



Guelph Public Library
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NEW MAIN LIBRARY

Q AND A

What did Council vote on in February of this year? Is a new Main Library now going to be built?

On February 13th, City Council approved the business case for a new Main Library. This business case called for a new Main Library to be 88,000 sq. ft, located in the Baker District redevelopment site.

At the same meeting, Council also:

- Approved \$1.9 million to create preliminary design concepts and determine construction costs;
- Directed staff to coordinate these design concepts with the preferred development partner for the overall Baker St. site, who will be chosen in July, 2018;
- Directed staff to explore various ownership models for the new Main Library, including full GPL ownership, lease to own or a long-term lease. A report to Council on these options is due by the end of 2019;
- Directed staff to explore operating efficiencies for library services;
- Called on the Mayor to write a letter to the Province asking that “adequate and appropriate funding” be established for local libraries;
- Directed City of Guelph and Guelph Public Library staff to work collaboratively to decide how to dispose of the current downtown library, with any proceeds from the sale going towards the costs of the new Main Library.

Basically, while this was the first important step towards the construction of a new downtown Main Library, Council still needs to vote to approve the design and move forward with construction, which won't happen until at least 2019.

Questions? Contact:

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Libraries Matter!

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If the new Main Library is part of a bigger picture (the Baker St. redevelopment), why was money put into design when the overall Baker St. design isn't yet known?

After the meeting in July, 2018, where Council will select a design partner for the Baker St. redevelopment project, it is expected that the overall development and the Main Library design will happen in tandem. This will allow architects to work together to ensure that the design concepts are compatible. Putting the money towards the design now allows for greater influence over how the library will be integrated into the overall development.

How much will this project cost?

The project has a projected price tag of \$46.25 million, which, accounting for inflation, would total just over \$50 million by 2021. These figures are detailed estimates and could evolve once consultation and design are complete.

The current downtown library is only 29,000 ft². Why does a new Main Library need to be 88,000 ft²?

The business case for the new Main Library, independently prepared by the respected consulting firm KPMG, recommended that the new Main Library be 88,000 sq. ft. because we're not just building for today, but for the future as well. This recommended size is the right one to meet the future needs of our growing community, for a number of reasons:

- The need for more collection space: To meet the needs of Guelph's 2050 population, the business case demonstrates how the new Main Library needs space for 2.5 books per capita, with a projected population of 185,000.
- Meeting current accessibility laws: The current downtown library is too outdated and small to meet current Provincially-mandated accessibility standards. These standards are vitally important to ensure that we give equal access to everyone in our community to explore, connect and thrive in our library locations.
- Creating improved community and special use space: The largest single area of growth in the new proposed Main Library is in seating areas for readers and community and special use space. The purpose of this space is to provide the community with an outlet for their creativity and energy, and to allow them to make the new Main Library their own. It's important that given the role a new Main Library will play as a vibrant downtown community hub that the ideas of the community can find a home in this new building. There will be extensive community engagement and conversations as this project progresses regarding how this space will be used.
- Meeting a variety of best practice standards. KPMG relied on the commonly-used Wisconsin Model, the Southern Ontario Collection Standard and the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA) in determining collection area size and required unassigned space.

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Do we really need space for more books? Do people still read books?

Yes! In 2016, 2,314,454 items were borrowed from the GPL. Books remain the favoured media among Guelph's library users. These millions of items were borrowed across the whole of Guelph, thanks to our branch model.

The growth in technologies like e-books doesn't actually mean people want fewer books, it just means that the Library has to provide a broader range of media, resources and activities to fulfill its mandate as a vibrant community hub where Guelphites can explore, connect and thrive. For example, visitors to the current downtown library will have noticed 3D printers and virtual reality areas. It is the norm, not the exception, for modern libraries to provide this range of service, in addition to great collections of books.

Why is this project needed now?

The main reasons why this project is sorely needed now are space, accessibility and the need to build for the future of our growing city. At the current downtown library, it's hard to find parking, it's hard to get in and out of the library, patrons can't move conveniently between the floors, the elevator is old, and washrooms are not in good shape, among other issues.

When our current Norfolk St. location was built, Guelph's population was 51,377. In 2050, Guelph's population is projected to be 185,000.

A new Main Library will solve these problems and have the flexibility to serve our community for the next 50 years.

Will there be opportunities for residents to get involved in the conversation?

Definitely. During the course of the design of the building there will be public engagement and consultation. This is a vital part of the process, to ensure that the final design of the Main Library contains the best, most feasible ideas from the public about how this building can work for them.

Will this just serve the downtown core?

The downtown Main Library will serve residents from across the entire city, both in person and by strengthening our branch model, which makes the entire GPL collection available across the city at local branches. Those who visit in person will also come from all over Guelph, as they would for any magnet facility, like the River Run, Sleeman Centre, or any of our rec centres. A recent Globe and Mail article also demonstrated

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how new downtown libraries are key to breathing life into underused properties and areas, saying that “central libraries around the world are being used as magnets for development and are often a primary project in a revitalization strategy.”

In KPMG’s business case analysis, they showed how every comparable other city save for one experienced an increase in library membership, library programs and in the circulation of library materials after building a new, modern facility.

With 2,314,454 items borrowed from GPL in 2016, and the collection space set to more than double in a new Main Library, countless hours of entertainment, education and cultural enrichment that will flow across the city from downtown.

If this is part of the Baker St parking lot redevelopment, will there still be parking on site?

Yes. As part of the overall site redevelopment, the City intends to increase the number of spots available on the Baker St. site.

Would a new Main Library provide economic benefits to Guelph?

Absolutely. Downtown is vital to the City’s economic engine, and the Baker District is currently the biggest single item yet to be unlocked. The Library is a key to making the whole development happen. Library construction alone will contribute approximately \$46.1 million to Canada’s GDP, 90% of which is expected to be in Ontario, and a large share of which we know anecdotally will be right here in Guelph. Library construction is also aligned with all of the City’s economic development priorities and the Prosperity 2020 plan, including investing in people and ideas, the downtown, and in hard and green infrastructure.

We know that building and operating modern libraries returns significant economic value into the community. Our proposed new Main Library would too.

What is the GPL’s current operating budget and how will the new Main Library affect that?

The GPL’s current annual budget is \$9.1 million and would increase by \$2.2 million upon the opening of a new Main Library. These increased operating costs are an investment in greater community and economic impact.

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Let's break down the 2.2 million in proposed operating cost growth.

- 29% of that money is for purchasing, including increasing and improving the collection, which as noted before will ripple across the whole city through the branch system.
- 39% is for staffing. Quality jobs in our downtown core, providing front line service to community members.
- 32% for operating expenses – maintaining a larger facility and ensuring it's both AODA compliant and includes unassigned space so that we can remain flexible over the next quarter century as the community defines for us how this building will be used.

This is the opposite of wasted money: it will deliver tangible community services and benefits for the diverse residents of Guelph.

Can the 2.2 million in operating growth be decreased?

This growth is the cost of running an expanded, modern, vibrant library facility that serves a diverse community in countless ways. It is important to remember that in this case, service levels rise along with operating costs. And in the February 13 meeting, Council did direct staff to continue to explore operating efficiencies for library services, a common practice already within the GPL.

The current downtown Main Library is owned by the GPL, while some branches are currently leased facilities. What would the ownership structure be for the new Main Library?

While the GPL fully owns the current downtown library site and building, leasing has been used in the past as a way to get branches quickly up and running in new areas. At the February 13, 2018 Council meeting, Council asked city staff to work with Library staff to explore various ownership options, including full ownership, lease to own and a long-term lease. A report on the implications of these various options for the Main Library is due back to Council by the end of 2019.

The expectation is that proceeds from the disposing of the current Norfolk St. library will be put towards Main Library construction costs.



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