programming and services, enhancing community access and fostering stronger connections. The synergistic effect of shared resources not only improves efficiency but also creates a more dynamic and accessible community hub.

A number of local examples include:

Startech.com Community Centre, YMCA & Library (opened 2018, 166,840 sqft, cost \$55,000,000)

501 Southdale Road West, London

Includes numerous multi-purpose rooms, community kitchen, an indoor pool and gymnasium and a double pad ice arena, a YMCA fitness center and the Bostwick branch of the London Public Library.

John M. Harper Branch Library Branch and Stork Family YMCA (opened 2012, 177,600 sqft, cost \$22,000,000)

500 Fischer-Hallman Road North, Waterloo

Includes a swimming pool, gym, fitness centre, track and a 21,000 sqft library.

Cornell Community Centre (opened 2012, 129,000 sqft, cost \$77,000,000)

3201 Bur Oak Avenue, Markham

This large site includes a multi-level health and fitness centre, an indoor playground, a youth centre, three pool areas, and a multi-sensory room. There are also many all-purpose rooms and a 200-seat rehearsal/performance hall available for rent. Cornell also includes a state-of-the art Library.

David Braley Vaughan Metropolitan Centre of Community (opened 2022, 109,000 sqft, cost \$35,000,000)

200 Apple Mill Road, Vaughan

Features a YMCA health and fitness centre, Vaughan Studios & Events Space Centre with a rooftop terrace and gourmet teaching kitchen, the VMC Library offering a suite of resources and interactive programming.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

[2022 Lemay Space Needs Report](#)

[2023 – 2026 Stratford Public Library Strategic Plan](#)

[2023 ARUPLO Guidelines for Rural/Urban Public Library Systems](#)