BIBLIOTHÈQUE PUBLIQUE
North Bay
PUBLIC LIBRARY

North Bay Public Library Space Needs Assessment

February 25, 2026

Report from

TCI Management Consultants

Beth Ross & Associates
Goderich, Ontario

North Bay Public Library
Space Needs Assessment

Table of Contents

Executive Summary *4*

1. Introduction and Context *7*

1.1. Overview of the North Bay Public Library System 7

1.1.1. The Special Case of the Harris Learning Library 8

1.2. Purpose of this Study and Activities Undertaken 9

1.3. Strategic Context for this Work 10

1.3.1. City of North Bay Cultural Plan (2011) 10

1.3.2. City of North Bay Strategic Plan, 2017 – 2027 11

1.3.3. North Bay Public Library Strategic Plan, 2021 – 2025 11

1.4. Assumptions and Caveats 12

2. Data Collection and Analyses *13*

2.1. Population Growth Expectations for North Bay to 2041 and Beyond 13

2.2. Observations from the Site Visit 14

2.3. Standards Assessment 16

2.4. Benchmarking Assessment 20

2.5. Staff Survey 27

2.6. Conclusions: Additional Space Requirements for NBPL 31

2.6.1. 'Top Down' Approach 32

2.6.2. 'Bottom Up' Approach 32

2.6.2. Reconciliation of the Two Approaches 34

3. Growth and Expansion Scenarios *35*

3.1. Scenarios Considered 35

3.2. Criteria to Evaluate Options 35

3.2.1. Comments on Operating Costs 35

3.2.2. Recommended Evaluation Criteria 37

3.3. Evaluation of Options and Recommended Path Forward 39

3.4. High-Level Cost Implications of Recommended Path Forward 40

3.4.1. Capital Cost Implications 41

3.4.2. Operating Cost Implications 43

4. Recommendations and Implementation *45*

4.1. Key Conclusions and Recommendations 45

4.1.1. Conclusions 45

4.1.2. Recommendations 46
4.2. Timing and Critical Path Implications **49**
4.3. Resource Requirements **52**
4.4. Targets and Milestones **53**
4.5. Conclusion **53**
Appendices ***55***
Appendix A: TCI Methodology for Per Square Foot Library Space Provision **55**
Appendix B: Examples of Partnerships Between Academic and Public Libraries **57**

Executive Summary

Introduction

The 36,000 square foot (rounded) North Bay Library facility is a key resource in the community. Centrally located downtown, and adjacent to City Hall, it is a very well-used and valuable community asset. It compares well to other library systems in similar-sized municipalities on most usage metrics. One major shortcoming of the system, however, lies in its provision of space to the community: compared to similar library systems it is deficient in the amount of area it should have, and certainly compared to commonly accepted library standards (where most comparable library systems are deficient) it falls short considerably.

This analysis was to examine the space needs of the North Bay Public Library system over the next decade. However, early in the work, it was realized that a 10-year planning horizon might be insufficient, and that a 25-year time timeframe might be more appropriate for strategic planning purposes. Accordingly, while the thrust of the recommendations is upon what should be done over the next decade, this is undertaken within a longer-term perspective looking at preparing the system to meet community needs by 2051 (i.e., the middle of the century).

Following a diligent procurement process, the library consulting firm TCI Management Consultants in association with Beth Ross Associates was retained to undertake this work. The project involved a review of all relevant background materials (including strategic plan documentation from the City and the library); a site visit; a staff survey; benchmarking several other comparable library systems to determine their space provision; a review of current space provision against library standards; a projection of future population (to 2051); a presentation of findings and recommendations to and discussion with the Library Board; and the preparation and presentation of this Report. Throughout the project, meetings with a 'Steering Group comprised of senior library staff were held approximately every two weeks. The project started in September 2025 and was completed by January 2026.

Key Findings

A service provision standard of 0.85 square feet of library per capita is recommended for a community the size of North Bay, and the report contains a detailed explanation of why this is so. This service standard is for ***all*** space including collections, individuals and group study space, community meeting rooms, storage, administrative offices, as well as space for washrooms, corridors, elevators, electrical conduits, etc. It is thus a measure of gross space required to adequately serve the population.

This service standard implies that the current space provision of the North Bay Library system should be 47,000 square feet (sf) (rounded), and that this will grow to 53,000 sf by 2051. Thus, the current (2026) shortfall is on the order of 11,000 square feet (i.e. the current ideal space provision of 47,000 sf minus the current provision of 36,000 sf) and this deficiency is expected to grow to a total 16,000 sf by the middle of this century (i.e. to 2051) if new space is not added or procured between now and then.

Further, the existing library facility is sub-optimal in terms of its use of existing space. Not only are there questions relating to excessive space being devoted to collections and storage, but also the layout of functional areas is not efficient. Whether or not the existing building can be expanded and

opened up (by removal, for example, of non-load bearing walls) is also an open question. (A Building Condition Assessment, currently underway, may answer some of these questions.)

Other questions also exist that may affect future space requirements. The population may now be growing at a rate faster than in the past, a matter that will not be known until later this year when the 2026 Census is undertaken. If true, this will push up the space requirements even further. Another key uncertainty is whether facilities at the new Harris Learning Library facility (58,000 sq. ft.), serving students at Nipissing and Canadore College but also available to all residents of North Bay, could be utilized to alleviate some space needs.

Recommendations

This study recommends a reasonable course of action going forward, dealing with and resolving these many uncertainties so that the overall system by mid-century (and ideally well before that) is suited to the needs of the community. This will enable the North Bay Public Library to continue being a valued, well-used and well-respected asset to the community.
Specific recommendations and the time frame proposed for these over the next ten-year period, are:

Recommended Initiative	Recommended Timeframe
1. Rationalize collections and storage functions and space	Immediately (2026)
2. Examine alternative deliver mechanisms	Immediately (2026)
3. Explore more formal relationship with Harris Learning Library	Immediately (2026)
4. Update population forecast	Short-Term (2027,2028)
5. Undertake architectural and engineering update of existing Main Library facility	Medium-Term (2029,2030)
6. Explore feasibility of second branch location, or library rebuild	Long-term (2031 – 2035)

The logic of this timeframe is as follows: the very first task to be undertaken is to critically examine ('right-size') the collection and determine the actual space required to accommodate it. At the same time, a critical assessment of the storage needs for other items in the NBPL's inventory should occur. Meantime in the first year, alternative service delivery mechanisms should be explored as a means of better distributing library services throughout the community. Also in this critical initial period, discussions should begin with the Harris Learning Library (Nipissing and Canadore) as an appropriate arrangement between the parties could in effect alleviate some of the space needs of the NBPL.

Early in what we have termed the 'short-term' period, the population forecast developed here should be reviewed and likely revised to take into account the actual current (2026) population of the City as measured robustly through the Census. As mentioned earlier, this could well lead to the population estimates prepared here being revised *upwards*, with a commensurate increase in library space requirements.

At this point at the end of the short-term period, NBPL will have several critical inputs needed to determine the longer-term space needs of the system: 1) the Building Conditions Assessment

(currently underway); 2) an assessment of the optimal space needs for the collection and related storage; 3) an updated population forecast; and 4) a sense as to whether there are joint-use or partnership possibilities with the Harris Learning Library that could be relevant to future space needs. Armed with this critical information, NBPL should then, in the 'medium term' (and possibly earlier towards the end of the short-term if that is possible) undertake an architectural and engineering update of the existing main library facility to develop an optimal configuration of the existing space, and determine whether significant expansion of the facility is possible (to accommodate the anticipated space required by the year 2051 (i.e. mid-century). This would likely require expansion into the existing park space and/or Leger Square, which may encounter community opposition and, in any event, require Council approval as it is on municipal property. These are possibilities that would need to be determined at that time.

The results of the medium-term work will determine whether or not the overall space needs of the NBPL system can be accommodated on the existing library site (bearing in mind that some of the space needs of the system might be able to be accommodated through an arrangement with the Harris Learning Library). If the needs can be accommodated on the existing site through expansion and/or some sort of partnership with HLL, then the long-term period (2031 to 2035) would be devoted to implementing the architectural and engineering plan developed. If, however, the existing site is not adequate to accommodate future space needs, then the longer-term period would need to explore and articulate various options: build a second branch elsewhere in the community; lease space for a second branch location; or build a new library, on the existing or a new site.

Conclusion

It is clear that the North Bay Public Library system needs additional space for all purposes in order to continue its long track record of being a well-used and valued asset to the community. The actions outlined in this space planning study will enable it to continue to play this compelling role well into this century and beyond.

1. Introduction and Context

In this initial section of the Report, we provide first an overview snapshot of the operations of the North Bay Public Library as a basic orientation to the system. *(As an adjunct to this discussion, the Report briefly profiles the Harris Learning Library, as it is a critical asset to library services in the City that might help to alleviate some of the space-related concerns identified through the study.)* This is followed by a statement of the purpose of the project and the various tasks undertaken towards its fulfilment. Next, the strategic context in which the library operates is presented in terms of the City's now somewhat dated cultural plan, as well as the City's and the Library's own strategic plans. Also, in this section we present key caveats and assumptions underlying the report's conclusions and recommendations.

1.1. Overview of the North Bay Public Library System

North Bay Public Library (NBPL) is the municipal public library serving the City of North Bay. Founded in 1895, it now operates from its main downtown facility at 271 Worthington Street East (adjacent to the City Hall) and functions as a core civic service supporting literacy, learning, culture, and community connection. NBPL is a one-branch library system, operating out of a 36,000 square-foot facility.

NBPL is governed by an independent Library Board and funded primarily through a municipal tax levy from the City of North Bay. Additional funding comes from provincial operating grants, minor earned revenues (fees, rentals, donations), and periodic capital contributions.

In 2023 (the most recent data available), NBPL reported total revenues of approximately $3.32 million. Of this amount, $2.61 million came from the municipal tax levy, $0.11 million from provincial operating grants, and $0.53 million from capital contributions. Total operating expenditures were approximately $2.92 million. Salaries and employee benefits accounted for $2.08 million, representing roughly 71% of total expenses. The Library recorded an annual surplus of approximately $0.50 million and an accumulated surplus of $4.26 million at year end.

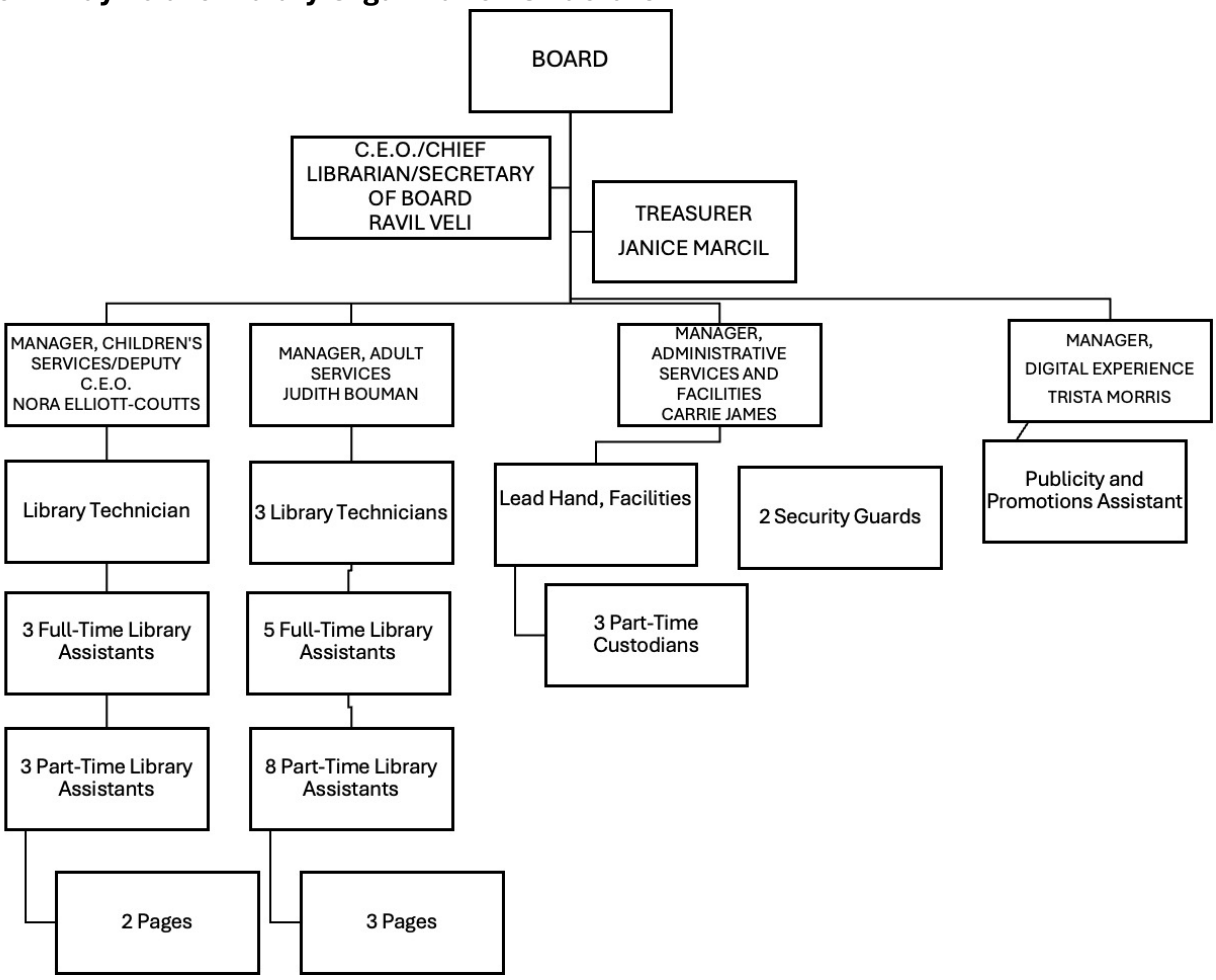
The Library is open 6 days a week, Monday through Saturday from 10 a.m. until 9 p.m. (6 p.m. on Fridays and 4 p.m. on Saturdays). The hours in the Children's Department are until 8 p.m. Mondays through Thursdays, and then align with adult hours on Fridays and Saturdays.

NBPL offers lending collections for adults, teens, and children, including books, magazines, DVDs, and digital materials such as ebooks and audiobooks. Additional services include public computers, printing and scanning, local history and genealogy

resources, and a range of free public programs. Programming spans early literacy, youth and teen activities, adult learning, digital literacy, and community events.

The staffing complement of the library is 40 positions, comprising approximately 21.7 full-time employee positions. The organizations structure of the Library is shown below.

North Bay Public Library Organization Structure



1.1.1. The Special Case of the Harris Learning Library

The Harris Learning Library is the academic library serving Nipissing University and Canadore College on their shared campus in North Bay. It is located at 100 College Drive on the Nipissing–Canadore campus, approximately a 6 km. distance from the North Bay Public Library. The Library is a 3-storey building of approximately 56,000 square feet.

The Library supports teaching, learning, and research through access to collections, learning spaces, and professional research assistance for students, faculty, and staff. It is an institutional library funded through the operating budgets of Nipissing University and

Canadore College. Student-related revenues and institutional operating funds support staffing, collections, and facilities.

Unusual for many academic libraries, the library is *open to community members* during regular hours for in-person use of space, study areas, and many services, including taking out books. Residents of North Bay and the surrounding area can obtain a Harris Learning Library card by presenting valid photo ID at the service desk. This allows borrowing privileges for physical materials like books, DVDs, and other items. The Harris Learning Library does not track users who come into the library simply to make use of the spaces. It currently has 183 valid community borrowers. In addition to this there are a further 159 community borrowers whose account has expired less than 1 year ago.

Facilities include silent and collaborative study areas, group study rooms, a computer lab, adaptive technology rooms, and the Thomson Reading Room, all available to community residents as well as students. During academic terms, the Library maintains extended daytime and evening hours, including weekends. Library collections include print materials, audiovisual media, and extensive digital holdings such as e-books, online journals, research databases, and streamed media. Services include reference and research help, interlibrary loan, course-integrated instruction, and online research support. The Library also facilitates access for community scholars through designated programs.

A distinguishing feature of the Harris Learning Library is the Nipissing University and Canadore College Archives and Special Collections. The professionally staffed archives support research into the history of North Bay, the surrounding region, and the institutions themselves, and form an important regional research asset.

The Harris Learning Library is mentioned here as it is a library asset to the residents of North Bay, and therefore needs to be considered in the overall ecosystem of library resources available to North Bay residents. Certain of the scenarios subsequently considered envision more active promotion and utilization of this facility through a partnership between the City and the educational institutions, which may offset some of the additional space needs of the community (as well as, potentially, some of the operating costs of the library).

1.2. Purpose of this Study and Activities Undertaken

The North Bay Public Library (NBPL) had a population of 52,700 (2021) with library space of 36,000 gross square feet. The purpose of this project is to assess the library's current and future space needs over the next decade and to determine whether the current amount of space is sufficient, given the current and anticipated future growth of the community. If additional space is required, high level capital and operating cost implications are to be determined.

Originally, the time horizon for this work was determined to be 10 years (i.e., to 2035), although future needs need to be understood within a longer-term timeframe as the overall context for the needs of the growing and changing community. Ultimately it was decided that a 25-year planning horizon (i.e. to mid-century) was best within which to work for the project. To accommodate the original timeframe, this longer-term period was divided into a 10-year Phase 1, and a 15-year Phase 2.

Key activities undertaken over the course of the project were:

- detailed review of all background data and studies that related to the project
- interviews with key stakeholders and municipal officials
- a survey of staff to obtain their perspectives on the space needs to the system
- a benchmarking review of library systems in similar communities across Ontario
- a presentation and workshop session with the library Board
- preparation of this report in draft and final forms

Throughout the project, meetings were held with a Steering Committee of senior library staff approximately every two weeks throughout the duration of the project. The work started in October 2025 and was completed in January 2026.

1.3. Strategic Context for this Work

There are three policy and planning documents in particular that need to be considered in assessing the future space needs for the North Bay Public Library. These are the now somewhat dated (2011) ***Culture Plan for the City***, the City's own strategic plan ***(City of North Bay Strategic Plan***) created in 2017 and covering the period to 2027, and the North Bay Public Library's own ***Strategic Plan*** (created in 2021 and covering the period 2021 to 2025). All three of these fundamental strategies underscore the importance of the Library and validate its role and presence in the community. Each is discussed in turn.

1.3.1. City of North Bay Cultural Plan (2011)

The City's Cultural Plan explicitly positions the North Bay Public Library as one of the community's core "anchor cultural institutions" and emphasizes the importance of accessible, flexible cultural spaces that support creativity, learning, collaboration, and community identity. The Plan calls for addressing cultural facility gaps, strengthening downtown cultural vitality, expanding opportunities for cultural participation across age groups, and adopting a "cultural lens" in municipal planning and infrastructure decisions. Within this framework, the Library is envisioned not only as a collections-based facility but as a multi-functional cultural hub supporting writers, creators, youth, newcomers, and community organizations through programs, gatherings, and informal cultural exchange. *This library space-needs study directly advances these objectives by assessing whether the existing facility can realistically fulfill its evolving role as a cultural convenor and creative space, and by identifying spatial requirements needed to support partnerships, programming, inclusivity, and cultural capacity-building envisioned in the Cultural Plan.*

1.3.2. City of North Bay Strategic Plan, 2017 – 2027

The Strategic Plan for the City of North Bay supports the Vision of a community that is *"economically prosperous for all residents, by ensuring that we are a vibrant, integrated, and balanced community rooted in the natural beauty of Ontario's near north."* There are two perspectives, or lenses, emerging from this Vision hat support the role and position of an active community library as a key delivery agency for that Vision.

Community, Arts, and Quality-of-Life Lens
The City's Strategic Plan strongly reinforces the role of the Public Library as essential civic infrastructure supporting a "Spirited Safe Community," arts and culture, lifelong learning, and inclusive community spaces. The Plan emphasizes accessible cultural amenities, age-friendly services, youth retention, social inclusion, and the promotion of arts and culture as cornerstones of a dynamic community—all functions the Library already delivers but which are increasingly space-intensive. The library's role as a free, welcoming, indoor civic space aligns directly with City priorities around equity, diversity, community well-being, and cultural vitality. *This space-needs study allows the City to test whether the existing library facility can realistically support these policy goals over the long term, or whether spatial reinvestment is required to maintain alignment with Council-endorsed community-building objectives*.

Growth, Infrastructure, and Governance Lens
From an infrastructure and governance perspective, the City's Strategic Plan underscores the importance of maintaining municipal assets in a good state of repair, delivering cost-effective services, and making evidence-based decisions about capital investment. The Public Library—one of the City's most heavily used civic facilities—must therefore be assessed not only for programmatic fit but also for long-term functional adequacy, accessibility compliance, and operational efficiency. *This space-needs study responds directly to these priorities by providing Council with defensible data on utilization, deficiencies, future demand, and options ranging from reconfiguration to expansion or replacement. In this context, the study supports responsible governance by ensuring that any future capital decision related to the Library is aligned with City-wide goals for fiscal sustainability, asset management, and equitable service delivery*.

1.3.3. North Bay Public Library Strategic Plan, 2021 – 2025

The Library's own Strategic Plan directly establishes the rationale for this space-needs study by identifying "vibrant physical and virtual space" as a core strategic goal and documenting specific spatial deficiencies in the existing facility. Community feedback highlights overcrowding, limited accessibility, insufficient quiet and group study areas, constrained children's and teen environments, lack of makerspace capacity, and challenges accommodating neuro-diverse users—all issues explicitly linked to physical layout and building limitations. While survey results show mixed perceptions about the *need* for additional space, the Plan clearly acknowledges that many desired service enhancements cannot be accommodated within the current footprint due to physical and

accessibility constraints. This space-needs study is thus a logical implementation tool to translate these strategic objectives into quantifiable spatial requirements, options for reconfiguration or expansion, and alignment with evolving service models outlined in the Plan.

1.4. Assumptions and Caveats

There are a few key assumptions and caveats that need to be taken into consideration in reading this report and interpreting its recommendations. These include:

- **population forecasts may be underestimated:** In the absence of specific population growth forecasts prepared by or for the City, the population forecasts used in this report assume a continuation of the historical 2016 – 2021 growth rate seen in the community. (The 2026 census counts will not be available after the count is taken in May of this year – likely in the fall – and until that time these are the best estimates available.) However, our discussions with officials in the Economic Development and Planning departments of the City suggest that population growth may be exceeding this historical growth rate. Accordingly, the population growth forecasts, and the resulting space requirements, may be underestimates of the actual space needs. Recognizing this, we have included a recommendation in our work to the effect that the specific population forecast and resulting space requirements, be updated in the fall of this year, after the most recent population counts are released.

- **a 25-year time period is assumed:** As previously indicated, while the time period under consideration for this work was originally a 10-year span (i.e. to 2035), it was subsequently determined that a longer-term time horizon was desirable, recognizing that the planning period for larger capital projects in the city required sufficient time for fundraising, planning and approvals to be undertaken. Accordingly, a planning period consisting of two phases, with a first phase comprising the 2026 – 2035 period, and a subsequent second phase consisting of the 2036-2051 period was considered.

- **information contained in this report is high-level, not considering individual sites or specific development plans:** The purpose of this work was to estimate the space needs of the North Bay library system at a high level, and to recommend a general course of action, rather than to develop specific design schemes for the existing facility, or select individual sites for future development. While an estimation of the general capital costs of any new development was part of the delivery requirement for the work, it is understood that this was to be a high-level estimate, based upon general construction costs estimates.

With this understanding of the general assumptions and caveats underlying the project, we next turn to the key findings and conclusions of the work.

2. Data Collection and Analyses

This section of the report presents key findings from the various avenues of research undertaken over the course of the project. First population growth projections for the City, which are a critical foundational element for the determination of space needs, are presented. Next are discussed the observations of the study team from the site visit. We then assess the provision of space considering both commonly accepted library standards as well as a benchmarking assessment of comparable library systems. This is followed by a report on the findings from the staff survey undertaken (which reinforce many of the study team's own observations). With this background information in hand, an assessment of the current and future space needs of the entire North Bay Library system is presented, using a 'top-down' and 'bottom-up' approach (explained in the text), which shows fundamental agreement between these two methods (providing assurance that the space needs identified are robust and verifiable.

2.1. Population Growth Expectations for North Bay to 2041 and Beyond

A population projection was developed using North Bay's census population data and five-year growth rate between 2016 and 2021. The growth rate for that five-year period was 2.2%. Using the same growth rate for each five-year segments following 2021 gives the following population projection for North Bay up until 2051.

Year	Population
2021	52,662
2026	53,820
2031	55,003
2036	56,213
2041	57,449
2046	58,712
2051	60,003

The above population forecast for the City was compared with the Ontario Ministry of Finance's population forecast for Nipissing District (over the period 2024 to 2051) and found to be broadly in line with the above projection (with North Bay's share of the District's population was very similar in each of 2024 and 2051). According to the Senior Planner, the City's planning policy is to be guided by the Ministry of Finance's projection.

The team had discussions with Board members who noted that population growth in recent years may be higher than the historical rates as a result of an increased number of immigrants and others who may be moving to the community from elsewhere. In our

discussions with North Bay's Senior Planner, it was noted that for many years North Bay's growth has been relatively modest. However, in the recent five-year period have been some new housing units developed in the north end of the community as well as an increased number of immigrants, some of whom have been attending Nipissing University or Canadore College who may be driving up population counts higher than was historically the case. The above perspectives suggest that the population growth rate for the next five year may be somewhat higher than the official projections and therefore the population forecast for the City above should be reviewed when more 'official' population projections are received following the 2026 Census.

Accordingly, we have adopted the above population forecast in this report for the purpose of planning future library expansion, recognizing that these forecasts may be somewhat conservative.

2.2. Observations from the Site Visit

On October 28 and 29, 2025, the consultants visited North Bay. The evening of the 28th, they visited the Harris Learning Library at Nipissing University, shared with Canadore Community College. This academic library is open to the general public, and residents of Nipissing District, which includes North Bay, may borrow materials from it. The consultants were impressed with the study spaces and variety of seating available.

Also on the evening of October 28, the consultants briefly visited the North Bay Public Library to get a sense of the use of it in the evenings, and observed both individuals and families using the library. On October 29, the consultants toured the North Bay Public Library and interviewed some staff and board members in person.

The library is located centrally downtown in a block that also includes City Hall, Leger Square, and a small park. On-street paid parking is available in the area. The main entrance is on Worthington Street and is accessible via an exterior ramp. A second accessible entrance is off McIntyre Street near Leger Square and the parkette. While a popular entrance due to a nearby bus stop and proximity to the children's department, this entrance is currently closed for security reasons due to illegal drug users "hanging out" in the area.

The three-storey library was built in 1966 to replace the original Carnegie library. In 1982, a two-storey addition was built which included the children's department on the main floor and storage/stacks below. At this time, an elevator was added. It is a very solid red brick building with few windows, more like a warehouse of books than an inviting place for people to visit and engage with library resources, programs, and other people.

Mezzanine Level

This appears to be the most modern and attractive area of the library, including a teen area of books and desks, with colourful accents and graphics and natural light, as well as a meeting room for 26 people, and a staff office.

This area could be improved by:

- adding more casual furniture suitable for teens;
- relocating the cake pan collection, which is not compatible with teen use.

Main Floor

Children's Department

This separate section of the library has its own circulation/service desk which provides good security for people coming into the children's area. A fireplace, light wood trim, and good windows offer a cozy ambiance. Book displays, picture books, and child-size furniture add to the comfort. A couple of interactive play stations are also available. A separate program room is used for storytimes as well as a staff office and storage.

This area could be improved by:

- reducing the size of the collection, especially the dated non-fiction collection;
- reducing the height of all the tall shelving;
- refreshing the furniture to add comfortable family-friendly seating;
- adding a play and literacy station, such as Keebee or KidsStop;
- putting wheels on the low book shelves so they can be moved out of the central area for more programming space;
- reducing the size of the service desk and making it more welcoming.

The rest of the main floor contains the adult fiction, audio-visual collection, periodicals, computer workstations, some study tables, and part of the non-fiction collection. There are few windows, and the red-brick theme continues on the pillars, stairwells, and some interior walls. Signage by the main stairs is busy with directions, rules, and warnings.

This area could be enhanced by:

- reducing the size of the circulation desk and relocating it across from the main entrance, thereby freeing up space for casual seating or the Library of Things;
- significantly reducing the collection, and then reducing the height of the shelving, especially in the non-fiction area;
- moving the book sale table (downstairs?), and using this prime real estate for library displays;
- making the signage more customer and user friendly.

Lower Level

This area is very confusing to navigate, with two sets of stairs to it, and some sections staff-only. It contains the auditorium, public washrooms, French language materials, and part of the non-fiction collection, as well as the board room, a staff work room, staff break room and washrooms, and a large storage area, "The Stacks." Wayfinding is somewhat assisted by stickers on the floor. The red brick theme continues in the two-level auditorium which also has a stage that is mostly used for storage. There are no windows in any area of this level.

This area could be improved by:

- with the assistance of architectural services, consider moving the staff work room to another space and opening that area to the public and collection. Consolidate the non-fiction collection in this area, and move the French fiction collection to the main floor or use the space on the main floor for public seating;
- Eliminating the dropped floor of the auditorium to expand seating capacity.

General observations about access to the North Bay Public Library:

- For function, management, and supervision of the library, it is generally preferable to have one entrance to the library. The addition of the McIntyre Street entrance at the time of the addition of the Children's Department enhanced the access for the public but since has contributed to security concerns and has been closed;
- The elevator is inadequate to meet current needs of users as it is awkward to access for larger wheelchairs, scooters, and child strollers. It is also in a poor location particularly for access to the lower level.

2.3. Standards Assessment

Standards and guidelines offer a method for libraries to measure their resources and activities against widely accepted norms. These often vary from one jurisdiction to another, so examples are used here. Fundamentally, a public library needs to be responsive to its community and meet the community needs with resources available. In most cases, meeting the standards is voluntary. The following standards were reviewed.

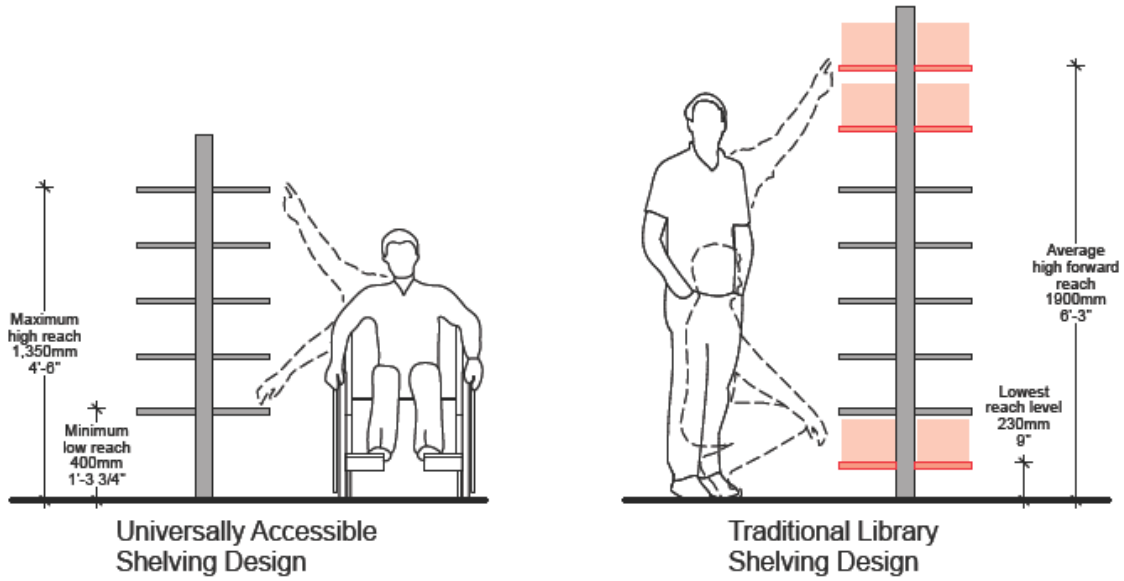
Ontario Public Library Guidelines

The Ontario Public Library Guidelines (OPLG) are developed and administered by the Ontario Public Library Guidelines Monitoring and Accreditation Council. The Guidelines are updated annually, and the version used for this Study was 2024. The Guidelines are voluntary standards accepted by the Ontario public library community and are used by libraries particularly as an assessment tool to update or change management and service goals. The OPLG are more descriptive than prescriptive, in that quantitative targets are not included. Rather, the Ontario Public Library Guidelines provide a framework for good governance and management. See: https://ontariopubliclibraryguidelines.ca

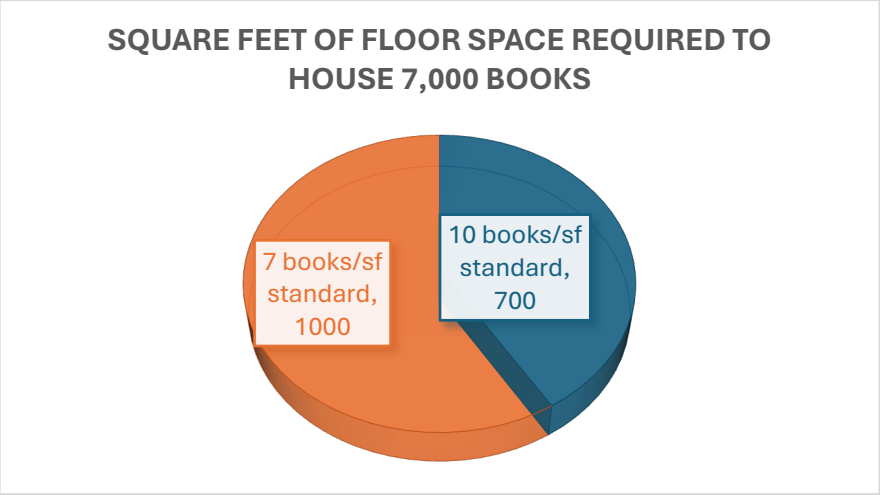
Guidelines for Rural/Urban Public Library Systems
The Guidelines for Rural/Urban Public Library Systems are developed and administered by the Administrators of Rural and Urban Public Libraries of Ontario (ARUPLO). The edition used for this study is the 4th edition, published in June, 2023. The ARUPLO Guidelines are supplementary to the Ontario Public Library Guidelines, above, to address issues of multi-branch and rural library systems in Ontario. The ARUPLO Guidelines pertain to public library branches within a multi-branch library system, in which some staff functions are performed at an administrative office elsewhere, including Interlibrary Loan, materials processing, off-site storage and other administrative functions, thereby reducing some staff and storage space that a standalone library needs to accommodate. See: https://aruplo.weebly.com/uploads/2/8/3/7/2837807/aruplo_guidelines_4th_edition_final_-_accessible_web_version.pdf

Making Your Case for Your Library Building Project, prepared by Robert Hubsher and Karen Watson for Southern Ontario Library Service, March 2010, The Library Development Guide Series.

Barrier-Free Access to the Library
In addition to barrier-free requirements for new buildings, such as access to the building, universal washrooms, elevators, and the provision of accessible workstations and furniture, clear aisle space and the height of book shelves are important elements of an accessible public library (see the diagram below). This results in a larger space requirement for the collection. It also has the benefit of making the library more attractive, open, and easier to supervise.



Barrier-free design requires significantly more floor space to accommodate universally accessible shelving than traditional shelving designs.



Using barrier free design guidelines of 7 books/sf shelving standard, 43% more floor space is required to house an equivalent number of books.

Comparison with Library Guidelines

The ARUPLO Guidelines are used here as they are the most recent and most relevant Guidelines for the North Bay Public Library. It should be emphasized that the ARUPLO Guidelines were developed for a branch of a multibranch library system, assuming that administrative and support functions take place in another location. Therefore, in order to apply them to a standalone library, additional space and staffing should be added for the support functions, and collection size should be considered in that a branch library would have access to collections from other branches in the library system.

An Urban Branch generally serves a catchment population of 35,000 or more. According to the 2021 Census, North Bay currently has a population of 52,662. Therefore, the ARUPLO guidelines are pro-rated by 1.5 to compare North Bay's population and service levels to the ARUPLO Urban Branch model.

	ARUPLO Urban Branch (35,000+)	ARUPLO Prorated + 25% for Gross Square Footage	North Bay	Deficit
Library Square Footage	35,000+ (net sq. ft.)	66,040 (gross sq. ft or gsf))	36,000 gsf	30,000 gsf
Hours of Operation per Week	65+	70	58	12
Days Open per Week	7	7	6	1
Collection size	50,000+	75,000	200,889	None
User Seating	200+	300	69	231
Staff Complement	17.5+	26.3	21.7	4.6

Note: Net library space is the space allocated for library services including programming spaces in the library, collections, gathering areas, seating, staff areas, and library storage, etc. Additional non-assignable space is required for public washrooms, utilities, stairwells, elevators, corridors, foyers, custodian, closets, mechanicals, etc., which will vary based on the type of building. This has been calculated as an additional 25% to the above net space required.

The above comparison to the ARUPLO Guidelines supports the recommendation that the North Bay Public Library needs more space to:

- Meet accessibility guidelines for access to the collection and ease of movement through the library;
- Provide adequate seating and meet the need for study rooms, programming, and small meeting rooms;
- Provide new space for technology such as makerspace equipment and non-traditional collections.

It also identifies a shortfall in staffing to provide additional programming and outreach, and a surfeit in collection size.

Making Your Case for Your Library Building Project, prepared by Robert Hubsher and Karen Watson for Southern Ontario Library Service, March 2010, The Library Development Guide Series. This document refers to library standards with regard to facilities.

Definitions

- Basic – minimal services, such as a neighbourhood branch of a multi-branch system.
- Enhanced – basic standard plus administrative, technical services and additional public services and programs, can apply to neighbourhood and regional branches and may apply to standalone buildings.
- Comprehensive – broad range of public services and programs.

Service Population	Basic	Enhanced	Comprehensive
Buildings serving 35,001 – 75,000 people Use minimum square footage or square feet per capita (whichever is greater)	42,000 sq. ft.	52,500 sq. ft.	66,625 sq. ft.
	0.83 sq. ft. per capita	1.04 sq. ft. per capita	1.30 sq. ft. per capita
Per Capita implications for North Bay Public Library (52,662 population)	43,709 sq. ft.	54,768 sq. ft.	68,461 sq. ft.
Per Capita implications for North Bay Public Library (60,000 population)	49,800 sq. ft.	62,400 sq. ft.	78,000 sq. ft.

2.4. Benchmarking Assessment

Ontario's public libraries report usage and related statistics to the Ministry of Tourism, Culture and Gaming on an annual basis, which allows for some comparisons that are of interest to libraries and their funders. The statistics are from the year 2024.

Many factors can affect the variation in library data, such as the size and condition of the library buildings, which can affect both costs and ability to provide programming and accessible space. Some municipalities provide in-kind services such as financial, facility, and IT services, which may or may not be accounted for in the costs. Low investment by the funders, affecting staffing levels, hours of operation, and materials budget, will result in commensurately low outputs of material circulation and program attendance. Quantitative measures are just one way that a library can demonstrate its value.

Qualitative measures are indicated elsewhere in this report through the stakeholder and staff surveys and interviews.

The following libraries were selected as comparators because they are similar in population, branch configuration, or because they are neighbours in the near north area of Ontario. Data was retrieved from the Province of Ontario Ministry of Tourism, Culture and Gaming. [1]

Aurora Belleville Cornwall Georgina (4 branches) Halton Hills (2 branches) Orillia	Sault Ste. Marie (2 branches) St. Thomas Timmins (2 branches) Welland (3 branches) Woodstock

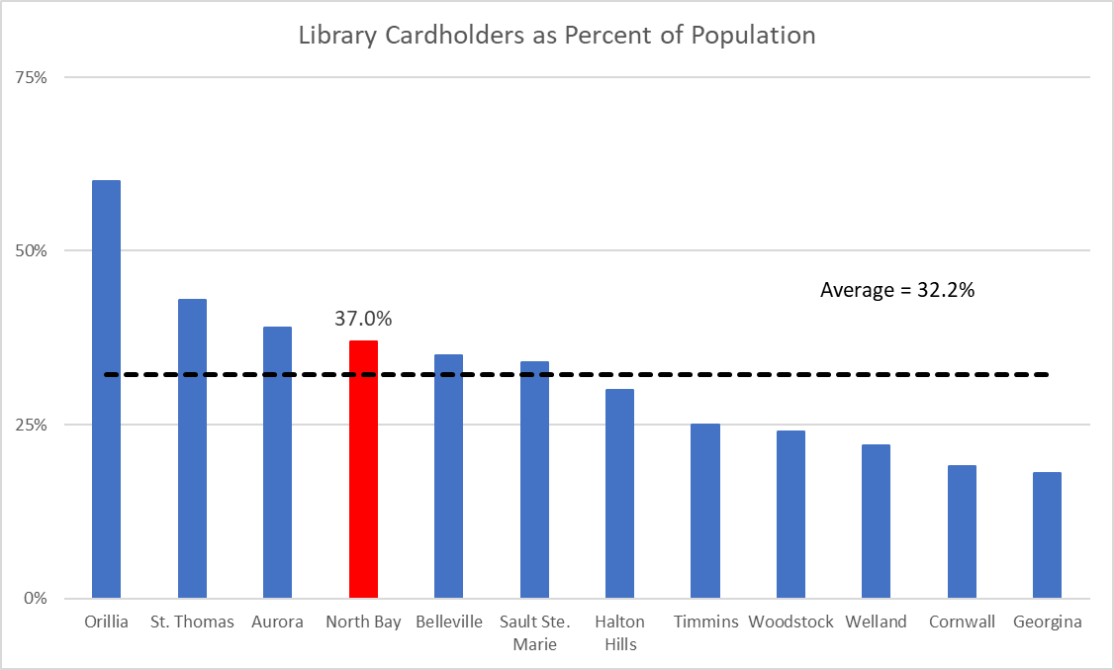
Charts use "per capita" to standardize the measures to allow for variations in population. The visual display of quantitative information is an effective way to demonstrate the relative activity of the public libraries. Key performance indicators include output measures such as library cardholders as a percent of the population, circulation of materials, and program attendance. These are displayed on a per capita basis.

Performance measures include the percentage of the population with active library cards, circulation of materials, and program attendance.

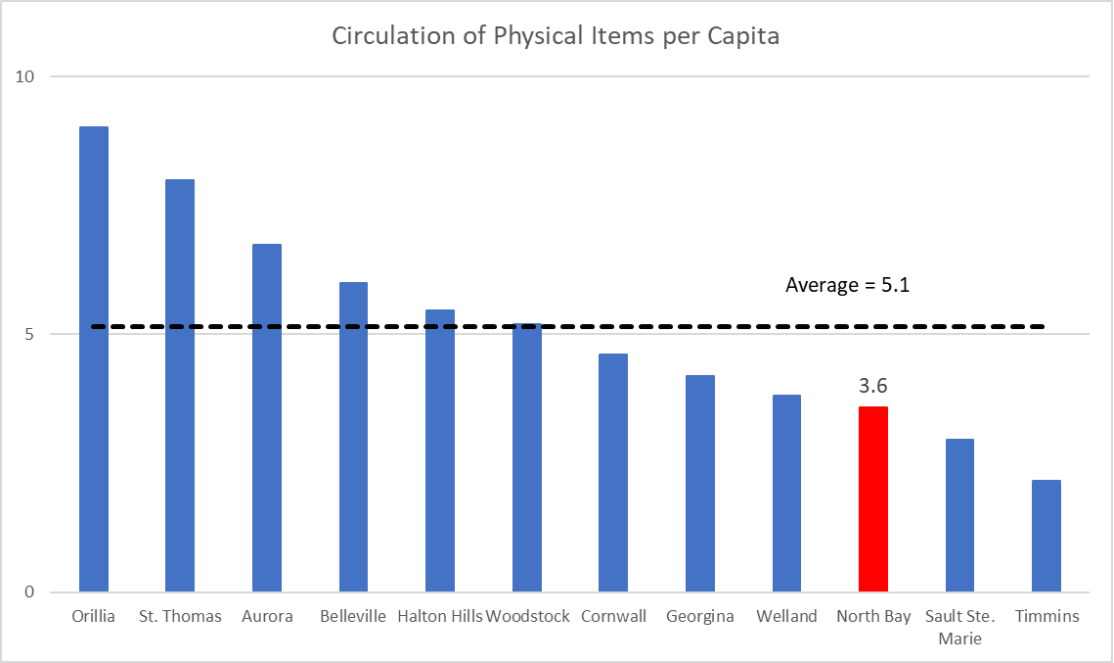
Resources available include local municipal financial support, books and other physical items, staffing levels, and size of the libraries.

[1] https://data.ontario.ca/dataset/ontario-public-library-statistics

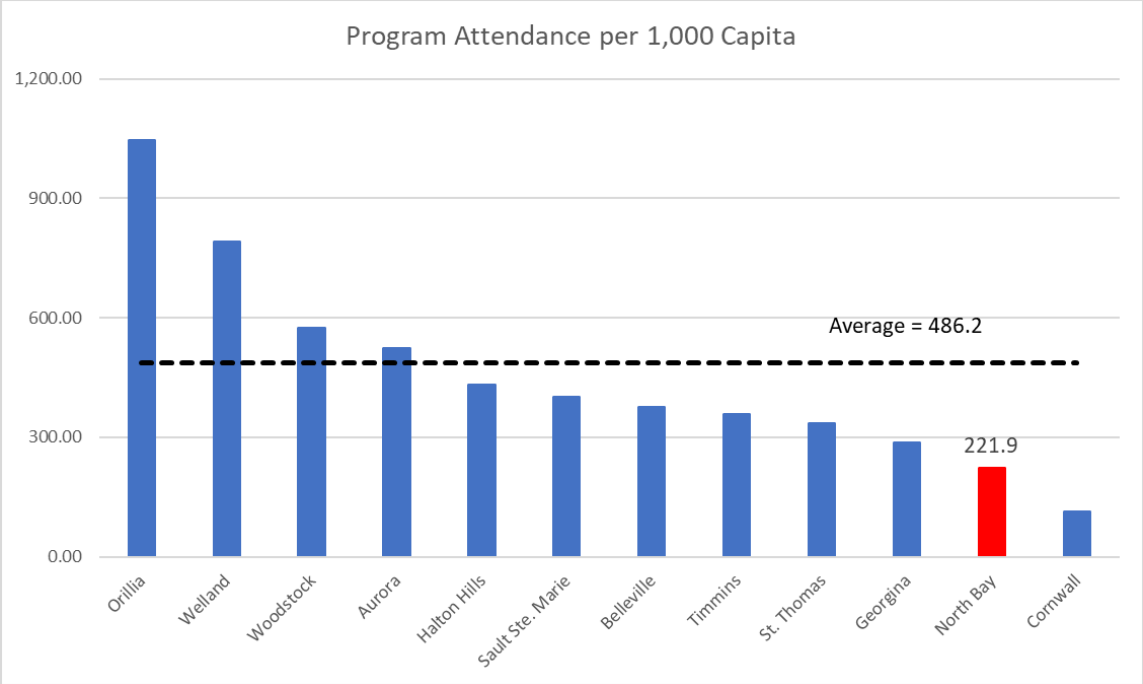
Library Performance



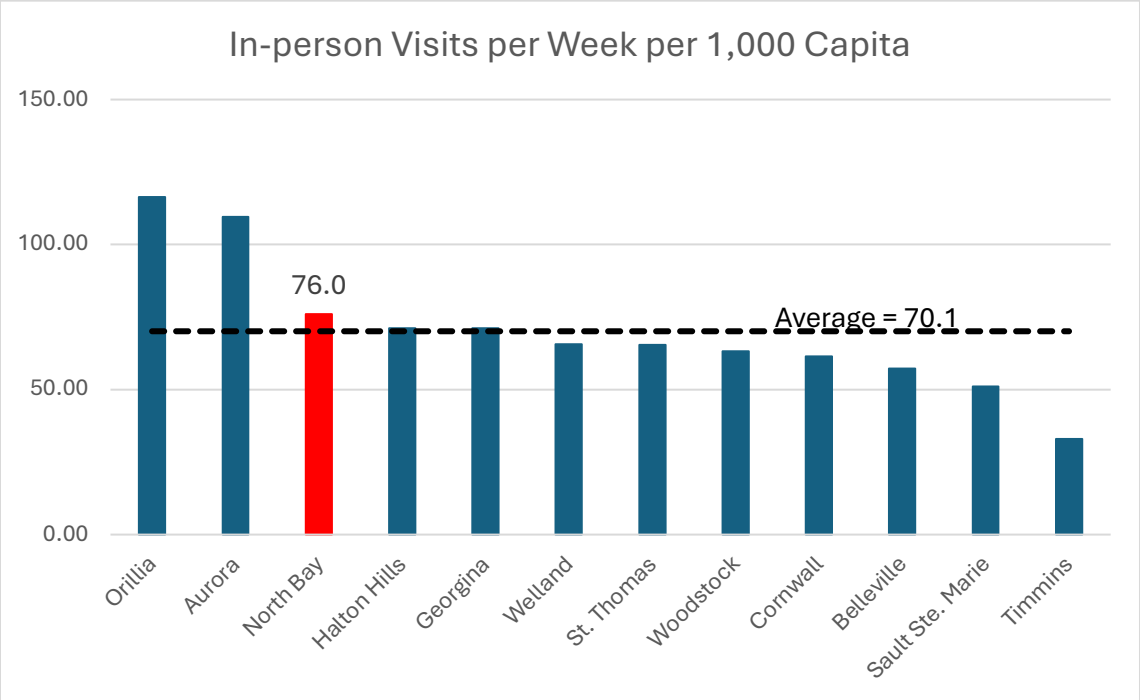
North Bay is above average with regard to cardholders as a percentage of the population indicating the library is a valued asset in the community.



Circulation of physical items per capita is low suggesting, that users may be using the library for other purposes or that collection strategies may need to be updated.

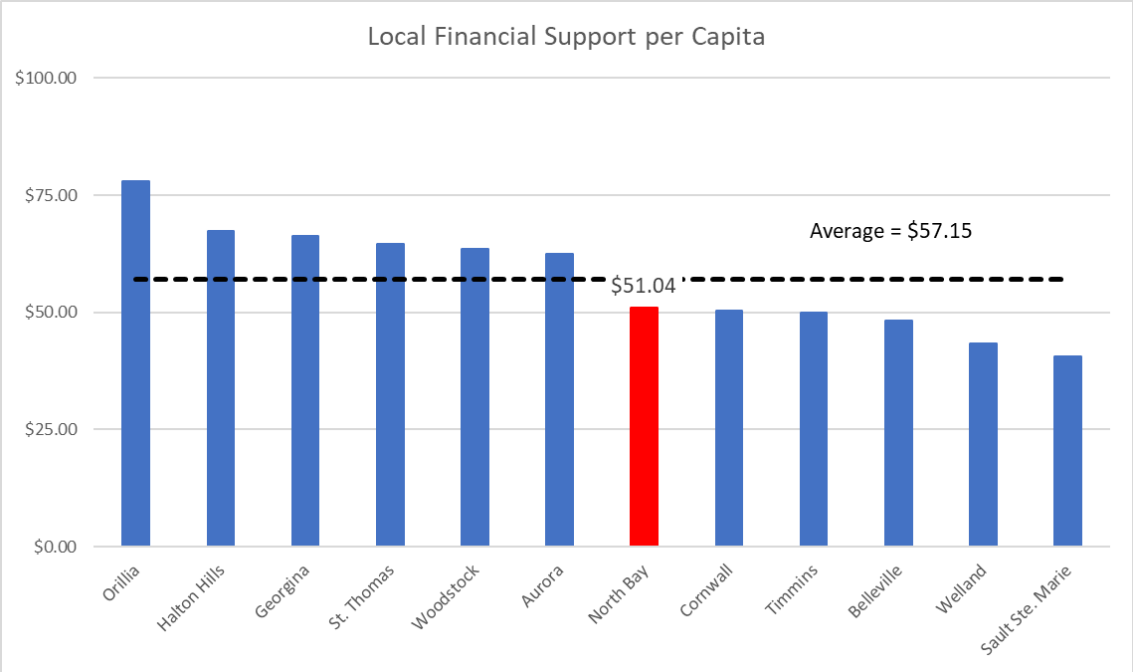


Program attendance is low which can be affected by lack of space and/or lack of staffing.

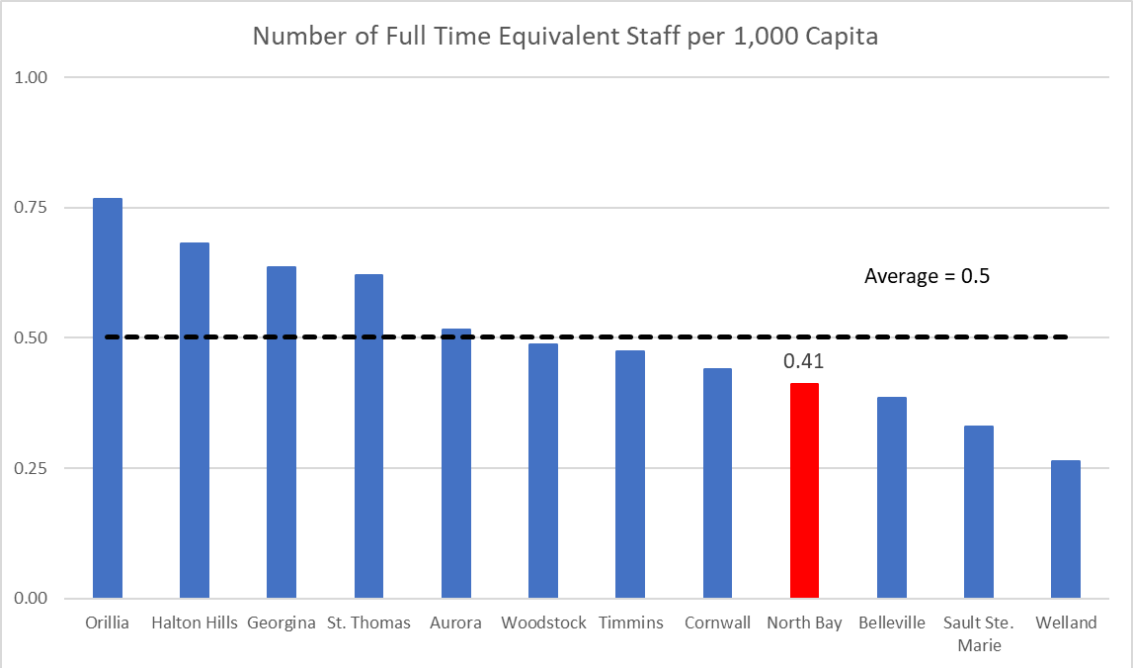


In person visits per week are somewhat higher than the average.

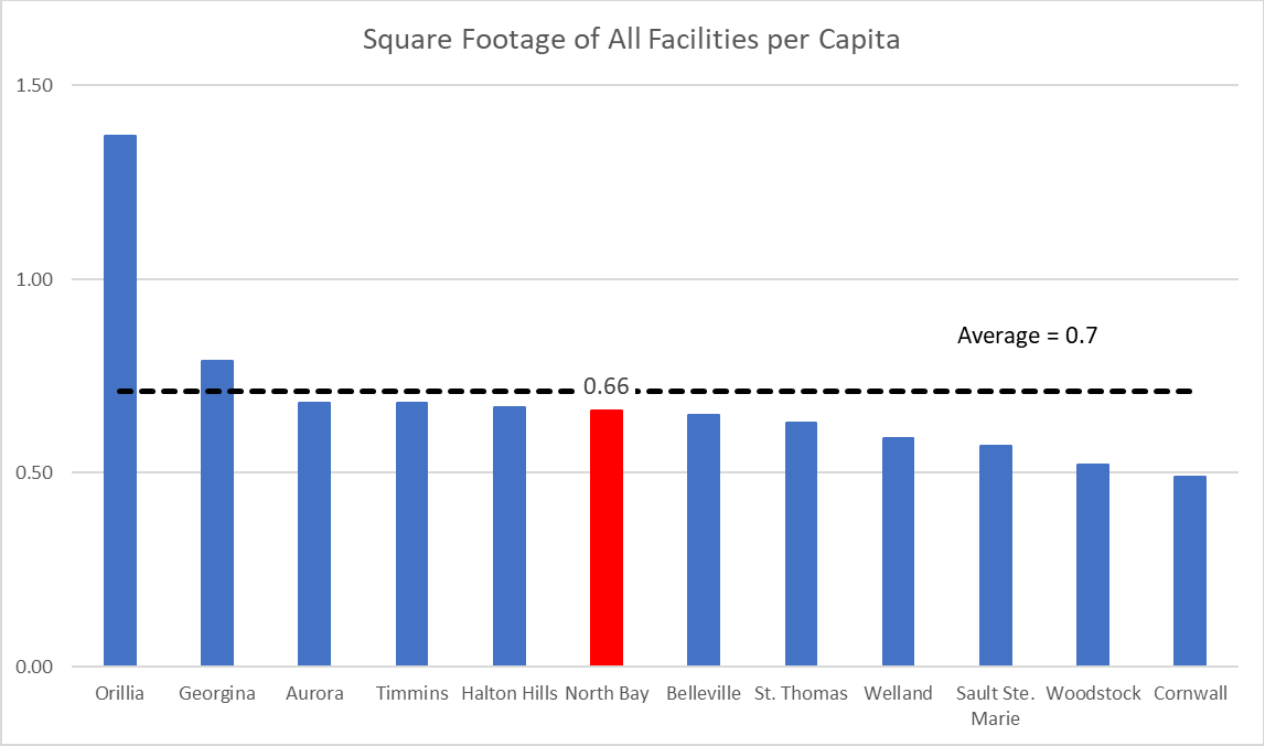
Library Resources Available



Financial support per capita is somewhat lower than the average. If municipal support was increased to meet the average it would provide approximately an additional $300,000 to the library's budget.



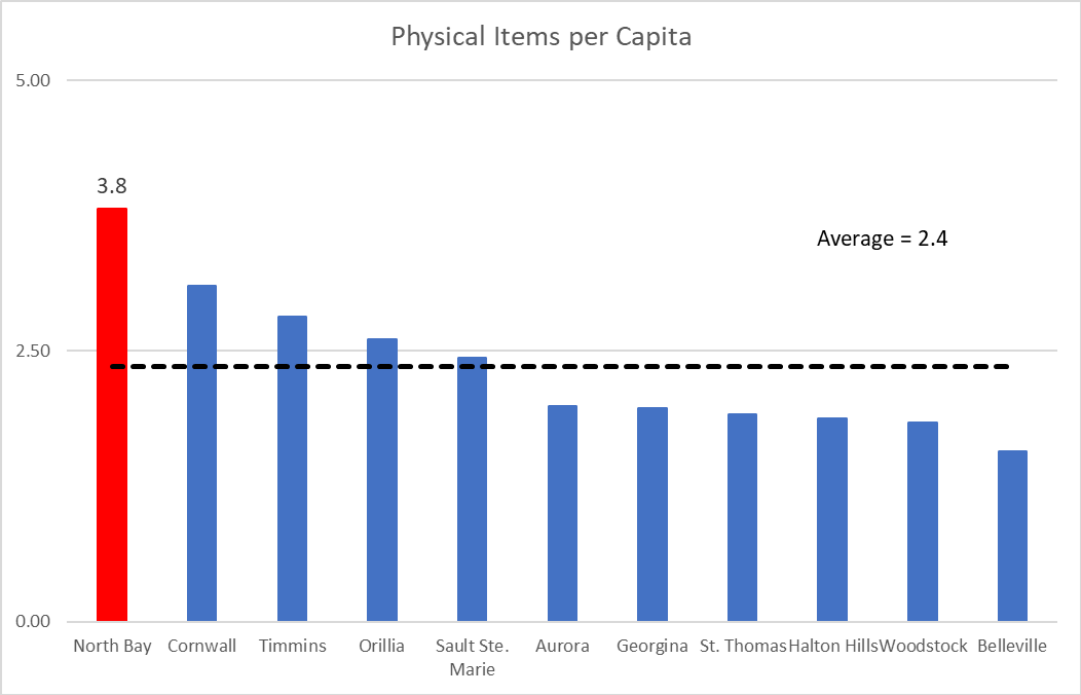
As shown, North Bay's staffing (FTEs) is somewhat lower than its peer libraries.



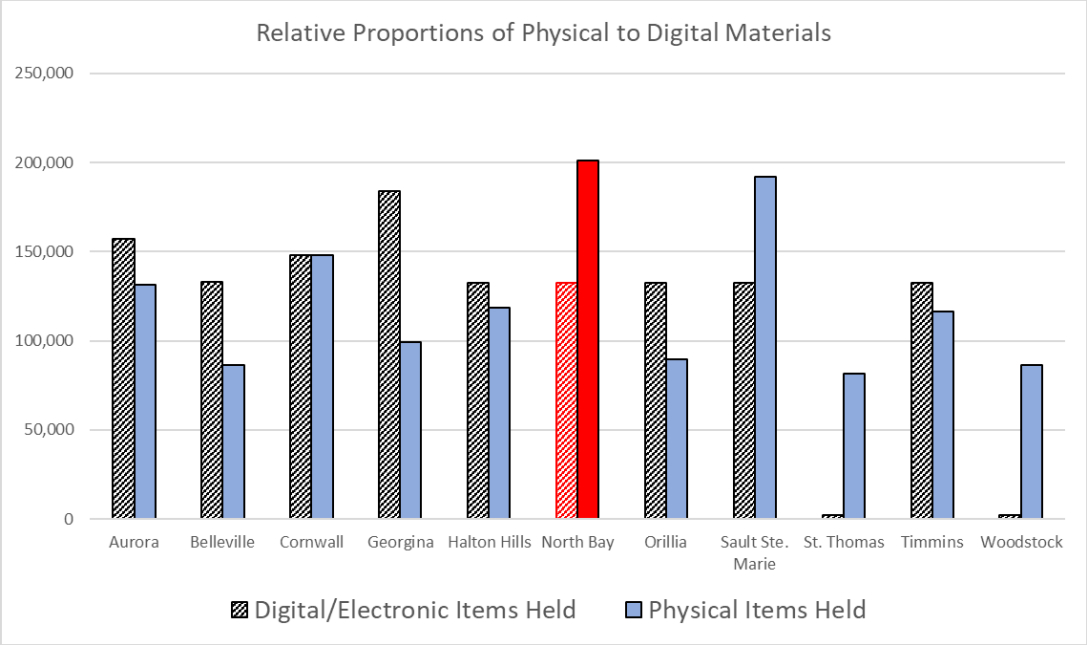
Note that Georgina, Halton Hills, Sault Ste. Marie, Timmins, and Welland have multiple branches, which may result in higher building and staffing costs.

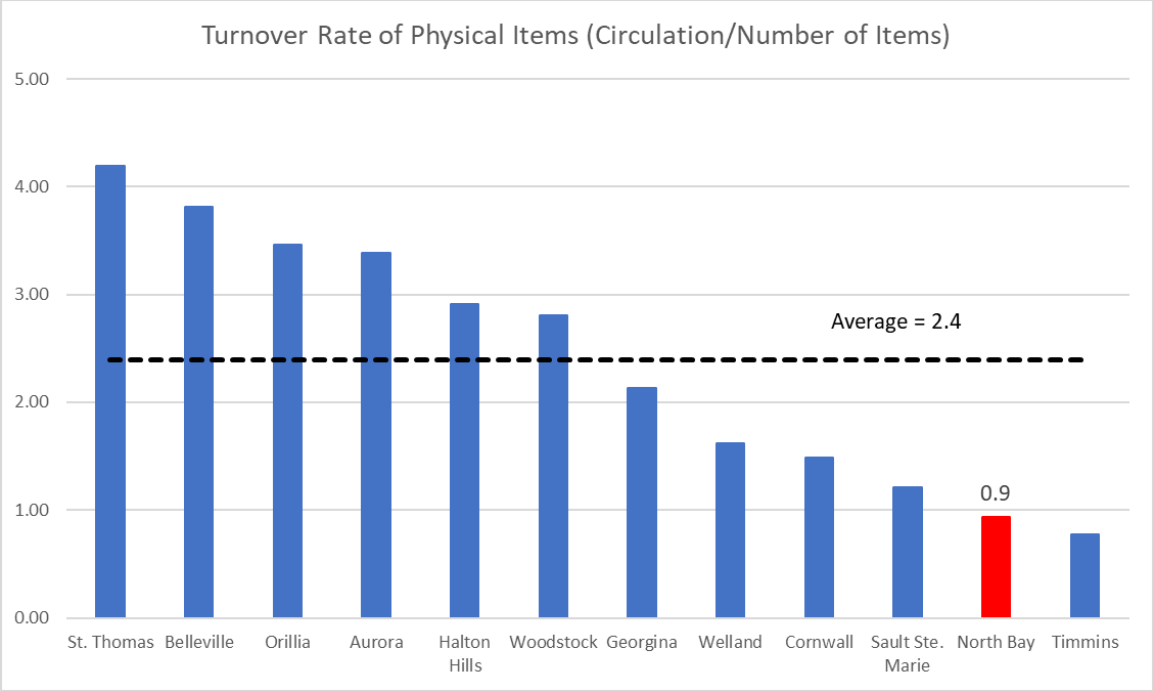
Most of the above graphs indicate that North Bay is close to or below its peer libraries in the metrics.

While this project is a facility study, it is helpful to drill down into the collection component, specifically because the physical collection has an impact on the facility requirements while the digital collection does not.



The very high level of physical items per capita for NBPL suggests that weeding strategies should be implemented to ensure collections are in demand and relevant.





North Bay's low turnover rate combined with a high number of physical items per capita suggests the collection needs to be weeded and refreshed to ensure it is well used by the community.

The above graphs suggest that the North Bay Public Library has a much larger collection of physical items, mostly books, than the peer libraries, but the circulation of them is low, relative to the size of the collection and the population.

The data suggest that the collection needs serious weeding, to reduce it to free up space to make the collection more physically accessible and more attractive. It may also free up space for informal seating for visitors to the library.

2.5. Staff Survey

A confidential staff survey was designed using SurveyMonkey and was available for completion between October 28 and November 25, 2025. A good cross-section of 20 staff completed the survey, representing management, technicians, full-time and part-time assistants, pages, and maintenance. Respondents are very familiar with the institution. Nearly half have worked at NBPL for 16 years or more, and most are over age 50, with a good mix of college, university, and specialized library training. Key findings are as follows:

Satisfaction with Services

- Staff expressed high satisfaction with core collections and services: roughly half or more are very satisfied with the range of physical and digital materials, adult programs, and staff ability to help with information and research.
- Perceptions were more mixed for the "library of things," teen programs, and training for research and technology support, where staff noted gaps in tools, digital resources, and skills development.

Open-ended comments identified the creative use of space and programming, but also frustration that the facility limits what a modern, vibrant library could offer, particularly for teens and early years.

Facility Satisfaction

Overall space, layout, and storage

- Staff were most critical of the overall size of the facility, storage, space for collections, and program and meeting space, where "somewhat" and "very deficient" ratings were given. Those identifying "somewhat" or "very deficient", included external accessibility issues (48%); space for public meetings (35%); functionality of the space (53%); office and administrative space (65%); storage space (41%); overall size of the library (49%); amount of programming space (65%); creative space (e.g., Maker space) (65%); internal accessibility (69%); quiet space for private study (82%); and space for library of things (71%).
- Comments described the building as a "relic of the past," over-shelved, visually dated, and fragmented, with collections split between floors and a "rabbit warren" of rooms and corridors that confuse patrons and complicate workflow.
- Storage and collections space were described as insufficient and poorly located, forcing ad-hoc repurposing of offices and corners for the library of things, program materials, and equipment, and constraining the ability to expand collections or add new service elements.

Programming and study space

- Availability of program and meeting space and quiet work/study space received some of the strongest dissatisfaction ratings, including a majority "somewhat" (41%) or "very dissatisfied" (24%) with the availability of program and meeting space. Further staff were "somewhat" (65%) or "very dissatisfied" (24%) with the availability of quiet study space.
- Staff reported frequent requests for individual or small-group study rooms, Zoom/Teams-ready spaces, and dedicated program rooms that do not have to compete with community bookings.

- The children's department was identified as particularly constrained: loss of the former story room to staff workspace and storage has reduced program capacity, and staff see significant unrealized potential for early-years programming if suitable space were available.

Staff workspaces and ergonomics

- Office and administrative space for staff is widely seen as deficient, with many rating it "somewhat" (35%) or "very deficient" (29%) and describing cramped, noisy workrooms with no privacy, poor ergonomics, and split teams across levels.
- Comments emphasized lack of private, sound-separated space for HR conversations, confidential phone calls with doctors or schools, or focused work, and point to outdated desks, poor lighting, and acoustics that contribute to stress.
- Staff noted that part-time staff and those sharing workstations were particularly affected by ergonomic deficiencies and layout decisions that were made without sufficient staff consultation.

Accessibility and internal circulation

- Internal and external accessibility received many "somewhat" and "very" deficient ratings, especially regarding the lower level, elevator, and routes to meeting rooms.
- Staff described significant challenges for wheelchair users, people with mobility aids, strollers, and visitors with visual impairments, mentioning the small, outdated elevator, long distances from the elevator to the auditorium, multiple locked doors, and the need for assistance from a staff escort.
- The closure of the McIntyre Street entrance was cited as a major loss of an accessible, transit-proximate entry, particularly raising difficulties for seniors and people with disabilities who arrive by bus or from street parking.

Parking, transit, and external environment

- Parking was one of the most negatively rated aspects of the facility, (71% "very deficient") with many staff describing the situation as "no parking" for both patrons and staff, combined with strict enforcement and distance from available spaces.
- Public transit access was also seen as problematic, because the nearest bus stop is on the McIntyre side and not linked to an open, accessible entrance, making the approach particularly difficult in winter and for those with accessibility issues.
- Several staff noted that families are reluctant to attend evening programs because of parking and safety concerns between street parking and the front door.

Technology, creative space, and modern library functions

- Wireless access and computer workstations received mixed but generally more positive scores, yet comments pointed to gaps such as lack of wireless printing, self-serve scanning, and modern digital learning tools.
- Creative/maker space and digital studio capacity are rated as deficient by most staff, with repeated references to the absence of any dedicated creative space and concern that the library is not keeping pace with contemporary practice.
- Staff also note that digital materials and online services, especially research databases, reader's advisory tools, and educational platforms, lagged behind peer libraries and limited service quality.

Staff comments about change and priorities

Strong desire for a new or significantly reconfigured facility

- Multiple comments identified directly the need for "a new building" or relocation to a larger site (for example, the former Widdifield school) with ample parking and opportunities to share space with community partners.
- Others mentioned that, even if a new build is not feasible, the current space requires major reconfiguration, including aggressive weeding to reduce shelving, consolidating collections on a single floor, and rethinking the children's and teen areas for better flow and visibility.
- Staff were willing to contribute to planning and emphasize that a central, modern elevator, more open sightlines, and shorter shelving would materially improve accessibility, safety, and user experience.

Program, meeting, and quiet space as core needs

- Staff viewed separate, dedicated program space for library-run activities as essential so that children's, teen, and adult programs are not in constant competition with external bookings.
- Quiet, enclosed carrels or small rooms for individuals and small groups were often mentioned as a high priority to support studying, job interviews, telehealth, and other confidential or concentration-intensive activities.
- The need for one or two sound-proofed rooms equipped for video meetings was highlighted as a new but pressing community requirement in a world of remote work, virtual court and health appointments, and online education.

Limited support for alternative, off-site or staffless service models

- Only four staff responded to questions about alternative service delivery, and even among these there was minimal enthusiasm; most comments stress staffing and

safety constraints and a perception that off-site kiosks, lockers, bookmobiles, or extended "staffless" access would be impractical and risky. The cost of the bookmobile was identified as a concern.

- Respondents emphasized that North Bay is compact and reachable, and that resources should be invested in making the central facility more functional and welcoming rather than dispersing services without adequate staff support.
- One or two respondents expressed interest in exploring ideas like a new site with community partners, but overall the staff believe the main library should be strengthened and reconfigured before considering alternative service models.

Implications for the space needs study

- Staff see the current building as at or beyond functional capacity, with design, layout, and infrastructure limitations now significantly constraining service quality, safety, and the ability to deliver contemporary library offerings.
- Priority needs emerging from the survey include:
  - Additional and more flexible program and meeting spaces for all ages.
  - Dedicated quiet study and small-group rooms with reliable connectivity and sound separation.
  - Expanded, better located staff workrooms with privacy and ergonomic design.
  - Increased and consolidated collections space, coupled with strategic weeding and clearer wayfinding.
  - Greatly improved storage and display for the library of things and program materials.
  - Modernized accessibility (especially elevator and circulation routes), lighting, finishes, and seating to create a more inviting, inclusive, and healthy environment.
  - On-site parking and improved connection to transit and accessible entrances.

Overall, the staff survey provides a compelling, experience-based case that any facility expansion or major renovation must address both public-facing and back-of-house space, ensure genuine accessibility, and support staff well-being and modern library functions, rather than focusing solely on adding more shelves or minor cosmetic updates.

2.6. Conclusions: Additional Space Requirements for NBPL

Two approaches are taken to the determination of the amount of space required for the North Bay Library System. These are a top-down approach that simply applies the recommended per-square-foot allocation of 0.85 square feet per person (see Appendix A) to the current and anticipated future population of North Bay. The second is a bottom-up, 'components of space' approach that examines the various functions of the library system that use space (collections, meeting rooms, study spaces, etc.), assesses the optimum

size of each based upon the size of the population, and adds up the resulting amounts to determine toe total space required. As will be shown, these two approaches point to essentially the same 'ballpark in terms of the total space required.

2.6.1. 'Top Down' Approach

Applying the 0.85 square feet per capita to the best estimate of current population, as well as projected population to 2051 yields the following estimate of the total amount of space required, as well as the current gap between the current space provision and the ideal. As the table shows, the gap at present is on the order of 11,000 square feet, which is expected to grow to 16,000 square feet by 2051.

	Population	Required Space (@ 0.85 sf per capita (sf rounded)	Existing Space (sf)	Gap (sf rounded)
2026	53,820	46,000	34,700	11,000
2051	60,000	51,000	34,700	16,000

As previously indicated the estimate of current population, and thus the estimated population projection for 2051 that is based upon it, may under-represent the current and future populations and thus the space required. As outlined in put recommendations, this is one aspect of this assessment that needs to be modified once new Census figures are available later this year (2026)

2.6.2. 'Bottom Up' Approach

Libraries need to consider the specific needs of their community when developing or assessing the requirements. The unit sizes used are the recommendations from the ARUPLO Guidelines based on barrier-free access and their members', consultants' and architect's experience.

Area	Notes
Collections	Blended collections. Accessible shelving.
User seating	Blended seating, mixture of lounge and desk.
Program room	May also include kitchenette and storage.
Service desks	Emerging trend for smaller service desk, roaming staff, self-checkout stations.
Non-assignable space	Corridors, foyer, waiting areas, public washrooms, custodian, walk thicknesses, building services, mechanical.

With these areas and space requirements in mind, the following chart is a ***notion*** of what might be desirable in a library to meet the needs and aspirations of North Bay. Note that the recommended collection size is ***less*** than what the North Bay Public Library currently has, based on other recommendations in this report.

The exercise of developing a components-based library may be somewhat more accurate that the standards-based approach as it can take into account the actual components in the library and how much space they will take up. Likewise, if it is decided to reduce the size of the library, the decision makers can eliminate particular components with the knowledge of the implications.

North Bay Public Library

Proposed library for Year 2051

		60,000 population	
Component	**Square Feet per Unit**	**Number of Units**	**2025 (sf)**
Collections	0.14	138,000	19,320
Public Service Areas			
Adult seating	35	200	7,000
Teen seating	35	40	1,400
Children's seating	30	60	1,800
Program room	750	1	750
Small meeting room	200	2	400
Study room(s)	100	3	300
Maker space	500	1	500
Library of Things	500	1	500
Genealogy space	300	1	300
Total Public Area			**32,270**
Staff and Service Areas			
Service/circulation desk(s)	500	2	1,000
Staff work desks	70	20	1,400
CEO office	150	1	150
Other professional offices	100	4	400
Storage	4000	1	4,000
Staff break room and lockers	300	1	300
Accessible staff washroom	300	2	600
Total Staff and Service Area			**7,850**
Components total			**40,120**
Non-assignable space 27%			10,832
Total GSF required			**50,952**

Shaded areas have space standards. Unshaded are estimates.

Current actual space is 34,660 gsf.

2.6.2. Reconciliation of the Two Approaches

As the table below shows, the results of these two approaches to the 2051 space projections are identical to one another (after rounding), which provides assurance that the overall figures used in this assessment are robust and correct.

	(A) Top-Down Estimate *(rounded to nearest '000)*	**(B) Bottom-Up Estimate *(rounded to nearest '000)***
Future (2051) Space Requirements	51,000	51,000

3. Growth and Expansion Scenarios

With the space needs of the North Bay Public Library system identified, this section of the Report discusses various scenarios as to how these space needs can be met. The scenarios are evaluated and a preferred direction (expanding or rebuilding on the current site if this is possible) is articulated.

3.1. Scenarios Considered

Five basic options to accommodate the additional space requirements for the North Bay Public Library were considered:

A) **Consolidation and Optimization:** This scenario examines whether sufficient space could be freed up in the existing building through consolidating / deaccessioning the existing collection; optimizing the use of existing space (e.g. auditorium); and converting utilizing external space (i.e., the garden area).
B) **Expand the Existing Building:** This scenario would see the addition of 16,000 square feet to the existing building, likely onto the public plaza to the west of the building.
C) **Lease of Additional Space:** This scenario examines the possibility of leasing additional space elsewhere in the community on a medium to long-term basis (e.g. a 5- to 10-year period or longer). Leased space would be used to house collections and, depending upon its size and configuration, possibly program space as well.
D) **Build a New Branch:** This option considers building a new branch somewhere else in the municipality. The exact size would be in the order of 16,000 sf if there is no expansion to the main library.
E) **Partnership Operation with Harris Library:** This fifth option proposes an innovative arrangement with the Harris Library, which could function effectively as a second branch to the North Bay Public Library system through a cooperative partnership arrangement.
F) **Rebuild on Existing Site:** This option would demolish the existing facility and build a new library of approximately 50,000 sf to meet North Bay's future space needs.

3.2. Criteria to Evaluate Options

We begin first with some general comments on the impacts on operating costs of each option. Following that, we review an expanded set of evaluation criteria and their impacts on each option.

3.2.1. Comments on Operating Costs

Each facility option will change staffing and operating costs in different ways, mainly through changes in hours, square footage, service model, and how "spread out" the system becomes.

More space on same site

- Typically increases operating costs moderately (utilities, cleaning, maintenance) but can be partially offset by consolidating functions and improving layouts.
- Emphasis is on reallocating existing staff through better layout, fewer service points and improved sightlines. Staffing usually grows incrementally over time to support more programs and possibly outreach. However, this is not in direct proportion to square footage because supervision and some back-of-house will not increase as much. Some workload relief can come after weeding the collections and improving internal space efficiencies.

New or second branch

- Operating costs increase significantly due to duplicated core costs: separate utilities, security, IT, cleaning, and building maintenance.
- Staffing impact is high: a basic small branch typically needs its own core team (e.g., supervisor, several public service staff, pages), often adding multiple FTEs even with some central support for technical services and admin.

Major renovation / reconfiguration only

- Operating costs may go up slightly or even remain stable if the project improves energy efficiency and building systems; the main change is often in what the library can do, not what it costs to "keep the lights on."
- Staffing can be rebalanced rather than increased, as better sightlines and functional adjacencies allow more efficient scheduling and fewer service points while expanding programs and improving supervision.

Off-site or alternative service options (bookmobile, kiosks, holds lockers)

- Operating budgets rise through vehicle costs (fuel, maintenance, insurance) or third-party lease/fee arrangements, but building overhead may be lower than for a full branch.
- Staffing needs can be additional but modest (e.g., 1–2 FTE for a bookmobile or staffed kiosk), and scheduling is less flexible because services depend on specific staff with driving, outreach, or partnership responsibilities.

Partnership with Harris Learning Library

- Depending on the partnership model developed, operating costs increase as a result of the likely need for NBPL staffing at Harris.

- Depending on the partnership arrangement, there could be a lease agreement which shares some of HLL's existing overhead including utilities, insurance and ILS costs.

Rebuild on Existing Site

- The goal with the new library would be to add space with a more efficient design. A new building can be planned explicitly around staff needs including efficient back-of-house, collections handling, clear lines of sight, safe entrances, and modern building systems, addressing many of the staff concerns identified in the survey.

- A new, larger main library may require somewhat more frontline FTE as demand for programs increases, possibly some additional back-of-house capacity, but efficient design can moderate growth relative to the size increase. Minimizing the number of floors will help keep staffing costs down.

- A new building could be built to LEED standards, thereby reducing utility and maintenance costs, however the added space may increase costs over time with increased amounts of technology and more programs.

3.2.2. Recommended Evaluation Criteria

This section compares the six options by scoring each one using a 1 to 5 scale against shared **criteria** that reflect service quality, feasibility, in addition to cost. The options are then summed to compare the advisability of each one.

For each criterion, higher scores mean "better" or "more favourable."

- **Service impact and access**
  - How well the option improves access to collections, programs, and spaces (including hours, locations, and barriers removed).
  - Includes support for children, teens, adults, and equity-seeking groups.
- **Support for staff and operations**
  - How effectively the option addresses staff workspace, safety, sightlines, and workflows.
  - Considers whether the configuration enables efficient staffing rather than stretching thin coverage.
- **Alignment with strategic direction**
  - Fit with NBPL's strategic plan (e.g., community hub role, digital inclusion, partnerships, reconciliation, accessibility, literacy).

    - Consistency with City/Official Plan directions (downtown vitality, 15-minute neighbourhoods, growth areas).
- **Capital cost and feasibility**
    - Order-of-magnitude cost, land/building availability, and likelihood of securing funding and approvals (City, grants, partners).
    - Risk of cost overruns or dependence on uncertain opportunities (e.g., specific sites or partners).
- **Operating cost impact**
    - Expected change to ongoing operating budget (staffing, utilities, leases, maintenance, technology).
    - Affordability within projected municipal and library operating envelopes.
- **Flexibility and future expansion**
    - Ability to adapt to changing needs (technology, demographics, new programs) without major new capital.
    - Potential to expand or reconfigure again in 10–20 years.
- **Implementation risk and disruption**
    - Construction and transition risks: impact on current services, timeline, complexity, and dependencies.
    - Risk that the option cannot be delivered as envisioned (e.g., zoning, structural limits, partner stability).
- **Equity, partnership, and community benefit**
    - How well the option addresses geographic equity, underserved neighbourhoods, and priority populations.
    - Strength and sustainability of partnerships (especially for Options C and E).

3.3. Evaluation of Options and Recommended Path Forward

Using the above criteria, we can apply the following scoring matrix to each option.

Scoring matrix (1–5 scale)

Use this 1–5 scale for each cell:

- 1 = Very poor / major concerns
- 2 = Weak / below acceptable
- 3 = Adequate / acceptable but limited
- 4 = Good / strong
- 5 = Excellent / highly favourable

Option scoring matrix (unweighted)

Criterion	A) Consolidate & optimize	B) Expand existing facility	C) Lease space	D) New branch	E) Harris partnership	F) Rebuild on existing site
Service impact & access	3	4	3	5	4	5
Staff & operational support	3	4	2	4	3	5
Strategic alignment	3	5	3	4	4	5
Capital cost & feasibility	4	3	4	2	3	2
Operating cost impact	3	3	2	1	2	3
Flexibility & future expansion	3	4	3	4	4	5
Implementation risk & disruption	3	3	3	2	3	1
Equity, partnership & benefit	3	4	3	4	5	4
Total	**25**	**30**	**23**	**26**	**28**	**30**

Conclusion
The analysis shows that Option B) expansion of the existing library and Option F) rebuilding on the existing site are the preferred options. Option F) rebuilding on the existing site scores very high on service, staff support, strategic alignment, and flexibility, similar to or better than the new-branch option. However, the rebuild option scores lower on capital feasibility and implementation risk and disruption, reflecting demolition, the need for temporary-space needs, and cost and timing risk.

Option E) some form of partnership with the Harris Learning Library also scores highly. This assumes that the Nipissing Canadore facility is open to some form of partnership arrangement with NBPL, involving the ability to share space in the Harris Library. If there is no appetite for expansion or rebuilding of the main library, then it may be necessary to investigate the other options, such as leasing space elsewhere or building a new branch in the longer term.

3.4. High-Level Cost Implications of Recommended Path Forward

This section shows high-level capital and operating costs for each of options B) expand the existing branch and E) build a new branch. These are very much ballpark estimates and likely subject to change once detailed plans are developed and the full engineering and architectural parameters are known.

As a municipal public building that is an important community reference point and a cultural and societal infrastructure anchor, being at the forefront of sustainable design should be an important aspect of all future library buildings for the City. With global warming on the rise, and as moving away from depending on fossil fuels seems increasingly prudent and is environmentally friendly, it is highly recommended that City construction strive to integrate as much as possible Zero Carbon Buildings (ZCB) and Net Zero Energy Buildings (NZEB) principles, as much as possible. The following are key principles that are recommended to be considered and evaluated in detail during design stages of each new building/new addition:

1. Incorporate renewable energy systems (e.g., avoid gas-fired combustion systems).
2. Design building with passive sustainable principles in mind.
3. Design building systems and select equipment that reduce the building's overall energy demand.
4. Design highly insulated building envelopes that reduce the energy required for mechanical systems while providing better occupant comfort.
5. Select equipment that is not reliant on fossil fuels as a primary energy source.
6. Emphasize selection of sustainable building materials with low carbon footprint.

7. Incorporate energy storage systems in the building.

3.4.1. Capital Cost Implications

The Altus Construction Cost Guide, 2025 edition reported that construction costs for libraries in the GTA ranged from $550 to $1,100 per sf (midpoint = $825), and for Ottawa, they were $500 to $850 per sf (midpoint $675). The costs vary depending on whether they are part of a multi-use complex or stand alone. Institutional buildings are assumed to be built to LEED sliver standard.

These are hard construction costs and exclude items such as site acquisition, site preparation, parking, interior partitioning of buildings, purchases of furniture, fixtures and equipment, design costs, etc. Soft costs such as furniture, fixtures and equipment (FF&E) and engineering and design costs can add approximately 35% to the hard costs with ratios higher in complex building costs.

Below is an example of construction costs for Option B) expansion to the existing building. These are very high-level estimates at this time and could vary by +/- 25%. Costing would need to be revised as more detailed architectural and engineering work is undertaken and to take into account construction cost inflation.

Option B) 2 Storey Expansion to the North Bay Library

Item	Unit Rate	Quantity (SF)	Costs
Construction Cost Addition	$1,030	16,000	$16,480,000
Site Development	$30	8,000	$240,000
Subtotal			$16,720,000
Contingency (10%)	$105	16,000	$1,672,000
Total Construction Costs			$18,152,000
Soft Costs (35%)			$6,350,000
Estimated Total Project Costs			$24,502,000
Collections, technology costs (5% of construction)			$824,000
Total Project Costs with Collections and Technology Costs			$25,326,000

Note: The unit construction cost rate of $1,030 is based on the midpoint of the GTA construction cost ($825 per sf) plus 25% based on the addition being a more complex construction project than a new build. Figures have been rounded.

For Option F, a rebuild on the existing site, estimate capital costs are as follows. Again, these are very high-level estimates and would need to be revisited following architectural and engineering planning work as well as to take into account construction cost inflation.

Option F) 2 Storey Library Rebuild of the North Bay Library

Item	Unit Rate	Quantity (SF)	Costs
Construction Costs (including demolition)	$850	50,000	$42,500,000
Contingency (10%)	$85	50,000	$4,250,000
Total Construction Costs	$935		$46,750,000
Soft Costs (35%)	$327	$50,000	$16,360,000
Estimated Total Project Costs			$63,110,000
Collections, technology costs (5% of construction)			$2,130,000
Total Project Costs with Collections and Technology Costs			$65,240,000

Note: The unit construction cost rate of $850 per sf is based on the midpoint of the GTA construction range ($825 per sf) plus $25 per sf for demolition costs. Figures have been rounded.

Notes:

1. These estimates provide an Order of Magnitude cost estimate because the design provided is at a very high-level conceptual stage. As a project develops through the various design stages from schematic design through design development and finally to construction documents, cost estimates progress with every successive design stage and become more accurate as the information provided becomes more detailed and comprehensive. The final, most detailed costing, called a Class A cost estimate, is usually undertaken at the 90% construction documents stage and is the most accurate.

2. **Order of Magnitude Costing:** (O of M costing) is a high-level estimate of a project's cost to complete. An O of M costing takes place very early in a project's life cycle, during the project selection and capital budgeting period and prior to project initiation in most cases. HST is not included in an Order of Magnitude Cost.

3. **Construction Cost:** means the price of all elements of the project designed or specified by or on behalf of the architect, through their sub-consultants, that define the construction of the building (including mechanical, electrical, plumbing, structural systems, landscape elements, and finishes)

4. **Project Cost:** refers to the construction cost plus all other **soft costs** associated with the project. They include costs such as permit fees, professional fees, furnishings and equipment, financing and legal costs, as well as moving costs. Soft

costs range between 30-40% of the project's total cost for institutional public buildings depending on their nature, size and complexity.

5. The used unit price per square foot in this O of M costing does not factor in sustainability systems and strategies that achieve or are close to achieving Net Zero Building Performance. The estimates in this O of M costing only meet sustainability and energy performance requirements required by current building codes. However, it is clear that achieving Net Zero Building Performance levels and being carbon-neutral is an important parameter in the design of municipal public buildings, particularly new buildings, as that could set an example for sustainable design and construction, and because the industry is progressively moving towards that level of sustainability fairly quickly. A premium of an additional 25% is recommended to be added to the above provided cost estimates to reach this level.

6. The unit rate used above includes building and conventional site development costs where stated and excludes costs of purchasing a site (if the new build were to be elsewhere). Additionally, it excludes any special costs that could arise from the nature of the site.

7. This O of M costing reflects current construction market trends and prices. It is difficult to predict what the estimated costs of the proposed projects could be in the future. Hence cost of escalation is not factored in the estimated O of M costs provided above.

8. For capital budget planning purposes, it is recommended that a minimum of 7% escalation per year be added to the above provided costing estimates to determine any of the projects' O of M costing once an intended year for start of construction is established. For example, if a project enters the planning stage in 2026, but is not ready for issuance of construction tender/construction start until 2028, we recommend an annual escalation factor be added to the values presented above. Cost estimating for a construction start beyond 5 years should be revisited with refreshed market data.

9. No cost of land is included in the above estimates.

3.4.2. Operating Cost Implications

For the high-level analysis, staffing costs in NBPL were 71% of total operating costs In 2023, the most recent year available. Total operating costs will therefore be driven largely by the increase in staffing required for each option.

For option B) an expansion to the existing library by 16,000 sf, it is assumed that approximately 4 to 8 staff would be added over time. At an average compensation cost of $60,000, plus a gross up of 30% for other operating costs, this would add approximately $300,000 to $700,000 in net new operating costs.

For option F) rebuilding on the existing site, we have assumed this would add approximately 6 to 10 staff over time, resulting in approximately $500,000 to $900,000 in net new operating costs.

4. Recommendations and Implementation

The final section of the report contains key recommendations for action to address the space issues identified for the North Bay Public Library over the next decade. An implementation plan, suggesting the timing and critical path of the recommendations, as well as resource requirements and key performance indicators (KPIs) are also developed.

4.1. Key Conclusions and Recommendations

4.1.1. Conclusions

1. **Future Population Growth:** At a *minimum*, North Bay's future growth expectations, estimated by extrapolating the 2016 – 2021 growth rate to 2051, are:

2026	53,820
2031	55,003
2036	56,213
2041	57,449
2046	58,712
2051	60,003

And, as outlined in our report, these projections may well underestimate the actual current and future population.

2. **Future Space Provision Should be 0.85 Square Feet Per Capita:** We recommend that the space standard that should be adopted by the Library Board should be 0.85 square feet (sf) per capita (see the rationale for this level of space provision in the text of the Report). With its current facility of 34,660 sf, and an estimated 2026 population of 53,820, this implies space provision of approximately 0.64 sf per person at present. While the benchmarking assessment of comparable libraries showed an average of 0.70 sf per person, we know from previous work that many of these benchmark communities feel strongly that even at that level they lack sufficient space for comprehensive programming activities and community meeting space. Accordingly, we feel that the 0.85 sf per capita figure to be a reasonable and responsible level. As shown in the Report, this conclusion is supported not only by the 'top-down' method of examining aggregate space needs in the manner outlined above, but also by a 'bottom-up' approach that examines the 'components of space' in terms of the specific space needs of the various key functions of the

library. Both the 'top down' and 'bottom up' methods point to the same order-of-magnitude of space needs.

3. **The North Bay Public Library System Needs More Space:** Given the foregoing, the current shortfall in the system is on the order of 11,000 sf. (i.e., the ideal provision of 45,700 sf[2] less the current provision of approximately 34,700 sf). Without finding more space, this shortfall will grow to just over 16,000 sf by mid-century (i.e. 2051) with the ideal provision of space being 51,000 sf. The calculations are shown in the table below.

	Population	Existing Space (sf)	Required Space (@ 0.85 sf per capita (sf rounded)	Gap (sf rounded)
2026	53,820	34,700	46,000	11,000
2051	60,000	34,700	51,000	16,000

4. **More Efficient Utilization of the Existing Footprint Could Free Up Some Space:** In the short-term, some space could possibly be freed up by more efficient utilization of the existing space. Our analysis, for example, shows that by more vigorous weeding of the non-fiction collections several thousand square feet could be freed up for more optimal use. The auditorium space could likely be better utilized. The small 'garden space' on the northeast corner of the building could be roofed over and the space used more efficiently. Offsetting this, however, is the requirement to install a new elevator to meet accessibility requirements, which will take up considerable area. At this point, it is unknown exactly how much 'net new useable' space might be freed up through all of these revisions and modifications; in any event, it is clear that a first step will be to undertake an 'Architectural and Engineering study' of the existing building to determine how much net new useable space could be gained.

4.1.2. Recommendations

1. **Rationalize Collections and Storage Functions and Space**: It is clear that there is no need or appetite to relocate the main library from its current accessible and very central location. However, as indicated above, there may be considerable space that could be freed up for more efficient and optimal use in the existing building. While this will not contribute materially to the space gap, it may help alleviate some pressure on use of the facility (for example, if meeting room space could be freed up through reduced collection storage space). Our analysis suggests that the collections at the North Bay Public Library are much larger than in the other

[2] *Calculated as the estimated 2026 population of 53,820 multiplied by the recommended standard of 0.85 sf per person.*

benchmark libraries – the NBPL collection is just over 200,000 items whereas using the per capita average of the benchmark set would bring North Bay's collection closer to 120,000 physical items. This suggests that NBPL may be able to reduce its collections by 80,000 items (40%) – with commensurate space savings that could be used for other purposes. Similarly, it is our observation that there is a large amount of storage space in the basement – that could be otherwise used if stored items could be discarded, consolidated, or stored elsewhere (i.e., offsite storage). Weeding and rationalizing the collection is a critical first step towards the next recommendation which is to undertake an architectural and engineering study to determine how to best use the existing space in the building as well as to determine the possibility of expanding the space.

2. **Examine Alternative Service Delivery Mechanisms:** Whatever space might be 'found' or freed up in the current facility, it is clear that there will still be a need for additional space to address the various shortfalls identified in the report and to meet the recommended space standard in the short term. Accordingly, it is recommended that the Library investigate alternative means of providing service (i.e. book delivery) throughout the community by means of kiosks and book lockers in strategic locations. The City is small enough that it would be realistic maintain a standard where no resident is more than (say) a 5-minute drive from a book access location (including the Main library) through these options. (Logical locations for these delivery mechanisms, for example, would be the new Community and Recreation Centre at the Steve Omischi Sports Field Complex, the Northgate Shopping Centre, and the Harris Learning Library.) A small book van should also be considered, which can not only deliver books, but act also as a promotional vehicle at community events and activities (e.g. St. Thomas' ***Library Outreach*** van; Pickering's ***Ovee*** van). Book lockers could be provided at the Harris Learning Library and the North Bay Community and Recreation Centre.

3. **Explore More Formal Partnership with Harris Learning Library:** A unique asset for the residents of North Bay (and possibly many of them do not realize it) is access to the Harris Learning Library (HLL) on the Nipissing-Canadore campus. This 58,000 sf facility could clearly contribute to some extent to the shortfall in space provision possibly through a shared use agreement with the North Bay Public Library which would provide NBPL with space for programs, events, meetings, and possibly collections. A more formalized relationship between the two entities could assist in alleviating some of the needs of the NBPL as well as increasing utilization of the HLL overall. Clearly, the first priority for usage of the HLL facilities would be the students and faculty of the two learning institutions, but there may be some opportunities to be explored and realized through an MOU or some sort of shared-use agreement between the entities. This is a direction that should be explored further.

4. **Update Population Forecast:** As soon as the 'official' 2026 population estimates for the City of North Bay are released, the forecasts for future population growth according to the methodology utilized here (or whatever more definitive forecasts might be developed by the City) should be updated. Revised space library space requirements for the City by mid-century should be calculated and the results used to adjust these recommendations and their associated implementation schedule as necessary. (At this time, it is not anticipated that any major or fundamental changes will be required, but it is prudent to update the figures to reflect current reality and avoid any confusion or misunderstanding.)

5. **Undertake Architectural and Engineering Update and Expansion of Existing Main Library Facility**: Once the collection has been weeded (or it is determined how much space will be needed for the reduced collection), and the actual storage needs of the library operation determined, the NBPL will be in an appropriate position to determine the optimal configuration of the space. Also available by this time will be the results of the Building Conditions Assessment (being undertaken by Mitchell Jensen), which will inform this task. Accordingly, it is recommended that an 'Architectural and Engineering Study' of the existing facility be undertaken. This study should plan for the new accessible elevators; consider other accessibility requirements for public use of the building; undertake appropriate weeding of the collection to free up space where possible; examine optimal uses for the auditorium space; and examine the cost-benefit of expanding certain spaces such as the northeast garden and the southwest wall. A general 'refresh' of the overall interior space should be undertaken as well. Any other structural or building-related condition improvements (such as replacement of exterior brick façade where required) should be considered.

   Specific items that should be considered in this study also include:
   - locate elevator centrally in the building convenient to users (near main stairs?)
   - reduce size of service desks, make them more open and welcoming
   - location for the collections, to avoid splitting them into different areas
   - re-orienting the wayfinding routing patterns of users for more efficient traffic flow through the building
   - where possible, removal of load-bearing walls to create more internal space and convey more of a sense of space and openness
   - move adult service desk across from Worthington Street entrance
   - add more windows, make exterior of the building more attractive
   - lower shelves to make collection more accessible
   - create comfortable seating areas for casual enjoyment
   - reopen the McIntyre Street entrance if security issue can be addressed.

In addition to determining the optimal use of the existing space, this Architectural and Engineering Study should assess how much additional space might be gained through expansion of the existing facility. Our preliminary calculations suggest that the current space deficit could be accommodated by either expanding the northwest wall out to Leger Square, or by expanding the southwest wall into the park area, and that the entire space deficit to the year 2051 could be accommodated by both these moves. The feasibility of doing this, or course, is a matter to be determined in this Architectural and Engineering Study.
An objective of this work should be to address as many of the current space deficiencies as possible through the creation and repurposing of existing freed up space as well as expansion to the existing building where possible.

6. **Explore Feasibility of Library Expansion, Second Branch Location or Library Rebuild:** In the event that the Architectural and Engineering Study (see Recommendation #2) determines that it is not possible to develop significant additional space at the current site, it will be necessary to consider a second branch. In the longer term (i.e., after 2035) it is inevitable that the NBPL will need additional space of likely 15,000 to 20,000+ sf (which could accommodate growth beyond mid-century). There are several possibilities for this, including: **expansion of the existing library space**; **a long-term lease of space in a retail or otherwise accessible location**; **the repurposing of an existing surplus public facility**; **purchase and conversion of an existing building**; or **building a new branch altogether**, either as a stand-alone facility or in partnership with a developer (e.g. as a ground-floor amenity in a condominium development). It is even possible that **a longer-term and more permanent relationship with the Harris Learning** Library is established, and that becomes the location for a second branch. At this point it is premature to determine the size, location and ownership situation of a second branch (assuming expansion is not realistic), but it is prudent for the NBPL to begin planning for this eventuality, perhaps through a subcommittee' of the Board. Finally, an option to consider is **replacement of the existing library**. This is clearly a more expensive option, but would allow NBPL to address many of the various space, accessibility and efficiency issues that have been outlined in our report. (Lack of convenient parking would still be a concern.)

4.2. Timing and Critical Path Implications

While the timeframe for action to deal with the space needs of the North Bay Public Library is to cover the next 10-year period, the actual planning horizon that is being considered is a 25-year period, to the year 2051 (mid-century). This is because to accommodate for the needs of the North Bay population to the middle of this century, critical action will need to happen over the next decade. Accordingly, the strategic actions recommended are spread out over that time span, following the GANTT Chart outlined below. Four time periods in this decade are suggested: an 'Immediate' period which would cover 2026; a 'short-term' period which would be 2027 and 2028; a 'medium-term' period that would cover 2029 and

2030, and a long-term period covering the remainder of the decade (2031 – 2035). The 'longer-term' would be the period in which more major expansion or new build activities would occur.

The logic of this timeframe is as follows: the very first task to be undertaken is to critically examine ('right-size') the collection and determine the actual space required to accommodate it. At the same time, a critical assessment of the storage needs for other items in the NOPL's inventory should occur. Meantime in the first year, alternative service delivery mechanisms should be explored as a means of better distributing library services throughout the community. Also in this critical initial period, discussions should begin with the Harris Learning Library (Nipissing and Canadore) as an appropriate arrangement between the parties could in effect alleviate some of the space needs of the NBPL.

Early in what we have termed the 'short-term' period, the population forecast developed here should be reviewed and likely revised to take into account the actual current (2026) population of the City as measured robustly through the Census. As mentioned earlier, this could well lead to the population estimates prepared here being revised *upwards*, with a commensurate increase in library space requirements.

At this point at the end of the short-term period, NBPL will have several critical inputs needed to determine the longer-term space needs of the system: 1) the Building Conditions Assessment (currently underway); 2) an assessment of the optimal space needs for the collection and related storage; 3) an updated population forecast; and 4) a sense as to whether there are joint-use or partnership possibilities with the Harris Learning Library that could be relevant to future space needs. Armed with this critical information, NOPL should then, in the 'medium term', undertake an architectural and engineering update of the existing main library facility to develop an optimal configuration of the existing space, and determine whether significant expansion of the facility is possible (to accommodate the anticipated space required by the year 2051 (i.e. mid-century). This would likely require expansion into the existing park space and/or Leger Square, which may encounter community opposition and would require Council approval as it is on municipal property. These are possibilities that would need to be determined at that time.

The results of the medium-term work will determine whether or not the overall space needs of the NBPL system can be accommodated on the existing library site (bearing in mind that some of the space needs of the system might be able to be accommodated through an arrangement with the Harris Learning Library). If the needs can be accommodated on the existing site through expansion and/or some sort of partnership with HLL, then the long-term period (2031 to 2035) would be devoted to implementing the architectural and engineering plan developed. If, however, the existing site is not adequate to accommodate future space needs, then the longer-term period would need to explore and articulate various options: build a second branch elsewhere in the community; lease space for a second branch location; or build a new library, on the existing or a new site.

While at this juncture this timetable outlines a logical and optimal path, it should be noted that no implementation plan such as this is 'written in stone'. New opportunities will arise, people will come and go, priorities will change, etc. As a result, this plan can only be a guide to future action in determining the best path forward to providing the space required by the NBPL system.

Recommendation	**Immediate**	**Short-Term**	**Medium-Term**	**Long-Term**
	2026	**2027-2028**	**2029 - 2030**	**2031-2035**
1. Rationalize Collection and Storage Functions and Space				
2. Examine Alternative Delivery Mechanisms				
3. Explore More Formal Partnership with Harris Learning Library				
4. Update Population Forecast				
5. Undertake Architectural and Engineering Update of Existing Main Library Facility				
6. Explore Feasibility of Library Expansion, Second Branch Location, or Library Rebuild				

4.3. Resource Requirements

This section of the plan outlines the resource requirements associated with the recommendations presented here. Human resources generally mean the allocation of time on the part of library staff; financial resources are typically out-of-pocket costs from the library budget. In the column labelled 'human resources' the following general estimates of time requirement are used:

- none to minimal: one day or less
- small or minor: 2 to 3 days
- moderate: 3 to 5 days
- significant: one week or more

Recommendation	**Human Resource Requirements**	**Financial Resource Requirements**
1. Rationalize Collection and Storage Functions and Space	Significant	None to minor
2. Examine Alternative Delivery Mechanisms	Moderate	- Depends upon configuration determined (individual lockers or kiosks can be up to $30,000) - Suggest budget allocation of (say) $100,000 and work within that Book van would be significantly more; needs to be investigated further
3. Explore More Formal Partnership with Harris Learning Library	Moderate	None to minor
4. Update Population Forecast	Small/minor	None to minor
5. Undertake Architectural and Engineering Update of Existing Main Library Facility	Significant	Major cost to hire firm: suggest budget in the $30,000 to $50,000 range
6. Explore Feasibility of Library Expansion, Second Branch Location, or Library Rebuild	Significant	To be determined: feasibility and planning study could be in the $50,000 - $80,000 range

4.4. Targets and Milestones

Below are suggested target milestones and metrics associated with this space needs plan. As with any of the other elements of the implementation plan, there are subject to modification and change as the implementation of the plan progresses.

Recommendation	**Performance Target**
1. Rationalize Collection and Storage Functions and Space	Complete 'weeding' by end 2026; continue 'weeding' discipline thereafter
2. Examine Alternative Delivery Mechanisms	Identify locations and have at least one additional delivery location in place by end 2026
3. Explore More Formal Partnership with Harris Learning Library	Initiate discussions in 2026; follow-up as required
4. Update Population Forecast	Complete by end 2026 (assuming based data from 2026 is available by then)
5. Undertake Architectural and Engineering Update of Existing Main Library Facility	Study complete by 2028; implement improvements by end 2030
6. Explore Feasibility of Library Expansion, Second Branch Location, or Library Rebuild	Feasibility study complete by 2031; if major rebuild or expansion is required, have construction underway of not competed by 2035

4.5. Conclusion

The 36,000 square foot North Bay Library facility is a key resource in the community. Centrally located downtown, and adjacent to City Hall, it is a very well-used and valuable community asset. It compares well to other library systems in similar-sized municipalities on most usage metrics. One major shortcoming of the system, however, lies in its provision of space to the community; compared to similar library systems it is deficient in the amount of area it should have, and certainly compared to commonly accepted library standards (where most comparable library systems are deficient) it falls short considerably. The analysis presented in this report shows that the current (2026) shortfall is on the order of 11,000 square feet, and this deficiency is expected to grow to 16,000 sq, ft. by the middle of this century (i.e. to 2051).

Further, the existing library facility is sub-optimal in terms of its use of existing space. Not only are there questions relating to excessive space being devoted to collections and storage, but also the layout of functional areas is not efficient. Whether or not the existing building can be expanded and opened up (by removal, for example, or non-load bearing walls) is also an open question. (A current Building Condition Assessment, currently underway, may answer some of these questions.)

Other questions also exist that may affect future space requirements. The population may be now growing at a rate faster than in the past, a matter that will not be known until later this year when the 2026 Census is undertaken. If true, this will push up the space requirements even further. Another key uncertainty is whether facilities at the new Harris

Learning Library facility (58,000 sq. ft.), serving students at Nipissing and Canadore College but also available to all residents of North Bay, could be utilized to alleviate some space needs.

This study recommends a reasonable course of action going forward, dealing with and resolving these many uncertainties so that the overall system by mid-century (and ideally well before that) is suited to the needs of the community. This will enable the North Bay Public Library to continue being a valued, well-used and well-respected asset to the community.

Appendices

Appendix A: TCI Methodology for Per Square Foot Library Space Provision

There are three factors that explain a revised square-foot-per-person standard of library space provision (resulting in a higher figure than the 0.7 per sf standard espoused by the OLS and used in many library studies a decade ago). These three factors are:

1. Additional space to accommodate new accessibility standards;
2. Additional public space required for meeting rooms, study spaces, etc.; and
3. Additional space required for administrative purposes.

The rationale for additional space in each of these areas is outlined below.

1. **Additional space to accommodate new accessibility standards:** As outlined earlier, the AODA and FADS standards require that books and other materials on shelves be accessible by a person in a wheelchair. This means that, for a library with five shelves from top to bottom (a very common configuration in modern libraries), the top shelf and the bottom shelf are not accessible. Accordingly, an accessible library might only have three shelves, all reachable by a person in a wheelchair. That in turn implies that a library would need 40% more space to house the same number of books or other materials (i.e. two of the five shelves (40%) would need to be relocated to accessible shelves, which of course will take up additional space). Note that the AODA standards, previously discussed, would require 43% more space, within the same general ballpark.

   Offsetting this to some extent, is a countervailing trend seen in many libraries to reduce the amount of material on the shelves. Many libraries are downsizing their reference collections, no longer keeping hard copies of magazines, eliminating their CD and DVD collections (in favour of making streaming services available to patrons), and generally taking a more rigorous weeding approach to the materials they keep in the stacks). As a very general rule of thumb, a more proactive approach to weeding may result in (say) 10% downsizing of the space requirements of the library.

   So, putting this all together, the amount of additional space required in a modern accessible library compared to what it might have been 10 to 15 years ago could be calculated as follows (this example is based upon a hypothetical example of a library with 10,000 sf of space at present devoted to collections):

Space currently devoted to collections under 'old' standard	10,000 sf
Space required to meet current accessibility standards (40% more)	14,000 sf
Space saved as result of more intensive weeding approach (10% of 'new' total of 14,000 sf)	1,400 sf
Net total space required	12,600 sf
Percentage increase over space required under 'old standard'	26% more

2. **Additional public space required for meeting rooms, study spaces, etc.:** A second factor contributing to an increase in the per-square-foot standard is the increase in demand for meeting room and study space, as libraries have increasingly come to play the role of community hubs and gathering spaces. This is more difficult to quantify empirically, but a 25% increase in the amount of space allowed for this critical function of libraries, over what it was a decade ago, is in our view reasonable.

3. **Additional space required for administrative purposes:** Nearly every library system with which we have worked is under-resourced when it comes to space for essential administrative and 'behind the scenes' functions. Again, while strong empirical evidence is lacking, in our experience a 25% increase in the amount of space historically allocated to this function is warranted (and perhaps, if anything, conservative).

Revised Standard: The current OLS standard is 0.7 sf per capita. Increasing this by 26% yields approximately 0.87 sf per capita. Rounding down to 0.85 sf per capita is in our view a reasonable approach.

Appendix B: Examples of Partnerships Between Academic and Public Libraries[3]

Several universities and colleges maintain formal collaborations with nearby public libraries, often to expand community access, share spaces, or co-run programs.[1][2]

Academic–public access partnerships

- Penn State University Libraries partners with multiple Pennsylvania public library systems so local residents can use their public library cards to borrow from selected Penn State campus libraries and, while on campus, access certain electronic resources.[1]

- Specific Penn State campuses with such public-library borrowing partnerships include Brandywine (with Delaware County Libraries), Mont Alto (with Franklin County Library System and Alexander Hamilton Memorial Free Library), and Fayette (with the WAGGIN network of public libraries in Fayette, Greene, and Washington counties).[1]

Joint or shared programming

- Waubonsee Community College Library partners with the Aurora Public Library District and Messenger Public Library (Illinois) on a digital literacy initiative that offers basic technology classes and recurring technology programs for both students and community members.[2]

- This Waubonsee–Aurora–Messenger collaboration shares facilities, staff expertise, and outreach, and has grown into a regional network including additional public and academic libraries in the college's district.[2]

Shared facilities / joint-use models

- Metropolitan State University in St. Paul, Minnesota, operates a shared community–university library with the City of St. Paul and the Dayton's Bluff neighborhood, creating a single facility that serves both university users and local residents as a combined academic–public library.[3]

- In this joint-use model, partners share "behind the scenes" tasks and expenses to sustain services in a neighborhood facing economic challenges, while supporting both academic needs and broader community access.[3]

[3] This material has been edited from Perplexity AI.

Statewide and consortia collaborations

- OhioLINK, a statewide academic library consortium in Ohio, lists partnerships with various organizations and libraries that support shared resources; many member institutions also coordinate with nearby public libraries for resource sharing or programming at the local level.[4]

- National projects such as Ithaka S+R's "Maximizing Public-Academic Library Partnerships" document further examples, particularly between community college libraries and public libraries focused on supporting basic needs and digital inclusion.[5][2]

- The American Library Association provides resources on joint-use libraries and collaborations between academic and public libraries, including case studies and construction/space-planning examples.[6]

- Professional reports and inventories (for example, Ithaka S+R's studies of public–academic partnerships) highlight additional case-study institutions that may not yet have extensive public-facing descriptions but are actively collaborating.[5][2]

Canadian Examples

Several Canadian universities and colleges have partnerships with nearby public libraries, including joint-use facilities and other formal collaborations.[11]

Joint-use university–public libraries

- Wilfrid Laurier University (Brantford campus) and Brantford Public Library share a joint facility where the university collection, study spaces, and dedicated student computers are housed inside the public library, under a formal service agreement.[11]

- University College of the North (Manitoba) operates joint-use university–public libraries with local communities such as Easterville and Norway House, introducing full library services in places that previously had none while serving both students and residents.[11]

Other documented Canadian partnerships

- A national study of Canadian academic–public library collaborations identified 21 academic libraries with formal or informal partnerships with public libraries, ranging from shared programming and collections to shared systems and reciprocal borrowing.[11]

- When provincial consortia (for example, province-wide borrowing or e-resource agreements) are included, the study reported 56 academic libraries—over half of respondents—engaged in some form of partnership with public libraries.[11]

Sources:

1. https://www.psu.edu/news/university-libraries/story/university-public-libraries-collaborate-serve-pennsylvania-communities
2. https://sr.ithaka.org/publications/public-and-academic-libraries-in-partnership/
3. https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/EJ1092767.pdf
4. https://www.ohiolink.edu/content/ohiolink_partners
5. https://sr.ithaka.org/blog/maximizing-public-academic-library-partnerships/
6. https://libguides.ala.org/library-construction/joint-use
7. https://www.ccdaily.com/2024/07/opportunities-for-stronger-ties-between-community-college-and-public-libraries/
8. https://www.ala.org/aboutala/examples-partnerships-focused-information-literacy
9. https://americanlibrariesmagazine.org/2021/11/01/the-necessity-of-collaboration/
10. https://www.insidehighered.com/news/student-success/college-experience/2024/07/11/four-college-library-led-strategies-student
11. https://digitalcommons.du.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1109&context=collaborativelibrarianship
12. https://www.library.ualberta.ca/about/partners
13. https://www.crkn-rcdr.ca/en/supporting-diamond-open-access-canada-10-years-partnership-between-crkn-and-erudit
14. https://harvest.usask.ca/bitstream/handle/10388/404/Mutually Beneficial (Australia 2011).pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y
15. https://macsphere.mcmaster.ca/bitstreams/17c7ef29-2aab-4c56-b7ea-ab08a8cdb7f2/download
16. https://christianlauersen.net/2018/11/12/lets-dance-thoughts-and-cases-on-academic-and-public-library-collaboration/
17. https://fopl.ca/news/5-ways-you-can-use-partnerships-to-transform-your-library-into-a-community-hub/

18. https://commons.emich.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1025&context=loexconf2021

19. https://ncceh.ca/resources/blog/where-public-meets-health-libraries-key-partners-advancing-public-health-goals