

Stakeholder Engagement Summary

Regina Public Library

April 2021

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Executive Summary

In January 2021, RPL identified the need to conduct supplementary stakeholder engagement related to central library renewal. As described in RPL's Needs Assessment and Project Plan, initial engagement occurred in January through March 2020. Following the completion of the Needs Assessment and Project Plan, unforeseen COVID-19 impacts were realized. Supplemental engagement activities sought to understand whether or not COVID-19 had impacted stakeholder perceptions of central library renewal.

Qualitative engagement was undertaken with 26 individuals representing 19 organizations in Regina. These organizations represented broad perspectives, including accessibility, arts and culture, business, community services, employment, downtown, and Indigenous viewpoints. These interviews were complemented by quantitative engagement undertaken by Inshightrix Research Inc. ("Inshightrix"). Inshightrix undertook a telephone survey and online survey of 800 participants, including 400 participants by phone and 400 online. The distribution of participants' age and gender was representative of the distribution of these attributes for Regina's population.

Stakeholder engagement continues to demonstrate strong support to proceed with renewal of RPL's central library. As demonstrated by both qualitative and quantitative feedback gathered, the COVID-19 Pandemic is believed to have strengthened the need for investment. Nearly two-thirds of interview participants provided examples and perspectives for how the Pandemic has strengthened the need for investment. As discussed within this report, over 88% of respondents to the online survey, 90% of respondents to the telephone survey, and approximately 90% (17/19) of the qualitative interview participants indicated support for investment to sustain central library services.

RPL's Needs Assessment and Project Plan, supporting Appendices, polling results, and this report continue to demonstrate the need to progress this important project. RPL has defined a community-informed vision, a plan to drive outcomes, and analyzed the potential costs and funding for the project. RPL is ready to further progress central library renewal activities. This includes continuing to engage with the City related to funding and financing sources; confirmation of the site and renewal approach; ongoing stakeholder engagement; and continued progression of technical considerations, such as the functional program and conceptual design. The insights and perspective from stakeholders, as described in this report, will continue to play a critical role in informing decision-making related to the project.

1.0 Introduction

1.1 Background & Context

Qualitative Engagement Background

In January 2021, KPMG conducted an interview of 26 individuals representing 19 organizations in Regina. These organizations represented broad perspectives, including accessibility, arts and culture, business, community services, employment, downtown, and Indigenous viewpoints.

The rationale for these interviews was to gather perspectives, input, and share preliminary information about the project with key stakeholders through continued consultation. The interviews were conducted in confidence with assurance that comments would not be attributed to any specific individuals or organizations, and feedback would be summarized in aggregate.

Quantitative Engagement Background

In addition to interviews, RPL (through Colliers Project Leaders) engaged Inshtrix Research Inc. (“**Inshtrix**”) to gather public perspectives related to central library renewal. Responses were collected in March and April 2021, via both telephone and online surveys.

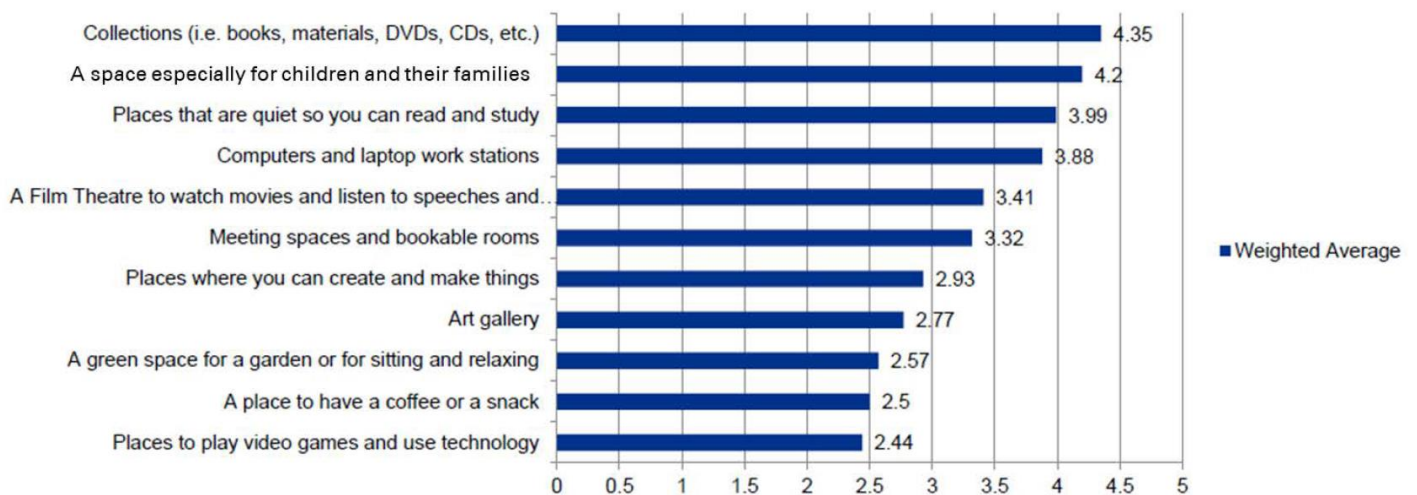
The rationale for phone and telephone surveying or polling was to gather perspectives on public support for investment in central library renewal. These perspectives were seen as particularly critical given ongoing impacts of the COVID-19 Pandemic around the world.

1.2 Qualitative Engagement Discussion Guide

The interview questions that were provided to participants, which served as a discussion guide but were not intended to limit the discussion, included the following:

1. Given the community’s experience in response and recovery to COVID-19, has the role of the Library in our community changed?
2. In February 2020, community partner and collaborator organizations shared the following thematic feedback related to central library renewal:
 - Central library should be a **destination for downtown**
 - It should focus on being a place for **learning and innovation**, continuing to provide education on Regina’s diverse cultures and indigenous history

- It needs to have **flexible spaces** that can be booked by community partners and deliver various program and community engagement opportunities
 - It needs to be a **facilitator of local connections**, connecting people with other resources in the community
3. RPL has continued to proceed with planning for Central Library Renewal. From your perspective, has the need for central library renewal changed in the last year? Why or why not?
 4. A public survey in February 2020 of over 1,000 participants indicated the importance of the following spaces from 'not necessary' to 'critical.' Given COVID-19, do you believe the need or priority of spaces / services / experiences have shifted? Why or why not?



5. Please provide any additional feedback, guidance or input that may support RPL in its planning and next steps related to central library renewal.

1.3 Poll Script

Quantitative information was collected through a robust polling process. Informed by RPL, its engaged Owner's Representative, and Inshtrix, a poll script was developed for both telephone and online use. In addition to questions related to participant demographic information, the following questions were asked of respondents:

- A. Broadly speaking, do you support or oppose library services in Regina? (read list)
 - Strongly support
 - Somewhat support
 - Somewhat oppose

Strongly oppose

Not sure

As you may or may not be aware...

- The current Central Library building was opened in 1962 to serve a population less than half of Regina's current population.
- Central Library is RPL's busiest location and can no longer meet the needs of the growing and diverse population.
- The building itself is old and its systems and infrastructure continue to age.
- The Central Library is required for local branches to function properly throughout the city.
- To continue providing library services, improvements to the Central Library are required.

B. With this in mind, do you support or oppose investing in improvements to the Central Library to continue providing library services? (read list)

Strongly support

Somewhat support

Somewhat oppose

Strongly oppose

Not sure

C. Would you support or oppose investing in improvements to the Central Library, if it means an increase in property taxes? (read list)

Strongly support

Somewhat support

Somewhat oppose

Strongly oppose

Not sure

1.4 Qualitative Engagement Participants

Interview participants included representatives from the following organizations:

#	Organization	Date
1	Saskatchewan Chamber of Commerce	15-Jan-2021
2	Regina Downtown Business Improvement District (RDBID)	18-Jan-2021
3	Family Service Regina	18-Jan-2021
4	Regina Folk Festival Inc.	19-Jan-2021
5	Regina Chamber of Commerce	19-Jan-2021
6	Regina Region Local Immigration	19-Jan-2021
7	Cold Weather Strategy	20-Jan-2021
8	Economic Development Regina (EDR)	20-Jan-2021
9	Regina Catholic School Division (RCSD)	21-Jan-2021
10	Saskatchewan Office of Disability Issues	22-Jan-2021
11	Carla Harris Consulting	25-Jan-2021
12	Saskatchewan Labour Market Services	25-Jan-2021
13	Family Law Information Centre	26-Jan-2021
14	Young Men's Christian Association (YMCA)	26-Jan-2021
15	Reconciliation Regina	26-Jan-2021
16	Regina Police Service (RPS)	26-Jan-2021
17	Knox-Metropolitan Church	27-Jan-2021
18	Regina's Warehouse District	27-Jan-2021
19	Canadian National Institute for the Blind (CNIB)	29-Jan-2021

2.0 Qualitative Engagement Summary by Discussion Topic

The following describes the thematic feedback from participants by discussion topic.

2.1 Role of the Library

Participants were asked the following: “Given the community’s experience in response and recovery to COVID-19, has the role of the Library in our community changed?”

Responses primarily focused on articulating that COVID-19 has not changed the role of RPL in the community, but it has highlighted its importance; or that COVID-19 has changed the role, and that role is even more important now than it was before COVID-19. Not even one of 19 respondents stated that RPL plays a less important role in the community now.

The most common response from participants is that the role of RPL has not significantly changed, with numerous participants describing RPL as an essential service. Some participants stated that they did not recognize how critical of a role RPL played in the community until it was no longer available to the same extent. Participants representing organizations that provide supportive services to vulnerable populations believe that RPL’s temporary closures and reduced services to reduce the risk of COVID-19 transmission have negatively impacted their clientele.

For the respondents who believe the role has changed, stating that RPL is even more important now, the common responses relate to the services and experiences that go beyond only the traditional uses of a library (i.e. access to the collections). There is an even greater need for technology, as core services begin to adopt online-only services (e.g. job applications, health information, municipal services). Whether that is a construction worker who has been laid off and needs to create a resume or it is a student who needs a safe and welcoming place to study, access to technology has become essential to inclusion and opportunity. Second, there is a desire for further engagement and discussion relating to the prevailing challenges within our community, such as Reconciliation, mental health, the Black Lives Matter movement, and supporting newcomers as they adapt and integrate both culturally and economically. Lastly, COVID-19 has fostered a societal craving for connectedness and the feeling of safety and hospitality in public spaces, and a library is one of very few locations that welcomes people from all walks of life, without an overarching expectation of commercial activity.

2.2 Central Library Renewal Themes

Participants were asked the following question, “In February 2020, community partner and collaborator organizations shared the following thematic feedback related to central library renewal:

- Central library should be a **destination for downtown**
- It should focus on being a place for **learning and innovation**, continuing to provide education on Regina’s diverse cultures and indigenous history
- It needs to have **flexible spaces** that can be booked by community partners and deliver various program and community engagement opportunities
- It needs to be a **facilitator of local connections**, connecting people with other resources in the community

From your perspective, are these themes still relevant today, have they shifted or is there something that may be missing from these themes?

Participants generally agreed with the themes that had been previously identified. Some believe these themes are still relevant today or will be in the near future, while others believe these themes are even more clear now.

Out of all four themes, a **destination for downtown** resonated most with participants. Participants stated that a vibrant downtown location would benefit all organizations and businesses in the area, as it would draw people into the downtown. The central library is and should continue to be an artistic, cultural, and educational asset in the city. The central location is particularly important for many newcomers and vulnerable populations, as they often utilize public transportation. Major cities, such as Calgary, Vancouver, and Halifax, are leveraging their investment in renewed central libraries as promotional material in attracting events and conferences. One participant believes the central library should be *the* place to see in Regina and even Saskatchewan, continuing to say that residents should be proud of the central library and the values that it would represent.

Participants also strongly agreed with the central library being a space for **learning and innovation**. In this divided world, participants stated that there is a need for the community to come together. The central library can serve as a touching point as we emerge from COVID-19. Some participants believe that learning and innovation must be done in a modern way, collaborating with other

organizations. It should enable patrons to use new technology and tools in a neutral and safe space. While some people have access to innovative technologies within their own homes, it is the vulnerable populations which do not have access to the luxuries that others take for granted. As technology becomes increasingly entwined in how communication and the production of goods and services, the central library can assist in bridging the digital divide that would exist otherwise.

Flexible space as a theme was one with which most participants agreed, without further expanding upon it or emphasizing its importance with examples. Many participants recognize the role that the Library plays in providing a safe and neutral space that can be accessed by those in leadership roles within their organizations, other members within the community, and also their clientele. Its central location and welcoming atmosphere enable people to come together and collaborate.

As for **facilitating local connections**, participants strongly agreed with this theme, noting that it is even more important now than it was before COVID-19. Participants representing organizations that provide services to vulnerable populations stressed the important role that the central library plays in their ability to connect with their clientele. Many of these organizations offer informational sessions through the library and report higher attendance in those instances, largely attributing it to the neutral environment. Cultural infrastructure – such as a library – in strategic areas – such as downtown – can be used as a tool for inclusion, reconnection of the community, and addressing social isolation, which is believed to be increasingly important at this time.

2.3 Need for Central Library Renewal

Participants were asked the following question: “RPL has continued to proceed with planning for Central Library Renewal. From your perspective, has the need for central library renewal changed in the last year? Why or why not?”

Representatives from 17 of 19 organizations believe the need for renewal has increased or stayed the same. Only two expressed reservations regarding the need for a central library renewal.

The source of the reservations regarding renewal from two of 19 representatives can be attributed to investment prioritization and potentially reduced importance of built infrastructure. The representative with reservations regarding investment prioritization believes that other investments may be more necessary at this time, such as affordable housing or healthcare. The other representative expressed concerns relating to the need for continued investment in downtowns more broadly, as remote working and learning opportunities have been accelerated by COVID-19.

As for the other 17 respondents, approximately two-thirds believe the need for central library renewal has increased due to COVID-19. The sentiment from these respondents focused on the impact that COVID-19 has had not only on Regina’s downtown, but also the community more broadly. Many see the central library as a core asset that can help lead Regina out of the negative economic and social impacts of COVID-19. One respondent states the need for investment is apparent to anyone who looks at the central library, stating, “Modern libraries do not look like ours; they are modern, unique spaces that fulfill needs beyond books.” Another contributing factor to the respondents’ belief in the need for renewal is the evolution of diversity in the community. The demographics have changed significantly since the central library was constructed nearly 60 years ago, and it has become challenging to serve the needs of the population in the existing space. Further, some view investment in the central library as representing investment in serving Regina’s vulnerable populations who have been set back the most by COVID-19. Segments of the population are facing disconnectedness and financial hardship, with very few opportunities to pursue interests. A central library can be an outlet for these people with affordable, constructive, and inclusive opportunities at the most critical of times.

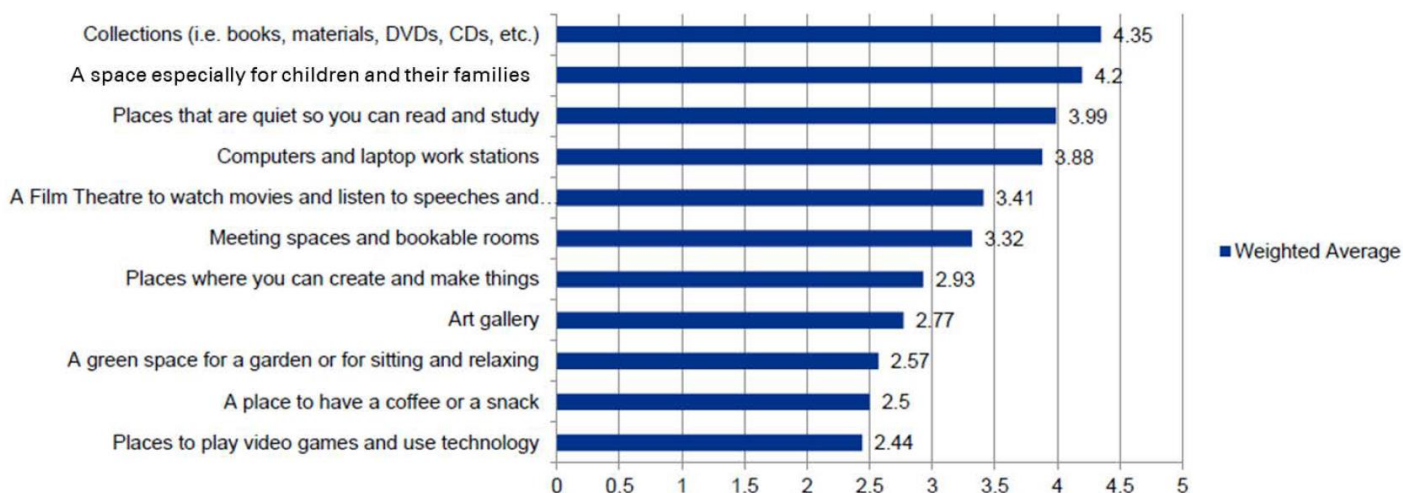
Although there has been a shift in how people live, work, and access services, many respondents still view the central library renewal as an opportunity to reinvigorate Regina’s downtown with a cornerstone asset. Investment in a central library renewal is seen an investment in all businesses

currently located downtown and for those with interest in expanding downtown. Central libraries can support the vibrancy of a city and its downtown core, drawing people from within and outside the region, and providing significant economic impacts during construction and operations.

For the one-third of respondents who believe the need for renewal has not changed, it is clear that most saw a need even before COVID-19. For instance, respondents stated, “The renewal is still needed,” “They still need renewal – that has not changed at all,” and “I think it is the same – it is still a need.” The respondents in this category recognize the criticality of the central library to the community and wish to see it renewed in some way. They see it as a place for families and students to access materials; and whether those are online or in-person, they believe downtown renewal is still needed. Some see there being an even greater socioeconomic gap, so access to materials and technology in a blended environment will be critical in minimizing that gap. From an accessibility standpoint, respondents see the existing central branch as being the most accessible of all branches in Regina but far from meeting modern standards for accessibility and inclusion.

2.4 Importance of Spaces, Services, and Experiences

Participants were asked the following question: “ A public survey in February 2020 of over 1,000 participants indicated the importance of the following spaces from ‘not necessary’ to ‘critical.’ Given COVID-19, do you believe the need or priority of spaces / services / experiences have shifted? Why or why not?”



In general, responses were that the prioritization is still relevant and consistent or that the prioritization is still relevant but the importance has increased. Most respondents recognize that while physical space is perceived differently as we endure COVID-19, the prioritization will still be relevant once we have emerged.

Although the participants generally agreed with the overall relevance and prioritization of the spaces, services, and experiences, three key themes emerged from the interviews. First, technology and innovation has become even more important, attributable to the adoption of technological processes to minimize in-person interactions. Second, it is believed there will be increased demand for flexible and collaborative space. Third, the craving for learning, inclusion, and connectivity has increased.

As it relates to technology and innovation playing a more important role, many respondents have highlighted that public-facing organizations have implemented technological solutions to mitigate the need for face-to-face interaction and process support services more efficiently. Although some organizations and processes may revert back to the original method of processing and providing information, the sentiment is that these have become permanent. A space within the central library

that can support access to these critical services and opportunities will be important in providing equitable access to opportunity.

As it relates to flexible space, some believe that a blended work environment will emerge as a lasting result of COVID-19, in which case there will be greater demand for flexible and collaborative space.

Learning, inclusion, and connectivity strongly resonated with respondents. Although behaviours have changed temporarily, many respondents believe that society is craving connection. The library is a place for people from all walks of life to come together and connect. Many respondents view the library as a strategic asset that can foster these connections. As social beings, having to avoid interacting with one another has had very negative impacts on the general population. Respondents believe that many people have come to appreciate connection, whereas it was historically taken for granted. The library can serve as a hub for connection given its safe and welcoming atmosphere.

3.0 Quantitative Engagement Summary

As described in the Inshtrix Research *RPL Central Library Survey Report, April 2021* (“**Inshtrix Report**”), polling indicated strong support for central library investment. Specifically, over 93% of support library services in Regina; over 88% support investing in the central library to continue to provide services; and, over 66% support investing in central library if it means an increase in property taxes.

This strong support represents a broad demographic perspective, with care taken to consider potential variability based on age, gender, library use, etc. Slight variances were noted by age and gender as presented in the Inshtrix Report.

4.0 Conclusions and Project Implications

Stakeholder engagement in January through March 2020 and again in January through April 2021 continues to demonstrate strong support to proceed with renewal of RPL’s central library. As demonstrated by both qualitative and quantitative feedback gathered, the COVID-19 pandemic is believed to have strengthened the need for investment. Nearly two thirds of interview participants provided examples and perspectives for how the Pandemic has further highlighted the need for investment.

As discussed within this report, over 88% of respondents to the online survey, 90% of respondents to the telephone survey, and approximately 90% (17/19) interview participants have indicated support for investment to sustain central library services.

RPL’s Needs Assessment and Project Plan, supporting Appendices, polling results and this report continue to demonstrate the need to progress this important project. RPL has defined a community-informed vision, a plan to drive outcomes, and analyzed the potential costs and funding approaches for the project. Progressing central library renewal requires further consideration of funding and financing sources (working collaboratively with the City of Regina); confirmation of the site and renewal approach; ongoing stakeholder engagement; and, continued progression of technical considerations such as the functional program and conceptual design.

For more information about proposed project next steps, please see RPL’s Needs Assessment and Project Plan.