

Report to / Rapport au:

**Ottawa Public Library Board
Conseil d'administration de la Bibliothèque publique d'Ottawa**

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Submitted by / Soumis par:

Danielle McDonald, Chief Executive Officer / Directrice générale

Contact Person / Personne ressource:

*Anna Basile, Division Manager, Corporate Services / Directrice, Services
organisationnels*

(613) 580-2424 x32335, Anna.Basile@BiblioOttawaLibrary.ca

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SUBJECT: Library services in the Carlington community

OBJET: Services de bibliothèque dans la communauté de Carlington

REPORT RECOMMENDATION

That the Ottawa Public Library Board approve the exploration of library services in the Carlington community, and direct staff to report back by Q3 2021, as further described in this report.

RECOMMANDATION DU RAPPORT

Que le Conseil d'administration de la Bibliothèque publique d'Ottawa approuve l'analyse des services de bibliothèque au sein de la communauté de Carlington, et demande au personnel d'en soumettre un bilan d'ici le troisième trimestre 2021, tel que décrit plus en détail dans le présent rapport.

BACKGROUND

As per the *Public Libraries Act* (PLA) Section 19 (1)(a), a Board may "...acquire land required for its purposes by purchase, lease ..." Furthermore, Ottawa Public Library (OPL) Board Policy #002-OPL (Delegation of Authority), item #26, stipulates the Board's authority to approve sites for new branches, buildings, bookmobile stops, or kiosk

services, and item #4 delegates to the CEO single or multi-year leases with a total expenditure of less than \$500,000.

As part of the 2020 operating and capital budget process (report OPLB-2019-1102), the OPL Board approved funding for the development of a Facilities Master Plan (FMP) in order to ensure OPL can address both public and staff facility needs and adapt to challenges introduced primarily by growth. The FMP will also serve to benefit in the development of a clear facilities mandate, consistent design, fit-up, and functional standards, and fiscal planning. The scope of work to be included in the FMP includes the development of facilities parameters, a gap analysis of current services, a growth study regarding future needs, the identification of detailed facilities standards, and asset management assessment and planning. In addition, staff advised of an initiative to develop a fiscal framework that will identify parameters and guidelines for prudent financial management and planning for facilities development.

During the deliberation of the 2020 budget, Trustee Brockington (Councillor, River Ward) indicated a desire to explore library services within the Alexander Community Centre (ACC). At that meeting staff committed to a high-level analysis of library services, referring to the FMP process, and indicated that staff will work with City counterparts to explore opportunities, and if feasible, a report will be brought back to the Board.

The purpose of this report is to secure Board approval to explore the provision of library services to the Carlington community comprised of highly marginalized populations. Services to be explored include physical services driven by new technologies, as well as costs related to fit up and occupancy.

DISCUSSION

Carlington community is bounded by Carling Avenue to the north, Kingston Avenue and Caldwell Avenue to the south, Fisher Avenue to the east, and Maitland to the west.¹ The community, while connected to neighbouring communities to the West and South, is relatively isolated from communities to the North and the East as a result of both

¹ <https://www.neighbourhoodstudy.ca/18carlington/>

human- and natural-made barriers (i.e. Highway 417 overpass, the Central Experimental Farm, and the Rideau Canal).

Identified in the top three of Ottawa's most at-risk neighbourhoods, Carlington is a priority area with a Community Development Framework (CDF) aimed at growing strong neighbourhoods. Data from the Ottawa Neighbourhood Study (ONS) shows that Carlington has a community population of approximately 10,500. In addition,

- The median income is \$44K (compared with \$74K in Ottawa overall);
- 20% of the community population is children and youth (under 18 years of age)²;
- 10% of the community population are individuals aged 65 and older; and,
- There is a high population of racialized individuals (33%).

The closest OPL branch to the community is Rosemount branch (2.9kms) followed by Emerald Plaza (3.7kms), and Carlingwood (4.5kms). In terms of library usage, 18.63% of residents in Carlington community are active library cardholders, very much aligned with OPL's overall cardholder figure of 21.59%. Of those cardholders living in Carlington, more than 25% identify Emerald Plaza as their home branch, and another approximately 25% identify Carlingwood. The remaining customers identified other locations such as Rosemount, Main, and Nepean CentrepoinTE, with 3.5% identifying the Bookmobile as their "home branch". There are two permanent bookmobile stops, "Caldwell" (est. 1989) and "Carlington" (est. 2017), with an annual circulation of more than 4,300. Combined, the results rank the neighbourhood #4 for bookmobile services (based on 2019 data). Year-over-year circulation for these two stops is consistent, with a steady, loyal community base. OPL's presence in the Carlington neighbourhood goes beyond providing library materials, and has incorporated a community development approach for the last few years. Staff have worked with various organisations in Carlingwood to build collaborative relationships to improve social outcomes in the community. Most recently, staff worked with Carlington Community Health Centre, Caldwell Family Centre, City of Ottawa Human Needs Task Force to provide both chromebooks and WiFi hotspots to support digital inclusion.

In May 2020, the City of Ottawa released the Growth Management Strategy, which calls for more than half of the new population increase to year 2046 to take place in existing

² Data for the children and youth figure was calculated using information from ENVISION5 from Environics Analytics.

neighbourhoods, with more than 200,000 residents expected to move into existing communities, mostly inside the Greenbelt. To that end, and as part of the Facilities Master Plan, OPL will be analyzing its existing urban branches in terms of level of usage and planning for expansions of urban branches or identifying locations for new urban branches.

While not in Carlington directly, there are planned developments in neighbourhoods adjacent to the Carlington community, that would see a minimum population increase of more than 3,500 over the next 10 years. These include development of the sites of the current Westgate Mall and the former Travelodge Hotel, as well as other lands between Merivale Road and Kirkwood Avenue along Carling Ave. In addition, there are planned:

- future developments including the Central Park and Civic Hospital areas.

In the spring of 2020, the City's Recreation, Culture, and Facilities Services (RCFS) team undertook a community consultation process to obtain input on the revitalization of the Alexander Community Centre (ACC) in the heart of the community. The ACC is a 9,065 square foot complex that includes multi-purposes rooms and a gymnasium, providing various programming and other services. The facility is undergoing revitalization that includes an expanded gymnasium. As per the staff commitment in 2019, OPL participated in the needs assessment.

More than 360 individuals responded to the survey, with most representing more than one person from a household or community group. Of the respondents, 284 indicated that they currently use OPL services at other locations, and 283 respondents indicated that a library in the community is important to them. Furthermore, 299 respondents indicated that having library services in the ACC would increase their use of OPL. Some respondents acknowledged that there are several locations close by, but the ability to pick up holds closer to home is a preferred service.

When asked specifically about what other facilities they would like to see, many respondents identified a library, or library-related services such as social / community spaces, computer use, access to WiFi / printers / scanners, and both adult and

children's programming. Specifically, those who indicated a library is an important consideration to the community centre indicated the key library services are³:

- Ability to borrow materials (271)
- Children's programs (285)
- WiFi (264)
- Adult programs (235)
- Computers (218)
- Study and work space (200)

Based on the results of the survey, the RCFS team has offered OPL the lease of space as part of a proposed retrofit of a community facility. The available space is approximately 2,400 square feet. A feasibility study and design work for the facility is set to take place in 2021. This presents an opportunity for OPL that has the potential for many positive benefits. The long-term impacts, should future plans be approved, include discontinuing bookmobile stops in the community, which would result in additional stop times available for other areas of the City in need of access to service. In addition, staff expect OPL's presence in the community will be greater, increasing access for some of the City's marginalized populations, and resulting in an increase to OPL's active cardholder base.

Staff recommend that planning funds be used to explore the provision of library services to this community specifically driven by new technologies, as well as confirmation of associated costs related to facility fit up and occupancy. New technologies to be explored include self-check collections such as Radio Frequency Identification (RFID) enabled smart shelves.

If approved, staff will report back to the Board on the results and any subsequent next steps or recommendations by Q3 2021.

CONSULTATION

Consultations included the local ward Councillor (R. Brockington), staff at the City of Ottawa's Recreation, Culture, and Facilities Services (RCFS) department, members of the OPL Board Ad-Hoc Committee on Finance and Facilities (Trustees Begg and

³ The number in parentheses following each item denotes the number of respondents that selected "Very Important" or "Important."

Higdon), as well as Chair Luloff and Vice-Chair Fisher. In addition, RCFS employees conducted community consultations in early 2020, with more than 280 respondents commenting positively on the desire to have library services in the Alexander Community Centre, as noted earlier in the report.

LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

There are no legal implications associated with this report.

RISK MANAGEMENT IMPLICATIONS

Risks are as identified in the report. The need for a branch in this community is expected to be identified via the needs and gap assessment being conducted as part of the Facilities Master Plan (FMP). However, there is potential risk that the data is not aligned. This risk has been mitigated via staff's recommendation that funding for 2021 be limited to planning, including the exploration of service delivery, with a full decision to come to the Board as part of the FMP and subsequently the 2022 budget process, as applicable. Funding the study of Library service needs in the Carlington community informs decision-making and may result in the capitalization of an opportunity to effectively re-utilize portions of a City facility while increasing accessibility to Library services.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

Staff have included \$200,000 for planning funds in the 2021 draft operating and capital budget, tabled in November 2020 and for consideration at the meeting of the Board in December.

ACCESSIBILITY IMPACTS

There are no immediate accessibility impacts associated with this report.

TECHNOLOGY IMPLICATIONS

There are no immediate technology implications associated with this report.

BOARD PRIORITIES

The recommendations in this report align with the Board's strategic priority to remove barriers to access, in the overall direction of improving the library experience for customers.

DISPOSITION

If approved, staff will include funding for the planning stage in the 2021 operating and capital budget for consideration by the Board in December 2020.