

Township of Russell Public Library Facility Model Study

Summary

You may find the full Township of Russell Public Library Facility Model Study online at:

bit.ly/AvisRossStudy

A special joint public meeting between Municipal Council and the Public Library Board is scheduled for Thursday, September 29, 2016, at 6:30 pm at the Gaston R. Patenaude Hall, 717 Notre-Dame, Embrun.

June 27, 2016

Project No. 1586.00

Township of Russell Public Library Board
1053 Concession Street - Box 280
RUSSELL, Ontario K4R 1E1
mylibrary@russellbiblio.com

Att: Amanda Simard, Chair

Re: Township of Russell Public Library Facility Model Study

Dear Ms. Simard:

The following is the Facility Model Study for Township of Russell Public Library.

This study identifies the considerable need for expansion and relocation of library facilities for the Township of Russell Public Library and identifies options for addressing it.

It is our opinion that the community would be best served by:

1. Keeping the Russell Branch Library and considering expansion to meet future needs;
2. Building a new 20,000 sq. ft. library in Embrun separate from any school.

It was a pleasure to work with your library board and staff. Thank you for giving us this opportunity to explore the potential of the Township of Russell Public Library.

Yours truly,



Allan Avis
B. Arch, OAA, MRAIC, CAHP

Summary

A Facility Model Study for the Township of Russell Public Library was completed in 2005; since then, an improved library branch was constructed in Russell, but not in Embrun. The current study analyses the library's infrastructure requirements for the next 15 years while taking into account the population growth and the mixed linguistic communities present in the township. It is based on relevant Ontario public library guidelines as well as the Strategic Plan adopted by the Library Board in 2013 — which includes the development of a strategy to improve facilities for residents who reside in the eastern part of the Township — as well as the Municipal Corporate Strategic Plan — which provides for the development and implementation of a relocation plan for the Embrun branch.

Municipal documents state that most new residential developments are planned for the eastern side of Embrun. In 2011, the catchment population for the Embrun branch was 9,447 inhabitants and 5,800 for the Russell branch; projections suggest an increase to a total of 15,230 and 7,000 inhabitants respectively by 2031. However, while the demographics of Russell village have remained fairly consistent, the Anglophone population in Embrun is growing; therefore, the Embrun branch must increasingly serve a bilingual population. This requirement of bilingualism in the Township has an impact on collections and services, and thus the space required to serve the community.

The Township of Russell Public Library system does a good job of servicing the community within the limits of its current resources. However, the two existing facilities are grossly undersized to meet the community's current needs, let alone projected future needs, and to comply with provincial library guidelines.

A community survey conducted by the Library in 2012 indicated a high satisfaction rate with the Russell branch. That location was inaugurated only six years ago on leased land, for a term of 49 years; the property is large enough to accommodate a potential library building expansion. On the contrary, the Embrun branch shows a very low satisfaction rate. Located within *École Saint-Jean, Pavillon La Croisée* elementary school, the existing Embrun branch has no realistic potential to expand. Furthermore, it requires visitors to pass through security barriers to enter the school and, once inside the building, the subsequent mixing of library visitors and school population creates safety concerns and potential liability risks. It is the opinion of the authors that the embedded school location directly contributes to reduced library usage with the highest number of users being children.

An overview of trends and best practices in library services reveals that public libraries combine many functions in the fulfillment of their role and mandates, including the following: destination where people come to borrow and consult various reference resources, life-long learning centre, technology centre, and community hub. Additionally, they must serve all segments of the population, from children to seniors; presently, the facilities of the Embrun branch cannot properly address all these populations.

The Township of Russell Public Library Facility Model Study presents two possible scenarios.

Scenario A — Two Libraries (Favoured Scenario)

This is the favoured scenario in this Facility Model Study. It is recommended to build a new, detached, 20,000 square foot library building in Embrun — a priority to be completed no later than 2019 — and expand the existing Russell branch to increase its size to 10,000 square feet. Expansion of the Russell branch, however, is not urgent. Each branch would thus benefit from potential foot traffic and the proximity to residential areas.

Ideally, the new branch would be located in the eastern part of Embrun, near the schools and the expanding residential areas, or in the western part of Embrun, near the intersection of Notre-Dame Street and St-Guillaume Road, as it is the main commercial area on the commuting corridor. It is recommended to move administrative and technical functions from the Russell branch to the new Embrun branch.

Preliminary capital construction costs of Scenario A are estimated at \$11.018M.

Scenario B — Single Central Library

Scenario B is not recommended. It provides for the construction of a new 25,000 square foot central library and the subsequent closing of both existing library branches. The study proposes two possible locations: 1) part way between Russell and Embrun, as a detached building or as part of a multi-faceted community complex project, not currently underway; or 2) at the west end of Embrun, to facilitate access from Russell by road or bike path.

The authors disfavour scenario B for numerous reasons. First, a library located part way between Russell and Embrun would be difficult to access and would not spin-off development nor benefit either of the existing urban centres. As everyone would have to travel some distance outside of town to access their library, spontaneous visits would decrease, negatively impacting visitor numbers and frequency of use. Additionally, no installation currently exists to house a library. Furthermore, finding a parcel of land is likely to involve lengthy official plan amendments and rezoning as most of the lands adjacent to County Road #3 are designated for agriculture use. Still, the new facility in Russell is serving the community well and is well used; it would be difficult to justify its removal. Finally, a library in the western sector of Embrun would not be within walking distance from schools, daycares, or most residential areas.

Preliminary capital construction costs of Scenario B are estimated at \$10.882M.

According to preliminary estimates, the difference in capital construction costs between the two scenarios is only \$136,000, or 1.3%. It may be noted that operating a two-branch library system involves increased maintenance, utility, and staffing costs compared to operating a single central library facility. Detailed calculations of such costs are outside the mandate of this study.