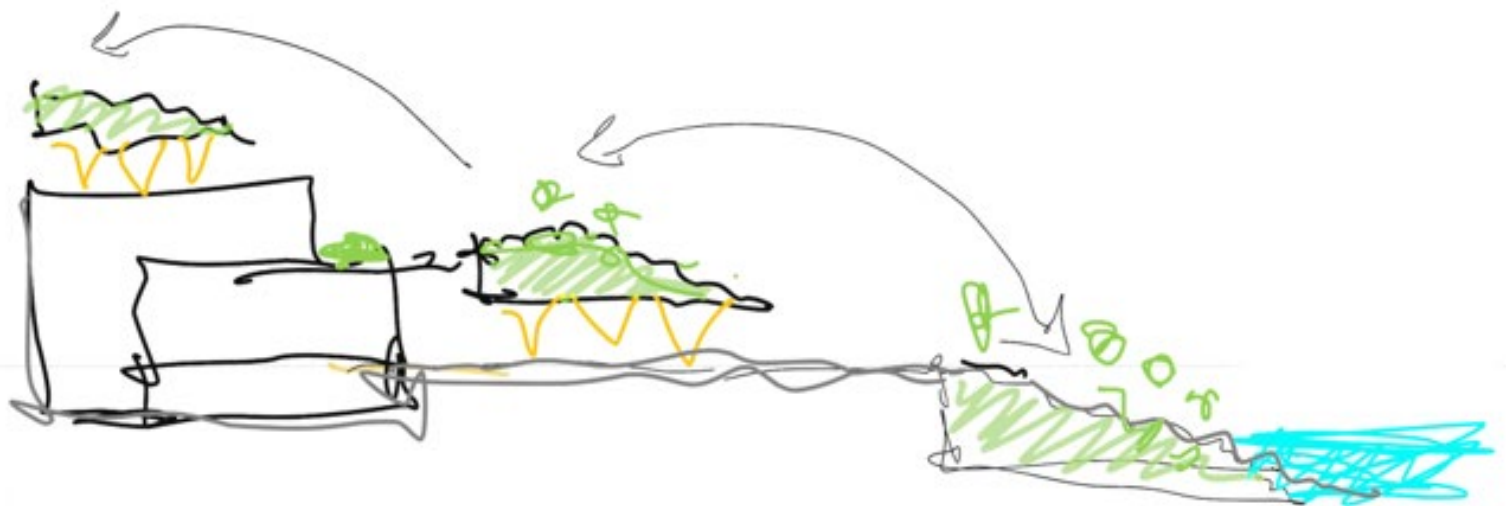


Oakville Public Library New Central Branch

Engagement Summary Report

November 12, 2024



Oakville
Public
Library



OAKVILLE

1. Honouring the Land and Territory

Oakville, as we know it today, is rich in the history and modern traditions of many First Nations. From the lands of the Anishinaabe, to the Attawandaron and Haudenosaunee, these lands surrounding the Great Lakes are steeped in First Nations history. As we gather today on the sacred lands of Treaties 14 and 22, we are in solidarity with Indigenous brothers and sisters to honour and respect Mother Earth, the original nations of the trees and plants, the four legged, the flyers, the finned and the crawlers as the original stewards of Mother Earth.

We acknowledge and give gratitude to the waters as being life and being sacred and to the carriers of those water teachings, the females. We acknowledge and give gratitude for the wisdom of the Grandfathers and the four winds that carry the spirits of our ancestors that walked this land before us.

The Town of Oakville is located on the Treaty Lands and Territory of the Mississaugas of the Credit. We acknowledge and thank the Mississaugas of the Credit First Nation, the Treaty holders, for being stewards of this traditional territory.

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3D model of the site

3. Overview

1.1 About the Project

Oakville Public Library's (OPL) New Central Branch is a visionary project set to redefine the Oakville community's cultural and learning landscape. A step of the Town of Oakville's long term Downtown Cultural Hub plans, OPL's New Central Branch will be nestled in the heart of Old Oakville.

OPL has been at the forefront of community service and engagement, offering a sanctuary of knowledge and a hub of community activities. A New Central Branch is fundamental to delivering on OPL's vision to enrich lives through community connections, engagement and inclusivity, and a critical piece of OPL's long-term plan to address Oakville's growth and increased service demands.

OPL envisions a New Central Branch that will be infused with the spirit of the community and will be a source of inspiration and pride for those who call Oakville home. The New Central Branch will enhance library services to meet the needs of the community now and into the future, create critical social infrastructure, generate positive economic impact, and stimulate downtown revitalization.

OPL is also deeply committed to furthering Truth and Reconciliation at a community level. Having a space that reflects the Indigenous history of Oakville is key to fulfilling OPL's role as connectors for Oakville residents to learn about the many Indigenous peoples who once (and still) called this land home.

1.2 Purpose of the Engagement Summary Report

Given OPL's mandate and the role of Central Branch in the community, the journey to build New Central Branch must engage all of Oakville using creative and interactive methods to establish the vision and programming needs for this important community space. Public, Indigenous and stakeholder engagement is foundational to the exercise of building a library that reflects and belongs to the entire community.

This Engagement Summary Report provides an overview of the engagement activities that were undertaken in Phase 1, documents the input we received from the people who generously gave their time and ideas through the engagement process, and distills key considerations for the project team as the Central Branch project moves forward.



Children's Engagement Session

1.3 Overview of Engagement Activities

The engagement process was designed to engage library customers and non-customers of all ages and backgrounds from across Oakville. Library users speak from experience about what they love about libraries in general and the current Central Branch in particular and their aspirations for the new Central Branch. Equally important is the perspective of people who do not currently use the library, as it helps the team to understand the barriers they face and how a New Central Branch might be an accessible and inclusive place for all.

Engagement activities undertaken in Phase 1 included the following:

Public engagement

- Online survey
- Open house
- Heritage to Horizon Panel

Stakeholder and community engagement

- OPL staff
- Donors
- Community organizations
- Youth

Indigenous engagement

The Indigenous engagement process is ongoing and will be summarized in an Indigenous engagement summary report in early 2025

A project-specific webpage was established on OPL's website to provide information about the project and ways to get involved such as the survey and public events. The website provides contact information as well as an opportunity to sign up for a New Central Branch newsletter to stay informed.

Additionally, a series of interviews and workshops were held with members of Town Council, provincial and federal political representatives, the Oakville Public Library Board and senior Town and OPL staff. The information collected through these meetings is not summarized in this report but has been used to shape the new Central Branch project.

The engagement process learned from and built upon the feedback related to libraries that was gathered through Oakville's Parks, Recreation and Library Master Plan. Since there was the benefit of very recent feedback on the library system as a whole, the engagement process for the New Central Branch was able to focus specifically on the new library and its role within the Downtown Oakville Cultural Hub and as a destination within the Oakville Public Library system.



A stunning site in Downtown Oakville,
anchoring the Downtown Cultural Hub

4. Public Engagement

2.1 Public Survey

Overview

An online public survey was conducted from mid-September to mid-October, successfully gathering over 1,000 responses. This survey aimed to capture a wide range of public opinions and insights, and ensure diverse perspectives are represented. The survey was designed to get feedback from a wide range of users on how they engage with the library, with the goal of using this input to inform the design and development process.

The survey was hosted on the Maptionnaire platform, which enabled branching questions to capture responses from both individual users and community groups who use the library. The survey was publicized through the Town’s webpage for the library and through social media. QR codes were

also made available at various in person events for participants to easily scan and participate in the survey.

The survey collected feedback on these key themes

1. **User Demographics**
2. **Library Access**
3. **Frequency and Purpose of Library Visits**
4. **Current Library Usage**
5. **Aspirations for the Library**

“a friendly place where books and people coexist happily”

“Cozy, Quiet and Comfortable”

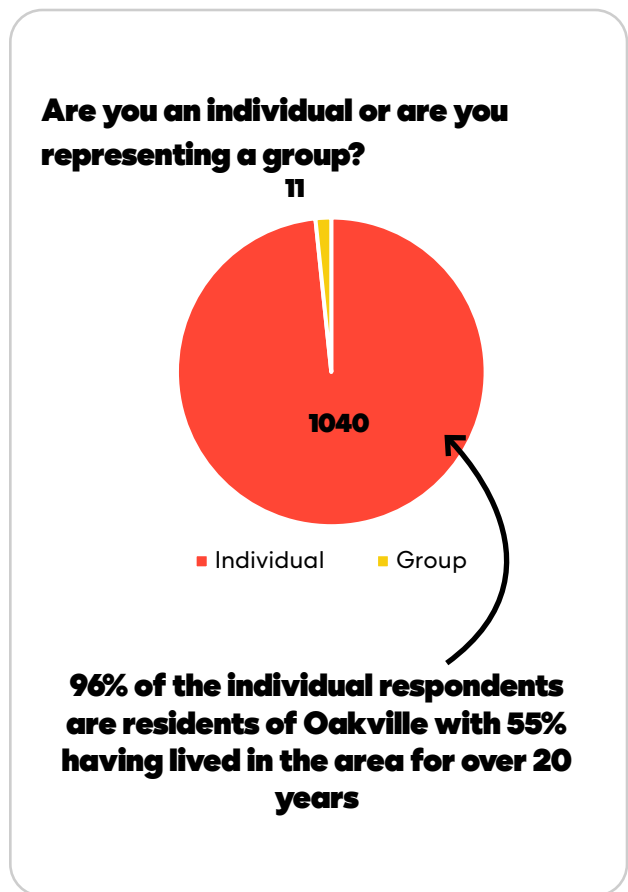


Summary

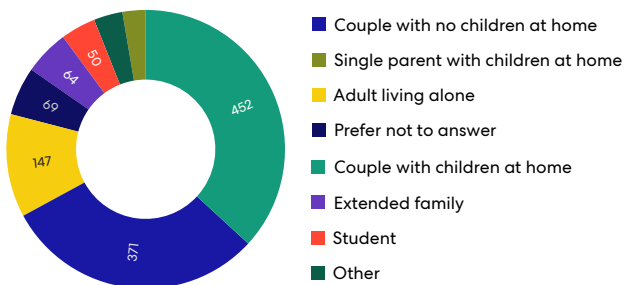
The following are the main takeaways from the survey. The full survey results can be found in the Appendix for all individual questions.

User Demographics

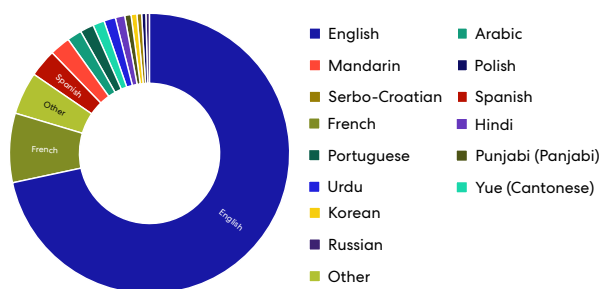
- Demography of the survey respondents included the following:
- 96% of the individual respondents are residents of Oakville, with 55% having lived in the area for over 20 years. A notable 24% of these residents have lived in Oakville for less than a decade.
- The remaining respondents come from nearby cities, such as Mississauga and Brampton.
- The majority of respondents identified as couples with children (38%), followed by couples without children (31%).
- Most respondents speak English at home (98%), with smaller groups speaking French (11%), Mandarin (3%) and other languages.
- 4% of respondents identified as individuals with a disability.



What choice best describes your household?

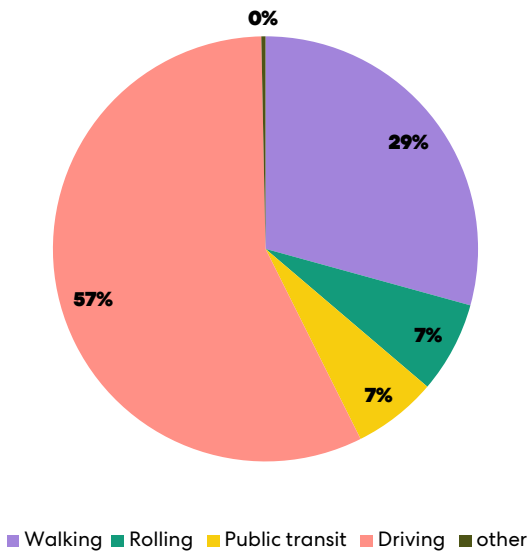


What languages are spoken in your household?

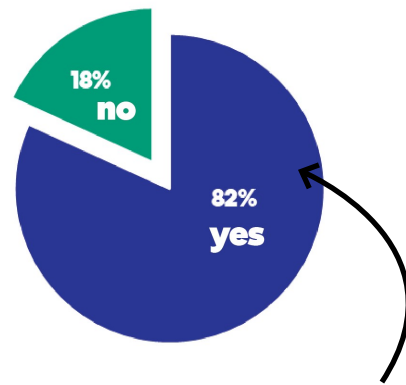


Library Access

When asked how they visit the library, most respondents (57%) drive, while 29% use public transit. Additionally, 7% typically walk or roll to the library.



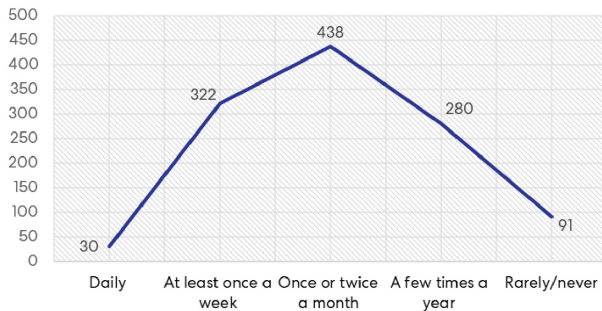
Frequency and Purpose of Library Visits



82% of the respondents said they visit the OPL Central Branch

The majority of respondents visit the library once or twice a month (38%), while 28% visit at least once a week, and 24% go a few times a year. A small percentage (3%) visit daily, and 8% rarely visit. Notably, 82% of all respondents reported visiting OPL's Central Branch.

How often do you visit the Oakville Public Library (any branch)?

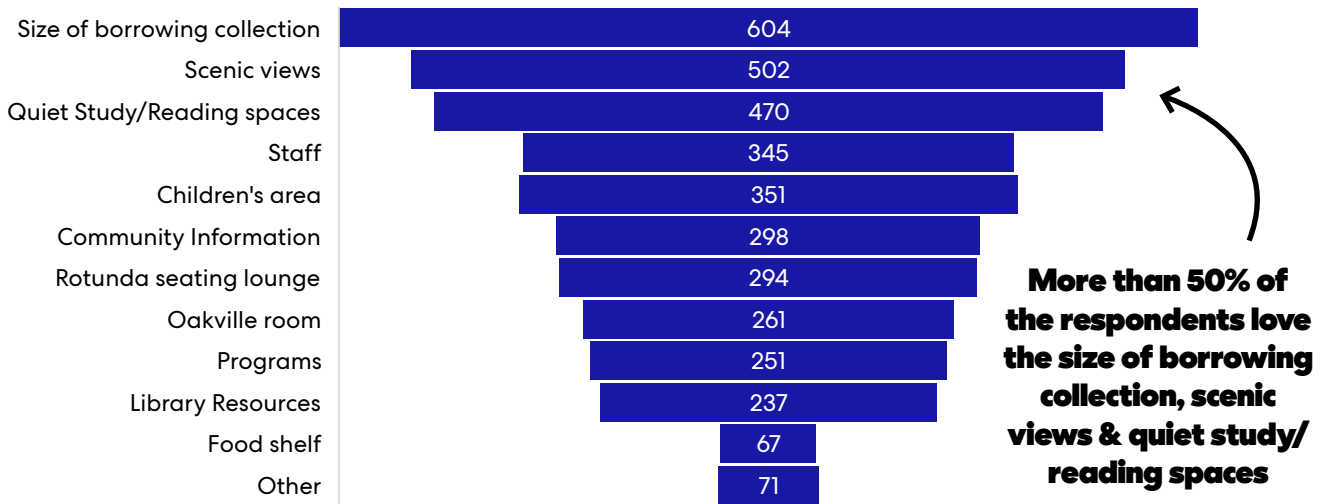


When asked what they love most about the Oakville Public Library’s Central Branch, the majority of respondents (64%) highlighted the size of the borrowing collection. More than half (53%) appreciated the scenic views, and 50% valued the quiet study spaces. The least favorable responses were for the food shelf (8%), while 7% of respondents selected “Other,” which included suggestions such as more events, additional parking, a gallery, outdoor spaces, and more.

“Relaxed and unpressured to be doing anything”

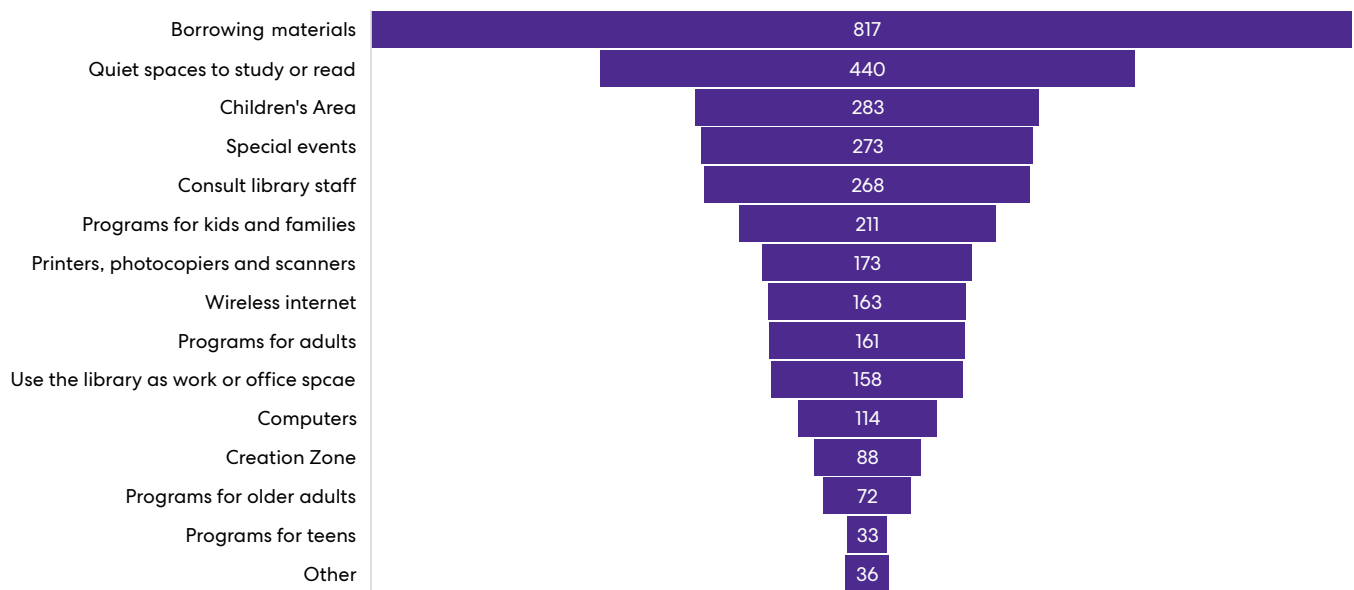
“Comfortable place to read with a nice view out the window.”

“Sitting in the rotunda with a coffee relaxing with a magazine on a hot summer day.”



What do you love about OPL’s Central Branch today?

Current Library Usages



What services do you typically use at the library?

When frequent library customers were asked about the services they typically use, the majority (88%) reported borrowing materials, followed by quiet spaces for studying or reading (47%). Fewer than half of respondents indicated they use the children's area (31%), special events (29%), or programs for kids and families (23%). A smaller percentage of respondents mentioned using programs for teens (4%) and adults (8%), Creation Zones (9%), or computers (12%). It's also worth noting that services like wireless internet, printing, and the library being used as office space remain popular among respondents.

However it is interesting to note that the trend remains the same amongst those who don't visit the central branch but access other library branches in Oakville. The most popular choices are borrowing materials (89%) and quiet spaces to read or study (26%). A similar percentage of respondents (around 20%) use the other branches for Special events, printing services and for using the library as a work or office space. It is important to note that there was more interest in using the children's area in the Central Branch when compared to the other branches.

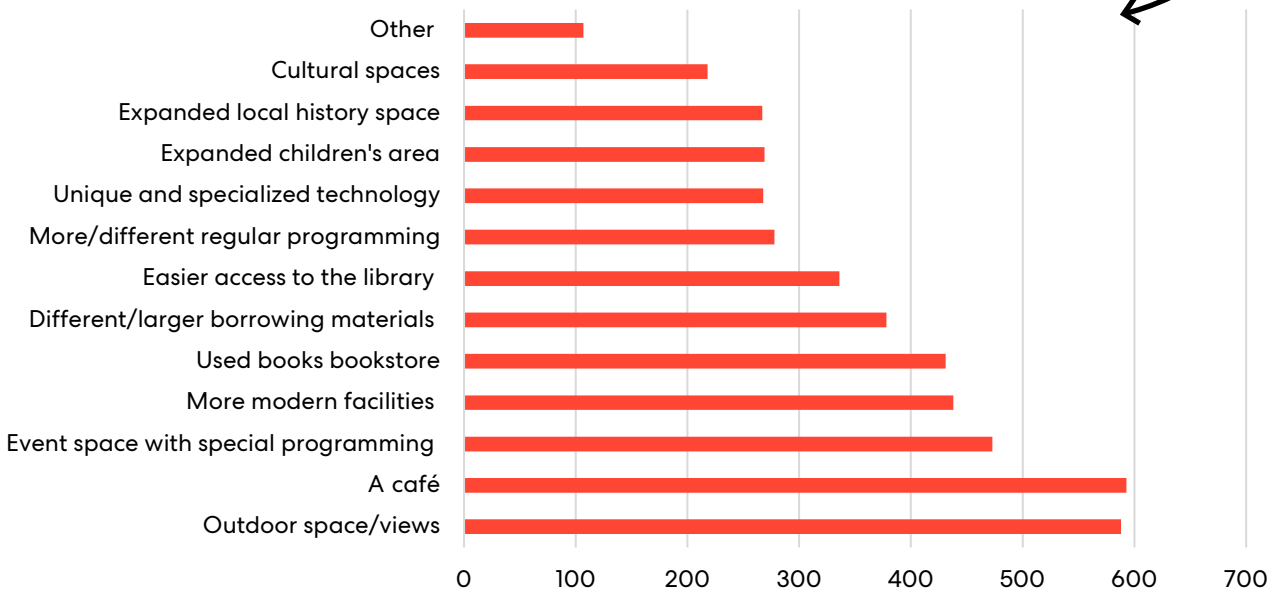
Aspirations for the Library

When asked what would attract them to the library, more than half of the respondents expressed interest in a café (56%) and outdoor spaces or views (56%). There was also strong interest in an event space with special programming (45%), more modern facilities (42%), and a used bookstore (41%). Additionally, there was moderate interest in larger borrowing collections, easier access to the library, regular programming, and unique technology. A particularly notable response was the significant interest in expanding the children’s area, which was especially popular among those who frequently visit the central branch.

“Makerspace with classes to learn how to use equipment. Arts and crafts area. Hands on making activities.”

“Cafe, indoor play area with a structure and a room with toys and loose materials.”

More than 50% of the respondents would love outdoor spaces, views, a cafe and event spaces at the New Central Branch



What would draw you to visit the new OPL Central Branch library?

“Event space that can be rented for large parties, outdoor terrace, community garden.”

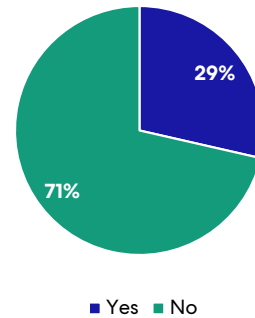
Groups

A total of 14 groups responded to the survey, with 12 identifying as non-profit organizations. The types of organizations represented were diverse, including service providers, residents’ associations, museums and historical societies, as well as grassroots organizations.

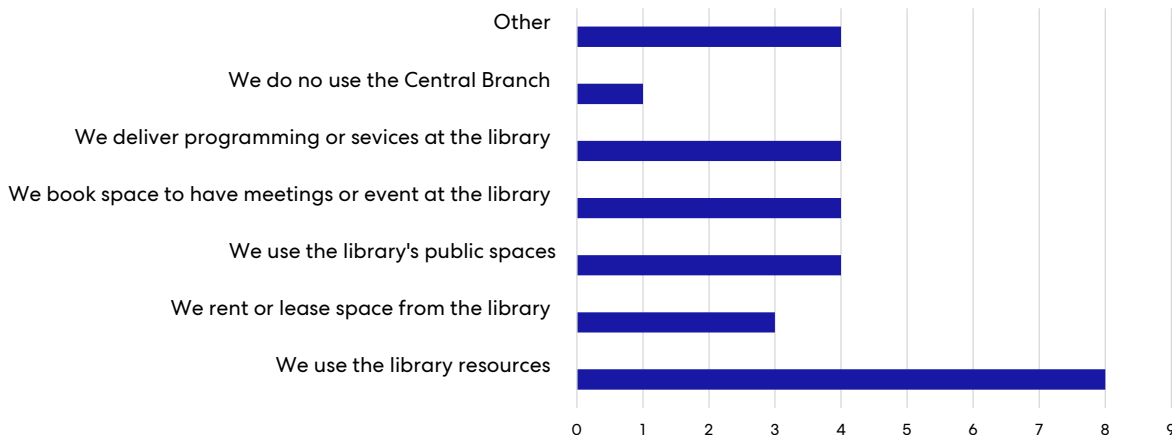
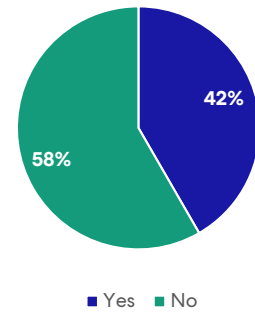
When asked how they use the current Central Branch, 57% of the groups reported utilizing the library’s resources, while 28% said they use the library’s public spaces, book space for meetings or events, and deliver programs and services there. 21% mentioned renting the library’s public spaces, and just one group stated that they do not use the Central Branch at this time.

Although most groups already use the library’s spaces for events, 71% indicated they would not be interested in renting or leasing space at the new Central Branch. However, a significant portion of the groups expressed interest in booking meeting or event spaces at the new location.

Would your organization be interested in renting or leasing space at the New Central Branch?



Would your organization be interested in booking meeting or event space at the New Central Branch?



How does your organization use the Central Branch?

2.2 Public Open House

Overview

A public open house was held to introduce the New Central Branch project to the Oakville community and seek input on priorities. The open house was held at the current Central Branch on the evening of October 2, 2024. Fifty-three participants attended the open house to share their thoughts with the architectural team and library executives. Information boards set up around the space provided background on the project, including the site and the historic post office building as well as inspirational precedents from other libraries. Participants were invited to fill out sticky notes responding to prompting questions about their aspirations for the new library. A model of the site was also set up on a table for people to interact with. A QR code for the public survey encouraged respondents to fill it out online to provide additional feedback.

The public open house was promoted across multiple platforms. It was shared on Oakville Public Library's (OPL) website through both an event listing and a homepage banner. It was also featured on OPL's social media channels - Facebook, Instagram, LinkedIn - along with paid promotion on Facebook for one week. In addition, small posters were placed in every branch and two large posters were placed at the Central Branch near the entrances. The event was also listed on local event calendars, such as Oakville News and the Oakville Chamber of Commerce and featured in OPL's newsletter, which has about 16,000 subscribers.



NEW CENTRAL BRANCH
Coming soon!

Public Open House

Key Themes

Participants at the public open house shared many thoughts and ideas with the project team in discussions and on the provided sticky notes.

Common themes from the sticky notes are summarized below;

Programming and Partnerships

- Partner with Downtown BIA and local businesses
- Music/piano in the library
- Clubs and after school programs
- Craft circles
- Cultural teaching
- Arts and cultural events and performances

Spaces and Resources

- Café
- Dog spaces
- Spaces and facilities for kids
- Expanded multi-language literature section
- Art and artwork display space
- Game section/destress area
- Modular, moveable shelves and furniture
- Technology- cutters, 3D printers, lego robotics, recording studio, photo editing software
- History -archives, history of town, prehistory of river

Transportation and Accessibility

- Parking
- Minimize walking distance from bus shelter to entrance
- Accessible interior features like ramps instead of stairs



Comments from the Public Open House

“Warm, inviting family spaces to encourage stop, stay, play, and read. Chance for families to meet new friends!”

Truth and Reconciliation

- Artwork from different Indigenous groups
- Story telling circle
- Consult with Indigenous Peoples to ensure it is authentic
- Bring in an Indigenous author to discuss one of their books

Design

- Lots of windows and light
- Respect history of the building but modernize
- Take advantage of views of the creek
- Outdoor spaces – rooftop patio, community garden, reading garden
- Indoor plants/green walls

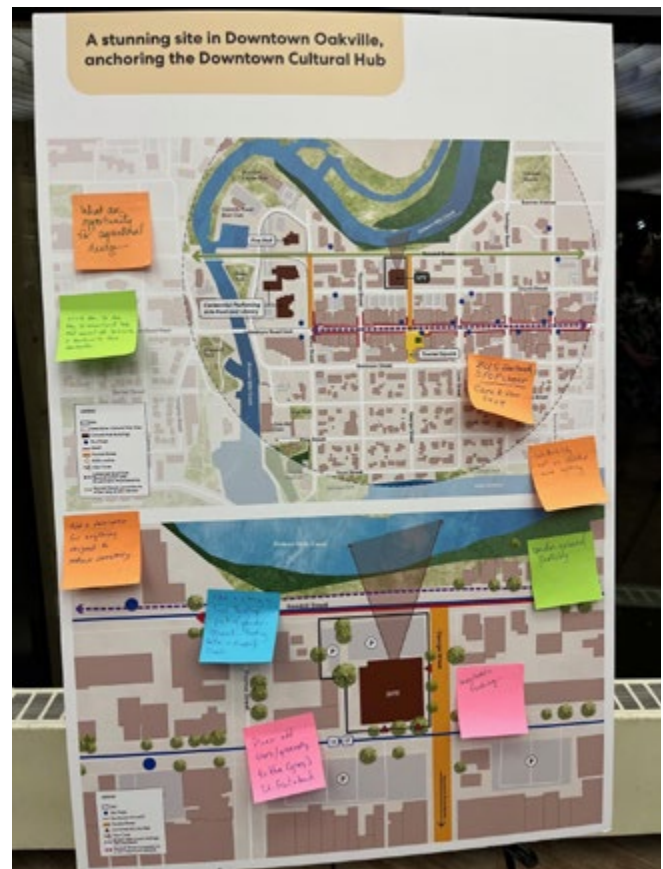
Sustainability

- Rooftop beehives
- Solar
- Bird-friendly windows
- Green roof
- Rainwater collection and reuse
- Wood

Library Inspirations

- Halifax Central Library
- Edinburgh Public Library
- Vaughan Civic Centre Library
- Starfield Byeolmadang Library in Suwon, South Korea
- Biblioteca Vasconcelos in Mexico City

“Let our children dream and be curious”



Comments from the Public Open House

“Learning, community, exploration, inclusive, multi-cultural, multi-generational”

2.3 Heritage to Horizon Panel

On October 9, 2024, OPL held a panel discussion and Q&A event at Central Branch called From Heritage to Horizon. The panel featured a conversation between George Farrow, the original architect of Oakville Public Library Central Branch, Ron Baird, a sculptor whose works are currently featured at Central Branch, and Andrew Frontini, Principal and Design Director for Perkins&Will who is leading the New Central Branch project. George Farrow and Ron Baird discussed Central Branch's

heritage – its original build and artistic features alongside Andrew's reflections on its horizon – the next chapter for Central Branch. Twelve participants attended the panel discussion. The event was promoted on social media and through a Facebook event and listed on OPL's website, where it was featured with both a homepage banner and event listing. It was also promoted on branch digital screens, posters, external event calendars and in OPL's newsletter.





What would make the New Center Branch a destination library that attracts visitors from across Covello?

add your captions/comments here

OPL Orange Public Library

What kind of programming and services might attract visitors? Do you see an interior library?

How do you envision the interior of the library? What kind of atmosphere do you want to create?

How do you envision the exterior of the library? What kind of atmosphere do you want to create?

5. Stakeholder and Community Engagement

3.1 Library Staff

Overview

As part of an Oakville Public Library (OPL) all staff event on September 20, 2024 the New Central Branch design team held a one hour session with staff to introduce the project and learn about staff's aspirations for the new library. The session involved a group activity where staff were given the overall site plan, existing floor plans for the post office building, and program blocks for the new library. They collaborated to design an optimal layout for the New Central Branch, incorporating both indoor and outdoor spaces. Groups were also provided with images of other libraries for inspiration and asked to consider the following questions:

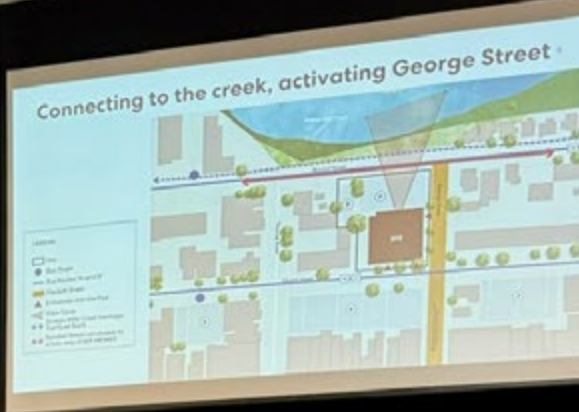
- What can public space look like in the new library?
- How can outdoor spaces be incorporated into the program?
- What key adjacencies are necessary for effective library operation?
- Are there any special features you think could be incorporated into the new library?

At the end of the session a few groups presented their designs and all groups' layouts were documented.

Key Themes

Key messages heard from staff at the workshop included:

- The connection to nature is a key opportunity.
- Outdoor space should be maximized and can be used for things like library events and a reading garden.
- The layout should provide a logical indoor-outdoor connection between spaces.
- Sustainability is a priority. A biomimicry design approach to interior spaces, features such as living walls can be used to demonstrate sustainability at the new library.
- It is important for the children's area to be on the main level.
- A flexible event space at the library would be very valuable for community events.
- Natural light is important, not just for public spaces but also for staff working spaces.
- A café space at the library would be highly appreciated.



OPL Staff Engagement

3.2 Donor Open House

Overview

On September 27, 2024 OPL held an invitational open house event for previous and potential library donors to introduce the New Central Branch project and seek input on priorities. The Donor Open House was held at the current Central Branch and 30 participants attended and shared their thoughts with the architectural team and library executives. Information boards were set up around the space and participants were invited to fill out sticky notes about their aspirations.



Key Themes

The summary of the feedback received on the sticky notes in Section 3.1 is also reflective of the donor open house feedback as the notes were from both events. In addition, the following summarizes key messages from discussions at the event:

- The new library should make a big impact in terms of scale and design excellence.
- This is an opportunity to reinvent the old post office and do something spectacular on the site.
- The library should activate the downtown and create street life, attract people to the site with things like a café.
- The design should include natural materials, taking advantage of views, as much greenspace as possible and places for people to gather.
- There was a lot of interest in what is planned for the existing Central Branch building and site.
- There was a lot of discussion about parking – its importance to accessibility for all library users, but also whether parking is the best use of space on a small site.

3.3 Community Organizations

Overview

Two virtual focus groups were held with community groups in Oakville and Halton Region to get feedback on their use of the current Central Branch, the types of community spaces that are needed in Oakville that the New Central Branch might be able to provide, and their aspirations for the project. The focus groups were held on the evening of October 10, 2024 and the morning of October 18, 2024 where a total of 12 community organizations were represented. Perkins&Will took participants through questions on a Miro Board that closely followed the questions asked to groups in the public survey and the prompting questions used at the donor and public open houses. Participants were invited to fill out virtual sticky notes. In addition, OPL shared the questions with Project Autism which ran a session with their youth.

Participating community organizations:

Acclaim Health
Community Development Halton
Downtown Oakville BIA
Fedcap Canada
Halton Community Legal Services
HMC Connections
Project Autism
Oakville Community Foundation
Oakvillegreen
Oakville Historical Society
Town of Oakville

Key Themes

The focus groups provided the opportunity to have in depth discussions about community space needs. In addition, participants shared their design aspirations for New Central Branch. Feedback from the two sessions is summarized below.

Types of Spaces

- Tables and spaces for agency partners to use that are close to the entrance
- Affordable space to book for larger meetings (40-100 people)
- Reservable auditorium event space at a reasonable cost
- Free bookable space for one-on-one meetings, tutoring sessions
- Working space for non-profit groups
- Equivalent or larger book sorting room
- Prominent space for Oakville local history collection when you enter
- Library should continue to be a cooling centre
- Outdoor spaces for festivals – the existing Central Branch is great for pop up events
- Indoor/outdoor spaces
- Public square that puts public life on display
- Central Branch is the hub

Art

- Open, expansive walls for the display of artwork
- Display of Town's corporate collection – significant artworks are displayed at the current Central Branch
- Public art for the community
- Children and teens
- Great children's space with engaging programming – storytime, puppets, painting, writing
- Children's festival is a big draw – brought in 15,000 people in a day
- Teens need a dedicated space as well

Inclusivity

- Continue to hold space for Food for Life food shelf and fridge
- A centre for belonging
- If a space is too slick some people may not feel comfortable coming in
- Accessibility beyond ramps – features that allow everyone to move around space with ease
- Non-mobility related accessibility – e.g. calm, quiet spaces
- Safe space for all cultures - prayer room, smudging, gathering

“Public living rooms making everyone feel welcome.”

“Everyone sees themselves in the design. different cultures represented.”

Design

- Views to the creek
- Natural light
- Lots of greenery
- Organic shapes
- Lots of wood – warm
- Bringing the natural world indoors

Truth and Reconciliation

- Put Indigenous culture on display
- Display and celebrate Wampum replicas

Inspirational Buildings

- Calgary Central Library
- Royal Ontario Museum
- Tom Patterson Theatre in Stratford
- Medical Library at the University of Toronto
- Halifax Public Library

“Play of light inside. integration of natural light. capturing the passage of time.”



3D model of the site

3.4 Youth

Overview

Youth – both children and teens – are one of the largest user groups of the library. Designing youth activities to hear from young library users was an important part of the engagement strategy for the New Central Branch. The team created an activity called “What does your dream library look like?” which was incorporated into existing children’s programs at every OPL branch. Children received a box with craft supplies and were asked to design the children’s space for the New Central Branch. As they designed their spaces they were asked to think about the following questions:

- What things do you love about the existing library?
- What is your favourite thing to do at the library?
- Are there any features you would like to see in the new library like, play structures, reading zones or outdoor spaces?

A teen event was also organized, where teens were invited to arrange programming blocks for the library and to position pre-labelled furniture blocks in the designated teen space for the New Central Branch.

Details of the events are provided in Table 1.



Date/Time	Audience	Program Name	Location	# of Attendees
September 14, 1-2pm	Children	Lego Drop-in	White Oaks Branch	21
September 14, 2-3pm	Children	Crafternoons	Glen Abbey Branch	9
September 17, 4-5pm	Children	Lego Drop-in	Woodside Branch	3
September 21, 10-11:30am	Children	Exploration Station	Iroquois Ridge Branch	No participation
September 22, 1-3pm	Children	Exploration Station	Central Branch	20
September 28, 2:30-3pm	Children	Crafternoons	Sixteen Mile Branch	25
October 3, 4-5pm	Children	Construct and Create	Central Branch	10
October 3, 3:30-4:30pm	Children	Exploration Station	Clearview Branch	7
October 16, 4-5pm	Teens	N/A	Glen Abbey Branch	28

Table 1: Youth engagement events for the New Central Branch (2024)

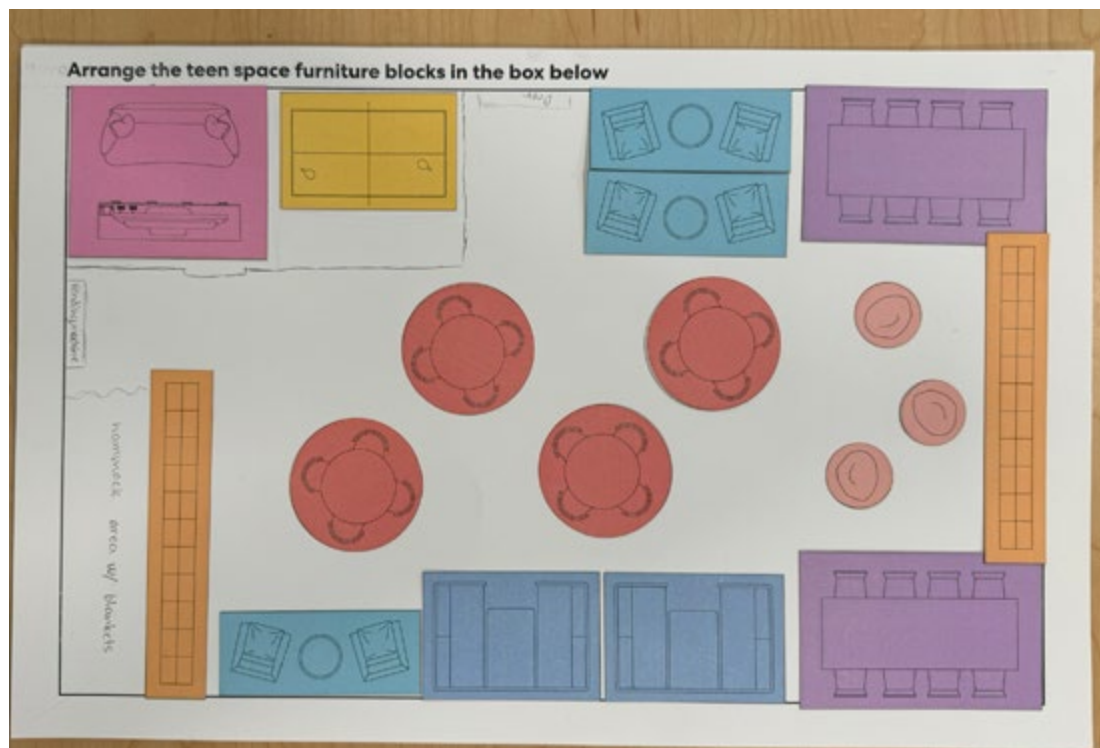


Children's Engagement Session

Key Themes

Both groups designed highly creative spaces for the New Central Branch in their activities. The children's spaces were playful, fun and colourful and tended to include features such as play spaces, platforms, and elements that created a sense of enclosure. The teens provided thoughtful layouts for the library as a whole. Their priorities for the teen space included:

- Features that would make them feel comfortable and enable them to stay for some time like snacks, a café, a sleeping area or a music room.
- Different zones – quiet study areas, collaborative study areas and gaming zones
- Informal space with comfortable furniture like hammocks and bean bag chairs that they could move around and reconfigure themselves



Activity from the Teen Engagement Session

6. Considerations for the New Central Branch

A number of key considerations for the New Central Branch emerged quite consistently across public and stakeholder engagement with all groups. These key considerations will inform the design and programming of the library as the project moves forward.

“It is not often that we have an opportunity to rethink a public building. Let’s not miss this opportunity.”

- **A landmark building for Downtown Oakville.** People are excited by the opportunity for a major new public building in Downtown Oakville and would like to see the historic post office building reinvented.
- **“Oakville’s Library.”** Central Branch has a special place within Oakville Public Library and should be a destination that draws and connects people from across Oakville. It should be a space where everyone sees themselves in the design and feels welcome and comfortable.
- **Views of Sixteen Mile Creek.** People are excited by the site itself and the potential to take advantage of views of Sixteen Mile Creek, possibly through an addition.
- **Children’s space.** Everyone agreed that the new library should include a spectacular children’s area with a variety of facilities designed for kids.
- **Indoor/outdoor connection.** Outdoor spaces of all types were a repeated theme in the engagement feedback. This includes everything from large festival and event spaces to cozy, shaded outdoor reading rooms. Bringing the outdoors inside with large windows and plants was another desire.
- **Community space.** Community organizations in Oakville are in need of all kinds of spaces, from a large auditorium for special events to affordable large meeting rooms for groups of up to 100 to small bookable meeting rooms and work spaces.
- **Celebrating culture and history.** The New Central Branch should be a place to share and celebrate Oakville’s culture and history. This includes the history, culture and knowledge of Indigenous Peoples who have inhabited the land, as well as more recent archives and records related to the Town of Oakville.
- **Technology.** The library is where people go to access technology and they are looking for everything from a simple reliable internet connection to 3D printers and lego robotics.

7. Next Steps

In addition to the public and community engagement summarized in this report, Indigenous engagement will be a critical input to developing the program and design of the New Central Branch. Ongoing meetings with specialized groups at the Town of Oakville will also continue to take place throughout design development (e.g. Accessibility Advisory Committee, Heritage Planning). As the design progresses, the detailed layout may be adjusted based on the input from these groups.

