

# WHY DOES GUELPH NEED A NEW MAIN LIBRARY?

## How did we get to this juncture?

In 1902 philanthropist [Andrew Carnegie](#) donated \$20,000 to the Royal City to build a public library at the intersection of Norfolk and Paisley. In classic Carnegie style, it had six columns, a dome, stained glass windows and a central staircase - a landmark in downtown Guelph.



With an ever growing population, by 1945 it became apparent that the Carnegie building was too small, and had serious structural issues. In 1964 the much loved old library was demolished and a new 19,000 sq. ft. building at 100 Norfolk Street opened costing \$552,002. By 1975 the GPL board realized the library was again too small and a 10,000 sq. ft. addition was constructed at a cost of \$284,182.

In 2011, after 45 years of heavy usage, the GPL board contracted for a [building and functional plan](#) to get a new main library “shovel ready.” In 2014, the library became part of the Baker Street Re-Development project.



Public libraries provide a diverse collection of resources that enrich, educate, and entertain,

but why do we need a new library here in Guelph?

1. The most frequent complaint about 100 Norfolk is the lack of community space to meet and study. When built, the main library was designed to house 80,000 volumes and no public computers or study space. Currently it houses over 243,000 volumes, 42 public access computers and very limited study space. For a community the size of Guelph the recommended [standard size](#) of a main library in the Great Lakes region is .60 square feet per capita. The Guelph Public Library is currently .47 square feet capita. The library is too small.

2. The second most frequent complaint is the lack of parking for vehicles, bicycles and strollers. However, the library is “landlocked”, there are no options to expand parking on the street, underground or to purchase adjacent property. The library needs more parking.

3. Over 29 million people have used the main library in the last 49 years; it is the most used recreational facility in the city. So it's no surprise that the building is simply worn out and getting more and more expensive to maintain with deteriorating mechanical and electrical systems. The new library needs to be more cost effective, environmentally sustainable, plus respectful of the land and our environment.

4. The awkward layout of the main library makes access by seniors, preschoolers, and the disabled very difficult. By necessity resources and services are located on all three floors, only accessible by a staircase or a very small elevator. The new library needs to be open and flexible to welcome all customers whether they are walking, wheeling or riding.

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5. Currently the city's [archives](#) and local history records are shoehorned into a small storage room in the basement of the library. A well-appointed local history room would assure that our children and children's children will know where they are going, because they will know where they came from, the Royal City!

6. Public library buildings are catalysts for development and commercial activity. Canadian communities are using the public library as a way to create more vibrant and resilient public spaces that attract a steady stream of visitors. Communities such as [Surrey, British Columbia](#) where the public library is the cornerstone of the city centre, or the [Hamilton central branch](#) which is part of the Farmers Market are great examples of libraries being economic generators. In Guelph, main library foot traffic is expected to be 2,000 people per day within 2 years of opening which will significantly increase commercial activity in the cafes, retail shops and businesses at the north end of Wyndham Street.

7. A downtown [public library](#) defines a city's character. Think of the amazing stone [lions \(Patience and Fortitude\)](#) guarding the [New York Public Library](#), the iconic [Vancouver Public Library](#), the spectacular [Hespeler Public Library](#) wrapped in glass or the historic [Owen Sound and North Grey Union Public Library](#) connected to the [Tom Thomson Art Gallery](#). These public libraries are civic landmarks that reflect the community's character and commitment to learning, innovation, and well-being. A new main library would define and enhance Guelph.

8. A new main library would improve the quality of life in Guelph. It would be Guelph's "living room", encouraging children and teens to read,

seniors to continue learning, and for the rest of us, a fabulous place to use and enjoy.

The rise of new information and communications technologies has given Canadian public libraries a new life, packed with innovative services and community engagement. A new main library in Guelph will support this transition, build on our rich heritage, be the economic engine needed to revitalize the downtown core and open the door to Guelph's future. For all these reasons and many, many more, Guelph needs a new main library.



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