



## MANAGEMENT REPORT

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Meeting Date: January 24, 2018  
TO: Library Board  
FROM: Christina de Castell, Director, Collections & Technology  
**SUBJECT: Update on Facilities Master Plan**

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### **SUMMARY**

This report provides an update on the Facilities Master Plan strategic initiative, and outlines the Branch Location Decision Framework that the team has developed and tested with input from Managers, Directors, the Board, and the City of Vancouver's Planning department.

### **PURPOSE**

This report is for discussion.

### **POLICY**

The Facilities Master Plan is initiative 3.4 in the Vancouver Public Library Strategic Plan, VPL 2020, supporting the Access & Equity outcome and Patron Centred Experience goal.

### **CHIEF LIBRARIAN REMARKS**

The Directors Group has reviewed the Branch Location Decision Framework outlined in the Discussion section of this report. We welcome any further comments from the Board as we finalize the criteria.

### **BACKGROUND**

The purpose of the Facilities Master Plan is to support VPL's planning and decision-making for its physical facilities over the next 30 years. This initiative started in June 2017 with team members from Policy & Planning, Neighbourhood Services and Facilities & Purchasing. The

team also engaged an external consultant from MODUS Planning, Design and Engagement to provide urban planning and engagement expertise.

Specific deliverables for the Facilities Master Plan are as follows:

1. **VPL Facility Model.** A model describing the types of facilities VPL's network will comprise over the next 30 years, and key characteristics of each – Central, Regional, Neighbourhood, Express.
2. **Branch Location Decision Framework.** A set of guiding principles, requirements and preferences that will guide VPL's decision-making on branch locations - used to assess new branch opportunities as well as existing branch locations.
3. **Strategic Priorities for VPL Facilities.** An assessment of VPL neighbourhoods and branches using the Decision Framework, outlining key priorities for investment in new and re-developed branches to 2030.
4. **Total Space Needs.** An estimate of the total square footage needed over the next 30 years and high-level allocation of additional space across city areas.
5. **Management Framework.** A framework to evolve the Facilities Master Plan, so that it remains relevant as City and public library trends and organizational priorities change over time.

The project has delivered the following key accomplishments to date:

**Research & Analysis.** The team conducted secondary research and quantitative analysis on VPL's branch users, existing locations, total space compared to that of other public libraries, public library facility models and location guidelines, public library facility planning trends and City of Vancouver population trends. This work has resulted in an important set of insights to inform the development of the Facilities Master Plan.

**Public consultation.** From July to August 2017, we conducted primary research via a Talk Vancouver survey to gather input from library users on topics such as branch size, ease of access, location convenience and service hours. The survey provided valuable patron feedback on VPL facilities at the individual branch level and overall.

**Workshops with Managers, Directors and the Board.** On July 26, 2017 we gathered group input on two topics from Directors and the Board: VPL's total space needs to 2050 and VPL's future facility model. From these sessions, participants agreed that the future facility model for VPL would include four elements: Central, Regional, Neighbourhood and Express branches.

In November 2017, we leveraged the collective knowledge and experience of Managers, Directors, and the Board through two workshops to inform a draft set of branch location criteria for assessing new branch opportunities and existing branch locations. Both workshops were well-received and yielded valuable input, enabling the project team to revise the criteria into a broader decision framework encompassing guiding principles, requirements, and preferences.

Key themes gained from the workshops were as follows:

- Clarify the role of the City of Vancouver in our plan – identify where it makes sense for the City to lead and for the library to respond, e.g. medium to long-term city plans, population and demographic forecasts, neighbourhoods where community plans are underway, etc.
- Reflect a balance between present and future needs, e.g. importance of grocery and other retail locations, importance of on-site parking.
- Clarify audience definitions – reflect a broader set of demographic groups that are priorities for library services; include all people who live, work, and visit the area.
- Clarify the process of how the criteria will be used: must-haves vs. nice-to-haves

**Testing the Decision Framework.** In January 2018, the project team, with the support of the Neighbourhood Services Managers, ran a trial assessment of the framework against a select set of VPL neighbourhoods and facilities to gauge how the framework performed in real-life scenarios. The framework was further refined, largely by making the criteria more specific and measurable.

**Input from City Departments:** The City of Vancouver’s Planning Department reviewed the framework. They are supportive of the framework, and provided valuable input on aligning a few criteria more closely with their assessment methods. We are currently working to incorporate these enhancements.

## **DISCUSSION**

Given all the inputs received and incorporated to date, the project team has updated the Branch Location Decision Framework, below (for reference, original criteria presented at the Board Workshop on November 22, 2017 is in Appendix A). We are seeking feedback from the Board as it is being finalized. The Decision Framework will become an element of the final Facilities Master Plan, which the Community Relations, Planning & Development Committee and Board will receive in May 2018.

## Branch Location Decision Framework

### Guiding Principles:

- **VPL will continue to align its facility planning (including its facility model) with the City of Vancouver’s medium to long-term plans.** The City’s forecasts of neighbourhood-level population growth, densification, and demographic changes, as well as the City’s plans for community hubs, areas where they are undertaking community plans, and creation of new neighbourhoods, are key to determining priorities for library locations and range of services offered.
- **VPL’s facilities will reflect a range of location characteristics depending on the population’s needs for service within the local area.** While some library users (for example, families with young children) would prefer locations close to community centres, others find it most convenient to visit libraries located in the vicinity of retail shopping districts. In other cases, the library will best serve a community by locating in an area designated for economic revitalization. We will not deploy a one-size-fits-all approach but will seek what best serves the local population.
- **VPL’s facilities will be built to house the breadth and depth of library services required by current and future populations who will live, work, and use services in the local area.** The library space will be sufficiently sized to meet present needs, and will allow for maximum flexibility in space usage to meet future needs and keep pace with library trends.
- **VPL’s facilities will be easily accessible to the neighbourhood populations they are intended to serve.** Access will be optimized based on walking, cycling and the use of public transit – consistent with the Green Transportation goal of the Greenest City Action Plan.

### Neighbourhood Criteria:

#### Requirements

1. The library’s neighbourhood meets, or is forecast to meet in the next 10 years, the minimum population threshold - taking into account people who live, work, and use services in the area, i.e. 10,000 population for a Neighbourhood Branch and 50,000 population for a Regional Branch, per the Facility Model.
2. There is no other branch to serve the neighbourhood within 2 km.

## **Preferences**

1. The neighbourhood is forecast to experience above average population growth and/or job growth in the next 25 years.
2. The neighbourhood will reflect demographic groups that are priorities for library services – for example, families with young children, seniors, newcomers, economically vulnerable populations, etc.
3. The neighbourhood may not meet the population criteria but geographic and other physical barriers make it difficult to access the next closest library, i.e. highways, large hills.
4. The City of Vancouver has identified that the library can play a vital role in providing needed services to the neighbourhood's population and can serve to strengthen community health and well-being.

## **Site Criteria:**

### **Requirements**

1. The branch site is highly visible or can otherwise be easily located by visitors, i.e. on major pedestrian street, corner location, street level frontage with windows, ability to have prominent signage, etc.
2. The branch site is located in close proximity to retail services such as major grocery stores, i.e. approximately 5 min walk (400 m) to major services.
3. The branch site is easily accessible for most neighbourhood residents via public transit, walking and/or biking (*specifics to come based on the City's advice on transportation planning*).
4. The branch is a sufficient size to deliver the full range of services needed by the current and future population who live, work and use services in the local area, i.e. 10K to 20K sq. ft. for a Neighbourhood Branch, 25K to 35K sq. ft. for a Regional Branch, per the Facility Model.

### **Preferences**

1. The branch site is physically co-located with, or in close proximity (1 to 2 blocks) to, partners who provide compatible services to the community. Examples may be: recreational, cultural, or educational facilities; housing or social services.
2. The branch site is in a high pedestrian traffic area, with easy pedestrian access.

3. The entire branch space is on one level (ideally at street level) to facilitate visibility, patron circulation and library operations within the space.
4. The branch site has future expansion opportunities where the local area population is projected to grow substantially in the next 10 to 20 years.

### **TIMELINE**

The next steps on the project plan are to finalize the decision framework, and then to apply it to complete an assessment of VPL neighbourhoods and branches, identifying key priorities for investment in new and re-developed branches to 2030. We plan to bring these priorities to the Directors Group and the Board for discussion in February.

In early March, the project team will complete the remaining deliverables - an approximation of VPL's total space needs over the next 30 years and the management framework, which is intended to guide the use and updating of the Facilities Master Plan over time. The project team will draft the Facilities Master Plan by the end of March, with review and revisions during the month of April. We anticipate that the final document will be ready for the Community Relations, Planning and Development Committee and the VPL Board in May.

### **FINAL REMARKS**

The Facilities Master Plan will support planning and decision-making for VPL's physical facilities over the next 30 years. It is a foundational strategic initiative on VPL's 2020 Operating Plan, to be delivered in support of the Patron-Centred Experience goal. Through this plan, we aim to apply lessons learned from VPL's own collective experience and apply best practices from libraries around the world – so that we can shape the future of VPL's facilities in ways aligned with the evolving needs of the communities we serve.

**APPENDIX A**  
**DRAFT BRANCH LOCATION DECISION-MAKING CRITERIA**  
**From Board Workshop on November 22, 2017**

**DRAFT: NEIGHBOURHOOD CRITERIA**

1. The neighbourhood (or local service area) to be served by the library branch meets the minimum population threshold for the type of branch, i.e. 10,000 population for a Neighbourhood Branch; 50,000 population for a Regional Branch.
2. The neighbourhood is experiencing strong population growth and/or population densification.
3. The neighbourhood is in need of economic revitalization, and the library can serve to attract people and encourage growth of services in the local area.
4. The neighbourhood reflects demographic groups that are in high need of library services – for example, families with young children, newcomers, seniors, low income/low education population, etc.
5. There is no other branch to serve the neighbourhood within 4 - 5 km.
6. Without this branch, most neighbourhood residents must travel more than 15 minutes to reach a library branch (by foot, transit or car).
7. The neighbourhood is divided by geographic and other physical barriers that isolate it from the next closest library, i.e. highways, rivers, large hills.

**DRAFT: SITE CRITERIA**

1. The branch site is highly visible in an area with abundant walk-by and drive-by traffic.
2. The branch site is in close proximity to commercial services such as grocery stores, cafes, restaurants, etc.
3. The branch site is co-located with recreational, cultural or educational facilities where partners share a compatible vision for service.
4. The branch site is situated in a destination setting which is regularly visited by all members of the community.
5. The branch site is well-served by public transit, enabling people from within and outside the neighbourhood to access the library.
6. The branch site is located on a major thoroughfare with good road access and parking.
7. The branch site is in a high pedestrian traffic area, with easy pedestrian access.
8. The entire branch space is at street level, with windows to recognize the function of the building.
9. The branch has a separate entrance (if the library is housed in a shared facility).

10. The branch site has future expansion opportunities where the local area population is projected to grow substantially.
11. The branch space is open and square or rectangular rather than being irregular in shape.

#### **DRAFT: SIZE CRITERIA**

1. The branch's total space is within the square footage range for the type of branch (i.e. 5-20K sq ft for a Neighbourhood Branch or 20-65K sq ft for a Regional Branch).
2. The branch is a sufficient size to meet the current needs of the people who live, work and use services in the local area.
3. The branch is a sufficient size to meet the future needs of the people who live, work and use services in the local area.