

THIS IS HOME. LET'S BUILD IT

Your North Branch



What We Learned

Phase 1 - Summary

Halifax North Memorial Public Library Renovation Project

February 2026

Prepared by Happy Cities
for Halifax Public Libraries &
Halifax Regional Municipality

 Happy Cities

Halifax Public
Libraries

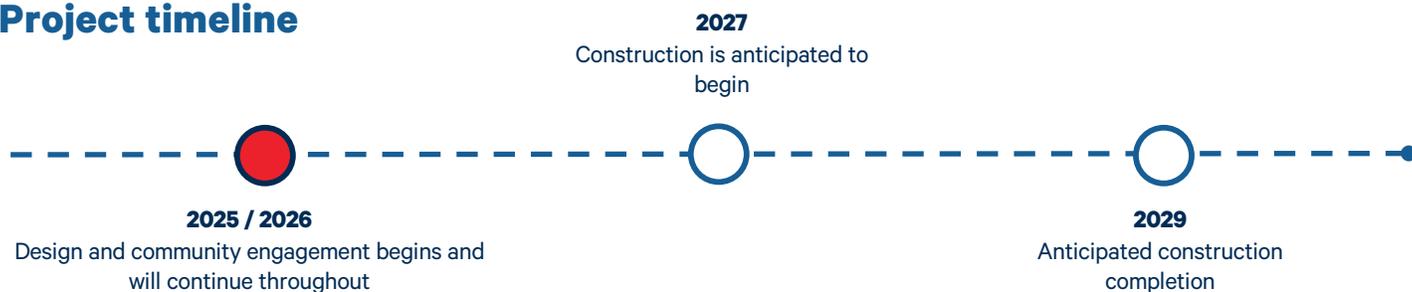
Engagement summary

Halifax Regional Municipality (HRM) and Halifax Public Libraries (HPL) have initiated a progressive design-build renovation for Halifax North Memorial Public Library. Throughout this process, we will be engaging with the community to make sure that community voices are reflected at each stage of the project.

Marco Group, Lydon Lynch Architects, Teeple Architects and their consultant team are leading the design. Happy Cities is the engagement lead working with HPL's Manager, Community Connections, HPL Staff and Community advisory committees, to deliver an inclusive, culturally responsive engagement process so North End voices shape the renovated library.

Engagement for the Halifax North Memorial Public Library Renovation will follow a three-phase process that moves from listening and trust-building, to co-design, and then validation and shared visioning. Each phase builds on the last, ensuring community voices meaningfully shape design decisions. HPL commenced community conversations in 2020 in anticipation of the renovation. The first survey was launched to gather feedback in 2022. In November 2025 after the design build team were contracted, we held engagement sessions for phase 1, and included another survey. This was to help build awareness, gather values and stories, identify priorities for interior and exterior spaces, and establish trust and relationships with equity-seeking communities, youth, 2SLGBTQIA+, elders and newcomers.

Project timeline



What we did



Survey
124 respondents
359 responses



Field office
70 people visited the team



Door-to-door visit
259 homes visited
42 interviews



Community Advisory Committee (CAC) & Staff Advisory Committee (SAC)
10 community leaders
2 special advisors



Community workshops
118 people - Overall
56 people - Community timeline
62 people - Design session



Pop-ups
2 pop-ups
Joe Howe School & Agricola
Street Holiday Festival

Learnings summary

Key themes from engagement sessions



Belonging & relationships

The library feels like home because of caring staff, trusted relationships, and feeling welcomed and supported when they enter the building.



Youth, families & shared spaces

People want more space and programs for children and teens, with spaces for social and active use.



Comfort, dignity & safety

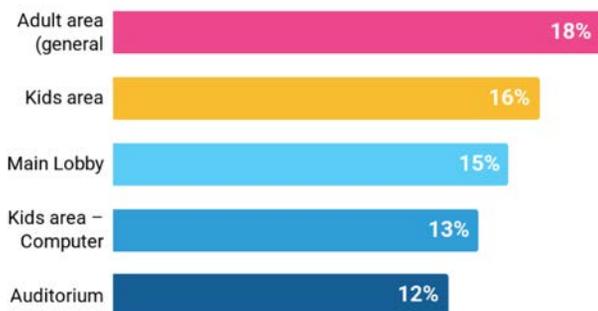
Comfort, cleanliness, sound control, and access to washrooms and seating affect whether people feel welcome and able to stay.



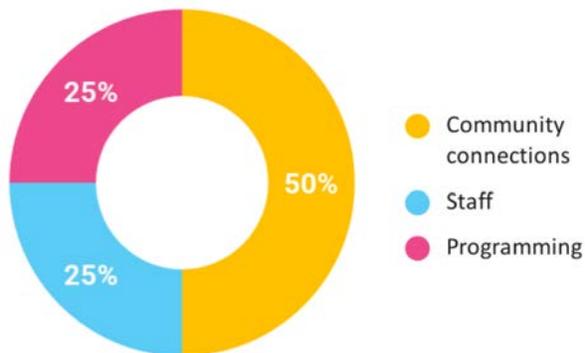
Community learning & identity

The library is a place for learning and connection that reflects the North End's culture and identity.

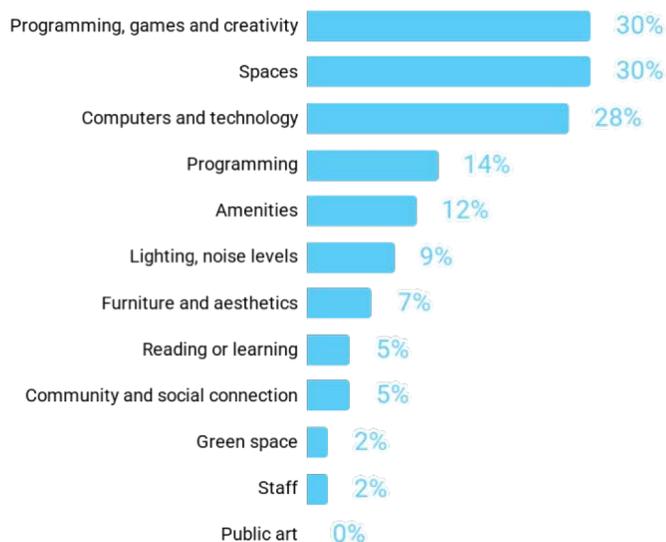
What spaces do people like?



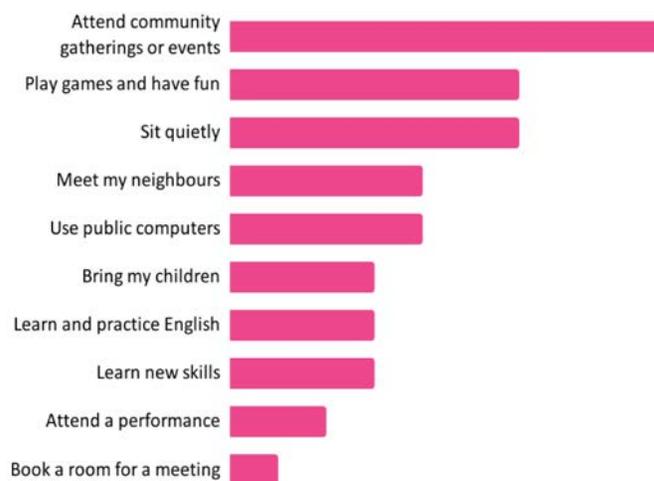
What makes the library feel like home?



What would you like to see changed at the library?



What is something new you would like to see or do at the renovated library?



Learnings summary

What people would like included in the renovation

- Teen area: A safe, inclusive area where teens can socialize without disturbing others, complete with lounge seating, acoustic noise control, and separation from younger children
- Kids area: An active, playful, and safe space with age-separated zones, noise management, and quiet areas for children with sensory needs
- Adult area: Quiet, well-lit spaces with good air quality, access to computers and charging stations, multilingual signage, and clear separation between study and work zones
- Quiet spaces: Reading nooks, soundproofed meeting rooms, as well as soundproof phone booths
- Auditorium: Improved lighting and acoustics,
- Meeting rooms and event spaces: Larger and flexible meeting and event rooms with better storage and technology to support these programs
- Main lobby: Kid-friendly washrooms, senior-focused programming, better seating and charging, inclusive signage, and a sense of belonging and inclusion
- Programming priorities: Emphasis on play, games, crafts, youth programs, community events, learning and skill development, movie nights, music-related activities and spaces — for both inside the library and the outdoor public space
- Resources and equipment: Updated computers with longer access to them, water stations, and a commissary kitchen for programs and gatherings
- Front plaza and outdoor spaces: Accessible and welcoming, with seating, shade, greenery, play areas, clear signage, good lighting, and flexible areas for gathering, events, and outdoor programming. Additional ideas raised through community conversations included an indoor bike rack for children and a clock located on the plaza, both mentioned multiple times

Design considerations

Phase 1 engagement gave community members the opportunity to imagine new possibilities for the library. Across the board community members emphasized the importance of designing a space that reflects the community's identity, culture, and history. The stories and reflections about the library shared throughout the engagement helped to shape the following design considerations:

Considerations for indoor spaces

1. Keeping features that the community loves and appreciates, like comfortable seating and morning coffee
2. Providing quiet spaces for focussed work and studying
3. Creating a welcoming environment that fosters a sense of belonging and connection
4. Expanding community programs with adequate spaces to support them, while ensuring that the building is modernized
5. A building layout that has clear boundaries and distinct spaces

Considerations for outdoor spaces

1. Ensuring that outdoor spaces of the library feel safe and welcoming with better lighting, and improved visibility
2. More greenery, gardens & natural areas
3. Expand outdoor programming possibilities to activate the space
4. Ensuring that the space is accessible and inclusive
5. Provide comfortable and functional furnishings for people to stay and linger

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