

Overview

In the spring of 2018, SPL engaged in conversations with our community to learn what spaces Saskatoon residents would like to see as part of a new central library.

It's time to look to the future & invest in our community.

While Saskatoon's central library facility has been in decline for the last 20 years, cities across Canada and around the world are reinvesting in central libraries. These facilities are breathing new life into their downtowns and contributing to more vibrant and contemporary cities.

In planning for a new central library for Saskatoon, our first step was to hear from our community. To find out how the community wants to use a new central library we planned a series of public engagement opportunities to gather feedback from patrons, stakeholders, employees and community members.

We surpassed our engagement goals and learned that you share our passion for public libraries, as well as our vision for a thriving, modern library system in Saskatoon.

The ideas and inspiration you've shared will shape Saskatoon's new central library, helping ensure the building reflects the community we serve and enables us to meet your present and evolving needs.

We also heard through these consultations that our current central library facility is not sufficiently meeting the needs of our growing community. You can read all about that here, too.

Over 2,000 people shared their vision for a new central library.

"Public libraries are essential for vibrant cities— we should make a major investment in ours. Otherwise, we squander the potential of our community." — Saskatoon resident



Here's how we gathered your input (so far).

We wanted to hear from as many people in Saskatoon as possible, so our engagement plans gave residents different ways to participate.

Pop-ups

We hosted 22 pop-up sessions around the community, where we spoke to over 400 people.

Online survey

1,368 surveys were completed.

Stakeholder sessions

We met with 17 business and community leaders.

SPL employee consultation

250 SPL employees participated in a workshop.

Community workshop

We held a workshop with small group collaborations and activities.

How will we use your input?

You shared and we listened. Thanks!

The information gathered will be used to inform the business case we take to City Council for approval of the new central library project.

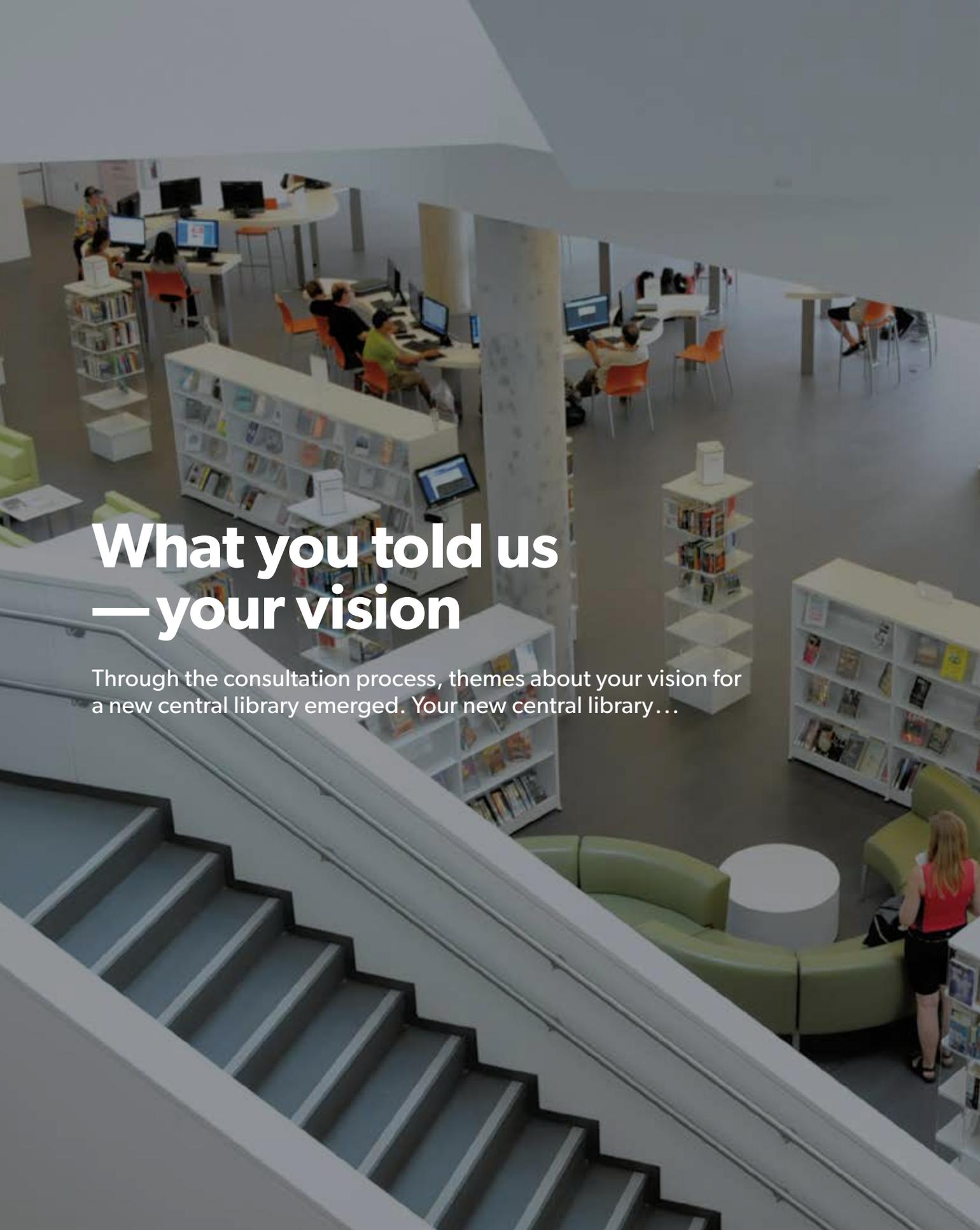
The first step in developing the business case is to develop a functional program, which is a “statement of needs.” The statement of needs is based on the wants and needs of the community. This information is combined with library best-practices and industry benchmarks.

A functional program will make a recommendation about the size of the building

required. It itemizes the types of spaces in the building and the sizes of those spaces. From there, we can begin to look at possible locations along with estimated cost, economic impact and future usage.

This is the first step in this process; there will be many more opportunities to provide input that will help shape the project as we move forward.

“Saskatoon is growing and evolving. SPL continues to be a valuable and high-quality public good, but the facility is very much in need of an update to keep it relevant and so that SPL can continue to offer exceptional services in all of the areas that it does. Thanks for your consideration!” — Saskatoon resident



What you told us — your vision

Through the consultation process, themes about your vision for a new central library emerged. Your new central library...



Is a welcoming and accessible hub.

You envision a new central library as an inclusive place where everyone feels welcome — a community living room. You shared your vision for a new central library as a place for conversation, celebration and sharing of cultures and interests.



Has space for a large and diverse collection of materials.

You want a new central library with a large and diverse collection of physical and digital materials.



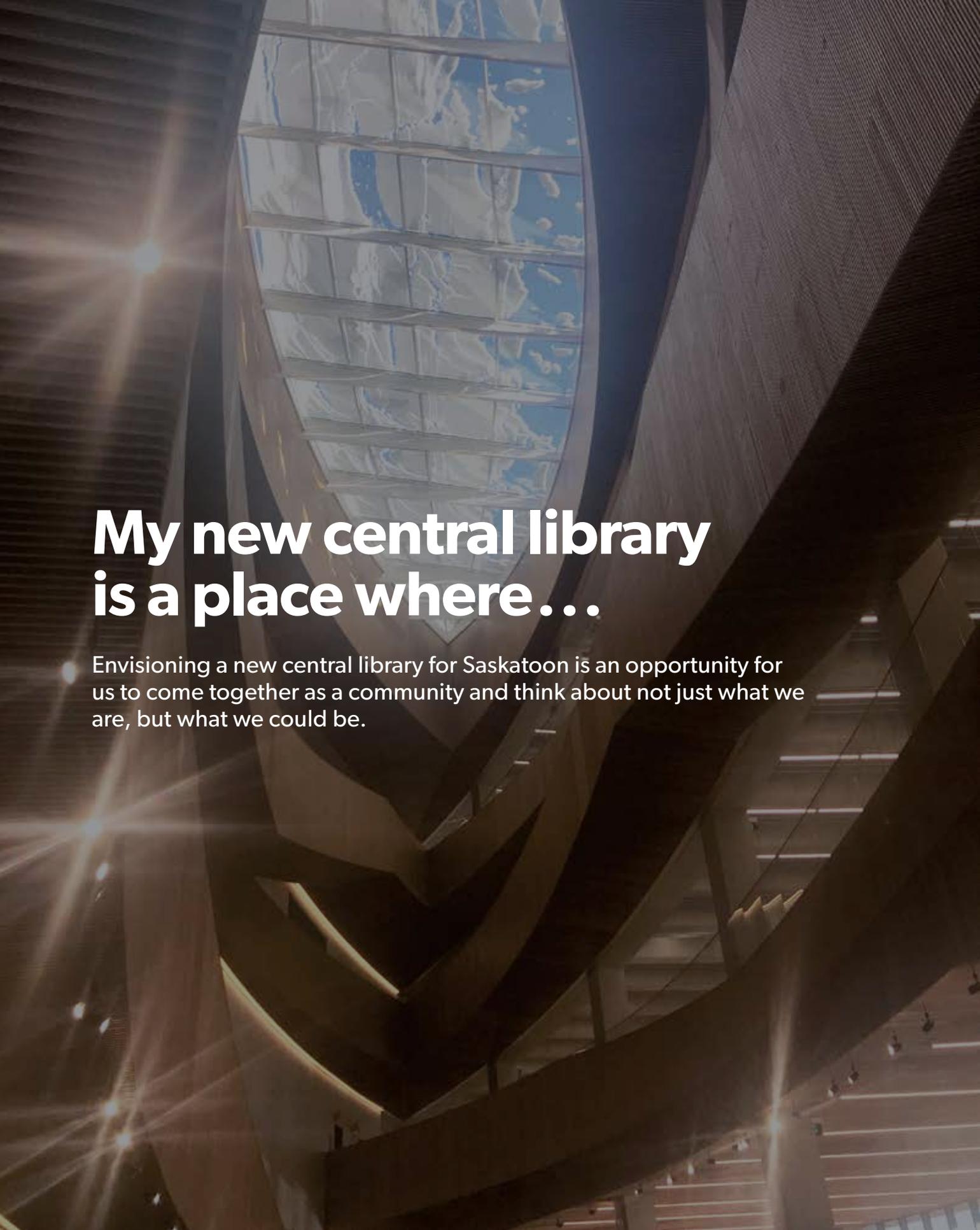
Has a variety of spaces to meet the needs of the community.

You envision a new central library with a wide range of spaces to meet the diverse needs and interests of the community. You highlighted a desire to include spaces that support technology, group meetings and collaborations, and quiet/individual study.



Is a place for learning and innovation.

Your new central library is a place where all forms of learning are encouraged and facilitated through all of life's stages. You recognize the role of libraries has changed and that there is an opportunity for a new central library to provide critical new services for our city.



My new central library is a place where...

Envisioning a new central library for Saskatoon is an opportunity for us to come together as a community and think about not just what we are, but what we could be.

The following are some of the survey responses we received:

"People gather, find sanctuary (physical, social, emotional), learn, share, challenge, debate, grow."

"People can feel safe, comfortable, and inspired. Where people want to spend time."

"I can use computers, find a variety of books to read and check out as well as charge my phone and hangout in. A library is part of my social safety net and a home base when I'm going about my day."

"I can find access to information, attend informative seminars and events, relax and unwind, and feel at home."

"The city has grown and the vision of libraries has changed significantly. The central library needs to be the change leader and the keeper of accessible learning for all."

"The entire community has spaces to visit, learn, enjoy, read/study quietly, gather, eat and drink, play."

"I can pursue creative adventures, connect with other people. It is also a place to have quiet contemplation, a place to work, meditate, relax."

"Every member of the community (from kids to seniors) will find a service or a resource or a space that is relevant to them. In addition to the traditional books, journals, sound and video recordings — either for loan or for enjoying in situ—the library should be a safe space for people to meet and interact."

"Comfortably gather, relax, learn. A place where everyone is welcome — something that does not feel institutional. It is a place where our history and culture is reflected. It is a place where people can get warm, use a washroom, and get help, in addition to meeting friends, reading a book, or using a computer. Most importantly, it is a place where I feel safe and inspired."

"Sunlight is abundant, and there are spaces for every purpose: loud ones, quiet ones, cozy ones, airy ones."

"Every person in the community can freely access and be involved in programming and spaces that can cater to a wide degree of interests — including academia, reconciliation, local heritage, technology, and design."

"Citizens can gather in a shared public space that enriches the mind and soul through ALL forms of learning. This library should go beyond books and truly enter our technological age."

New central library spaces



Collections

A large collection.

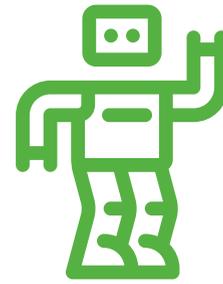
You suggested that both the physical and digital collections be expanded, well organized and easily searchable by patrons and employees. And you want knowledgeable employees to help you find materials.



Group spaces

A variety of group and collaborative spaces that can be noisier without disturbing others.

You were supportive of flexible spaces, which could be used for learning, collaboration and socializing.



New technology

Public access to self-directed STEAM (science, technology, engineering, arts and math) learning opportunities.

You would like maker spaces that inspire learning and execution of various creative projects, such as video and audio recording, robotics, crafts, 3D printing and more.



Computers, laptops & WiFi

Access to many options for public computers, in-branch laptops and WiFi.

You noted that the provision of free computer access and free WiFi were important library services.



Individual spaces

A variety of individual and private spaces for quiet use.

You want quiet spaces to read, study or work. You suggested a mix of spaces, including long tables, desks and private study areas with comfortable seating.



Local art installations

Space dedicated to showcasing local artists.

You indicated that having art from local and emerging artists at the library is important.

From tech-infused rooms and greenery to comfy chairs and books galore, you told us which spaces should be included in a new central library.



Public events & performances

Spaces to come together for events and to showcase the arts.

You like the idea of having spaces that can be used for community gathering, public events and performances.



Children's Theatre

Don't lose the magical quality of the storytime room.

You want the Pooh Corner experience recreated in a new central library.



Local History

Don't move forward without the past.

You want Local History to be an important part of a new facility. You also want to ensure that archives are preserved and stored safely.



Private meetings & events

Bookable spaces that are affordable and accommodate various group sizes.

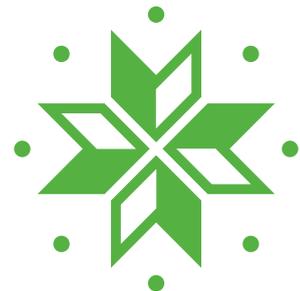
You feel having spaces for private meetings and events are important, given the limited availability of affordable space in the city.



Green spaces

Green spaces that inspire and inject life into the library's environment.

You recommended including indoor native plants to make the library a relaxing and peaceful environment.



Reconciliation

Incorporating Indigenous perspectives.

You told us Indigenous culture should be meaningfully integrated throughout the building.

What is the space like?

According to the survey results, Frances Morrison Central Library is falling short of expectations when it comes to the category of overall experience.

Some of the comments we received were:

“The current central library is severely outdated. It does not inspire imagination or creativity. A new impressive beautiful library with all the bells and whistles is just what Saskatoon needs to tell its residents that their time has come.”

“The one we have is depressing. It isn't a pleasant place to be, and doesn't fulfill any purpose very well.”

“I don't really know what this entails other than solar panels on the roof, but we need to help take care of the environment and public buildings should be setting an example for the rest.”

“Our central library is old and not that accessible really. It could use better lighting, more inclusivity and more space to gather individually or in a group. I feel it could be more welcoming and supportive of literacy and connectiveness if it were more modern and inviting. I LOVE the library!”

In addition to highlighting all kinds of current facility issues, you shared how we could make your experience using the central library more enjoyable.



Natural light

You want lots of windows and natural light.



Easy to navigate

You want a building that flows well and has clear signage.



Sustainable

You want an environmentally sustainable and energy-efficient design.



Safe

You want a building that feels safe for employees and patrons, inside and out.



Modern & spacious

You want the spaces to be warm, comfortable and functional.



Accessible

You want the building to be accessible.



Tech-friendly

You want a building that provides access to technology and devices, while also providing ample access to power for people who bring their own devices.

Amenities, anyone?

It's safe to say that you didn't give Frances Morrison Central Library a passing grade when it came to current amenities.

Some of the comments we received were:

"The old building is just that: old. Not enough space, doesn't meet safety standards, not accessible enough, and is just plain ugly. Parking is atrocious and a useable green space is non-existent. We need a modern library for modern times, a place where everyone is welcome and everyone can be proud of because it belongs to all of us."

"The building is dated, needs more washrooms, accessibility features need to be prioritized. I believe that the arts are very important and should be valued in the new building."

"This is the most important to me: relaxed, comfortable spaces where I can read, enjoy bright windows, and have a coffee as I read."

You told us what you expect for amenities in a modern library facility.



Comfortable seating

You want a mix of seating, including chairs, tables and desks, and want them made from durable, easy-to-clean materials.



Community information

You want an area in the library for sharing information about community events.



Food & beverages

You would like a local coffee shop integrated into the facility. You want drinking fountains and water bottle filling stations.



Washrooms

You want access to more washrooms (a lot more).

How will you get to a new central library?

We asked how you plan to arrive at a new central library. You shared how we could make accessing a new library more convenient for you.

“The library needs to be a resource accessible to all citizens, especially those who don't have easy access to private transportation.” — Saskatoon resident



Transit

You identified a direct link between a new central library and public transit as critical.



Car

You want lots of public parking. Free parking is also on your wish list.



Bicycle

Those of you who will arrive by bicycle want secure bike parking.

We heard your concerns.

We are currently developing a business case that will provide you with information to answer your questions and address your concerns.

Here are some of the reservations expressed in the responses we received:

"I would like to see a new library, but am unsure about the cost to taxpayers."

"This should not be built. The vast majority of people don't use libraries anymore, the internet exists."

"I think the current one is fine, could perhaps use an upgrade."

"Given that the majority of the population lives outside of the downtown core I'm not sure that a large central library best serves our communities. We never use the downtown library as parking is a bear and we can get everything we need sent to our local neighbourhood library."

Why does Saskatoon need a new central library?

You answered (and you didn't hold back).

"It's about time. And the current one is prohibitive to generally everything the library should be striving for (collaboration, connections, inspiring design, accessible, welcoming to all)." — Saskatoon resident



In your own words:

“A new space could be a way to help make the downtown more vibrant, and create a deeper sense of community for the entire city by having an equally accessible, modern resource.”

“The existing building is an uninspiring bunker and completely noncompliant in code. We need a building we can be proud of. The living room for our city.”

“The current central library is embarrassingly dated (especially compared to other cities' new libraries) and much too small.”

“The present central library is unsafe, crowded, outdated. A new central library would help revitalize the downtown, attract more people to Saskatoon, and provide a welcoming space for everyone. It would be more technology-friendly.”

“Our old library is old and outdated. We need something to propel us into the future and to continue to bridge the gaps in cultures and income levels.”

“I believe we should be investing in spaces that are free and accessible to everyone in the community. The library downtown is far too old and small and doesn't address the present needs. We tend to invest in institutions that are of interest to high-level decision makers and not of interest to those sitting in the libraries every day finding comfort, solace and knowledge from the staff, stacks and other patrons. This has to be our next large investment in Saskatoon.”

“Modern libraries are much more than just books now, they are social gathering places. Saskatoon would be wise to invest in one.”

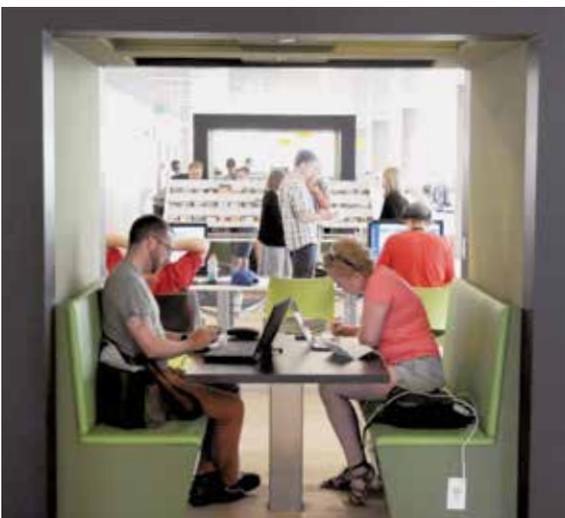
“Do we really need a reason to build a new library? They bring the community together and provide safe spaces for learning. No one loses by having a new library. There is only a world of things to gain.”

“The current central branch is adequate, but only just. The facility is quite run-down, restrictive, and even oppressive in places. It is not a source of civic pride, and it is not a place where I want to spend much time.”

“A library is one of the few free resources available to the public and is paramount in educating our citizens. It is responsible for creating an informed public capable of making good decisions. The current facility falls short of answering this need and is underutilized because of its condition.”

“The downtown library has become an embarrassment.”

“The safety code alone should be a reason. It also doesn't flow well, have ample parking or activity space.”



What's next?

Thanks for sharing your story and vision for a new central library!

We will continue to gather feedback from the community that will help shape plans for a new central library moving forward.

saskatooncentrallibrary.ca

