



# Branch Development

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The Greater Victoria Public Library Board's Facilities Plan, *Making Space for the Future*, prepares responsibly for the long-term growth of the system and the improvement of all libraries through a network of district, community and neighbourhood branches. Branch development must advance the library's strategic priorities, respond to changing library user needs, consider the budget impact on municipalities, and allow for time-sensitive, joint-use opportunities that may not exist in the future.

Annually, the Board provides and requests information from its member municipalities regarding branch development to inform the Five Year Financial Plan and GVPL's *Capital Plan*. Two years notice is required for new branch development under the Library Operating Agreement.

## **PRINCIPLES**

### **1. Branch Needs Assessment**

Need is determined through an analysis of current and projected population in an area, the geography of the region, proximity of other library sites and their capacity to deliver library service. Branch size standards are:

- Neighbourhood branch: 10,000 minimum area population with further growth over five years
- Community branch: 20,000 or more area population
- District branch: 80,000 combine larger geographic area population

### **2. Facility Standards**

Library floor space standards in square footage are outlined in the Facilities Plan:

- Neighbourhood branch: 3,000 sf minimum – 5,000+ sf
- Community branch: 10,000 sf minimum – 15,000 sf
- District branch: 20,000 sf minimum suburban – 63,000 sf in densified urban core

System and administrative services require a geographically central, accessible location to provide an efficient service delivery standard. Floorspace per capita across the system will meet the median ratio for Canadian urban libraries (0.6 sf) by 2026.

GVPL is administratively organized into three geographic districts:

- Core District (Victoria, Oak Bay, Esquimalt, and View Royal)
- Saanich and Peninsula District (Saanich and Central Saanich)
- West Shore District (Highlands, Colwood, Langford, and Metchosin)

### 3. Business Case

If a branch development or redevelopment project meets the above needs assessment and facility standards principles, library staff will develop a formal business case including the background of the project, the expected business benefits, the options considered (with reasons for rejecting or carrying forward each option), the expected costs and risks of the project, and a gap analysis. Consideration is also given to the consequences of doing nothing, including opportunity costs lost, and risks of inactivity in terms of community goodwill and social capital. From this information, the justification for the project is derived.

### 4. Site Selection Criteria

Assuming the first three principles are met, written criteria are used to guide the decision-making regarding branch location. Site selection evaluation criteria must be considered by the Board, in conjunction with municipal staff, before branches are built or redeveloped. Criteria are graded using a weighted, 10 point system with double weight for the essential site selection criteria that must exist for the site(s) to be considered further:

Criteria 1: Essential (double weighted)

Criteria	Description	Weight
Site Size	Overall site size can accommodate the proposed branch/complex with expansion possibility	2
Visibility/ Prominence	Site conveys community pride of place and value of the public library as a cultural institution	2
Public Accessibility	Site is on transit route(s) and well travelled roadway(s) and is easily walkable or accessible for those with mobility or other impairments	2

## Category 2: Desirable (single weighted)

Criteria	Description	Weight
Adjacency to school, retail or community services	Site near a concentration of other services that are well used by a broad section of the community	1
Public Feedback	Site has positive feedback from public consultation	1
Municipal site	Site is owned by the municipality and meets all the essential criteria	1
Joint-use opportunity	Site allows for joint-use or co-location synergy with a complementary organization	1

## 5. Joint-Use Facilities

The Board, in partnership with the municipalities who own or lease library space, looks for opportunities for co-location with municipal services, recreational, retail, or commercial ventures. Joint-use opportunities with other non-profit agencies or educational institutions that have potential to result in cost-sharing, increased use of public resources, the elimination of duplication, longer opening hours, and a wider use by a broader section of the community are preferred.

## 6. Branch Development/Redevelopment

The Board, in partnership with the municipalities who own or lease library space, responds to changing user needs through expansion, relocation, adjustment, or consolidation of services. The request to open, close or move a branch may originate with the municipality in which the branch resides, or may originate with the Board. Any branch development/redevelopment is approved by the Library Board and considers operation costs and other factors in the decision-making process.

Approved by the Greater Victoria Public Library Board:  
Reviewed by the Policy & Program Development Committee:  
Amended by the Greater Victoria Public Library Board:

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