



December 6, 2023

Joan Thomson
Chief Administration Officer
City of Stratford

Dear Joan,

It is with great enthusiasm that I write to you regarding the Grand Trunk Community Hub. Community Hubs are the lifeblood of a community, offering a diverse array of services from health and social support, to recreation, environmental engagement and education, all seamlessly integrated within a single facility. In many ways, this description perfectly encapsulates the essence of public libraries, and in our case, the Stratford Public Library stands as a testament to this alignment.

Libraries serve as vibrant community hubs where people gather, to learn, share, work, reflect, study, collaborate and to socialize, all of this without any financial barriers. The Stratford Public Library is no exception witnessing over 10,000 in-person visitors every month, each with a unique purpose. Our library is held in high regard both within the community and among our peer libraries, celebrated for its innovative programs and being the second most attended library in Ontario within our population range of 30,000 to 50,000 residents. We have cultivated partnerships with numerous local agencies, including the Stratford Perth Museum, the Connections Centre and Perth Community Futures Development Corporation to expand our reach and enriching the breadth of services we provide. Our MakerSpace, though small in size, exudes boundless creativity and serves individuals of all ages, offering invaluable support to entrepreneurs in Stratford. However, we've reached a critical impasse - not due to a lack of resources or staff, but, rather, a severe limitation of space.

In 2022, the Stratford Public Library Board commissioned Lemay to conduct a comprehensive space needs assessment, reinforcing what the Ventin Group's 2003 study concluded: **the library's current 12,472 net square feet is glaringly inadequate for a community the size of Stratford.** According to industry standards, we are short by 20,000 net square feet to meet the needs of our current population, a deficit that will only continue to widen as our community continues to expand. With our current location surrounded by constraints, there are no practical solutions to accommodate our burgeoning needs. To that end, the Library Board has made it a priority in their 2023-2026 Strategic Plan to address the library's space deficit.

With this in mind, the Stratford Public Library Board formally requests to be considered as an anchor tenant in the Grand Trunk Community Hub project. During our recent board meeting on December 5, the Library board unanimously approved a motion to take this step, reflecting our unwavering commitment to the community's betterment:

2023-65 Moved by K. Kochany, Seconded by D. Mackey

That the CEO send a letter to the CAO of the City of Stratford requesting that the Library be considered as an anchor tenant in the Grand Trunk Community Hub.

We believe that a library that is not only equitable but appropriately sized for the future, would be a valuable gathering space for the community. We aim to provide both public and private space for the community: meeting

rooms, an auditorium for performances and theatre, and flexible space for people gather and connect. Our vision encompasses ample seating, expanded collection space, and a more accommodating environment for entrepreneurs and local creatives in the MakerSpace. Furthermore, accessibility and parking concerns would become a thing of the past, making our library an even more welcoming destination for all, including those with mobility challenges and young families. Our library would be designed with energy efficiency, sustainability, and environmental awareness at its core, reflecting our commitment to a greener, healthier future.

In conversations with the YMCA of Three Rivers, both our organizations have recognized the immense potential for synergy that a shared presence in the Community Hub would bring. We cater to similar demographics and have cultivated numerous partnerships, which we anticipate will flourish even further in this new setting. This presents a unique opportunity to nurture both minds and bodies within a single, community-focused location.

The Stratford Public Library Board acknowledges that such a venture entails substantial costs. However, we are fully prepared to embark on a capital fundraising campaign and apply for grants from sources such as the Ontario Trillium Foundation and the Green Municipal Fund to cover a substantial portion of the anticipated expenses. Additionally, we firmly believe that this project could be eligible for support from the Canada Community Building Fund. When combined with developmental charges and the sale of our current library building, we are confident that the necessary financial requirements can be met.

Libraries have a transformative impact on communities, fostering health, prosperity, and inclusivity. It would be a tremendous honour to be a part of the Grand Trunk Community Hub, showcasing that at the heart of any thriving community lies the library, a place where possibilities and potential abound.

Thank you for your consideration,



Krista Robinson
CEO, Stratford Public Library

