

PROPOSED WEST SIDE LIBRARY BRANCH QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

1. *Why is a Library in West Lethbridge needed?*

As part of the Lethbridge Public Library's long range planning, the Library Board constantly reviews the service it provides to ensure all citizens of Lethbridge have equitable access to library services.

Factors impacting a public library's ability to provide equitable access to its services include:

- Location of library service points (ie. facilities)
- Distance and ease of access to these service points
- Availability of Library materials and services per capita

Long range demographic information the Library Board has received from the City of Lethbridge, indicates that by the year 2020:

- Lethbridge's population will have grown to 100,000+
- 40-50% of Lethbridge's population will reside in West Lethbridge
- the City's transportation structure will continue to develop on a north/south axis for the west and east sides of the City with the primary river crossings remaining as is (ie. Whoop Up Drive and Crowsnest Trail)
- Residential development on the West side will continue to grow and this will require the expansion of city services including, infrastructure, schools, parks, leisure services and library services.

In anticipation of Lethbridge's growth in population, the Library Board had planned for the building of a 15,000 square foot branch on the west side in 2012. Public Library industry based service standards suggest that additional library branches become viable and assist in retaining service levels when the following conditions exist:

- The nearest library branch is located further than 2.5 km away in any direction without a major physical barrier in between (ie. a river, major highway, railroad tracks/yard etc.)
- The population served by a library branch exceeds 25,000-45,000 people.

The current demographics and geography of Lethbridge suggest that both of these conditions may exist now, in 2003. For example,

- The west side of Lethbridge currently houses over 23,000 people and by 2020 it is anticipated that 45,000 people will reside on the west side
- Given that the river is a major physical barrier impacting west side residents' equitable access to city funded services (including full library services) the 2.5 km radius access to library facilities is not being met and will not be met for as long as the number of river crossings remains as is. Due to the significant

cost and other issues, the Chinook Trail and bridge are not planned to occur for at least another 40 years.

To ensure that all residents of Lethbridge have equitable access to library services as the city grows in population and developed landmass, the Lethbridge Public Library Board has identified the need to develop a second library branch in its Plan of Service 2002-2007 and prior to this plan in the 2002-2012 City of Lethbridge Capital Improvement Plan.

2. *What kind of library services could I expect to receive from the proposed West Side Library Branch?*

The proposed West Side Library Branch would act as a full service location, meaning that people would have immediate and direct access to:

- A 15,000 square foot library facility, centrally located on the west side of Lethbridge open approximately 69 hours per week.
- 60,000 volumes of adult, children's, and young adult fiction and non fiction materials including books, CD's videos, DVDs, books on tape, and magazines.
- Collections and services that focus on popular materials, new formats and the latest information
- Community based library programs for children, students, adults and seniors such as film/video nights, story times for tots, reading readiness for young children, book clubs and much more
- Public use computers with high speed access to the internet and a variety of electronic subscription databases
- Highly trained and professional staff who can provide on the spot direct assistance in meeting your information and recreational information needs
- Same day or next day delivery of items requested from the main library.
- A local community-gathering place in a friendly, trusted environment

3. *Why can't the expansion of the main library address the library needs of the residents in a growing city?*

The 15,500 square foot expansion of the main library that was planned to take place in 2005 was meant to address structural problems that exist, and do not allow the Library to make full use of the current space. Although the expansion would allow the library additional space for collections, its main purpose was to increase the space available for specific services such as adult literacy, children and young adult and general use space for public programs related to new formats and the internet. The expansion was not meant to address access issues related to how far residents would have travel to get full library services, or the housing of collections serving a population over 100,000.

From a structural and land base perspective, the main library location can only sustain one more 15,500 square foot expansion. Thereafter, no further expansions of the existing main library would be feasible or effective. As such, it is not possible for the

Lethbridge Public Library to maintain its current service levels to a 100,000 plus population from its current main library location.

Diversifying its services into a second library branch allows the Library plenty of growth potential beyond 2020. The Library Board's planning data suggests that three service points are needed, namely:

- A main library centrally located on the east side of the city
- A second branch library centrally located on the west side of the city
- A Bookmobile service addressing unique and limited service needs throughout the City and neighbouring areas would address the City's library service location needs for the next 30-40 years.

4. ***What is going to happen to the main branch expansion if the multi-use school/public library project goes ahead?***

The City of Lethbridge has assured the Library Board that they will be able to present the Main Library Expansion Project at the next Capital Improvement Program process scheduled to cover the time period 2005-2015. Council would review this initiative along with all the others they receive at that time. The Library Board has stressed the need for both an expanded main library branch and a west side branch.

5. ***What is going to happen to the Bookmobile if the West Side Library Branch is built?***

The bookmobile is scheduled for replacement in 2007. In preparation for this replacement and in tandem with the need to determine the level and type of library services to be offered from the main and proposed west side library branch, the Library Board is undertaking a study in 2004 that will assist them in determining what type of services to offer from all three locations.

As such, although the building of a west side library branch will have an impact on the type of bookmobile service the library will offer in 2007 and beyond, it is too early to even speculate on what these changes would entail.

For now the Bookmobile will continue to provide the services it currently provides and in fact, over the next few months the Library hopes to enhance its Bookmobile services by way of wireless computer connections to the internet and the library's online catalogue.

6. ***How will the West Side Library Branch be funded?***

The Library Board was asked by the City Council and the two school boards to consider revising its priorities with respect to library facilities, to take advantage of the opportunities that become available in building a west side library branch within a multi use facility that would house a public high school, a public library, and a

junior/senior high school for the Separate School Division. The Library Board after working with City Administration and the two school boards agreed to transfer the 3.1 million funds set aside for the expansion of the main branch to the building of a west side branch in a multi-use facility.

This 3.1 M includes construction costs, furniture and equipment, as well as a 60,000-volume start up collection. The Library has agreed to fundraise approximately 10% of the cost and the City anticipates saving approximately \$500,000 in construction costs by building the Library in a multi use facility instead of a stand alone facility as originally proposed in the 2002-2012 CIP process.

It has been estimated that the ongoing operating costs for the proposed west side library branch, starting in 2007 would be approximately \$850,000 annually. This figure is based on a library branch operating 69 hours a week, with approximately 10 fte staff and collections maintained at 60,000 volumes. The City anticipates utility and some physical plant savings due to the multi-use facility.

Should the multi-use facility project occur, the Library is and would continue to explore ways in which it could generate operational cost savings by way of sharing facilities with two schools.

The operating budget for the multi use facility library branch would need to be approved by City council in the 2006-09 budget process along with the rest of the library's budget.

7. ***What will happen if the proposed multi-use school/public library facility does not get built?***

It is assumed that if the two school boards are unsuccessful in receiving Alberta Infrastructure funding to build the two proposed schools within the multi use facility then the Library would postpone building the West side Library Branch and the funds committed for that project would revert back to the Main Branch Expansion project.

8. ***Why does the West Side Library Branch need to be built now as opposed to 2012 or later?***

The Library Board, at the request of the two school boards and City Council, reviewed the proposed multi-use facility proposal and felt that there was merit in taking advantage of the opportunity to build a library branch on the west side earlier than originally planned. The key opportunities that exist are:

- Facilitating the construction of two badly needed schools in our community
- Guaranteed central location within West Lethbridge – a predecessor to the Community Core concept developed in the 1970's.
- \$500,000 construction cost savings
- Ongoing operational physical plant savings

- Access to a hard to serve population – young adults
- The ability to explore yet to be determined joint library services with the two schools, some of which will hopefully result in tax dollar savings to the citizens of Lethbridge

9. ***Can Lethbridge taxpayers afford to have two library branches?***

The funds to build a west side library branch are available now and fits into the pay as you go philosophy City Council has adopted and operated under.

With respect to ongoing operating dollars, it is important to realize that the estimated \$850,000 annual operating costs have been quoted in 2007 dollars and are therefore approximately 12% higher than 2003 dollars based on a 3% annual inflation rate.

Secondly it is important to note that with increased population growth comes increased taxation revenue, which means that the above operating costs will be borne by more citizens than currently pay city and provincial taxes.

Although the library receives approximately 60% of its operating revenues from the City of Lethbridge, it currently receives 9% of its operating revenues from the province of Alberta. The provincial library grant is based on population and is currently set at \$4.29/capita. Advocacy and lobbying efforts are currently underway to have the province increase the operating funding to public libraries by 100%.

Written comments can be sent to Library Board Chair Lethbridge Public Library or emailed to lrossnagel@chinookarch.ab.ca