



Stephen Abram, MLS, FSLA
Lighthouse Consulting, Inc.
120 Perth Ave., Suite 412
Toronto, Ontario M6P 4E1

416-669-4855
stephen.abram@gmail.com



LGA Architectural Partners
533 College Street, Suite 301
Toronto, Ontario M6G 1A8

416-203-7600
lga-ap.com

Wednesday, August 15, 2017

Lambton County Library

Steering Committee (Via e-mail)

Andrew Meyer <Andrew.Meyer@county-lambton.on.ca>, Corporate Cultural Officer
Darlene Coke <darlene.coke@county-lambton.on.ca> Manager, Libraries
Vince Wijsman <vince.wijsman@sarnia.ca>,
Scott McEachran <scott.mceachran@sarnia.ca>
Greer Macdonell <greer.macdonell@county-lambton.on.ca>
Howard Lucas <howard.lucas@county-lambton.on.ca>
John Innes <john.innes@county-lambton.on.ca>

LGA / Lighthouse Team

Janna Levitt <janna@lga-ap.com>

Antero Fonte <antero@lga-ap.com>

Stephen Abram, <stephen.abram@gmail.com>

Dear Team:

Attached is the second draft of the report we wrote of **recommendations** for Lambton County Library regarding their facilities and programs in Sarnia. I've added the comments from our last meeting and made the recommendations clearer where needed.

Again, thank you for the opportunity to engage with your community and do this important work for Lambton County.

Sincerely,

Stephen

Stephen Abram

Lambton County Library Sarnia Space and Service Needs Study

June 14, 2017



Stephen Abram, MLS, FSLA
Lighthouse Consulting, Inc.
120 Perth Ave., Suite 412
Toronto, Ontario M6P 4E1

416-669-4855
stephen.abram@gmail.com



LGA Architectural Partners
533 College Street, Suite 301
Toronto, Ontario M6G 1A8

416-203-7600
lga-ap.com

Lambton County Library

Sarnia Library Space and Service Needs Study

Table of Contents

- 1 Executive Summary
- 2 Process Summary
- 3 Recommendations
- 4 Proposed Scheme (Bubble Diagrams) Plans

Appendices

- A Online Survey Report
- B Community Focus Group Report
- C Staff Focus Group Report
- D Partner Focus Groups Report
- E Peer Group Statistics Report
- F Trends Report - Opportunities for Innovation & Community
Growth and Engagement
- G (Initial) Facilities Report
- H Functional Program
- I Existing Facility Plans
- J Proposed Scheme Plans

1 . Executive Summary

This executive summary attempts to bring together the considerations and process of the consulting engagement with Lambton County Library (LCL) and the process of community engagement.

Process

Several meetings, focus groups, presentations, and telephone calls were held with community residents, students, Library staff and the Library Board. A dozen reports and drafts were created including a report on several Focus Groups, the report on the results of the meeting with Library partners as well as meetings with library staff. We also completed a successful online survey of the community. This is a tested approach, combining in-person focus groups with an online survey, which generates community discussions around the community's real needs while allowing for hot-button issues to be collected and reported. Combined with the high-level strategy and leadership perspectives we heard a lot of contextual and strategic information for the future of Sarnia and Lambton County and the Lambton County Library. As we often find, there were a number of opportunities that were identified in the open-ended comments too that were beyond the scope of this project - but this is good fodder for future consideration by library management and has been captured in the reports.

Themes

Overall our Sarnia and Lambton County/ residents who participated were very supportive and very passionate about the role of the library in their community. One major theme was "MORE" – more books, more programs, more promotion, more learning, and more integration with other community services. They were passionate about their villages, neighbourhoods and County and the quality of life there. They were worried about the decline in the downtown and the status of the heritage buildings and streetscape. They are very passionate about the community hub and heritage aspects of the current library branches. They always saw a role of the library to be a key player in increasing the local vitality of Sarnia and Lambton County.

A selection of themes arose from these consultations and there was much overlap in these themes. The themes were the launch point for our steering committee discussions and underpinned our considerations for the ultimate recommendations aligning with community and municipal leadership perspectives:

- The library as a learning, social and cultural institution that contributes to quality of life and economic success of the county.
- Partnership opportunities for programing, employment and economic support for community growth are quite evident and supported.
- Pent up demand for programming with more programming in non-business hours for kids and seniors and additional programming for teens, adults and males.
- Barriers in existing facility's logistic and workflow as well as with accessibility, safety, programming and access to technology.

The importance of the library services and the building as a primary downtown anchor and community hub.

Existing Facilities Limitations

There are many issues here identified by the staff that mirror the notes in our initial walk-around report. These include the elevator situations, the entrances, lighting, washrooms, HVAC, hot water supply, storage space, electrical issues, basement access, kitchen, AODA compliance, and more. The key issue that staff concentrated on is the lack of enough appropriate program spaces that allowed them to build successful program initiatives that are repeatable and have an impact. The community's critique of the facilities was primarily around the size of the space for program usage and its utility for purpose and accessibility issues and other requirements to address many of the obstacles noted by staff to optimize the existing floor space and to supplement it.

Recommendations

LGA and Lighthouse Consulting Inc. have crafted a range of recommendations that address the shortcomings in the Master Plan that create barriers to success in achieving both Sarnia and Lambton County goals and the continuing success of the Sarnia facilities in the Lambton County Library. The recommendations of this study cover the topics of facilities, program and service portfolio, and management and strategy. Given the challenges with the existing facilities and the needs identified in the study, the construction of a new addition to Bright's Grove, expansion of Mallroad and re-design of the Main Branch is required. There is a real need for optimizations of the Main Library space through an extensive renovation. Mallroad is far too small and needs to be doubled in size through an extension or local move. In terms of programming, the findings point to specific needs in senior, adult, teens and children populations as well as at-risk populations and a number of wider and deeper potential partnerships with other social and cultural institutions in the County.

The complete recommendations are described in section 3 of this report and plans illustrating the concepts are found in section 4. There are a huge number of ideas and community needs and recommendations in the appendices that capture the research online and in focus groups and meetings. A careful reading of the appendices provides many more ideas. We have made recommendations that will provide the facilities changes needed for LCL to achieve their dreams.

2. Process Summary

The team of LGA Architectural Partners and Lighthouse Consulting Inc. were awarded a contract in 2016 to perform a Library Services and Facilities Needs Study in winter/spring 2016/7.

The full results of these studies are captured in the appendices of this report.

The process was designed for maximum community input as well as strong input from leading voices in the community, including the Library staff. The process involved an intense week of community focus groups, staff meetings, steering committee meetings, and visits with partners, schools and special social services. It also involved an online survey administered from November 2016 – February 2017. This is a tested approach – combining in-person focus groups with an online survey - that generates community

discussions around the community's real needs while allowing for hot-button issues to be collected and reported.

Seven public focus groups were held in the week of Jan. 15th, 2017. These groups were held outside the library to create an independent atmosphere as well as at Bright's Grove, Mallroad, and Sarnia Main. Invitations were extended through e-mail, telephone and a notice on the LCL website as well as a PSA over the local radio. Below is a summary of the dates and locations of the seven community focus groups:

- Jan. 15, 2017 1 pm Art Gallery INAAG Meeting Room (Attendance 5)
- Jan. 15, 2017 3 pm Sarnia Library West Room (Attendance 7)
- Jan. 15, 2017 6:30 Bright's Grove (Attendance 33)
- Jan. 16, 2017 9:30 am Clearwater Arena Lower Room (Attendance 7)
- Jan. 16, 2017 2 pm Strangway Seniors Centre (Attendance 6)
- Jan. 16, 2017 5 pm Sarnia Library West Room (Attendance 6)
- Jan. 16, 2017 7:30 pm Bright's Grove Library (Attendance 21)
- Jan. 15, 2017 5 pm Mission Soup Kitchen (15 interviews. 2 staff conversations)

Our goal was to discuss the future of the library facility and its role in the vitality of Sarnia and Lambton County and other County priorities as well as the vision for their community. We also probed on issues related to community strategic challenges aligned with the portfolio of services offered by LCL.

There are many issues identified by the staff that mirror the notes in our walk-around report. These include the elevator, entrances, lighting, washrooms, HVAC, hot water supply, storage space, AODA compliance, storage, kitchen, and more. The key issue that staff were concentrated on is the lack of several multi-purpose program spaces that allowed them to build successful program initiatives that are repeatable and have an impact.

LGA and Lighthouse Consulting also toured the City of Sarnia and parts of Lambton County as well as the library buildings and created a report of issues and opportunities that needed to be addressed.

LGA, Lighthouse Consulting and the project steering committee reviewed the reports of the community engagement activities, staff, board and County feedback, and the facilities reviews. We then reviewed the summary of the themes that arose in the processes. The themes were used as a launch point for our steering committee discussions and are the foundation of a community-driven and leadership-driven set of recommendations.

Lastly, LGA and Lighthouse Consulting developed specifications and needs assessments for the LCL facility. These drove the creation of draft program diagram which led to discussions and will ultimately lead to concept drawings for the changes to the three LCL facilities.

These recommendations and drawings follow.

Themes

Several stronger themes emerged from the conversations in the focus groups. There may be additional themes as we read these further, discuss them, and add to them with the larger online survey. As such, these results from the focus group should be reviewed as very preliminary until we align it with the additional results from the online survey.

The groups required very little prompting and nearly every suggestion is an opinion, perspective or insight that came as a result of discussion between community members.

The broad themes fall into the following buckets (These are *not* in order of emphasis):

- **Parking and Transportation**
- **Location and Facilities**
- **Digital Needs**
- **Programs**
- **Culture**
- **Outreach**
- **Competition**
- **Marketing**
- **Collections**
- **Hours**
- **Safety and Security**
- **Partnerships**
- **Markets & Demographics**
- **Accessibility**
- **Teens**
- **Seniors**
- **Adults**
- **Pent Up Demand for Programs**
- **Barriers**

Several stronger themes have emerged in this study in the focus groups and senior management sessions. The themes from the open meetings fell into the following buckets and we saw continuing support for this in the online survey as well as additional commentary and insights from residents.

- **Culture**
- **Social Isolation**
- **Anti-Poverty and Social Work**
- **Events**
- **Parking and Transportation**
- **Location and Facilities**
- **Digital Needs**
- **Programs (pent up demand)**
- **Outreach**
- **The Village 'feel'**
- **Marketing**
- **Collections**
- **Hours**
- **Partnerships and relationships within the municipality and with other social hubs and cultural institutions.**
- **Demographics**
- **Safety**
- **Service**
- **Accessibility / Barrier**
- **Teens**
- **Seniors**
- **Adults**

The themes from the Staff and Partners were:

- **Downtown revitalization and Library-as-Anchor**
- **Growing use of current facilities**
- **Community Hubs**
- **Culture & Heritage / Sarnia Library Theatre**
- **Business, Employment and Economic Support – Community Growth**
- **Culture and Tourism – Relationship to river walk**
- **Integrated Strategies**
- **Teen Engagement**
- **Seniors and other Adults**
- **Demographic Change, Population Growth, Tax Base Growth**
- **Partnerships**
- **Relationships with Schools**

- **Community Expectations (vs. Tax, Revenue-base)**
- **Libraries as Learning Institutions, Adult Learning**
- **Quality of Life and attractiveness for in-migration of young families**
- **Distance and Walkability**
- **The Role of Libraries**
- **Libraries as Learning Institutions**
- **Libraries as Social Institutions**
- **Libraries as Cultural Institutions**
- **Digital and Innovation Experience and Training Hubs**
- **Libraries as Partners**
- **Quality of Life**

Other staff themes were more directly library-oriented and focused on facilities and services in the large part.

Staff Themes:

- **Infrastructure**
- **Flow: Member, Logistics & Workflow**
- **Programs and Services**
- **Accessibility and Safety**
- **Technology**
- **Partnerships and Competition**

3 . Recommendations

Sarnia Library Facilities Report

Introduction

This report comprises our initial impressions from several visits to each of the three library branches as well as local tours and the downtown Sarnia blocks in October 2016 and Jan. 2017. These included:

Sarnia Main Library
124 Christina St. S., Sarnia, Ontario, Canada, N7T 8E1

Bright's Grove Public Library
Box 339, 2618 Hamilton Rd., Bright's Grove, Ontario, Canada

Mallroad Public Library
1362 Lambton Mall Rd., Sarnia, Ontario, Canada, N7S 5A1

These impressions were made to stimulate further conversations and feedback regarding the 3 branches toured by the team. They are intended as constructive criticism in light of Sarnia's and the Library's strategic goals and the adequacy of the physical plant to support your long-term strategies.

This document will provide the framework for the final Master Plan and building drawings recommendations and aspects of this informed the questions we asked in local focus groups in addition to the online survey. Finally, they informed the proposed concept plans incorporating our proposed recommendations for each branch.

General Observations

These observations apply generally to the branches toured and are an overall summary of what may be system-wide issues. This summary allows us to avoid duplicating similarities observed tour wide. The observations are not totally prioritized with respect to cost-implication or importance.

Strengths

It would be unfair to present opportunities for improvement without noting that the Sarnia Branches have strong use and the respect (even love) of their communities. Their current strengths are in children's programming, seniors programming, makerspaces, and programming based on reading and entertainment. There are fair foundations for teen and adult programs as well as technology-based programming but this portfolio item is weak.

Highlights of Recommendations – The Top 20

1. **Sarnia Main Branch should have a large interior renovation and upgrade HVAC and FF&E, the Theatre, add program space and provide expanded digital services.**
2. **Bright’s Grove Branch must be expanded to accommodate use as well as link the Gallery in the Grove to Library programming in partnership. An elevator is needed for AODA compliance.**
3. **Mallroad Branch should be doubled in size to accommodate use.**
4. **A large increase in programming aimed at key user populations and social and economic needs of Lambton County / Sarnia.**
5. **Increased safety systems should be installed.**
6. **Ensure that cultural and social programming meets the needs of downtown revitalization activities and the Main Branch is considered a key anchor tenant in these strategies.**
7. **Move to single service desk strategies, BYOD, and RFID circulation in phases.**
8. **Develop collections in support key programs while integrating stored collections and weeding out unused materials.**
9. **Add social space for food, coffee, and silent reading / collaboration.**
10. **Add student study and tutoring space and ensure that school buses bring kids to a stop there after school as an option. Continue to enhance the Makerspace and Mobile Maker Stem/Steam activities.**
11. **Create a stronger relationship with the local Reserve(s) and add a Bookmobile stop there.**
12. **Connect Bright’s Grove and Main to outdoor programming strategies.**
13. **Invest in coordinated signage and street presence for Libraries and Theatre.**
14. **Invest in marketing, online community calendars, website, and social media presence.**
15. **Improve entrances, wayfinding, and street presence of Bright’s Grove and Main.**
16. **Discuss increasing access to downtown parking including time limits as well as improving the desirability and ease of access to the Main parking.**
17. **Build strong partnerships with cultural, social and community institutions, clubs and services in the City/County. Train staff in new partnership protocols.**
18. **Increase the role of the Libraries for local history, genealogy, archives, and tourism support.**
19. **Increase the role of the libraries for displays of culture – writing, art, photography, performances, music, etc.**
20. **Develop and train for a policy to increase the customer service ethic as well as a better protocol for dealing with member issues in the Main Branch.**

General Details:

- While there appears to be adequate parking at every branch, that is an unusual situation in Ontario communities and is a big plus. In anticipation of a municipal initiative to make Sarnia a “walk friendly” community we believe this will positively enhance the future value of the Library as a “community hub”, especially in the downtown core. The key issue is that the parking for Sarnia Main is perceived as unsafe. We recommend upping the lighting and improving the walkway to the branch and opening the entrance on the east side.
- Specifically, the two hour limit for on-street parking is strongly working against a vital and vibrant downtown. Consideration should be given to widening the parking window so that

multiple activities can be accommodated in one visit. Ideas include ensuring that the Mall parking is open and available at a good cost all the time. (Is there a tax subsidy situation for this landlord that can be used as leverage?)

- All branches suffer from a paucity of flexible program space. Most program space appears to be too private from the remainder of library space or too in-your-face at the smaller branches. We recommend a diversity of new and flexible program space for each branch.
- Staff are dispersed across 3 branches in Sarnia and overall 26 branches in Lambton County. We recommend that consideration be given to wide adoption of modern virtual collaboration, sharing and communication tools. LCL needs a County culture and each branch has strengths in local 'village or neighbourhood' culture but no real County overview.
- We recommend the development of a County overview orientation and the development of mapping tools for business, culture, social services, etc. to connect the community at large through the library as a service point. These 'maps' ensure that LCL serves as a gateway into County services and events. Supported by a strong community calendar operation and relationships with web tools and new media, LCL can make a strong contribution to community health, culture, education, and vitality.
- While there are good (larger) designated program spaces in the main branch, they are difficult for staff to casually monitor. In addition, access to these spaces needs to be better integrated into the flow of the main branch. We recommend that the renovation better integrate the meeting, auditorium, display, and library space in a whole.
- There is a greater need for spaces that specifically cater to and attract teen users. More meaningful teen space(s) branch by branch supports safe recreational activities and homework and more. We recommend that this is essential for community cohesion activities. Specifically, there needs to be small quiet spaces for tutoring, exam proctoring, and small group work for teens (especially after they are drawn in through maker initiatives and programs).
- Technology usage areas have been introduced, however, except for the Maker Space at the main branch, they are not meeting current patron needs/expectations and requires re-design to achieve current standards. For instance, most technology is single-user style, one person per PC. The inclusion of spaces that support collaboration, co-working, and training programs is reflected in the redesign recommendations. This is also targeted at the local business need for a more computer literate employment base.
- All branches should introduce a "bar type" and "harvest table sized café table" computer terminal offering with integrated power and data for the public to easily access for their use either to "plug and play" and/or re-charging their personal device. This would also support current and future use of both personal and Library supplied laptops in a more convivial "café type" setting supporting the potential for collaboration. It supports business travel as well. We recommend support for BYOD as there is inadequate space for users to bring and plug-in their own devices in every branch while Wi-Fi is open already.
- The main branch has an excellent maker space. It would benefit from some small adjustments to the current design to support more small and medium-sized group sessions; activities and programs. The other two branches have no peripheral support for 'making' and digital innovation activities such as sound and headphone use for online creation; digital editing, photography; film, language studies; streaming collections. Mobile Maker has been started as a great portable and sustainable program but the two Sarnia branches do not have adequate

space to support this which needs to be added. The Main Branch Makerspace needs a stronger identity and promotion.

- Lambton County Library branding signage would benefit from the development and implementation of a consistent system-wide identity including greater building and streetscape legibility. There appears to be a lack of clarity between Sarnia and Lambton County and this appears to challenge the development of a system-wide identity. This works against creating “ownership” with the local population and how they define their wider ‘community’ or ‘neighbourhood’. It rarely or never matches the branding, logo, colour guidelines, and design strategies introduced at the main branch. This is a missed opportunity to highlight valuable community (county) assets.
- A consistent brand identity will assist a refresh of branch color schemes to both contribute to the overall branch-wide identity as well as the particular branch points of differentiation. Within each branch, different program areas, targeted at certain demographics would benefit from a colour coding and identity strategy. The “Library” brand should predominate and the sponsor should be clear. Specifically, targeted areas for kids, teens, seniors, relax & read, quiet, study, etc. should be branded.
- The introduction of a Coffee and Tea service at the service points. This can even be a “pop-up” or self-service style of coffee offering. Food and drink support the social nature of reading and programming as well as the Theatre experience or offered as a partnership with local businesses or a development program with Community Living / Social Services.
- In all branches, we suggest a rationalization of window treatments to control natural light infiltration.
- Branch FF&E (furniture, fittings & equipment) do not support current flexible and diverse inhabitation of the branches. Too often the furnishings are pushed against a wall and in a line versus organized for social conversations. Many furnishings are near the end of their utility and are ‘tired’ and the design of the furnishings needs to be updated to encourage the new uses that the library is trying to encourage. The current Interior finishes need a significant refresh to provide an uplifting and contemporary image for adult or teen programming. We believe it is necessary for members of the library to see themselves aligned as part of the desirable membership & cardholders of Sarnia/Lambton. While ‘plainness’ appears to imply that tax dollars are spent frugally, the reality is that a perception of a poor (non- or under) investment in the communities “third living room”, disincentivizes both general buy-in to the value of the Lambton libraries in Sarnia by the public and negatively impacts return visits. A refreshed, contemporary and dynamic interior design would significantly nurture pride in the library as a community asset and encourage it as a place to lounge, learn, and participate with neighbours and friends. In many library systems, it is typical to observe a disparate furnishing strategy, likely an outcome of migrating furnishings between branches on an “as needed” basis. A coherent strategy to provide a relevant and cohesive furnishing plan is required.
- The chairs at most tables do not encourage comfortable long-term use as the design of this type of furnishing is specifically for short-term use. Overall current library trends incorporate a combination of seating that supports the multiple modalities of relaxed and comfortable reading, kid-sized seating, fun seating, solo study, group study, and learning. They need to tell a seamless design story. Stacking chairs are recommended for occasional overflow programming – not primary seating. There are far too few seating options at all three branches and too little

seating in aggregate numbers. In Bright's Grove and Mallroad the emphasis on children militates against longer term teen and adult use. All ages risk being in 'friction' or competing situations due to the tight space.

- The quantity of tables for library members needs to be increased. In addition, the surfaces of these need to be more robust by design and many should be on wheels to allow for increased flexibility of program offerings within each branch. In particular, the Mallroad and Bright's Grove branches are missing any un-programmed tables/seating. We recommend that FF&E be increased and upgraded in enlarged facilities.
- Current primary service points offer reasonable library sight-lines. There are however too many service points at Main. However, their design does not reflect current library models of servicing customers. They are too large, too high and in all cases the finishes are past repair/restoration. In addition, they often do not meet current AODA requirements. The current trend is to downsize service points and make them more approachable and recognizable as central information points. Current primary service points now demand easy access, approachability, staff facing out, and AODA compliance. The finishes of these service/information points should be robust and long wearing. The inclusion of solid surfacing countertops in this millwork should be durable enough to ensure a long-term positive first impression and durability. Finally, the standard service points are far too separate and discourage centralized, easy and friendly customer service ethos. The double service points within steps of each other at Main (plus a separate service point for children) is not sustainable or a modern model. It risks tying staff up when they are better organized for program delivery. We recommend a single service point and cross-training of front desk staff.
- Much of the book shelving runs and spinners should become mobile units. This would increase the program flexibility of the branches and facilitate a plethora of space usage options. Shelves on wheels have been successfully introduced in many of our clients.
- The Books in storage are not clearly labelled in the OPAC. This is bad. Books in storage should be weeded and integrated into the runs in one place with the main collection. Ideally this is probably the current children's area since this could accommodate a quiet zone and allow for the reintegration and enlargement of the stored collection. Collection development should be tied to programming (i.e. enlarge the photography collection and make collections to support those programs)
- DVD circulation is in decline. Over the long term this will need less and less space and be a smaller part of the portfolio. It must be accommodated for the next five years but purpose-built space or a large renovation investment is not recommended.
- Generally, flooring in libraries is one of the most challenging to maintain as it takes incredible amount of all day use and in all seasons. In the 3 branches, we observed that the flooring is near or at the end of their useful life and needs to be renewed. Entries need to be hard surfaces that welcome and aren't dated but are low maintenance and all-season ready. Carpet tile flooring has become the standard in libraries as it offers a low barrier way to replace/maintain the floor coverings in all areas other than the entries and program rooms. At Main the entrance is particularly off-putting and gives a poor maze-like impression.
- A formal review of the lighting is required throughout all branches to increase both greater flexibility of the use of the spaces as well as increase much greater energy efficiency. Meeting rooms need flexible lighting.

- All elevators need to be assessed for AODA compliance and energy efficiency.
- Overall power, data and wire management requires a complete review and rationalization. Currently much of the wiring is open to the public and therefore subject to vandalism. This is a safety and security issue in addition to respond with assurance to 21st Century requirements.
- Given Sarnia's commitment to being a green community we would propose that the capital investment be put into durable products that require little or no maintenance and have a very long lifespan before requiring replacement. In addition, we recommend that you adopt a policy that all products used in the branches will not off gas and are inherently low or no VOC.
- We recommend that all the branches (not just Bright's Grove) invest in space for the display of local artists and artisans. There will be plenty of walls available for curation of art displays from the community or partners in the recommended re-design plans.
- All branches would benefit from a great tie-in to local history and community pride. This will bring traditionalists onside and orient newcomers to the rich history of Sarnia through thematic displays, artwork, maps, and signs. Canada150 is a good time to engage in partnerships with others including the archives. Archival materials at the Main should be moved to the Sarnia Archives and made safe. ON the other hand, archival displays in the library should be curated in partnership with the Sarnia Archives.
- The second floor of Main is oddly disconnected from the main floor. A better staircase and atrium would connect the two and ensure that the full space is utilized effectively. It will also emphasize the easier access and existence of the second-floor facilities and programs.

Branch by Branch Observations

Sarnia Main Library

124 Christina St. S., Sarnia, Ontario, Canada, N7T 8E1



- The main branch of the Sarnia Library is well situated. As a major anchor tenant at one end of the downtown, revitalization of this branch and making it a more city and street engaged “face” would serve to anchor more positive development and tenants farther down the downtown cultural and entertainment district and more reasons to walk, work, and play here. Sarnia Library is likely the top generator of traffic on foot and by car in Downtown Sarnia and should be recognized as an attraction and innovation node.
- Internally the branch has great ‘bones’, a large and flexible space whose use and utility can be greatly enhanced through re-design. Externally it needs to be better integrated as part of an active street scape to allow it to do what all great libraries do; that it be an active member in building community as a well-loved and visible local asset and programming resource.
- Entrance: There are several entrances that under-achieve their roles. Specifically:
 - The main Library entrance is maze like and cannot be easily used to accommodate the Theatre after hours.
 - The main entrance has a poor relationship to all staircases and the AODA compliant elevator.
 - The rear entrance is not used, even though it connects to the parking lot so everyone has to circumnavigate the entire building to enter – even during winter.
 - The Children’s entrance is a single width door that is difficult navigate with either kids or a stroller. There is a sharp turn upon entering and a narrow, potentially difficult and unsafe staircase to the theatre.

As such we recommend that the:

- Rear entrance be re-opened to enter down a Gallery Hall directly into the primary single service desk.
- The Children's Entrance be closed and used as a Fire Exit.
- The Main Entrance be moved and have double electronic-eye driven doors. It enters directly into a multi-purpose reception and orientation area that uses a re-designed staircase, AODA elevator and a Single Service Point. Its street presence and signage be enhanced to draw attention from all walkers and traffic. This nEntr5ance be the main entrance to all first and second floor activities including the Theatre and that security gates be used to separate non-used portions for after-hours events on the first and second floor.
- These strategies would greatly increase the valued usage of the community asset of both the Library, event spaces, and the Theatre.
- Currently we observed a significant amount of under-used space that, with a modest redesign, can be transformed into a coherent series of spaces such as a community living room or Teen program/lounge space. This would encourage more community activities and gate-count. By adding sofas, table lamps, and short tables, you increase the comfort and duration of visits and engagement with the community and foster conversations. This can be particularly effective in meeting community social and anti-poverty goals.
- More attention to adding multi-functional program (and meeting) space and increased availability of study space, technology space, digital innovation space, tech training classroom, etc. This should be most likely be located on the second floor with glass walls. This can be particularly effective in meeting community learning, education, school and college readiness and adult learning goals.
- Increase presence of the reception area by moving it forward to the door and upgrading the presence and providing one-stop services for the whole facility (including children's). It would be valuable to explore a central/shared service point supported by roaming staff rather than the current distinction between the three desks, Kids, Circulation and Reference, and adequate flexibility to support self-check services.
- Increasing the library image, branding, identity, approachability, etc. is needed. Specific naming/branding of the various portfolio programs (kids, teens, Maker, etc. is needed.)
- Increase the display of art and historical objects. Focus on Lambton/Sarnia history here (as was done in Bright's Grove). Use travelling displays across the wider County.
- Invest in a Pop-Up library to ensure that the public library can move beyond its walls and participate in many City and County events. Review the bookmobile's usefulness as a parade float for promotion at seasonal parades and fairs.
- This branch, in particular, needs to have strong partnerships with the local Reserve(s). It needs to be more indigenous friendly and aligned with local Reserve, municipal and provincial goals and funding programs. Adding some indigenous art and cultural programming as well as targeted at school-age kids would be a benefit on many levels. The bookmobile should make stops at the Reserve(s) and market the Main branch and county resources. All reserve residents should be targeted in a member growth campaign in partnership with the Chief.

- Consider increasing the light well and stair access to the large second floor. Increase the visibility between the two floors such as using a hanging art-piece to draw the eye upward to the library and theatre area. (Currently it's possible to be unaware of what is upstairs.) Introduce strategies to visually announce the activities upstairs including TV monitors.
- Include a full tourism brochure and service point in the entrance of Sarnia Main Library (and smaller racks at all LCL branches of local high points). Use this to increase local tourism as well as increase awareness of residents of great things to do in Lambton County. Many libraries in Ontario highlight local trails (especially with the new provincial trails strategy and lend fishing rods and gear, butterfly nets, etc. to encourage local outdoor activities (especially with the riverfront trail in Sarnia. Consider hosting history walks along the trails. Build collections and displays to highlight this – especially in Bright's Grove and Main.
- The elevator does not go to the basement level. There is an existing, old, non-compliant, inadequate and non-working elevator that accesses the basement. Consider consolidating the two to meet the AODA needs as well as for moving items to basement storage and back.
- Consider upgrading the staff lunchroom to serve as occasional program space for 'foodies' and the cookbook collection. A small demonstration (residential grade) kitchen could be accommodated near the makerspace by utilizing this space (Cooking is making). This would allow for business alliances within the community. As well, the servery outside the Theatre must be upgraded as well to serve as a cooking and selling space as well as a program space for food events in partnership with local businesses.
- Increase the extent of the window offering the great view of Christina Street providing a spectacular destination at the entrance of the library on both floors for adult program and reading areas. This also links the library to the street and allows traffic to view the wonders inside. Ensure that seating is in the windows for reading and conversation and not books. Show an active presence to the street.
- Consider addressing a re-design of the parking lot and park to bring it in line with community standards as well as to integrate the major tenants, parks, and facilities into a cohesive event and destination site. Update and re-design the patio space on the back of the library. Add a playground to the park. Add a glazed door directly from the library into Memorial Park as a kid's reading garden and outdoor program area. Add windows to this view into the park and reading garden. Ensure safety by programming and monitoring it often. Create a safe space for children but more eyes-on-the-park to increase safety. Add cameras here especially.
- Move all staff space to systems furniture within a more open office administrative zone by giving everyone 60-100 sq. ft. of well designed, private desk and storage space. Add a CEO office nearby for better teamwork and management direction. Place nearly all staff offices in system space to create a teamwork environment. Reduce entrances and ensure that staff noise isn't coming into public spaces. Ensure that this is as minimal as possible since staff at Main should be customer facing as much of the time as possible given that processing is handled in Wyoming.
- Review logistics and deliveries from the loading dock entrance and define temporary storage space.
- This branch would strongly benefit from offering Coffee and Tea services. This can even be a "pop-up" or self-service style of coffee offering or offered as a partnership with local businesses or a development program with Community Living / Social Services.

- There is inadequate storage space that may be able to be accommodated in the basement with a re-design of elevator access. The second-floor storage space is far too large and is left over from another era and use. This should be re-purposed as public space for programs.
- The anti-theft security system (tattletale) re-design looks temporary which decreases the potential for a positive and elevated first impression and appreciation of this branch. It is also old-fashioned in the current context of library service models. Consideration should be given to adopting RFID, starting with the main branch, and modernizing the operation (after weeding). RFID reduces the fortress-like security systems, allows for people-counters that are less obtrusive and, most importantly, allows staff to be refocused on customer service and programming. Re-designs should include foundations for RFID implementation in phases starting with the busiest branch(es).
- Safety and security systems are weak and there should be indoor and outdoor cameras and video recording devices in this branch in particular. Cameras should visibly also face the park to serve as deterrents to unwanted behaviours.
- The shared community space / theatre could support many more program activities, especially speakers, author readings and more. It needs better lighting control, improved acoustics, easier flexibility of furnishings, better access from library's second floor which could support simple reading / study areas, security for periodical newspaper reading and ambient programming with better sightlines from the single secondary service point. In addition, it would be valuable to look at ways to support and enhance the branches current program offerings. The library space needs to be designed to handle Theatre overflow and events after library hours while maintain security.
- Specifically upgrade the library signage presence on all entrances and at roadside so that it brands positive identity and stands out to drivers. The Theatre is unnamed and unsigned for all intents and purposes. There are program rooms and server/cloakroom associated with this important space that are under-used and cognitively separated from the library and library sightlines. Make this HUB visible to the community.
- There are several community requests for upgrades to the Theatre in the Partner focus group transcripts that should be considered. These recommendations in other reports are supported by our review.
- The entrance to the Theatre is currently from the street and very unimpressive, missing a real opportunity to harness all the activity that this program space can offer the street and the remainder of the library. It also requires seamless, unattended, AODA compliant access to the 2nd floor. On many fronts, this is an uninspiring access point and stands out as a common complaint of partners, staff and users.
- We suggest the redesign of the current front entrance to the library and the theatre to increase the visibility of both as well contribute to stronger community presence. Special attention to hours and logistics of the shared space is needed. It needs to be a single entrance with access to all areas while ensuring that various points can be closed off when not open.
- The large raised platform in the centre of the library is an impediment to efficient library design. In addition, it does not adequately support staff use. It feels like a security watchtower that militates against a positive, welcoming atmosphere. We suggest re-thinking the programmatic use to make it a teen collaboration space and/or casual programming loft and/or for private reading, study, and conversation. These uses would be easily monitored if the guard walls at

this raised area were transparent such as using glass guards. Adding a ramp, glass railings, improving the elevator, and art / seating / Wi-Fi prominence would make this a feature rather than a detractor.

- At first glance, it appears that the current HVAC system has surpassed its life span and is likely very cost-inefficient and not green, energy efficient enough for the long term. The inclusion of a new high efficiency HVAC plant and distribution would achieve greater energy conservation (and lower operating costs) as well as support an interior space that allows for program flexibility. Provincial government green programs should be considered and applied for to replace this aging infrastructure with a much smaller, more modern, and sustainable system. Ideally this will free up a good deal of storage space to free up space on the first and second floors to be used for staff and public. It should also allow for zoning the HVAC so that airless, stale, cold or hot areas are reduced.
- There needs to be an elevator (combined with passenger access as stated above or a singular freight type model) to the basement storage.
- A technology training classroom needs to be added. This is essential to the programming needs and demands of a system like LCL. It need to support up to 18 stations per class.
- The branch length balcony is an unused asset. It should be reviewed as a nice feature with a view. We recommend it be modernized for daytime use through 3 seasons as widely requested by the community focus groups.
- Parking Lot: The rear parking lot is poorly defined. It would be improved by:
 - Repaving and grooming the edges with curbs and plantings.
 - Adding security cameras.
 - Adding lighting.
 - Adding a door from the parking lot into the main area of the library for staff and public at grade.
 - Improving dedicated access and turnaround space for the bookmobile.
 - Providing lines that maximize the use of the lot.
- THEATRE: The theatre is a huge community asset. Current challenges are the loss of the large high school theatre as the only other cost-effective place for amateur and small group culture programs (dance, music authors, film, etc.) This is the main entry point for Lambton County residents to achieve public performance practice as well as affordable activities. (The Imperial has much higher and prohibitive costs for most local groups.) Strengthening the role of the Sarnia Theatre as an incubator for the Arts through partnerships with the local groups is a fine strategy.
- The Main Branch, as well as other branches, are fine community assets. Attention should be paid to regularly playing up the LCL as a collection of community and cultural assets for their architecture, usage, impact, collections, art, and more. Celebrate your libraries as a marketing activity.
- There was an original plan for a sculpture garden on the north end of the building under the Theatre overhang. This was never done. It has become a place that is sometimes used as a hangout. This could be addressed in three ways:
 - Make it as planned as a Sculpture Garden and integrate it with the streetscape.
 - Enclose the space as a Greenhouse feature and reading garden which would warm up the cold theatre floor above.

- Encourage it as a walkthrough with sculpture to the ear parking lot to encourage foot traffic and less vagrancy.

Sarnia Main Library Building Condition Report

Based on our review of the facilities so far, we are prepared to support the following recommendations from the “*Building Condition Report for the Sarnia Public Library and Theatre*”, dated November 5, 2014, prepared by Jorden & Cook Architect Ltd.:

1.0 Executive Summary

In general, the building continues to perform the needs it was originally designed for. However, recent requirements for barrier-free accessibility has added a new criteria to the facility that was not considered when the original Library was constructed in 1960 or when the Theatre was added in 1975. Further, the current public elevator to the second floor can only be accessed through the Library, creating a security problem when patrons to the Theatre who need the elevator must arrange for after-hours access to the Library to get to the second floor. There are no barrier-free washrooms on the main floor and the only toilet with wheelchair capacity on the second floor is the female washroom.

3.0 Building Code Compliance

- *“(…), the floor assembly over the basement must have a fire resistance rating of 45 minutes. The existing exposed steel joists and steel deck do not have any fire rating in the existing basement. Corrective measures would include providing a new fire-rated drywall ceiling below the joists or applying a 45-minute fire spray to the steel joists and deck.”*
- *“(…) columns and beams less than 3m from the property line must have fire protection to match (…) (1 hour fire rating). The column closest to the north property line is 2.2m from the property line and requires protection.”*
- *“(…) the building requires a fire alarm system since the occupant load exceeds 300 people. This system requires a signal to be sent to the fire department in the event an alarm is signaled.”*
- *“(…) the exit capacity of stair widths must exceed the occupant load. (…).” Existing conditions do not comply. The stairs “from the Theatre” have a total width of 11’-10”. Should be minimum 13’-6”.*
- *“(…) the stage used for theatrical performances plus ancillary spaces (workshops, dressing rooms and storage spaces) must be sprinklered.”*
- *“(…) exit stairs must have a fire separation not less than (…) Theatre: 2 hour (…). Existing conditions do not comply. The stairs to the second floor Theatre Lobby have no separation.”*
- *“(…) The existing handrails and guards do not comply with respect to:*
 - Handrail diameter
 - Handrail height
 - Guard height
 - Handrail extensions beyond the bottom riser
 - Guard openings*Corrective work would include modification of existing handrails and guards or replacement with new handrails and guards.*
- *“(…), exit doors require latches and panic devices. Stairwell doors do not have closing devices or panic releases on the latches. These will be required when the doors are replaced.”*

- *“(…), fire escapes shall be protected by closers for any openings within 3m horizontally or 10m below the fire escape. The existing window at the children’s reading corner on the main floor requires protection with wired glass on the west side.”*
- *“(…), all service rooms require a 1-hour fire separation. This applies to the boiler room and the electrical room and affects door ratings, wall penetrations, wall/ceiling fire separations and duct fire dampers.”*

4.0 Emergency and Life Safety

- *“(…), there are a number of fire separations that will require upgrading to improve the Life Safety conditions of the building and should take first priority and completed within in three to five years.”*
- *Required “(…) fire door at the basement level of the main stair case.”*
- *“(…), where renovations are being implemented, sprinklers be installed at the same time. (…)
The first phase of implementation will be to establish a new water service, dedicated to the proposed sprinkler system, and sized to accommodate the demand of the entire building. New branches can be added to this system over time.”*
- *“(…) Fire-rated doors with suitable closers, latches and panic bars are required at each of the stair exits.”*

5.0 Maintenance Items for immediate Repair

The following items have been identified for immediate repair, and are recommended for implementation within the next 3 to 5 years.

.1 Interior Finishes:

- *“Wall paint (…)
could use refreshing and a more contemporary colour scheme.”*
- *“Interior doors (…)
Replacement is recommended as renovations proceed. Hardware is aging and should be replaced, (…)”*
- *“Ceilings (…)
At minimum, (…)
requires repainting due to dirt from the air diffusers.”*
- *“Window sills on the second floor (…)
Repair and painting is required. A more resilient sill material, such as cultured marble, is recommended in areas to be renovated.”*

.2 Structural:

- *“Vertical cracks were identified in the exterior face brick at the receiving area. (…)
further study by a structural engineer is recommended.”*
- *“The steel lintel over the pair of door into the basement from the exterior has shown significant corrosion (…)
also caused the face brick to deteriorate significantly due to free-thaw cycles (…)
Full replacement of the lintel and face brick to the level of the deck is required.”*

.4 Exterior Envelope:

- *“Windows (…)
are glazed with single-pane glass. This conducts significant amounts of heat out of the building in the winter, compared to contemporary thermally-broken double or triple glazing systems.”*
- *“Window frames are mostly stainless steel frames at the public areas. Offices at the rear have steel sash units. All frames are original to the building and do not have thermal breaks (…)”*
- *“Window frames on the west face have damage due to vandalism near the sill, resulting in dented frames. (…)”*
- *“Main entrance doors are aluminum with single glazing. (…)
do not perform well with regards to thermal insulation.”*
- *“All other exterior doors (…)
are due for repainting.”*

- *"The rolling overhead door at the receiving area is corroded and it due for replacement. Door frames at this location are also corroded near grade and will require repair or replacement."*
- *"Frost damage (...) on the south face of the building below the stone panels at the edge of the balcony. (...) Replacement of bricks in the vicinity of the drains is required."*
- *"Finestone panels (...). Damage is noted at several locations where water has penetrated behind the panel (...). Further destructive testing is recommended (...)."*
- *"Copper fascias (...). Drains from the lower canopy are not connected to the grade (...). It appears there may have been drainage chains (...). Consideration should be given to reinstating these."*
- *"The underside of the west canopy is stained and should be repainted."*
- *"Caulking and sealant around windows and doors appears to be aged and due for replacement."*

.5 Barrier-free Facilities:

- *"(...) are limited in the building. (...)"*

.6 Millwork:

- *"Cabinetry (...) limited to the coffee counter on the second floor. (...) may require replacement when other renovations are considered in this location."*

6.0 Barrie-free Requirements

The following is a summary of the barrier-free requirements suggested for this facility. These requirements are based on the Ottawa Accessibility Design Standards published in November 2012. While not yet part of municipal standards for the City of Sarnia, these standards give a better reflection of that is needed for current users of this system than the current Ontario Building Code. Discussions with municipal staff indicate this benchmark is a reasonable one to use for the projected timeline of this facility.

.1 Flooring:

- *"Flooring is to be resilient and must have a matt finish to resist glare. (...)"*
- *"Wayfinding is recommended (...)."*

.2 Stairs:

- *"(...) The existing stair near the Library entrance does not comply."*
- *"Horizontal marking strips are required (...)."*
- *"Tactile warning strips are required (...)."*
- *"Existing guard and handrails do not comply (...)."*

.3 Drinking Fountains:

- *"Existing drinking fountains do not comply (...)."*

.4 Parking:

- *"1 barrier-free parking space is required (...)."*
- *"(...) as close as possible to an accessible entrance."*

.5 Main Entrance:

- *"Power door operators are required (...)."*
- *"A canopy is recommended (...)."*

.9 Theatre:

- *"Assisted listening system is required (...)."*
- *"(...), 6 accessible seats are required."*
- *"(...) seats must be dispersed at a variety of locations in the audience."*

.10 Library:

- *"Minimum width for path of travel is 1100mm."*
- *"(...) allow for 1675mm diameter turns."*

- *“25% of on-line catalogues and workstations are to be designed to be accessible.”*
- *“Security gates must have a clear width of 915mm.”*
- *“At least one accessible counter must be provided at circulation, information or self-service checkout areas.”*

Source: Building Condition Report for the Sarnia Public Library and Theatre, dated November 5, 2014, prepared by Jordan & Cook Architect Ltd.

The information included in the above list is a summary of the notes and recommendations and is not intended as a substitute of the original Building Condition Report. The reader is advised to refer to the original Building Condition Report for the full extent of its notes and recommendations. The authors do not assume and hereby disclaim any liability to any party for any loss, damage, or disruption caused by errors or omissions, whether such errors or omissions result from negligence, or any other cause.

Bright's Grove Public Library

Box 339, 2618 Hamilton Rd., Bright's Grove, Ontario, Canada



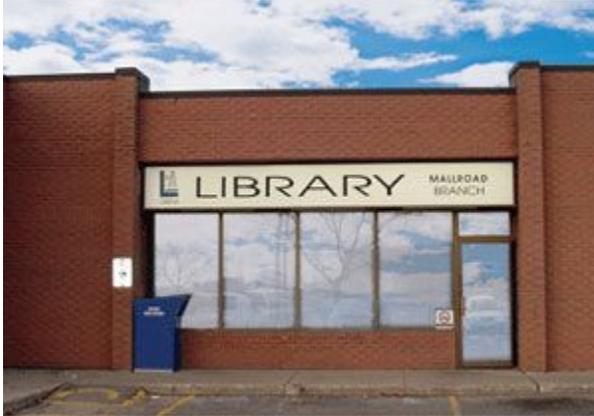
- This branch is an asset as a great shared cultural, historic and library space with a neat local story. The use of the space as a shared facility really complements the community and is valued. It is the definition of a village branch and should be promoted locally but considered for wider County-wide promotion for special events. That said there is too little integration with the art gallery (Gallery in the Grove). Build a stronger partnership with this arts tenant and others in the community. At this branch, consider regularly shared programming upstairs to gain greater attendance at the art shows and displays as well as to use the space more effectively for young adults, adults and seniors. It would be valued by the community for the effort in a beautiful space.
- This branch is undersized due to welcoming staff, two nearby schools, and a very engaged community and has proven itself as the main community centre for Bright's Grove. It must be improved and enlarged to accommodate the very high community demand. Emphasize the heritage context of this remaining historical site in the system.
- Emphasize the art show. Rotate through other branches – especially Main. Build a stronger partnership. The Gallery in the Grove could easily have its programs expanded to include some library programs that adapt well to this space – genealogy, local history clubs and events, art appreciation for all ages, as well as events and celebrations that can be accommodated in the Gallery and outdoors on the proposed deck.
- Upgrade the main service point to encourage a no barrier relationship between staff and patron.
- Redesign the lighting to gain energy efficiency and brighten the interior. Add task lighting.
- Improve PC stations, add more and make them more prominent. Add access points for BYOD.
- Add an upgraded adult seating area for comfort and work-in-place. Set up a small living room.
- Address signage issues for the branch at large as well as the collection.
- This branch could benefit from offering Coffee and Drink services at the service point. This can even be a “pop-up” or self-service style of coffee offering or offered as a partnership with local businesses or a development program with Community Living / Social Services.
- Follow through on the recommendation to add an elevator. A 21st Century public space needs to be accessible and the long-term sustainability and success of this community facility demands

an elevator to make comprehensive use of this community heritage asset. It also encourages more volunteers. The elevator can be added in the addition to mitigate against any deterioration of the historic nature of the building.

- Add access to outdoor areas for programming as well as an addition for more flexible program space. Add a roof deck for great three season space for art, library and culture activities.

Mallroad Public Library

1362 Lambton Mall Rd., Sarnia, Ontario, Canada, N7S 5A1



- Mallroad is a good example of a branch designed to create and engage as a community hub. However, it is very undersized. This is the result of successful programming, welcoming staff, and location but it has proven itself and now needs enlarging.
- This Branch could be easily enlarged by using adjacent or larger spaces within this plaza OR considering space options of the appropriate size in the immediate area. It is recommended that this branch stay very close to the other operations and 'draws' on Mallroad to continue to be an important part of this community Hub. Ensuring adequate parking is important especially when considering the needs of children and teens/tweens biking to the library.
- More attention to adding multi-functional program and meeting space and increased availability of study space, technology space, digital innovation space, tech training classroom, etc. is needed. This should be mostly located in an expanded space with glass walls in an expansion.
- This branch appears to focus its design on children. The teen and adult areas need to be strengthened. The renovation of a new space should create clearly separation between child, adult and teen areas.
- Technology is weak but available. More should be added with the ability to support Maker and technology training programs.
- Increase library image, branding, identity, approachability, etc. Ensure an AODA entrance while avoiding cold winds entering the space.
- This branch disappears into the larger presence of the mall exterior. A stronger identity is required to make the Library stand out within this environment. Address signage identity issues at entrance and road.
- We recommend that the floor area of this branch needs to be doubled, which will also help with the street visibility issue. The location is good in relationship to other community 'stops', but there should be an investigation of real estate space locally to move to in case this branch can't be doubled through renting adjacent space. The lease is up for renewal soon so this is a more urgent need.

- Particularly in this branch, all shelving and tables should be on wheels to provide flexibility and moved into a better formation to separate the various regions of the branch by user demographic.
- More art displays and better, more regular displays in a common room are suggested.
- More flexible and regular mobile maker and digital innovation programming is suggested. Exciting and relevant programming such as cooking, pottery and sewing, would do well here. A separate program room that contains noise-levels is greatly needed.
- More travelling art and historical display is suggested.
- Improve the store-type signage and window lettering to draw in attention.
- Consider a standard Kid Zone and Teen Zone branding that links with the other branches.
- This branch could benefit from offering Coffee and Tea services at the service point. This can even be a “pop-up” or self-service style of coffee offering or offered as a partnership with local businesses or a development program with Community Living / Social Services.
- A space for the ‘community’s living room’ strategy could work here. Consider delineating the adult area with carpet tile. Add an upgraded adult seating for comfort and work-in-place. Set up a small living room.

General Operational Needs

Pent Up Demand for Programs

One of the key themes that came out of the focus groups was a very significant demand for more programming despite the excellent programs in recent years. One theme is that their expectations were for quite traditional programming (reading, kids, book clubs, etc.) while their ideas were for more social and interactive programming (travel, author talks, cooking, hobbies, etc.) This is a function of the age of most focus group participants being older. They were very interested in increased teen and kids programs for Lambton County since they ‘know’ this group has less to engage them safely and locally. This underserved demand came in many flavours:

Digital Needs

There was strong demand for more digital programming ranging from overviews of the library website and services and how to use them more effectively to strong interest in elementary through advanced programs involving online learning, downloading e-books, movies, and audiobooks, using social media and digital hubs involving 3D Printing, digital photography, etc. They really want better broadband access in Lambton County but see the library as a great fix until that is ‘fixed’. Even though some folks have Wi-Fi at home they do not always have the peripherals or hands-on help they require.

Programs

There was very strong demand for more adult programming. This focused on book clubs, town events, social media and web training, digital photography, music, personal health, personal finance, travel, crafts, culture, and especially cooking and nutrition.

The adult community was very focused on more teen (and tween) and children's programming but despaired at access due to bussing, driving, transit issues, and distance.

Culture

There was strong support for the library to engage in cultural programming and to forge stronger alliances with the Theatre and build better partnerships with the arts and culture community in Sarnia. There was strong demand for more and larger multi-purpose spaces for meetings and programs. There was strong support for more cultural downtown events and street fairs with the Library as a player.

[Markets & Demographics](#)

Key markets clearly need to be accommodated differently since their needs came across as quite differently.

Teens

Teens felt very apart from the public library as a service point for them. For a number of reasons including bussing, school demands and lack of access to a local branch in walking distance, or a car/driver. The few we talked with were more likely to use the school library than LCL. Their awareness of what the library could offer them was good but the newer programs like the makerspace are still not making it into the school-aged consciousness. Consider having as many school buses include the libraries on their routes as possible after school!

Seniors

Seniors are a core market and there was great support for more programs of all types mentioned above. The strongest 'social' component came across from seniors participating and the need to get out and meet their community in retirement or semi-retirement. Many of these seniors were single and living alone but volunteer a lot.

They had strong feelings about too many programs being on weekdays which didn't fit their schedule or their access to a drive. It also interfered with some of their new 'jobs' – volunteering. They wanted their own 'space' versus sharing it with noisier library members.

Adults

The Adult programming demands also felt the need to be available at night and on weekends. A few wanted it to include programs for children so they could participate in something else at the same time. They were encouraged by multi-age groups and community discussions. They were focused on learning over entertainment but entertainment was part of the mix. Improving their employability and looking for work and volunteer opportunities were key opportunities. There was strong support for both in-class and self-directed learning of technology and social media. We recommend the addition of programs like Lynda.com and Gale Courses which build community employment capacity.

Children

There was strong demand for more children's and early years programming that met the needs of working parents' and grandparents' schedules. They loved the current programs but commented on the timing and sign-up issues.

Collections

As usual, they want more collections of what they want personally and were mostly aware of the ability for the library to add their requests to the collection and inter-library loan. There was strong support for DVD collections, as well as better browsing and reviews and recommendations. Many used the library's website for identification and holds. All collections should align with an annual program commitment and be assured of being current (especially health, photography, maker, homework support). Investments in collection should be strategic for non-fiction and aligned with community needs for fiction.

Communication

Outreach

The groups often suggested that the library should be out where they are and be 'present' more in the community as they've noted at other places. They were supportive of Pop-Ups and more. They supported greater use of outreach to the homebound and school and daycares.

One wonderful insight from the Soup Kitchen dinner interviews and conversations is that all but one person had a library card and used the library. (That one person came in the next day and got one, once she found out it was free). A stronger partnership on anti-poverty programs may be warranted. There were a number of families and young kids there who took advantage of some programs and used the library for homework.

Marketing

There was an overall feeling that they didn't know how to learn about library program offerings or programs throughout Lambton County. There were many suggestions about how to get to them or to be more assertive in telling them where calendars are, adding LCL to the Parks & Recreation catalogue, and being better at social media and e-mail promotion as well as regular postings in the news. They used the local papers and websites often to identify programs and things to do. A community calendar is needed and the Library is a great place to do that!

Partnerships

Everyone felt that their community could work more closely together to serve them. Specifically parks and recreation, cultural hubs, community events, clubs, and schools were pointed out. We recommend the development of a detailed community map (social services, cultural services, business maps, learning services, etc.), partnership strategy, and targeted priorities to build a strong system and LCL as a desirable partner.

Facilities Feedback

Focus Groups and Partners were complimentary of the facilities only so far as they wanted them to remain supported and didn't want to 'criticize' for fear of hurting their existence. They were VERY focused on protecting the buildings (especially in Bright's Grove) but in other ways they noted that the current facility is poorly accessible, confusing, and tight. Accessibility issues of many kinds came up.

Parking and Transportation

Parking came up as a big issue in Sarnia and this is usual. In particular the two-hour parking limit does not match their goals when downtown at all. This is very likely hurting the downtown businesses and walkability. They were combining eating, cultural activities, library visits, appointments, the market and more and found 2 hours a huge restriction.

Location and Facilities

Many noted quietly that the furnishings were 'tired' and that Sarnia's branches did not meet the standards they saw in other nearby communities. Sarnia's facilities were found wanting and the flexibility of the branch and central spaces to do more programming was noted as weak.

There was very strong passion for the Bright's Grove Branch. Mallroad is perceived as very good and friendly but way too small. The Main had the most demands and comments for improvements.

Barriers

Competition

Many used multiple facilities and many also took advantage of programs and libraries outside of Lambton County. If they had ever lived in a major city like Toronto, that drove their perceptions. They find Sarnia much friendlier but 'smaller' and less well resourced.

Hours

There was some demand for additional hours but the real demand was for how these hours were used. They wanted more programming outside of their work / volunteer hours and an acknowledgement that most parents work and can't take advantage of daytime kids' programs. This was echoed by seniors who fill their days with family and volunteer activities and want a weekly library night program that is comfortable in a 'good' room.

Accessibility

There are some issues with accessibility centered on teens and seniors for different and similar reasons. AODA was a big issue but winter conditions and access to a car/transit, was as well.

Safety and Security

There were concerns about lighting at the Main and in the parking, long walks to the front door. Memorial Park has a bad image which affects the library's usage and image.

Strategies

Partnerships

The focus groups came up on their own with suggestions for partnerships and there was strong support for more integration with other local services but in the library facilities.

Reading garden

Recommendation: There should be a stronger relationship to the memorial garden and park-like space adjacent to the library. This is the primary entrance to Sarnia Main but it does not relate well to the programming needs for events and kids. It is a valued community asset downtown and there should be a door leading to the reading garden and games board that draws appropriate uses.

Recommendation: Bicycles are a major mode of transportation for teens in Sarnia and Lambton County which lacks public transit. The bicycle rack should be expanded, made more prominent and placed on a concrete pad with a walkway. This would encourage more teen and adult use from the trails.

Technology

Recommendation: There is inadequate technology in the LCL for community needs and by provincial standards peer comparisons. There is a need for a computer access area – separated from children’s computer access. This would be for adults and teens as well as support training activities which need to be upgraded and co-programmed with the Adult Learning and Employment Centres.

Books and Display

Recommendation: The hard copy collection is too spread out in the Main and parts are hidden silently in storage. The current shelving does not provide easy browsing, doesn’t support face-out displays and is not AODA compliant. It creates confusion as to where the full collection access is. The collection needs to be expanded and new book stack groups need to be created on a second floor

Programs and Services Portfolio

Seniors engagement

Recommendation: Sarnia and Lambton County has a higher than average age profile. This group is a key group in the demographics of Sarnia and Lambton County and the library programs for them well. They are often into volunteerism and programming for them needs to be made available in the evenings as well as the day.

Adult engagement

Recommendation: Adults of working age are under-served in Sarnia and Lambton County. This area of programming needs more effort and needs to attract more than Moms and Kids. A focus on singles, couples, and men would be to encourage more programs and activities that appeal to them and to create spaces for their needs. Such things as technology access, maker spaces, wine and beer tastings, cooking and more can improve the quality of life and neighbourliness in Sarnia and Lambton County.

Teen engagement

Recommendation: If there was one group that everyone was worried about it was the teens and tweens – including the teens themselves. There is too little to do for them in Sarnia and Lambton County, despite great recreational facilities. There is an opportunity to create spaces that are NOT associated with school or sports where they can hang out, learn, relax, and be safe. Homework Helper programs are a start but STEM and STEAM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Art, and Math) programming through Maker Spaces are a major very successful long-term trend. Sarnia and Lambton County Public Library needs to dedicate space that is teen friendly, safe, and programmed to deliver value to that age cohort.

Pre-school and kids engagement

Recommendation: This is a real strength of Sarnia and Lambton County Public Library. That said, the spaces are inadequate and tired/un-fresh/poorly lit. Pre-schoolers and the early grades need safe spaces to play and learn. Story hour in front of a busy circulation desk is not optimal. Lack of easy access to the reading garden is a lost opportunity. Too few computers for kids negates the collaborative nature of play and technology. LCL must create a separate space for kids that allows for stroller parking, Parents/Caregivers to be nearby, and access to appropriate reading and digital sources/games that create learning year-round.

Cultural activities

Recommendation: LCL needs to integrate its collections and programs to support or encourage all cultural activities in the County. It needs to separate learning programming from cultural program planning and work in partnership with cultural institutions to cross-support each-other's goals.

Tourism activities

Recommendation: Some libraries are jumping on the community hub strategies linked to local trails and culture walks. There is an opportunity for LCL to link itself to a number of activities in the County and City that support tourism and would allow it to grow with all of the attendant benefits of that. Ensuring that community information is fully available in branches is an easy fix with right-sized display space.

Employment and Adult Learning

Recommendation: The library space and the Adult Learning space (and partnerships with the Employment Centre) need to anchor the downtown service corridor. This requires cooperation and scheduling and the concept that the program and computer spaces need to be planned as a on- service dynamic without regard to organizational barriers. This is to revitalize downtown foot traffic as well as to create an economic and employment program that benefits the needs of Sarnia and Lambton County residents.

Supporting local business

Recommendation: The library needs a program to align with the key needs of Sarnia and Lambton County businesses. While this includes employment training strategies, it also includes ensuring that key business and social/cultural institutions and recreational sites / programs are promoted County residents and beyond. The library can create shared programming to promote awareness of chefs, inns, stores, spas, museums, and recreational services in the library and start to create a community source of social engagement as well as tourism awareness.

Recommendation: One key strategy is for the library to create and maintain a major Community Calendar connected to social media delivery systems. In this way, all activities for residents and visitors could find them in one place to look and have them pushed to them according to their interests. While the Town is working on this the LCL should be a major partner and contributor to the calendar and the calendar should be promoted from the LCL website and social media presences.

Technology and Internet access

Recommendation: Internet access is a key issue for Sarnia and Lambton County' residents and the library is a key player in ensuring that Sarnia and Lambton County residents have access there. The library's technology foot print is too small and it needs more space for technology use and training. For obvious reasons, it is wise to create a separate space for kids and teens/adults. It is a major trend in libraries that STEM skills and employment skills development are cost-effectively supported by public libraries as both learning and entertaining training.

Recommendation: The library needs space for BYOD – Bring Your Own Device. With the presence of iPad based schools as well as many people requiring Wi-Fi for their smartphones, tablets and laptops, LCL must accommodate these users of the library's connectivity and peripherals.

Management and Strategy

Staff Training and Policies

The Main Branch has a very different staff culture versus the other branches in Sarnia. Village branches appear to be far friendlier and more user focused. It also has a far different mandate given its downtown location. It serves some different challenging communities and sees higher rates of indigenous populations, serves higher rate of economically challenged communities and people in poverty. It also encounters more issues of mental illness and homelessness or people in precarious housing. Over time it appears that some staff have developed 'policies' and 'protocols' that have fossilized and become very black and white in their implementation. Staff need training on:

- City and County services for referrals
- Social work protocols (Consideration should be given that social workers offices be housed in the main library and deliver regular service(s) there.)
- The law of public institutions
- Protocol options beyond just calling in the police as the only threat response to issues.
- Dealing with civic behaviours that may be disobedient, alcoholic, drug-induced, mental health or whatever and how to remain safe but help the user.
- Dealing with educational issues like autism, literacy, and curriculum goals, etc.
- All of this should be combined with the installation of security monitoring cameras to ensure a safer work environment.

Adult Learning Centre integration – anchors on either end of Downtown strip.

Recommendation: An Adult Learning & Employment Centre should be more tightly integrated on planning and programming activities with the LCL. LCL should cross-license online adult learning courses (such as Lynda.com and Gale Courses) for both entities and cross-market the opportunities to develop employable skills to Sarnia and Lambton County residents. Adult Learning services are a great way to maintain and develop a solid workforce, help local business, get people off of social assistance, attract government funds, and help to maintain lower unemployment rates.

Increased online learning opportunities in concert with the Adult Learning Centre and Employment Centre.

Recommendation: LCL should cross-license online adult learning courses (such as Lynda.com and Gale Courses) for both entities and cross-market the opportunities to develop employable skills to Sarnia and Lambton County residents.

Increased Co-programming with key major partners

Recommendation: The LCL should co-lead on developing a framework for cooperation and co-development of programs for the cultural and recreational entities in Sarnia and Lambton County beyond the program guide. There is too much competition for available dates and weekends which is not meeting the real need of developing a community engagement and tourism dynamic for Sarnia and Lambton County. Co-marketing and calendaring would benefit

all institutions equitably and build better and more dynamic activities for residents and guests in Sarnia and Lambton County.

Partnerships and relationships within the municipality and with other social clubs and cultural institutions.

Recommendation: Formal partnerships should be developed to increase activities of LCL outside of the library walls as well as to increase activities of partners in the improved library spaces. The library should use its pop-up ‘awning’ more often to be providing programs and other activities where the events are. A Pop-Up library (one where a small range of library services and programs as well as promotion can take place) is a good strategy for placing the LCL in front of residents where they are when a full ‘branch’ is not indicated but events, PRC programs, another activities generate a critical mass of residents. The library should offer book drops and services at the PRC on a regular schedule associated with targeted groups already at the venue (sports books for hockey teams, seniors reading clubs, etc.) These could help revitalize parks need all branches.

Addition of Cultural and Tourism activities

Recommendation: Seek to align your shovel ready LCL buildings with provincial and federal infrastructure funding and policy initiatives (Tourism, Trails, Culture, Community Hubs, Heritage, Libraries, Broadband, Employment, Training & Education, Indigenous, etc.). This funding is available for creative and innovative communities once you are prepared to go forward with your plan(s). Sarnia and Lambton County can benefit from province-wide strategies to create more jobs and visitors to Ontario’s communities in the culture, heritage, tourism (trails), education, and community hubs initiatives. One new grant announced in summer 2016 is the grant for Heritage restorations in the new Culture Strategy.

Integrated Planning

Recommendation: As Sarnia and Lambton County moves forward with its key strategies to grow the County, make quality living, attract young people and families, ensure connectivity, develop great parks and recreation programming, ensure that these planning activities are integrated across the board and include the library staff management. Break down the silos. Tighter integration with Culture, economic, social, business, employment, anti-poverty, and learning programming is needed.

Appendices

- A Online Survey Report
- B Community Focus Group Report
- C Staff Focus Group Report
- D Partner Focus Groups Report
- E Peer Group Statistics Report
- F Trends Report - Opportunities for Innovation & Community
Growth and Engagement
- G (Initial) Facilities Report
- H Functional Program
- I Existing Facility Plans
- J Proposed Scheme Plans