

MEAFORD PUBLIC LIBRARY FACILITY FEASIBILITY STUDY

July 9, 2008

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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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Weaknesses of the present Library facility

The Library building's original design and size as a post office has resulted in numerous problems for today's Library and constrains its ability to offer the best possible service.

Lack of accessibility

- Does not meet current or pending provincial accessibility standards, e.g. no accessible washroom, no elevator to third floor meeting and genealogy rooms or to children's department in the basement.
- Lack of accessible facilities restricts library services for some residents and is inequitable; with an aging population in the future these barriers will affect more residents.
- In a 2004 user survey 83% said wheelchair accessibility was important or very important.

Health and safety

- Recurring mould in the basement.
- Electrical hazards with outdated wiring, e.g. light fixtures catch fire.
- Poor lighting in children's department.
- Poor ventilation and climate control.
- Hazardous working conditions.

Inadequate space for books, computers and other library services

- Library service standards are compromised due to inadequate space. For example, the book collection of 32,000 is fewer than the 38,000 recommended for a community the size of Meaford; the Library has seven public computer stations compared to an average of 12 for similar libraries.
- Has a space deficit of 1,500-3,000 sq.ft. to serve today's population of 10,000. In the future, with a predicted population of say 15,000 (many of them seniors), over 12,000 sq.ft. will be needed to serve the community.
- In the 2004 user survey 90% indicated space for expanding the collection was important or very important.

Inadequate community meeting space

- Unable to meet growing demand for accessible community meeting space.
- Space constraints limit expansion of the Library's role as a community hub, e.g. community and business resource centre, training lab, lifelong learning programs, job fair partnerships

Inadequate space for Library specialized programs

- Specialized programs and services for children, teens and seniors.
- Dedicated children and teen spaces.

Library as a community asset

Good value

- \$1.5 million – the value of Library services in 2007.
- \$250,000 – Library budget in 2007 for services from the Meaford Public Library (i.e. excluding Owen Sound contract).
- \$6 – the return on investment for every dollar of taxpayers' money spent on the Meaford Public Library.

More than books - a community centre

- Access to knowledge, information and leisure resources, in print and online.
- Wireless access to the Internet; users include tourists and seasonal residents.
- Programs that enhance quality of life, e.g. pre-school and adult literacy, education and learning assistance, exam invigilation, technology and information literacy, services to tourists, employment assistance, outreach to Meaford's nursing home.
- Contributor to Meaford's economy, as an employer and purchaser of local goods and services, in co-location with the retail sector (75% combine shopping with visits to the Library), and access to small business resources such as ServiceOntario kiosk.
- Community cohesion through partnerships with many local organizations.

Benefits to the community of moving to a new Library building

- Accessible to all residents and in compliance with provincial legislation.
- Safe and healthy environment for Library users and staff.
- Library services appropriate for a population the size of Meaford, now and in the future, which is good for residents, aligns with the Municipality's goal of high quality service, and helps the Library seek accreditation.
- Enhanced ability to function as a community hub and resource centre, e.g. expanded programming in literacy and lifelong learning, business resources, local information, meeting space and community partnerships.

INTRODUCTION

In early 2008, in response to the latest health and safety concerns related to the presence of mould in the Meaford Public Library, Council requested an internal feasibility study for a new building. This study has been conducted by the Library Board and staff in consultation with the interim CAO and Southern Ontario Library Service.

WEAKNESSES OF THE PRESENT LIBRARY FACILITY

Building design unsuitable for library purposes

Many problems with the use of the building as the Library stem from the fact it was not constructed to function as a library. The Library's Strategic Plan identifies some of the issues as follows.

The building was constructed in 1935 as a Post Office and, as was standard then, not accessible to people with physical challenges such as mobility or sensory impairments. The collections are now held on the main floor and [the children's collection] in the basement. The third floor, which used to be a rented apartment, holds staff and genealogy offices, a meeting room and light storage. The structure is sufficiently weak that no book stacks can be located on the third floor. Door way sizes on the first and basement levels do not make for easy access among rooms and do not meet current wheelchair access requirements. Nor do the washrooms meet those requirements.

One example of the problem with using a building designed as a post office is the safe load capacity for the floors. In its original usage a safe floor capacity of 100 psf would be required while current and previous Building Codes specify that a library should have a floor rating of 150 psf.¹

Four years ago one quarter of users rated the building as poor while 83% agreed or strongly agreed that the Library needed a new or expanded facility. The most disliked aspects of the building were:

- Stairs
- Lack of space, being crowded and cramped
- Separate rooms

Lack of accessibility restricts benefits for some residents - inequitable

While the Library has improved its accessibility by installing a ramp and automatic entrance, it is not fully accessible nor can it be without major renovation. Structural problems include lack of an accessible washroom and, without an elevator, there is no access to the children's department in the basement or to the meeting room and genealogy room on the second floor. In the 2004 survey 83% said wheelchair accessibility was important or very important. Provincial accessibility requirements, e.g. Ontario Building Code and standards currently being developed under the Ontarians with Disabilities Act 2005, are increasing.

¹ Meades Engineering Limited, Building Structure Inspection and Assessment Report 2003, *Meaford Public Library Strategic Plan 2006-2010*, Appendix E .

Structural condition is costly to maintain and potentially unhealthy

The condition of the building has been a concern since at least 2001, especially water seepage into the basement and the third floor as a result of cracks in the building foundation and deteriorating roof. The consequences of water seepage include damage to the interior walls, ceiling and carpet, creating an environment in which mould can flourish. Mould presents a potential health hazard to staff and library users and threatens the book collection, which is a key municipal and library asset.

Controlling the water seepage has been an ongoing and costly activity. Since 2002 over \$43,000 has been spent on the cost of repairs to the basement and to the roof. These repairs include installing ventilation, dehumidifying and air conditioning equipment, repairing and parging the foundation walls and repairing the roof. Regular health and safety inspections are conducted by professionals to ensure the mould remains within acceptable limits. Cracks in the interior plaster in the reference room on the main floor may indicate hidden deterioration.

An additional concern is the state of the wiring which is outdated and, if overloaded, potentially a fire hazard. Light fixtures have created fires on more than one occasion. Apart from safety, outdated wiring has hindered the installation of appropriate temperature and humidity controls, needed both for healthy staff and visitor working conditions and to protect the books.

Building, collection and services undersized for a community the size of Meaford

The 2004 needs assessment indicated that the present library building, which has 7,175 sq.ft. of library space, is less than the desired size for Meaford's current population. And this is without any future growth in the population. (See the following section on Library Space Requirements for more details.)

Insufficient space has a number of consequences, such as restricting the size of the collection and the number of computer workstations, and results in cramped conditions for both the community and staff.

The collection materials are crowded and lack of space limits expansion of the collection to reach and keep up with recommended standards. Four years ago 90% of users indicated that space for expanding the collection was important or very important. While the Library has improved its collection over the last few years to around 32,000 items (at the expense of other services), it still falls short of the recommended 38,000 items. To accommodate the existing collection requires allocating it a disproportionate amount of space at the expense of other services such as computer work stations, adequate seating or a dedicated reading room, and requires shelving higher than recommended for universal accessibility.

The Library also does not have enough public computer workstations for a library of its size, and no space to expand. For example, Meaford has seven public workstations compared to an average of 12 for eight local libraries serving populations of a similar size. The Library needs better hardware and software to enable it to act as a comprehensive gateway to the knowledge-based society.

Security and safety concerns

Having the Library in several rooms on three floors makes it difficult and inefficient for staff continuously to monitor and supervise the collection and Library use. While the Library has installed video monitors, with few staff it is a challenge to monitor them all the time. The Library does not have the resources to install security tags in the items to be borrowed and security gates at the doorways.

Low security results in theft and potential safety threats to staff working alone on one floor. Around 200 books are lost each year, some due to theft, as are videos, newspapers and occasionally rare books such as a classical atlas.

Lack of dedicated parking

While the location of the Library is good for those who can walk to it, the lack of dedicated parking is a barrier for some potential users. The parking is on the street, and staff has three parking spots behind the building.

THE LIBRARY AS A COMMUNITY ASSET

Good value and return on investment

The Library provides excellent value:

- If the residents of Meaford had to buy all the services they used at the Meaford Public Library in 2007 (books borrowed, computers used, assistance received, programs attended etc.), they would have paid over **\$1.5 million** at market prices. The Library provided these services on a budget of about \$250,000 (excludes the Owen Sound contract).
- In other words, for every one dollar of taxpayers' money spent on the Meaford Public Library, the community receives over \$6 in benefits.

Well-used for a wide range of activities

- In 2007, an average of 127 people per day used the Library (total 31,826) and 26 people per day used its computers (total 6,535). This excludes those who bring their own laptop and use the wireless facility, often for up to two hours at a time.
- Most popular service relates to the use of leisure time, whether it is for reading (fiction or non-fiction, in print, large print or audio), listening to music or watching movies.
- Other services include literacy and numeracy programs for pre-schoolers, education and learning assistance for teens, lifelong learning opportunities, services to tourists, a location for weekly employment service visits by the YMCA and quarterly job fairs, community meeting place, outreach to Meaford's schools and nursing home.

Downtown location enhances access, the environment and retail activity

The location of the Library in the downtown core is a strength. Easy access enables many users to walk or cycle to the Library, a benefit particularly to active seniors, grandparents/parents-and-tots, and children. This enables non-drivers to use the Library, facilitates active healthy living and, by reducing traffic, benefits the environment

Economically, co-location with the retail area enables residents to combine shopping and banking with using the Library.

- In the Library's 2004 needs assessment, three quarters of Library users said they combined their visit to the Library with shopping; over half also combined their visit to the Library with banking and post office.
- In 2007, over 600 people per week visited the Library. A 1999 user survey of Exeter's public library found that average expenditures in the local retail sector attributed to library users

was \$50². Assuming that 75% of library visitors also go shopping and that the Exeter findings apply to Meaford, then the Library contributes \$22,500 to the Meaford's retail sector each week.

- There is anecdotal evidence from other libraries that a drop in retail activity can result when the library moves away from the downtown core.

FACTORS CONTRIBUTING TO FUTURE SPACE NEEDS

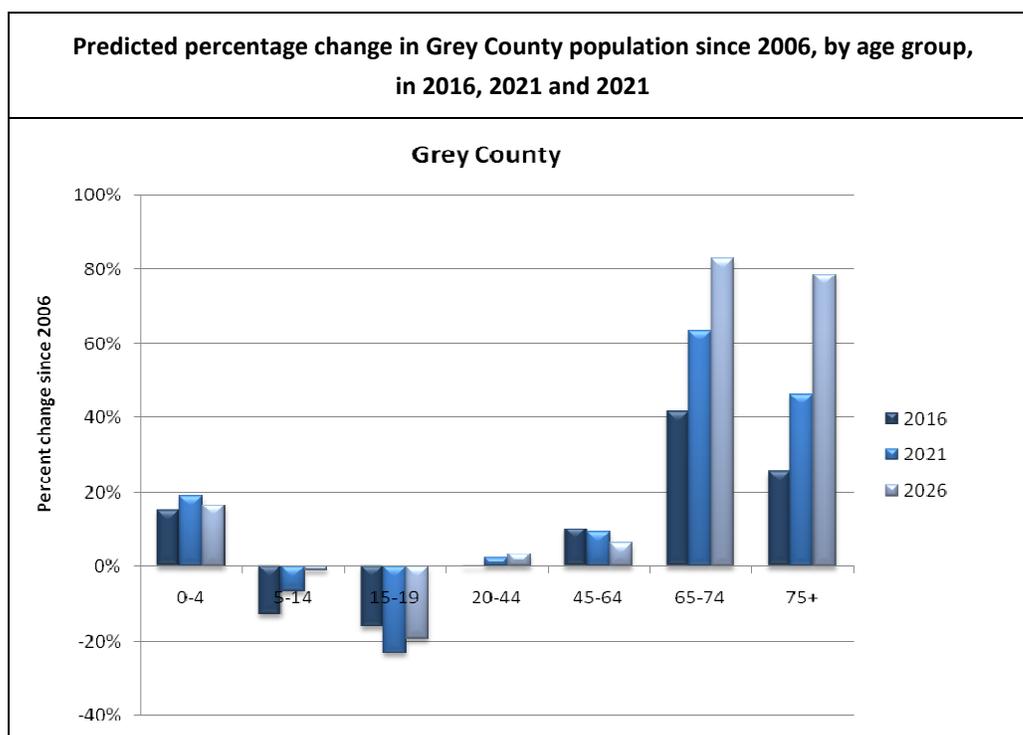
Key factors in determining future space needs include demographics, usage trends, and the Library's role in the community. Specifically:

- Rapid population growth in the near future will increase demand for library services.
- Relatively large and growing number of seniors will increase demand for improved accessibility as well as an expanded collection for leisure reading, active programming, and lifelong learning opportunities.
- Increase in pre-schoolers will increase demand for early literacy and numeracy programs, while dedicated teen space is important to teenagers using the Library after school.
- Increased use of information technology and public access computers are needed to access and keep pace with the online world of knowledge.
- Evolving role of a library as a community centre.

Demographic growth

- Depending on the growth scenario, Meaford's population will increase from 11,000 in 2006 to between 12,500 and 17,000 in 2021. This represents an additional 100 to 400 people every year (where 100 per year is already being exceeded) or an increase of between 14% and 55%. As a middle-of-the-road working estimate, say a population of 15,000 in 2021.
- Most of the growth will occur in urban Meaford.
- At present the largest age group in Meaford is the boomers aged 45-64 (32%) followed by 20-44 year olds (26%), seniors (20%), children 5-19 yrs (18%) and preschoolers (4%).
- As the boomers reach retirement age, there will be a dramatic increase in the number of seniors; by 2021 there will be 50% more seniors than at present and they will account for about 30% of the population (assuming Meaford echoes Grey County's age changes).
- There will also be an increase in the number of preschoolers.

² Dunbar, R . Exeter's Library Contributes to its Economy. *ACCESS*, Winter 1999/Spring 2000 (Ontario Library Association).



To meet the needs of this rapidly growing population, the collection per capita needs at least to keep pace with, and ideally improve on, current levels of service. Based on the 2005 provincial library statistics, Meaford's collection size ranks in the lowest of four categories of service levels. A larger collection to achieve a higher standard of service and appropriate for the size of the current and future community requires a larger space.

To meet the needs of the expanding number of seniors, the Library also needs the meeting space to develop programs and services (such as opportunities for lifelong learning) that will respond to

- the surge of younger more active seniors who want a full range of community services
- the requirements of the growing number of frail elderly seniors.

Considering that one-third of Canadians over age 65 reports having a mobility-related disability rising to over half of those over 75³, public library space and programs need to be accessible. An age-friendly library includes ramps and automatic doors, accessible washrooms, and a layout whose design and space enables a wheelchair to manoeuvre between and around shelving and desks. If the public space is not on one floor, an accessible elevator is required. These features tend to require more horizontal rather than vertical space.

Given the importance of pre-school literacy as a key to future success, the projected increase in preschoolers also means a need for expanded collection and space for programs. At the same time, while the number of school aged children is not expected to grow, there still a significant number of them at a crucial point in their education and the Library must not forget their needs, especially if

³ Statistics Canada, *Participation and Activity Limitation Survey 2006*.

slowing enrolment results in cuts to school resources, i.e. preschool programming at the library should not be at the expense of services to teens.

Usage trends

Two key trends in library use are the popularity of leisure reading and the growth in the use of computer workstations.

A 2004 needs assessment of the Library found that reading for leisure was the most popular activity with 83% of Library users borrowing fiction. This pattern is unlikely to change. Across Canada there has been little change in reading habits over the last 15 years and, contrary to popular belief, the Internet has had little effect on reading books for pleasure though it has had a negative impact on reading magazines and newspapers⁴. If anything the demand for leisure reading may increase at a faster rate than demographics; not only do women tend to read more than men but they also tend to live longer so there will be more women than men amongst older seniors.

To meet the needs of these readers the Library needs the space for an expanded collection as well as places to browse and to read. The dense shelving and crowded reading room are not conducive these activities.

Workstation use has risen dramatically. Across Ontario public use of computers increased 63% between 2000 and 2005, significantly higher than the 4% increase in circulation. Over the same period expenditure on materials, which include electronic resources, increased by 25%.⁵

To respond to demand for access to information requires more workstations which, in turn, requires more space. Guidelines indicate that each workstation needs space of 50 sq.ft.

Role in the community

The Library is more than a repository of books; it also functions as a community hub and resource centre. It will continue to serve all age groups, especially seniors, and including seasonal visitors during the summer months when the cottagers and tourists also use the Library. Within its resources, it will continue to offer quality-of-life programs such as:

- Literacy and numeracy programs for preschoolers, a critical resource that promote school readiness.
- Education and learning assistance such as specialized teen programs and materials (teen circulation has quadrupled over the last five years), access to computers and the Internet for homework, and invigilation of exams for online courses from universities and colleges such as Athabasca University.
- Lifelong learning opportunities by providing resources for the development of new skills and pursuits.
- Technology and information literacy (important for both school and employment) is enhanced through access to, and assistance with computers and the Internet, especially for those with limited access at home.
- Services to tourists such as access to email (also important for members of the Base), information resource centre on e.g. local events, courses and schooling, realtors etc., especially during the summer months and at times when the Chamber is closed.

⁴ *The Book Retail Sector in Canada*. Report by Turner Riggs, commissioned by Heritage Canada, September 2007

⁵ Gwen Wheeler, Southern Ontario Library Services, based on Ministry of Culture statistics

- An affordable meeting place for community groups and activities such as author readings, book club, knitting club.
- Community partnerships such as the YMCA weekly employment visits or Blue Mountain Resort job fairs, and other similar resources could be enhanced with programming space.

Meaford Public Library – Selected Community Partners	
Meaford Chamber of Commerce	YMCA – Employment Owen Sound
Meaford Hall Arts and Cultural Centre	YMCA – Crisis Housing
Meaford Museum	Blue Mountain Resort
Meaford schools	Owen Sound Literacy (Program
Meaford long term care facility	My Friends House (social service)
Meaford Express	Public Health Grey Bruce Health Unit
Military Family Resource Centre Meaford	

To support its role as a community hub and resource centre, however, the Meaford Library needs more programming and meeting space both now and in the future. There is no dedicated space for teens or for quiet reading. The growing number of seniors means more demand for programs to suit their needs, which requires more accessible space. A specially equipped meeting room for hire would be used for computer training, meetings or presentations by local business and an expanded resource centre would benefit residents, business and tourists.

LIBRARY SPACE REQUIREMENTS

There are two methods for calculating space requirements:

- Per capita basis. With the increasing use of computers and information technology in libraries today, library planners are recommending 1 sq.ft. per capita as the amount of space required for a public library.
- Functional basis: Based on standard space requirements for different Library functions including the space required for wheelchair access within the Library; 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.

Current space needs

Current space requirements assume a 2006 population of 11,000. The Library's present facility has a total of 7,175 sq.ft.

- Per capita basis: Total of 11,000 sq.ft. required, for a space deficit of 3,825 sq.ft.
- Functional basis: 6,247 sq.ft. of assignable space required, for a space deficit of assignable space of 1,127 sq.ft. (excludes space for stairs, washrooms etc.)

Current functional space needs

Component	No.	Standard	Space requirement (sq.ft.)	Current space (sq.ft.)
Books	35,974	10 vol./sq.ft.	3,597	
User seating	17	30 sq.ft./seat	510	
Staff	4	175 sq.ft. per station	700	
Periodicals	64	0.5 sq.ft./title	32	
Audiovisual	2066	10 items/sq.ft.	206	
Programming space	32*	25 sq.ft./seat	802	
Public access computers	8	50 sq.ft./computer	400	
Total assignable space			6,247	5,120

* Comprises 3 distinct areas

Future space needs

As a planning basis, assume a population of 15,000 in ten to fifteen years.

- Per capita basis: 15,000 sq.ft., or twice the size of the present building
- Functional basis: 12,138 sq.ft., almost 5,000 sq.ft. more than the present building

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

Component	Service standard	No.	Space standard	Space requirement (sq.ft.)
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

OPTIONS FOR LIBRARY SERVICES

Location

The best location for a library is near a busy downtown intersection in a healthy shopping area or centre, and near (if not on) the community's major pedestrian and vehicular traffic routes. Consider that:

- growth in Meaford will be concentrated in urban Meaford, following provincial policy;
- many people (40%) walk to the Library;
- three-quarters combine their visit with shopping and over half combine it with banking; and
- location on a major traffic artery increases the library's visibility so people will use the library more – "if people see it, they will use it".

The Library will be used by more citizens than most other buildings in town – over 600 people per week at present. Libraries are used by children, students, business people, do-it-yourselfers, artists, writers, taxpayers, people learning new skills, professionals updating their knowledge, and tourists. The Library must be in a location where it can be constantly visible and accessible to all of these people. Since there is no local public transit, this includes accommodating patrons' cars.

A location in urban Meaford within walking distance of shops and banking would be of greatest benefit to Meaford's residents as well as the "green" option. This is also necessary if the Municipality chooses to make a new library building an anchor to new development.

Single or multiple service points

Library guidelines indicate that no one should have to drive more than 30 minutes to reach a library. Almost all, if not all, of Meaford's residents fall within this guideline under normal driving conditions.

At the time of amalgamation, to help serve residents in former Sydenham, the Library prepared a proposal to open a branch in west Meaford. The cost was estimated to be \$60,000-\$80,000 per year. This proposal was not accepted by Council at that time but the concept of a branch library could be reconsidered as a short-term replacement for the Owen Sound contract.

OPTIONS FOR A NEW LIBRARY FACILITY

Option 1: Construct a new building

The gold standard for a new library would be to construct a building that was functionally designed to be a library. This enables it to have a safe, efficient, productive and user-friendly layout and means the Library has the capability to meet the specific needs and anticipated growth of this community. It would be an anchor building in attracting downtown development and a tourist destination.

A new building also provides an opportunity to incorporate green design into the facility – the new Collingwood Library is designed to be a LEED building. A green building could have benefits such as:

- a healthy building for both staff and the public;
- lower operating costs (energy, water, maintenance, e.g. south facing windows designed to provide shade in the summer and solar gain in the winter, reduced demands on local utilities;
- locally sourced materials and trades wherever possible, reducing greenhouse gases as well as benefiting the local economy

Municipally owned land that could be considered as a potential site for a new library includes:

- McCarroll Park near the Museum
- The Midas Mart location at Sykes and Collingwood near Meaford Hall
- Harbour lands

Given the need for accessibility, a new building should either be on one floor or have an elevator. Having library resources on a single floor is more secure, has reduced maintenance costs and promotes efficiency.

Advantages of a new building:

- Enables the Library to maximize its potential to contribute to the quality of life of Meaford's residents and the economic development of the municipality.
- Accommodates future growth and complies with the need for accessible public spaces.
- Demonstrates a proactive rather than reactive approach to services and promotes high quality services, consistent with the Municipality's vision.
- Could be a demonstration "green" building.
- Frees the present building for other municipal use or for sale.
- One of the Municipality's long-term assets.

Disadvantages of a new building:

- Requires significant capital funding, both construction and land costs.
- Lengthy development time, at least several years and sometimes as long as ten years.

Option 2: Move to another building and renovate

A second option is to move into another larger building and renovate it to meet library standards. The existing building would need to have, or have the potential to have, sufficient space, be structurally

sound enough to house a library, be accessible, and have appropriate climate controls. Uncertainties include unknown structural problems that may arise during renovation.

Potential options for the location of another building include an office building at 296 Cook Street or in a future shopping mall.

- The property at 296 Cook Street offers 14,400 sq.ft., much of which is accessible, as well as parking space. While not in close proximity to retail, it is within the BIA and near a school. This office building is being offered for sale at \$975,000 or for lease at \$3.50/sq.ft.; taxes and insurance are currently \$1.50 per sq.ft. per year.
- A future shopping mall is likely to be located at the edge of town. The landlord may sometimes contribute to construction/renovation costs; lease rates typically range from \$40 to \$70 per sq.ft., depending on the quality of the mall.

Financially this option could be achieved by (a) purchase, (b) lease, or (c) lease to purchase.

a) Purchase

Advantages:

- Could accommodate future growth and compliance with accessibility requirements.
- Could be in place sooner than constructing a new building.
- Frees the present building for other municipal use or for sale.
- Maintains the Library building as a municipally-owned asset.

Disadvantages:

- With purchase costs as well as renovation costs, could be more expensive than Option 1.
- Unknown hidden costs once renovation begins.
- May be less suitable than a building specifically designed as a library.
- Harder to incorporate green benefits.

b) Lease

Advantages:

- No (or at least less) capital funding required.
- Could accommodate future growth and compliance with accessibility requirements.
- If in an existing building, could be in place sooner than constructing a new building.
- If in a shopping mall, likely to be on one floor and enable visitors to do some shopping at the same time.
- Frees the present building for other municipal use or for sale.

Disadvantages:

- Library expenditures on lease payments do not build up a municipal asset.
- Higher annual operating costs
- Improvements remain the property of the landlord

- Any potential shopping mall is likely to be on the edge of urban Meaford and less “walkable”, further from banks.

c) Lease to purchase

Similar to Option 2b) but with the advantage that the Municipality will eventually own the building.

CONCLUSIONS

The Library is a significant community asset and provides great value to the residents of Meaford. The present building, however, is a constraint: it is not fully accessible, presents health and safety hazards with ongoing remedial costs, and is undersized for a community the size of Meaford.

Moving to a new and larger facilitate would have the following benefits:

- Accessible to all residents, which will become an even more important factor with the increasing number of seniors, and in compliance with provincial legislation.
- A safe and healthy environment for Library users and staff.
- Library services would be appropriate for a population the size of Meaford, now and in the future, which is good for residents, aligns with the Municipality’s goal of high quality service, and helps the Library seek accreditation.
- Ability to function as a community hub and resource centre would be enhanced, e.g. expanded programming in literacy, lifelong learning, business resources, community information, community partnerships.

The Library’s vision is ***to be a vital and vibrant hub in the community***. A new building would enable it to continue working towards this vision. It would enhance its ability ***“to open doors to a world of information, education and recreation, thereby enhancing the economic, social and cultural vitality of our community.”*** And, most importantly, it will demonstrate that the Municipality and Library are proactive in responding to the future needs of the residents of Meaford.

“There are city leaders who have decided that libraries aren’t that important anymore, not necessary in the age of the internet. And if libraries were only about information, perhaps they’d be right. But libraries are about much more than that. They’re about community. They’re safe places for children, where trustworthy professionals take kids’ needs and interests seriously. They’re gathering places for adults. They’re the place where communities store their history. There are as many reasons for going to the library as there are library users.”

Libraries and the Revitalization of Downtown, Marylaine Block (2002)

