

# MEAFORD PUBLIC LIBRARY NEW FACILITY BUSINESS CASE

May 2009

*Library Vision: To be a vital and vibrant hub in the community*

*Library Mission: To open doors to a world of information, education and recreation,  
thereby enhancing the economic, social and cultural vitality of our community*

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## BUSINESS CASE FOR NEW LIBRARY

### THE PROBLEM

The need for a new library in Meaford has been apparent for at least ten years. The main reasons are lack of accessibility, insufficient space to meet demand, and a building that has structural deficiencies when used as a library.

#### Not accessible

- Compliance with *Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act*
- Social equity – lack of accessibility means unable to provide the same level of service to all residents

#### Not enough space to meet demand

- Space deficit of up to 3,000 sq.ft. to serve today's population of 10,000. In the next ten to fifteen years, over 12,000 sq. ft. will be needed to serve a predicted population of 15,000 (many of them seniors), for a space deficit of 5,000 sq.ft.
- Inadequate space means
  - a collection that does not meet library standards
  - fewer than average computer stations, no space for a computer lab for, e.g. skills training
  - inability to meet demand for specialized programs, e.g. for children, teens and seniors
  - inability to meet growing demand for accessible community meeting space; turning away requests for employment workshops

#### Building deficient for Library use

- Load-bearing/structural limitations
- Electrical hazards due to outdated wiring; insufficient capacity for Library IT use
- Poor ventilation and climate control
- Hazardous working conditions

#### Library users support a new building

In a 2004 user survey, 85% agreed that the library needed a new or expanded facility, while 25% rated the building as poor. The most disliked aspects were the stairs, lack of space leading to crowding and cramped use, and having separate rooms.

#### Consequences

As a consequence of the problems with the library building:

- People with disabilities are restricted in the level of library service they can access
- Cramped floor space limits the size and accessibility of the collection (e.g. narrow aisles between shelves, books piled on top of shelves), the number of public workstations, and results in rooms used for multiple (often conflicting) functions (e.g. reading room used for wireless access and homework)
- Having the meeting room on the second floor without an elevator means turning away community groups whose members cannot access the room
- Health and safety concerns have turned away some potential users
- Dealing with ongoing maintenance crises diverts time and resources from managing library functions

## **REQUIREMENTS**

### **Projected demand**

It is anticipated that in the next 10-15 years the population of Meaford may be 15,000 people.

Current library trends indicate

- increasing use of technology—computers with access to the Internet, workstations for laptops, gaming—despite an increase in home computers
- changing role in the community from quiet place for information and reading to a social nexus, a safe public space that may include a cafeteria, art gallery, meeting rooms etc.
- separate teen area
- computer labs for training and e-learning

### **Space requirements**

The amount of space required for a library to meet Meaford's future needs is 12,000 sq.ft.

This is based on standard space requirements for different Library functions including the space required for wheelchair access within the Library. It has two components:

- Assignable space which is for direct Library functions;
- Non-assignable space which covers essential non-Library areas such as stairs, corridors and washrooms, often calculated as a percentage of assignable space.

### Future space needs for population of 15,000

Component	Service standard	No.	Space standard	Space requirement (sq.ft.)
Books*	37,000+2 per 1,000 over 9,999	47,500	10 vol./sq.ft.	4,750
User seating	5 per 1,000	75	30 sq.ft./seat	2,250
Staff	.47 FTE per 1,000 pop	7	175 sq.ft. per station	1,225
Periodicals	6.69 per 1,000	100	0.5 sq.ft./title	50
Audiovisual	Audio Visual, Non-print Minimum 2,500	2,500	10 items/sq.ft.	250
Programming space		30	25 sq.ft./seat	750
Public access computers	ARUPL guidelines	13	50 sq.ft./computer	650
Special use space such as display case and photocopier				190
Total assignable space				10,115
Non-assignable space		20% of assignable space		2,023
Required facility size				12,138

\* Based on 3 books per capita, the current ratio for the Meaford collection

### Location requirements

All potential sites should meet the following criteria:

- Size:
  - MUST accommodate 12,000 sq.ft. building
  - LIKE to have it on one storey
- Location:
  - MUST be close to downtown;
  - LIKE to have it in the downtown core
  - LIKE to integrate with public spaces
- Parking:
  - MUST have access to parking
  - LIKE to have dedicated parking
- Ownership
  - LIKE to have municipal ownership

- Timing:
  - MUST be available within next twelve months

### **New vs. retrofit**

The Library Board has a strong preference for a new building specifically designed to function as a library. The present facility was designed as a post office in 1935 with lower load-bearing capacity than required for library use. Engineering and occupational health and safety reports indicate continued water leakage and cracks, despite remediation efforts. Bringing the heating and cooling systems up to standard and strengthening the load-bearing capacity of the second floor requires major structural reinforcement. Installing an elevator so the second floor is accessible is expensive and will remove space from already cramped conditions. Expansion of the library is limited by the lack of available adjoining sites. Renovating the existing building is highly unlikely to be cost-effective and will not solve the problem of inadequate space.

## **SOLUTION OPTIONS**

The Library Board considered 26 municipal and several privately-owned sites in its search for a new location for the library and, after preliminary analysis, narrowed this down to a short list of three municipal and two private sites. After more detailed investigation and discussion with the CAO, planning department, developers and others, the Board selected two options: Harbour and Market Square. For the reasons above, it does not consider retrofitting the current building to be a viable option.

### **Option A: Harbour site**

#### ***Description***

The main harbour area covers approximately nine acres and is roughly bounded by Georgian Bay, Bridge Street, the Big Head River and Fuller Street. It is an older facility, and in the past has hosted a number of industries. The Harbour currently features two marinas, Coast Guard station, fish cleaning facility, Rotary pavilion and small concession stands with the remaining open areas covered in grass or gravel.

The development goal identified in the Meaford Harbour Strategic Master Plan is to establish the Harbour lands as a cornerstone of public open space and centre for community events. Libraries are specifically noted as a permitted use. A new library, with the Rotary pavilion, could be a focus for recreational and outdoor community activities in the park.

#### ***Risk Assessment***

Benefits:

- Municipal land designated as parkland with library as a permitted use
- Sufficient space for single storey
- Level grade with plenty of parking
- Potential for a spectacular building with waterfront views that can draw people to Meaford
- Potential for green projects e.g. geothermal heating

- As an anchor building of the Harbour Master Plan, it could be integrated with historic elements of Meaford, i.e. harbour, railway, as well as with trails, beach, parkland, outdoor skating rink and other outdoor recreational activities.
- Located in a park at the harbour offers potential to access a wider range of funds

#### Disadvantages

- Some soil contamination from early industrial use that requires clean up. However, initial indications are that contamination is not severe and may be managed in the course of excavating the foundations. The Municipality is working with consultants on this issue.
- Windy site; may be managed with architectural and landscape design
- Not in the downtown core. However, it is near the downtown core, close to harbour and tourist activities, no further for two of the local schools than the current location, and adjacent to a large residential neighbourhood
- Less than optimal pedestrian access from downtown; however access does exist and there is room for improvement in the future
- If the Harbour Master Plan does not proceed, the library risks being stranded. In this case, the library may not be part of a larger plan but if Meaford grows as expected, that area will be developed further and the library will still be central to the community.

#### Discussion:

The Harbour site offers great potential for a library building that will be a source of civic pride, an anchor in the town's infrastructure, and a place to delivery high quality library services. There are risks involved but these appear to be manageable (assuming clean-up is indeed straightforward) though assessment and remediation may delay the start date.

### **Option B: Market Square**

#### ***Description***

Market Square is in the centre of Meaford and bounded by Sykes Street (Highway 26) where much of the retail is located, Nelson Street, and Collingwood Street. Around the edge of the square are two heritage buildings - Meaford Hall for Arts and Culture (formerly Town Hall) and the old Firehall – and the former Armoury and now a hardware store. There is also a small building housing a band shell and thrift shop. The centre of the square is devoted to parking.

A library could replace the small band shell and thrift shop and provide an anchor to the square to compliment Meaford Hall. There is the potential for open park space/civic square between the two buildings, assuming alternative parking sites can be found.

#### ***Risk assessment***

##### Benefits:

- Good location with respect to centrality in the downtown core, pedestrian access, some parking, close to retail
- With Meaford Hall would form a civic square; close to Museum

- If integrated with municipal administration, may have operational efficiencies

Disadvantages:

- Removes needed town parking, limited parking for library use
- May need to be on two floors to accommodate parking needs with consequent elevator installation and maintenance expense
- If integrated with municipal administration would lose its distinctive character

Discussion:

Market Square meets many of the criteria for the location of a modern library, primarily that it is in the downtown area, easily accessible to pedestrians and close to retail. As a signature building close to other cultural institutions, it would enhance a “cultural block” and provide the opportunity for downtown revitalization. The major disadvantage is the removal of parking space which is used by shoppers, people attending events in Meaford Hall, and residents of apartments over the stores. This could be resolved by creating additional parking in other nearby locations.

### **ESTIMATED COSTS AND PROPOSED SOURCES OF FUNDS**

A preliminary estimate of costs is \$3.5 million, excluding land, landscaping or professional fees, based on \$275-300/sq.ft. The funds will be raised through a combination of federal and provincial grants, municipal contribution, and fundraising.

### **RECOMMENDATION**

That Council support a new library building and, since the library is a municipal asset on municipal land, that the municipality prepare a formal evaluation of the location of a new library for approval by Council.

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