

# Burk's Falls, Armour & Ryerson Union Public Library

## Facility Needs Assessment



Prepared by the Library Facility Planning Committee:

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November 17, 2021

## INTRODUCTION

The Burk's Falls, Armour & Ryerson Union Public Library (the Library) has been in its current location at 39 Copeland Street in the Village of Burk's Falls since 1985.

In its 2019-2022 Strategic Plan, the Library Board identified that the need for a larger space was a priority:

### Strategic Priority #1: Physical Environment:

"Now that we have completed as many renovations as we can in our current space, it is evident that to continue to offer the services that are expected from our communities, we need a larger space."

In order to address this priority, the following Strategic Objective was established:

"Assess current and future facility space needs and develop a new plan for meeting those needs".

## PLANNING COMMITTEE

In 2020 the Board established a Library Facility Planning Committee (the Committee) to complete a Library Facility Needs Assessment which could be used to assist the Board and its partners in the future planning requirements for the library. The Committee consists of the following Library Board members:

Beverley Abbott  
Werner Mueller  
Delynne Patterson

The work of the Committee was guided by the following Objectives and Action Plans in the 2019-2022 Strategic Plan:

### Objectives and Action Plans #2:

"Assess current and future facility space needs and develop a new plan for meeting those needs."

### Objectives and Action Plans #3:

The following should be taken into consideration when developing a plan:

- a) Efficient work area for library staff
- b) Accommodation for expanding collection

- c) Meeting Room(s)
- d) Study/work area for students of all ages
- e) Children's area
- f) Space available to socialize
- g) Adult leisure area
- h) Local history/genealogy

The most urgent space considerations should accommodate the numerous groups and clubs that use the library space, as well as the provision of a private room for training sessions, meetings and community services.

It should be noted that since the Strategic Plan was implemented, the global COVID-19 pandemic has made the need for larger physical spaces due to capacity and physical distancing requirements a priority in any future space planning. As communities are reopening and people are in public more often, it is important that they be able to stay at least two metres (six feet) away from others to avoid catching an infectious disease such as COVID-19.

The Committee identified the following key principles that would guide its Needs Assessment:

- a) to provide the infrastructure required to maintain and expand the services provided by the library;
- b) to meet the needs of our communities in an efficient and effective way;
- c) all existing and proposed services and programming would be assessed in order to confirm the value, benefit and necessity of each;
- d) optimize current and future facility space needs and develop a new plan for meeting those needs with a focus on ways to adapt spaces to attract, engage and respond to the Tri-Council community;
- e) focus on the creation of dynamic spaces;
- f) work to provide services through both physical and virtual spaces; and,
- g) continue to make the library the hub of the community and encourage members to discover the joys and benefits of the library spaces.

## CURRENT SITUATION

In 2017, as part of its strategic planning process and considering the likelihood of needing a new library facility, the Board conducted a review and analysis of the library's historical data and annual provincial statistics and reported these in the "Burk's Falls, Armour & Ryerson Union Public Library – Library Overview Report".

The results of the 2017 report and ongoing monitoring of data through subsequent years clearly support the Board's position that the library currently occupies a seriously undersized space which was barely adequate when opened in its current location in 1985. The practicality of the current space was also identified as a significant problem by library users in their responses to a patron survey conducted in 2017. The two most pressing concerns shown in the survey were the size and quality of the library facility and the size of the materials collection.

The 2017 Library Overview Report noted that there had been a modest but steady increase of approximately 2% per year in the population served by the library; over 36 years, this growth on its own should warrant consideration of a larger facility. However, while the population served has grown modestly over time, the report also shows that library usage growth over the years has far outstripped the population growth, thus further outpacing the library's ability to satisfy demand in its current space. For the 10-year period from 2009 to 2019, active library patron numbers have increased by 56%, from 968 to 2,202. During the same period, the circulation of library materials increased 54.6%, from 19,324 to 42,541 items per year. Unfortunately, the collection size and diversity has not kept pace with the increase in library usage. Limited shelf space has meant that collection size has stagnated and that materials which could usefully have remained in the collection have had to be discarded earlier than desired in order to make room for new materials.

The 2016 Canada Census data used in the Library Overview Report also showed that the age of the general population in our area is older than the Ontario average and was set to increase further. Certainly, in recent years there has been an increase in the number of retirees moving into the area and using their cottages as full-time homes. The implication is that we are in need of more senior services as well as facilities which are easily accessible for them.

More recently there have been some indications that younger people are also moving into the area. Anecdotally this can be seen by the increase in the number of new building projects in the area. As well, the current emphasis on providing high speed internet to northern areas such as ours will provide continuing impetus for new business establishment and the ability of more employees to work from home.

Space and staff time for more traditional collections and services have also been extremely limited by the increase and introduction of new electronic collections and services. For example, in 2019 the library circulated 1,955 talking e-books; 10 years ago, talking e-books were not available at the library. The library currently has five public access computer workstations, which are heavily used by patrons and take up approximately 126 square feet; prior to 1985 public access computers were not a part of the services offered.

While library programming has increased over the years, from an attendance of 529 in 2009 to 2,941 in 2019, it suffers in quality and quantity as a result of current space constraints. Some library programming needs to be done off site (e.g., in the Seniors Centre) in order to accommodate the large numbers in attendance. When this happens, the library itself is not utilized (as in browsing before and after the program) and subconsciously program attendees may not associate the program as closely with the library. When larger programming is done in the library (e.g., March Break and Children's Story Time programs) the space is so crowded that others find it difficult to use the library at the same time.

## **BEST PRACTICES AND CURRENT TRENDS**

In addition to recognizing the impacts of the growth in population and library usage identified in the previous section, the Board also needs to be aware of changes in best practices with respect to library space requirements from 1985 to the present day.

The Committee used a variety of best practices sources to arrive at an estimate of the size, layout, and character of a new library space now and into the future.

Some of these changes are required by provincial legislation (Ontario Building Code (OBC); Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA), 2005) while others are standards which are generally accepted as the norm in library space requirements today.

Most of the current norms and standards for space requirements, such as collection shelf space, staff workrooms, circulation desk area, and assembly and meeting rooms, as well as the general size of buildings have been gathered in "Making the Case for Your Library Building Project: The Library Development Guide #5" published by the Ontario Library Service in 2010. For example, the Guide provides standards for building sizes based on population, as well as type of library (e.g., standalone library, library branch, library headquarters, etc.). For a facility such as the one the Committee is proposing, which would be a stand-alone library with administrative function, the Guide suggests a size in the range of approximately 6,500 square feet.

Some changes in standards arise out of legislation such as the OBC or the AODA, 2005, which imposes a legal duty on organizations to achieve accessibility. The AODA, 2005, establishes the framework for the development of province-wide regulations on accessibility, including Ontario Regulation 429/07 Accessibility Standards for Customer

Service and Ontario Regulation 191/11 Integrated Accessibility Standards Regulation. For example, should a new or renovated building be multi-story, the regulations require that an elevator, lift or ramp be installed.

Other considerations arise out of Library Board Policies and Procedures. For example, the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Policy states that “The Burk’s Falls, Armour & Ryerson Union Public Library is committed to the independence and integration of persons with disabilities and all who live, learn, work and play and invest in our communities.” In the case of patrons using mobility devices such as wheelchairs or scooters, this will require the provision of lower shelves for accessibility and wider aisles for maneuverability, both of which require more space.

To better understand best practices and to see the practical application of the standards, the committee members visited two local, small libraries which have recently renovated their spaces: Powassan & District Union Public Library and Whitestone Public Library and Technology Centre. Both libraries have taken steps to address accessibility issues. Powassan & District Union Public Library is a two-level library with an installed elevator; Whitestone Public Library and Technology Centre is a single level library which provides for easy access to collections, as well as programming areas, meeting rooms and offices. Both libraries have wider doors and aisles, and larger bathrooms for wheelchair access. Whitestone has new lower shelving units with a special, angled lower shelf to allow for easier reading of spine labels, especially from a wheelchair. Although both libraries have taken various steps to provide accessibility, the Chief Librarian in Powassan noted that there were challenges associated with the installation and continuing maintenance costs for the elevator, which certainly reinforces the recommendation of the Committee that a single-level library facility is the preferred option.

## LIBRARY SPACE NEEDS

The current space of approximately 1,800 square feet is insufficient for library staff to effectively deliver programs and services to the community. Staff are often searching for larger spaces in the Village of Burk's Falls if it is anticipated that attendance for a particular program will be high.

Following an assessment of the areas identified in Objectives and Action Plans #3, the Committee is recommending the following:

a) Library Staff and Volunteer Work Areas – approx. 1,174 sq. ft., including:

700 sq. ft. public service counter, staff and volunteer work area, copier/printers

150 sq. ft. Chief Executive Officer (CEO) office

300 sq ft staffroom with kitchenette

24 sq. ft. book return room

The Library's Chief Executive Officer needs a separate space to work undisturbed in order to efficiently manage the library's business, some of which may be confidential and/or related to human resources. Staff should have a place where they can get away from the public and eat their meals during their breaks.

b) Meeting Room/Makers Space – approx. 650 sq. ft. with an accordion wall to divide into two rooms when needed

Some examples of the types of uses of this room include but are not limited to:

- a. Library Board and Committee meetings
- b. Sewing/Quilting Clubs
- c. Book Clubs
- d. Children's Story Time
- e. Technology lessons
- f. Lego activities
- g. Film activities: Saturday Matinees/National Film Board of Canada (NFB)
- h. Art Exploration Workshops
- i. Video/Computer Games Clubs

Meeting spaces should be available for book clubs, presentations, or simply for leisure. Meeting spaces could also be used as a collaborative creative space, available for use by various community groups and clubs.

- c) Study/Work Room- approx. 250 sq. ft. with an accordion wall to divide into two rooms when needed

This room would be a quiet place that allows for students to work on independent and/or collaborative projects, tutoring, or exam proctoring.

- d) Children's Area - approx. 350 sq. ft.

This space would have sufficient shelving/storage for a variety of childrens' library materials, a reading area, table and chairs, etc. The space for families with young children is well-lit, comfortable, and inviting. Adequate storage is essential for children's programming and seasonal activities, early literacy materials, and displays.

- e) Adult Area – approx. 580 sq. ft

This space would have sufficient shelving/storage for the adult fiction and non-fiction collections, space for the seed library, a quiet reading area, table and chairs, etc.

- f) Teen Section – approx. 320 sq. ft.

This space would have sufficient shelving/storage for the teen collection, a group seating area, table and chairs, etc. The teen space would be isolated to allow for some noise and social activity but is also highly visible so that the space can be monitored and well-supervised.

- h) Local History/Genealogy – approx. 350 sq. ft.

This space would have sufficient shelving/storage for the library's collection of local history and genealogical information, cabinets for photographs, documents, table and chairs.

- i) Computer Lab – approx. 300 sq. ft.

This space would accommodate the public access computers, spaced apart to allow for a reasonable amount of privacy and physical distancing.

- j) Non-assignable Space – approx. 995 sq. ft.

This includes space allocations for:

- a. Wall thicknesses
- b. All horizontal and vertical circulation paths in the building, such as elevator shafts, stairwells, corridors, HVAC,
- c. plumbing, wiring, etc.

- d. Building foyer and interior vestibules (e.g., at the entrance to a meeting room)
- e. User waiting areas adjacent to service desks (Circulation, Reference, children and teen desks)
- f. Washrooms and water fountains
- g. garbage, recycling
- h. Furnace/mechanical room and associated duct work
- i. Electrical/telecommunications room and associated conduits and cabling
- j. Fire and security systems (cameras, alarm panels, etc.)
- k. Fire hose closets and extinguishers
- l. Custodian's closet(s)/workshop, storage rooms, coat rooms and closets

The term "non-assignable space" encompasses those spaces necessary to support the operation of the library building but that cannot be directly used for library services. In the early stages of the concept design, it is a rule of thumb that 25% of the building will be devoted to non-assignable space.

A chart comparing the existing Library space with the proposed spaces described above can be found in Appendix A at the end of this document.

## **BUILDING CRITERIA AND DESIGN PRINCIPLES**

The Committee is recommending that the location of the Library:

- a) be centrally located within the Town of Burk's Falls;
- b) is easily visible to the public;
- c) has sufficient public and staff parking either on-site or nearby; and,
- d) the entrance/exit is well-lighted and visible from the street.

The following are some of the building design features that the Committee feels are important for consideration:

- a) floor loads must be capable of handling the existing collections as well as any collection growth;
- b) one public entrance/exit (not intended to address the need for fire/emergency exits);
- c) single level for most public access areas;
- d) all public spaces are fully accessible to patrons with disabilities;
- e) sight lines allow for staff to see all public areas of the library and for the public to be able to easily locate staff;
- f) all public and staff areas of the library should allow for the connection of computers, tablets, or mobile phones to the in-building (Wi-Fi) network (i.e. no dead zones);
- g) the Meeting Room/Makers Space and work/study areas should also be connected to the in-building network;

- h) there should be enough circuits and electrical outlets for present and future needs with surge protection available for electronic equipment; and,
- i) lighting, heating, ventilating and air conditioning systems should be modern and energy efficient.

## **CONCLUSION**

The Library is a place to inspire the pursuit of lifelong learning and to engage the imagination. The Board and staff take pride in creating a welcoming space for area residents and visitors.

Unfortunately, the current space constraints are limiting the materials, services and programs that can be offered. With the addition of large and small meeting spaces, an expansion of program space, and the creation of space for the staff to better provide public service, the Library will be a welcoming place for many years to come.

The proposal described above is intended to give the Board, library patrons, and the communities they serve a template for moving forward in the search for a new library building.

The Board stands ready to embark upon this important and exciting mission: seeking a new and revitalized space that will enhance the Library's ability to meet the current and future needs of its patrons.

## APPENDIX A – CURRENT VS. PROPOSED LIBRARY SPACE

<b>Space Description</b>	<b>Existing (sq. ft.)</b>	<b>Proposed* (sq. ft.)</b>
Public Service Counter	192	700
Management office	0	150
Staffroom	0	300
Book return room	0	24
Meeting Room/Maker Space	0	650
Study/Work area	0	250
Children's area	176	350
Adult Area	693	580
Teen section	60	320
Local history/genealogy	209	350
Computer lab	126	300
<b>TOTAL ASSIGNABLE SPACE</b>	<b>1456</b>	<b>3974</b>
Plus non-assignable space (25% )	364	994
<b>Total square footage**</b>	<b>1820</b>	<b>4968</b>

\*does **not** include any changes that may result from COVID-19 and the need to allow for physical distancing

\*\* numbers have been rounded and should be considered as “approximate”