



Committee of the Whole Report For the Meeting of June 24, 2021

To: Committee of the Whole **Date:** June 15, 2021
From: Thomas Soulliere, Director of Parks, Recreation and Facilities
Subject: Project Plan for Central Library Feasibility Study

RECOMMENDATION

That Council approve the proposed project plan for the Central Library Feasibility Study as detailed in this report.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Council approved the redevelopment of the Central Library in the 2019-2022 Strategic Plan, along with funding for a feasibility study in the 2021 Financial Plan.

The Greater Victoria Public Library (GVPL) provides services at 12 library branches, and through online and mobile services, to 380,000 residents across 10 municipalities in the Capital Regional District. The James Bay | s^weŋj^wəŋ təŋəx^w neighbourhood branch and the Central Library branch are in the City of Victoria.

The existing Central Library branch was established in 1980 at 735 Broughton Street within a site comprised of two strata lots. The Central Library occupies one strata lot jointly owned by the City of Victoria, District of Saanich, Town of View Royal, District of Oak Bay, and Township of Esquimalt. The other strata lot is owned by the Province and is used for ministry offices.

The impetus for library renewal is rooted in the GVPL's 2010 Facilities Master Plan. The subsequent 2020 Regional Service Delivery Plan identified a need to modernize and expand the Central Library's footprint to meet the service area's growing needs. An updated or new facility is anticipated to offer enhanced programs and services, improve accessibility and benefit all residents in Greater Victoria.

The first step toward redevelopment of the Central Library is to complete a feasibility study that will evaluate the library operation's functional requirements and the technical and financial implications of redeveloping the existing site or a new location. An output of the study will be an assessment of the options and relative value of each. Upon completion, staff will report to Council and confirm direction on the preferred redevelopment methodology.

PURPOSE

The purpose of this report is to provide Council with an overview of the proposed project plan to redevelop the Central Library, as well as progress made to date.

BACKGROUND

The City of Victoria has supported the GVPL system since 1966. Governed by the Library Board, the GVPL operates within the parameters of the *Library Operating Agreement*. This agreement outlines the terms for the 10 regional municipalities who contribute funding to the GVPL for operating costs associated with the delivery of services. In addition, participating local governments are responsible for capital investment for library facilities within their respective municipal boundaries.

The library has occupied its current location for 31 years. Constructed in 1980, the library moved to its current location in 1990 as an interim solution when it had outgrown its previous location at 794 Yates Street. Located at 735 Broughton Street, the Central Library is the largest branch, with approximately 45,000 square feet of space. The facility contains specialized collections and resources, study rooms, community meeting rooms, administrative offices, and a public parkade.

The Central Library is in a building also referred to as the Waddington Complex. The commercial strata building is divided into two strata lots, one lot is owned by the Provincial government (78%) and the other lot is owned by five municipal property partners (22%). Joint ownership of the Library's strata lot includes: City of Victoria (68%); District of Saanich (19%); Town of View Royal (5%); District of Oak Bay (4%); and Township of Esquimalt (4%). These five municipalities cost-share the annual repair and maintenance expenses of the Central Library property. All 10 municipalities that participate in the GVPL's regional program contribute towards the cost of approximately 13,500 square feet of administrative office space located within the Central Library. A Strata Corporation was established in 1996 to manage the maintenance and repair of the property. The Strata is comprised of representatives from the Province and the City.

In 2015, a condition assessment evaluated the remaining life of the building's systems. Although the facility has been well maintained over the years, the assessment confirmed that many systems are anticipated to require typical life cycle replacement in the next 10 years. In 2020, the Strata approved a seismic assessment and an updated condition assessment to quantify risks and the projected investment needs. Under the Strata bylaws, the Province is responsible to pay for the majority (80%) of the costs to complete these studies, and the City is responsible for the balance (20%). The final report for these technical assessments will be complete in Q3 2023 and will inform the future planning opportunities for the facility.

The program requirements for library services are another important input for this project. In recent years, the GVPL has undertaken several studies and consultations to assess the region's needs, service levels and program requirements. The studies considered projected population growth, neighbourhood demographics, accessibility, library collections, and programming trends.

The existing facility has significant constraints in its current configuration. However, GVPL's Regional Library Service Delivery report identified that the Central Library is easily accessible, supported by primary transportation corridors, key bus routes, active transportation networks, and a public parkade. However, the GVPL has determined that the branch size is insufficient to meet the region's service needs. According to the GVPL, the facility's gross area (45,000 square feet)

would need to grow by approximately 17,000 - 23,000 square feet to meet future population projections.

ISSUES & ANALYSIS

This renewal project is complex given the variety of interests and stakeholders involved. The City is leading the feasibility study and ultimately funding the future design and construction. The GVPL, as the facility operator, is responsible for ensuring program needs are well articulated and that outcomes align with business requirements. In addition, the Province, as the majority owner of the Strata at the current site, is a critical partner in future planning and development of the building.

The City has developed a plan to determine the requirements, implications, and potential partnerships to redevelop the Central Library. The project roadmap shown below outlines the proposed project phases required to advance the project through the planning and implementation process. Assuming funding is available for construction, the entire project is estimated to take approximately five years to complete (2021 - 2026).

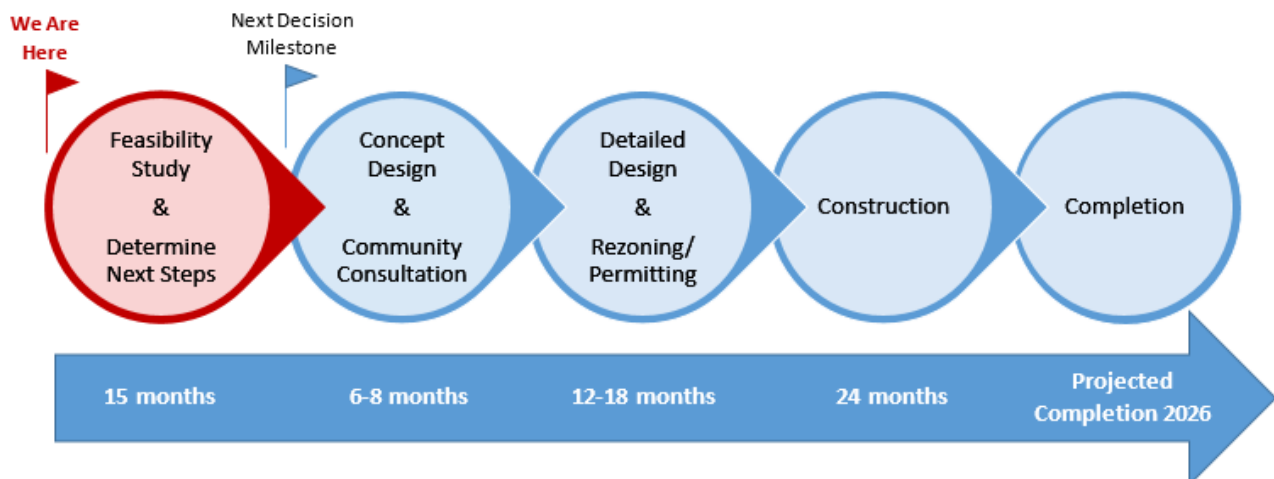


Figure 1: Proposed project phases and estimated duration.

The City's project initiation work has been completed and established a foundation for the project. The activities included research, identifying stakeholder interests and requirements, determining roles and responsibilities and a timeline. A high-level zoning analysis and an environmental assessment were also completed.

In addition, staff initiated discussions with representatives of the Province to understand their long-term objectives for the site. Discussions with the GVPL explored service delivery requirements and functional program needs. All stakeholders have committed to collaborating on the exploration of future opportunities for the facility.

Feasibility Study

The next step in the project plan focuses on the feasibility of renewing and expanding the library in its current location, as well as the implications associated with moving to a new site. Given that the City is obligated to pay its share of capital renewal costs for the existing building, the City will align this exploratory work with efforts planned by the Province. This collaborative approach will utilize resources and manage risk in an efficient manner. Once this step is complete, the City will understand what the existing site can accommodate and the costs and benefits of using this

location. In effect, the redevelopment of the existing site will provide a benchmark against which other options, such as relocation to another site, would be compared against in a value-for-money analysis. This approach is similar to the process used for the City's Fire Hall #1 replacement project.

As noted above, the feasibility study will provide the necessary information for the City and partners to determine the resourcing, scope and schedule for the future renewal of the Central Library. The study will specifically address the following:

- 1) The asset management requirements, proposed facility upgrades and associated costs;
- 2) The potential expansion of the library on the existing site and financial implications;
- 3) Partner responsibilities and opportunities;
- 4) A value-for-money analysis for alternative development options; and,
- 5) A recommended approach, as well as implementation plan, for future project phases.

GVPL will provide the service model and functional program requirements, and the Province is responsible for the seismic study and condition assessment of the strata property. The City will provide project management services. The GVPL and the Province will contribute resources to deliver their components of work.

The feasibility phase is anticipated to require approximately 15 months to complete (Q2 2021 – Q3 2022). Upon completion, the study will be presented to Council for review and a determination of next steps.

Project Budget

The 2021 Financial Plan includes a budget of \$200,000 for this project. The project has not incurred any expenses to date and the proposed allocation of resources is outlined below.

Central Library Branch Renewal Budget (Phase 1)	
Feasibility Study	\$150,000
Legal, soft costs, project contingency	\$50,000
Total	\$200,000

Stakeholder Engagement

The feasibility study will be informed by technical assessments and studies, as well as operational and service needs identified by the GVPL through previous strategic planning and consultations. Once the feasibility study is complete and a redevelopment plan is approved, the City and GVPL will engage the community on the library design, programming plans, and proposed amenities.

Risk Management

The City Project Management Framework provides guidance on the approach to risk management for infrastructure projects. This model ensures that risks are identified and that mitigation responses are developed throughout the life of the project. A project steering committee has been established to monitor the risk registry and provide guidance as required to address issues that may arise relating to cost management, scope, legal, and communications.

OPTIONS & IMPACTS

Pending Council approval of the proposed project plan, staff will initiate the procurement of consulting services to undertake the feasibility study. Progress updates will be provided through the triannual reporting process until the Study is presented to Council.

Accessibility Impact Statement

This plan supports the goals of the Accessibility Framework to “provide all residents and visitors with equitable access to municipal programs, and services”, as well as to “systematically remove and prevent barriers in public parks, open spaces and plazas, mobility systems and City-owned buildings and facilities.” The indicative design component of the feasibility study will, at a high-level, seek to remove barriers present in the existing facility and improve access to library programs and services.

2019 – 2022 Strategic Plan

The 2019-2022 Strategic Plan, Strategic Objective 5. Health, Well-Being and a Welcoming City, includes direction to develop a new Central Library.

Impacts to Financial Plan

Funding of \$200,000 for this project was approved by Council as part of the 2021 Financial Plan. No additional costs are anticipated at this time.

Official Community Plan Consistency Statement

Redevelopment of the Central Library is consistent with the following objectives and goals outlined in the Official Community Plan:

- 14.45 - Work with partners in the public and private sectors to develop a new Core District Public Library in the Downtown Core Area.
- 15.15 - Work closely with community centres, seniors centres, community organizations, the public library, citizens and other partners to seek innovative opportunities to sustain, enhance and deliver community-based recreational, educational, cultural and social programs.
- 16.17 - Maintain and enhance the use of community centres and a Core District Public Library as facilities for arts and culture programs.

CONCLUSIONS

Council approval of this project plan represents the first step toward redevelopment of the Central Library for the long-term benefit of residents and visitors, in alignment with the City’s Strategic Plan. Following completion of the feasibility study, staff will present to Council for review of the options and implications of future phases of this infrastructure project.

Respectfully submitted,

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Report accepted and recommended by the City Manager