



County of Brant Public Library Report

TO: County of Brant Public Library Board

FROM: Main Site Selection Sub-Committee

Marilyn Sewell, Fred Gladding and Jim Shivas

DATE: October 3, 2018

SUBJECT: Site Selection for the Main Branch of the County of Brant

PURPOSE: To provide a recommendation on the site of the main branch

RECOMMENDATION:

The Main Site Selection Sub-Committee recommends that a location within the redevelopment of the Syl Apps Community Centre area be chosen as the preferred site for the new main branch library in partnership with the County of Brant.

STRATEGIC PLAN GUIDANCE:

The County of Brant Public Library Strategic Plan 2017-2019 outlines strategic directions, many of which speak to the recommendation.

The strategic directions are:

1. A future-ready organization with an agile culture
2. Convenient patron-centred services and programs
3. A safe, welcoming and equitable system
4. Adaptive spaces for meeting diverse needs

5. Fresh spaces for the creation and incubation of new ideas
6. Increase effectiveness to meet growing and changing community needs
7. A library that is the place to be

These strategic directions were considered during the work of the sub-committee and mentioned at all public consultations.

BACKGROUND:

At the January 2018 meeting of the Board, the Main Site Selection Sub-Committee was created to perform the following work:

- Review the Consultant's Reports prepared and presented to the Board in 2016 and 2017,
- Design and execute a public consultation process, and
- Provide a recommendation to the Board

The sub-committee met monthly from January to October with the exception of July and August, however planning and consultation preparation was ongoing throughout the time.

Members reviewed the Consultant's Reports provided to the Board in preparation for the public consultation and for their own familiarity. The Paris Branch Library Facility Planning Study presented in month 2016 and the Library Site Selection Study Draft Report presented in November 2017 have served the sub-committee well and will continue to be valuable to this work going forward.

The sub-committee determined that three different public consultations would be conducted to discuss function (April), design (June) and location (September).

All sessions were promoted via the library's website and outdoor sign, in house via posters and flyers, via paid ads on Facebook and via Instagram and twitter. Press releases were also circulated with especially strong pick up for the first session in April.

Data from Facebook alone indicates that 4,234 people viewed the posts for all sessions and 596 people actively engaged, meaning either liking a post, adding a comment or sharing the post.

Consultation Phase 1:

Three public sessions were conducted in April 2018 to discuss the functions and services required for a main site library location into the future.

Over 45 citizens provided input in person and generally affirmed the findings of the Consultant's Report. There was agreement that the library of the future will be open and inspiring as well as being flexible in space and in purpose. Participants generally expressed an increase in their overall understanding about what the current library offers and what the library of the future could be in the community.

In addition, the sub-committee attempted to:

- Explain the need for a new main branch location
- Seek meaningful input from citizens
- Create an atmosphere of transparency and trust in the process

The public was made aware of the AGM of the Board on May 8th, 2018 which featured a presentation and discussion with Board members from the Niagara-on-the-lake library on their new library site selection process.

Consultation Phase 2:

Three sessions were planned in June 2018 to creatively explore the design features of a new facility. Less than 6 people volunteered to participate and the sub-committee determined not to proceed with these meetings now and seek out ways to obtain public input at another juncture of the overall process.

New developments to consider:

In May 2018, the County of Brant began its consultation on the "3 Indoor Recreation Facilities Business Plan". This plan outlined the ideas of redevelopment of the Syl Apps Community Centre area, redevelopment of the Brant Sports Complex and/or a new site for a gymnasium and other facilities.

Library and County staff met to discuss the possibility of a partnership in one of these sites. There was keen interest to work together. As well staff had discussions with the Grand River Conservation Authority and county staff to gain an initial understanding of the requirements of building on a flood plain.

The sub-committee determined that the process for Phase 3 would include information about all the sites described in the report, but that participants would be made aware of the new developments for partnership with the County of Brant.

After considerable debate and careful consideration, the sub-committee decided that the two most preferred sites under consideration would be within a redevelopment at the Syl Apps Community Centre or along Rest Acres Road – either in combination with the Brant Sports Complex or on development land.

Consultation Phase 3:

In September 2018, two sessions were conducted on the location of the library. Three sessions were planned but one was cancelled due to small numbers. There were 18 persons total in attendance and 5 letters were received. The sub-committee was surprised and disappointed that so few people registered to attend these sessions, as the location seemed to generate the most interest in general conversations with the public, and as well during the April sessions.

Details from The Site Selection Report were shared with the participants. Those sites were as follows:

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| Site A | Along Rest Acres Road |
| Site B | At the back of the Bawcutt Center |
| Site C | At the front of the Bawcutt Center |
| Site D | In the location of the Optimist Club at Syl Apps |
| Site E | In Penman's park along Willow Street |

Participants were told about the sub-committee's two choices and were asked to describe the pros and cons of the two most preferred sites under consideration, that being within a redevelopment at the Syl Apps Community Centre or along Rest Acres Road – either in combination with the Brant Sports Complex or on development land.

Participants provided the following range of comments on the pros and cons to both sites.

Site A – Rest Acres Road

Pros:

- Opportunity to build outside of the flood plain
- Opportunity to be in one of the primary areas of residential growth

- Opportunity of easier access for the rest of the county
- Opportunity for expansion if suitable land acquired
- Opportunity of savings by working with the County of Brant in a partnership

Cons:

- Cost of land will be considerable, if not already owned by the County of Brant
- Difficult for pedestrian traffic and safety issues in general
- Takes away infrastructure from the downtown core

Site D – Syl Apps Community Centre Redevelopment

Pros:

- Opportunity for public institutions to maintain a presence and generate activity in the downtown core
- Opportunity to creatively incorporate the view and proximity of the Grand River into the design of the facility
- Opportunity to maintain the ability to visit the library while conducting other downtown business
- Opportunity of savings by working with the County of Brant in a partnership
- Opportunity to create a community hub for a variety of recreation purposes, senior center, youth programs and others using the redeveloped Syl Apps Community Centre area

Cons:

- Additional costs to meet flood plain requirements and therefore the necessity for a 2-3 level building
- Multi-use facility could have parking challenges with the already heavy increase in downtown traffic

REPORT:

The sub-committee believes that the new main branch of the library should be located within a redeveloped Syl Apps Community Centre for the following reasons:

1. Paris is a growing place and could be described soon as three or more communities – north, south and downtown. A central location downtown provides more equity of access to all parts of the town.
2. Investing in community infrastructure such as a library will serve to strengthen the downtown core of Paris, and maintain the walkability of the location.

Participants mentioned how valuable it was to be able to conduct business or engage in retail activity while being able to use the services of the library.

3. Being a partner with the County of Brant would build a hub of activity on one site encompassing a wide and diverse range of demographics and interests.
4. Paris is a beautiful and unique town, and the sub-committee acknowledges that part of enjoying this landscape comes with the reality of building on a flood plain.
5. Building at this location would create an opportunity to take advantage of the beauty of the Grand River in the design and enhance the character of the area.
6. The community excitement that will be generated by this location could be advantageous to fund raising efforts and the overall acceptance by the community of the higher costs involved.

FINANCIAL CONSIDERATIONS:

While determining costs for the main branch is outside the mandate of this sub-committee, our research has determined that new library builds in Ontario cost around \$350 - \$400 per square foot. To meet wet flood plain requirements, it is estimated that the parts of the building (footings and ground floor) that would need to be built to these standards would cost approximately 50% more per square foot.

The ability to share physical space with a facility built by the County of Brant on this site would have the potential to reduce construction costs and maintenance going forward.

RESPECTFULLY SUBMITTED,

Marilyn Sewell – Chair

Fred Gladding and Jim Shivas – Members