



Background Report

To: To the Mayor and Members of Brant County Council
From: Kelly Bernstein, CEO, County of Brant Public Library
Date: September 24, 2019
Subject: Paris Library Branch Site Selection
Purpose: For approval

Request for Endorsement

At its meeting of September 10, 2019, the County of Brant Public Library Board passed a resolution *“that the chair appear before Council to advise on the Library Board’s wish that the new Paris main branch library and administrative centre be located at the 28 Mechanic Street site, and to seek County support to partner on applications for any available grant opportunities”*.

The County of Brant Public Library Board requests that Council designates the site of 28 Mechanic St, Paris as the location of the new Paris branch library.

Strategic Priorities

Construction of a new Paris branch library is supported by the Library’s Strategic Plan, and addresses two of the County’s key strategic priorities:

4. Reliable Infrastructure – Optimize existing assets and develop new assets to support the current and future needs of the community.
5. Healthy, Safe, and Engaged Citizens – Offer welcoming and inclusive programs, services, facilities, opportunities and events to enhance every resident’s quality of life.

Financial Considerations

The projected net cost of a new Paris branch library is \$7,100,000. Endorsement of the Library Board’s preferred site would allow for a fulsome design study, which will provide detailed costing of the project. A capital budget plan will be brought to Council for consideration.

Executive Summary

Due to changing factors, the Library Board expanded the scope of its site selection study to include three additional possibilities: expanding on site, partnering with a developer/investor on a leased facility, building the new library at 28 Mechanic St, Paris (current OPP Detachment site). A Site Selection Study by Chamberlain Architects found expanding on site to be unfeasible and undesirable due to cost and heritage impact. Partnering with a developer/investor received significant public opposition. The 28 Mechanic St. site would allow for a range of design options.

After considering the consultant's information and hearing public input, the Library Board has chosen 28 Mechanic St. as its preferred site, and requests Council's endorsement. The projected net capital cost of the project is \$7,100,000. Project costs would be refined in a design study, and could be mitigated by current infrastructure grant opportunities.

Report

Facility Needs Assessment

In 2016 the Library Board contracted dmA Planning & Management Services to conduct a needs assessment. The Needs Assessment Background Report concluded that the existing Paris Branch Library located at 12 William Street does not meet current building code and AODA accessibility requirements for a public building. It also does not provide the usable space requirements of a functional, modern branch library.

At that time, expansion of the existing facility to address the building code and accessibility shortcomings and to accommodate future growth in patronage was deemed to be difficult or impossible on the current site. The report recommended that a new site should be secured and the project put into motion.

The Library Board then engaged Chamberlain Architects to conduct a Facility Planning Study. It found that, to meet population growth demands, and to provide a full range of services consistent with the needs of current and future library users, a 20,000 ft² building would be required.

Site Selection Study

In 2017 Chamberlain Architects was engaged to complete a site selection study. Four sites in and around downtown Paris were evaluated, and ultimately the Library Board chose the Syl Apps redevelopment as its preferred site.

In a presentation to Council on October 30, 2018, Site Selection Committee Chair Marilyn Sewell stated that the Library Board's motivations in selecting the Syl Apps site were to:

- Take advantage of the natural beauty of the area and the rivers in the design
- Provide a central location [that] is most equitable for library users

In its Strategic Plan, the Library Board also committed to being agile and to create flexible and dynamic facilities that allow [the library] to adapt as community needs change.

Expanded Site Selection Study 2019

Since then, multiple factors have caused the Library Board to re-evaluate its site selection:

- Through work on concept designs for the Syl Apps site, it became clear that any aspect over the river or advantage of the natural area would be problematic to realize
- Became aware that 28 Mechanic St. might be a viable option, but hadn't been included in the Site Selection Study
- Through community consultation on the development of the Downtown Master Plan, reaffirmed the community's desire to keep the main library in downtown Paris, particularly in the downtown core

County staff requested that the Library Board also re-consider possible expansion on the current site, and that a partnership with a local developer/investor be considered. In response, the Library Board re-established its Site Selection Committee, and re-engaged Chamberlain Architects, with the direction to expand the scope of the Site Selection Study to include both scenarios, and the 28 Mechanic St. site.

Expansion at 12 William St.

Chamberlain Architects developed 3 concept designs for expansion on the existing library site:

- Building up on current footprint
- Building up and slightly out to the side
- Expanding into lot next door

Only option 3, expanding into the lot next door, provided the square footage needed. The project would involve purchasing and demolishing the neighbouring house. The extensive renovations required to the existing building would leave little of the heritage library structure intact, and would involve high project costs.

Developer/Investor Partnership

A local developer indicated interest in investing in a build-to-suit space for the Library, offering a customized design. The space would be leased on a long-term basis, with the Library's operating budget increased to assume the lease costs. In this scenario the Library would not own the site.

28 Mechanic St.

Chamberlain Architects developed 3 concept designs for the site at 28 Mechanic St.:

- A one-storey building
- A two-storey building with parking
- A three-storey building and maximized parking space

The concepts presented indicated that a 20,000ft² building would be possible on the site. Two- and three-storey buildings would allow for proportionately more parking space. Retaining portions of the existing building could be possible, subject to site review.

Community Consultation

A public meeting was held September 9, 2019, to invite comments and feedback on the three scenarios. Facebook advertising reached 2,261 people, and 44 attended in person. Chamberlain Architects presented a summary of its findings, and large diagrams of each scenario and concept were displayed. Attendees were invited to leave written comments at each display. Comments indicated general support for the 28 Mechanic St. site, concern about the heritage impact of expansion at 12 William St., and unanimous opposition to a developer/investor-owned library.

The Site Selection Committee reviewed all comments received, in addition to hearing Chamberlain Architect's recommendations.

Projected Capital Costs

Chamberlain Architects provided an order of magnitude budget estimate in its Facility Planning Study, indicating that the total project cost of a 20,000 ft² facility would be \$8,206,000. The Site Selection Report indicated that flood mitigation would add as much as 50% to the construction cost. For planning purposes, a cost of \$500/ft² has been assumed.

Total Project Cost	\$10,000,000
Revenue	
Development Charges	(\$1,400,000)
Sale of 12 William St.	(\$500,000)
Fundraising contributions	(\$1,000,000)
Net Capital Cost	\$7,100,000

As the 12 William St. property currently belongs to the County, sales revenue is only assumed. Sale or re-purposing of the property is Council's decision.

Library Board Decision

At its regular meeting on September 10, 2019, the Library Board considered the information and design concepts received from Chamberlain Architects, as well as all feedback from the community consultation event. The Library Board voted unanimously to select 28 Mechanic St. Paris as its preferred site, and instructed the Board Chair to seek Council endorsement.