



March 20, 2019

Guelph Public Library

Public Engagement, Programming & Schematic Design Documents Review

New Central Library — Focus Group Meetings Summary Report

Meeting Purpose

To hear from community groups and organizations in order to ensure all ideas and issues regarding the development of the programs, services, and spaces in the new Central Library and adjacent urban square are taken into consideration.

Dates and Locations

Ten one-hour meetings were held with community groups and organizations on February 25th and 26th, 2019 in the Central Library of Guelph Public Library.

Participating Groups

Older Adults:

Friends of the GPL; Older Adult Advisory Group; Guelph Wellington Senior's Association

New Canadians:

Guelph Wellington Local Immigration Partnership

Downtown Aid:

Arch, Lakeside Hope House

Downtown Health:

Canadian Mental Health Association

First Nations, Metis, Inuit:

First Nations Community Elders

History Interest:

Guelph Historical Society, Heritage Guelph, University of Guelph Archives

Aid to Developmentally Challenged:

Live & Learn Centre, Kids Ability, Guelph Community Health Centre; Jobs. Opportunities. Enterprise (J.O.E.)



Arts and Culture:

Guelph Arts Council, Guelph Black Heritage Society, Guelph Jazz Festival, Musagetes

Education:

People Info Network: Upper Grand District School Board, First Nations; Upper Grand District School Board; 10 Carden; Wellington Catholic District School Board; Guelph-Wellington Immigrant Services; Legal Clinic of Guelph & Wellington County; Guelph Homeschool Group Band/Private Music Teachers; Action Read

Youth:

Teen Advisory Group; Guelph Youth Council

Note

Comments included in this report represent the majority of the comments recorded. All comments recorded are available to the project team and will inform the development of the program and schematic design of the new Central Library.

Question 1 — Programs and Services

As we think about our new library space and future programs and services to 2040, what, if anything is, from your perspective, missing from this list? [Attached List of Programs and Services provided to participants.]

Older Adults

- Environmental impact / Educational actions to teach about recycling
- Community involvement
- Accessibility workshop for small businesses
- Archives in addition to genealogy: ensure no overlap of various archival needs. Local history, archives, and genealogy could share the same quiet room zone. Name suggested: "John Galt Room".
- Friends of the Library programs and services
- Question: Will library accommodate mental health services to do with displaced people (homeless)?

New Canadians

- Quiet spaces for study



- Concerts for sharing diversity of different cultures
- French storytelling / more books in other languages / online resources
- Question: More information/clarification asked about Language Learning and English support.

Downtown Aid

- Technology lending library (ex. laptops) and workshops

Downtown Health

- U of Guelph lecture series tie-in
- Performances: open mic writing/poetry
- LGBT events for “coming out” stories available to all
- More educational programs (ex. photography)
- More programs for seniors (ex topics for group discussions)
- Book clubs with different guidelines (ex. where people share whatever caliber of book they are reading in a non-judgmental setting)

First Nations / Metis / Inuit

- Embed the program list with Indigenous themes
- Indigenous groups can use learning/sign-language.
- Incorporating or "indigenizing" the programs with First Nations content doesn't reflect the First Nations worldview or how Indigenous peoples learn

History Interest

- Ontario Genealogy Society would appreciate a place for people to research and attend workshops on family history; an area that brings together all resources and gives them assistance
- Homework help: tutors meeting with students of all ages need space (private)
- Help with Income Tax and software programs
- Museum passes (organized to maximize availability to more people)

Aid to Developmentally Challenged

- J.O.E.: would love to see café/coffee service as part of a community group retail area that creates a sense of community
- Sensory day: provide a specialized program and space
- Special day/event for developmentally-challenged groups
- Programs/play times for younger children
- Opportunities for any group to participate in general programs



- Tutoring services (ex. French)
- Meeting spaces
- Staffing/volunteer opportunities in the library for developmentally-challenged people to support the library as an important community hub
- A commercial kitchen

Arts & Culture

- Art exhibited in the library
- Art programs for street youth are in demand
- Programming/display spaces for Black History month

Education

- Meeting room space that is safe and private; options for alternative education
- Quiet space for children with sensitivities
- Makerspace that is a flexible space and with different equipment such as a sewing machine
- Language learning for younger people who want to learn a second language
- Musical instrument lending; sound-proof room with piano
- Connection to existing tool library and LGBT library in Guelph
- Talks/Workshops about tenants' rights, income tax, and public legal information (space for approx. 25 people)
- Inclusion through entrepreneurship for people with various mental health or other challenges
- Childminding for immigrant communities attending programs or a Kids Corner while parents attend programs
- Programs that support the immigrant community
- Coffee/food support for meetings

Youth

- Free spaces where 4 to 6 people can meet (ex. to organize social justice events, art shows)
- Tutoring space and services
- Programs and spaces for arts kids and gaming kids



Question 2 — Multi-Use Space

**The new library will have a large multi-use space. How would you like to see this space used?
What kinds of activities would be good in this space?**

Older Adults

- Comfortable seating and comfortable space for all size groups
- Good soundproofing
- Free library programs: "library programs belong in the library"
- Library can also rent space to generate money
- Possibly weddings and private events?
- Lectures and concerts
- Catering kitchen
- Designated washrooms just for multi-use space

New Canadians

- Support multi-cultural performances (festivals), both indoor and outdoor (booths, performances)
- Fundraising events

Downtown Aid

- Local churches already have facilities for concerts and events that are used by non-profit groups. Library would be spending money on a space that is in competition with spaces that support charitable associations (churches): keeping these heritage buildings viable keeps them in public sphere

Downtown Health

- Election candidate meetings
- Panel discussions
- Festivals (ex. documentary films, queer films,)
- Co-hosting events with literary presses for both teens and adults

First Nations / Metis / Inuit

- Local speakers to engage community and develop relationships with the university
- Indigenous community gatherings are small in number and limited in capacity so uncertainty about need or use of larger space
- Accommodate smudging (required for every meeting) with appropriate venting system



History Interest

- Genealogy / new Canadians/ events with booths/tables, workshops, speaking events
- Available/affordable to all
- Ensure that marginalized groups are welcome and comfortable
- Heritage Canada conference a possible event
- Concern about need for this space, given available space in churches and River Run.
[follow-up email comment]

Aid to Developmentally Challenged

- Community dances at affordable rental rate
- Rock band event for kids

Arts & Culture

- Guelph Jazz Festival: concern about acoustic quality when other spaces already offer it; a smaller, intimate space designed for music/speech is desirable
- Good tech equipment on site: p.a. system, sound mixing board
- Affordability and availability for booking are important
- Could be in competition with Heritage hall with seating for 80 (which received an accessibility grant received to upgrade facility)
- Arts Everywhere could use the 150-person space if it has a sprung floor
- Licensed space is desirable
- General interest in sprung floor for dance groups
- Need for flexible space and rehearsal and recording space

Education

- Low stage accessible for children, better acoustics, room behind and beside wings for musical theatre; accommodate 100 to 300 people; provide music stands; provide acoustic piano
- Storage space needed
- Good sound system

Youth

- Concerts (especially with local artists)
- Talks by people with special knowledge/expertise
- Multicultural shows
- Many ideas for large space, including: “mystery night” and “candy land”



Question 3 — Other Needs/ Considerations for Spaces/Programs/Services

From your perspective, is there anything more or special we need to consider in the design of the new library space, programs and services?

Older Adults

- Quiet spaces for reading and sensory-sensitive people
- Bookable study rooms
- Lockable storage
- Adjacency to washrooms
- Café idea is good
- Lockers and strollers parking

New Canadians

- Provide active/noisy areas for kids
- Signage outside and inside to inform about events
- Space for nursing mothers close to children's area
- Better parking
- Multi-purpose spiritual space: doesn't have to be dedicated to the purpose
- Designated shelter spaces for 'homeless' – some people avoid the library because of 'undesirable' people

Downtown Aid

- Multi-purpose space to rent out
- Library accommodates marginalized populations: some library staff trained as social workers or a trained outreach person is needed
- Chill-out space where a patron could nap, separate from children's area
- Security: not with a visible uniform, which can trigger a negative reaction for some people
- All-gender washrooms (with signage) should be one for each set: people who don't identify can use it
- Sharps containers for all washrooms with regular monitoring; staff trained in sharps handling

Downtown Health

- Informal space with a comfortable set-up (ex. dimmer lighting) for events like author workshops
- Good security needed
- Fear of elevators: some people with mental health challenges need accompaniment
- Mental health-supportive spaces: space to move, no small spaces



- Direct connection from Downtown Health Centre next door to a Pre-lobby space is better than having its clients go through the outdoor space to enter the library.

First Nations / Metis / Inuit

- Accommodate small Indigenous groups: allow them to have a presence where helpful, like in book studies; avoid performances and "putting a tick in a box marked indigenous"; accommodate storytelling and music
- Welcome people who feel marginalized with the use of natural materials like wood, use of Indigenous language

History Interest

- Space for Local history and well-connected to University and civic archive; a place where anyone could come to learn. McLaughlin Library at U of Guelph was recently renovated with some capacity for exhibits of historical interest.
- Opportunity and space for City archives to be organized
- Concern about parking: street parking in Guelph "is a nightmare" but parking is required: people drive to the library. Public transit also needs to be in place to support the Central Library
- The site's history as former location of the City cemetery: existing burials may still be on site

Aid to Developmentally Challenged

- Sensory spaces: Snoezelen room (for autistic children)
- Universal design so anyone can participate in both semi-private and open areas
- Community Health Centre: Consumption services may be provided at CHC (adjacent to site) which may be an issue for library spaces and require management/awareness of different user groups
- Current space of Community Services Centre (adjacent to site) is in high demand for own use and by others renting it; Library space would be desirable for staff meetings, with proximity to a kitchen; CSC also hosts indigenous ceremonies but current space isn't suitable for smudging
- Teaching kitchen for social learning and life skills is needed in Guelph by several groups
- Indoor/outdoor communal space for markets
- Washrooms with blue lights to warn about overdose; continuous building surveillance

Arts & Culture

- Lamps for seasonally affected disorder
- Accessible spaces needed
- Arts Council: members need meeting spaces and exhibition spaces; currently have no dedicated gallery space



Education

- Privacy pods and areas for small groups
- Secure and accessible spaces accommodating specific learning needs, flexible spaces, clear access to services and spaces
- Meeting and training spaces available after hours
- Opportunities for students to earn co-op points
- Gender-neutral bathrooms
- Spaces for School Board use
- Accommodate people who need access to internet; be able to manage behavior of people with mental health challenges

Youth

- Space for Youth Hub (Rotary Club) to meet and collaborate
- Concern about allergies if library hosts cooking activities
- Spaces to eat: café would attract more youth
- Art by local artists displayed on walls
- Free parking availability or parking that's affordable
- Separate space away from technology
- No graffiti wall
- Warm happy colours and comfy seating
- Accommodate youth who are “study people” and who are “hanging out people”
- A new cool modern building will bring people out: a certain amount of people to start will attract more to come

Question 4 — Activities for Urban Square

What kinds of activities might benefit library users, specifically the groups you represent, in the outdoor space that will be adjacent to the new library?

Older Adults

- Outside performances for all ages
- Traffic is an issue that will affect enjoyment of space
- Presence of limestone in this space, such as for artwork (prefer: repurposed material from excavation)
- Library façade could be right at the sidewalk with outdoor space on the side.
- Space with activity and vitality: activities like a poetry slam.
- Seasonal markets: other Guelph areas have pottery/ vegetables / library book sales



- Many program activities on the list (Question 1) could be outside
- People like to stand at their computers/devices: something to support that would be nice
- Priority should be to spend budget inside before outside

New Canadians

- Arts events/workshops
- Events at market square could happen here
- Most library programs/activities can occur outside
- Yoga
- An outdoor space will draw people to this area of the city
- Movie nights with foreign films

Downtown Aid

- Outdoor washroom is useful to address shortage of public washrooms in downtown
- Benches that allow for naps
- Good lighting and emergency buttons
- Outdoor movies
- Markets and vendors (ex. "hope on the street" fundraiser)
- Drinking fountain
- Green space as entry space
- Partner with art gallery so art in interior is visible through glass at all times to outdoor space
- Maintain existing large sharps container that is currently off Baker Street
- Shade
- Pollinator garden

Downtown Health

- Tables with umbrellas for eating
- Sculptures/artwork
- Chairs and plants for a "getaway in the city"
- Refreshments
- Street performers/buskers
- Space for Improv: Making Box theatre group
- Drumming circles
- Kite making



First Nations / Metis / Inuit

- Green space is needed
- Small medicine garden or wheel would be meaningful; possibly a medicine wheel pattern in concrete (created with Indigenous people)
- Space to grow plants such as tobacco would help the Indigenous community: needs to be protected from vandalism

History Interest

- Area for First Nations' ceremonies
- Mural or art display that emphasizes local history
- Genealogy days or booths for special days at different points of the year
- Partner with U of G landscape architecture students to provide them with a way to contribute to the community using their skills/knowledge
- Partner with U of G through its experiential learning courses (actual workplace projects)

Aid to Developmentally Challenged

- Therapeutic lessons provided in barrier-free garden spaces
- Nature-based musical instruments; painting panel; ball run (put balls in holes that roll to a spot)
- SEED: local group could help maintain gardens
- Protection from busy traffic street
- Miniature splash pad or opportunities for tactile contact with water

Arts & Culture

- Public outdoor art
- Something for children (ex. large chess or scrabble board)
- Space under a tree to read
- Art installations (via an art call) to create ownership of the space: a call would likely generate unexpected ideas
- Drop-off vehicular space
- Question: how to integrate “other populations” into the space?

Education

- Use materials (including plants) that are indigenous to the land
- Performances, art space, graffiti wall
- Water bottle refill; bike parking;
- Diverse seating arrangements for tutoring that's comfortable and safe



- Outdoor learning/programming is being encouraged within the school board
- Outdoor teaching area doesn't have to be formal: a naturalized, informal arrangement works well
- Games like ping/pong/ meeting table
- Diverse people are served by the space: a busy space will be safer and encourage better behaviour and passive surveillance

Youth

- Accessible space with bicycle lanes and bicycle parking (that is maybe covered)
- Picnic benches and seating for eating and reading
- Food trucks attract people: could have a scheduled time when this happens to attract teens
- Good lighting for night safety
- Washrooms
- Water bottle fountains
- Something children can play on

Attachments

- GPL List of Programs and Services

End of Report