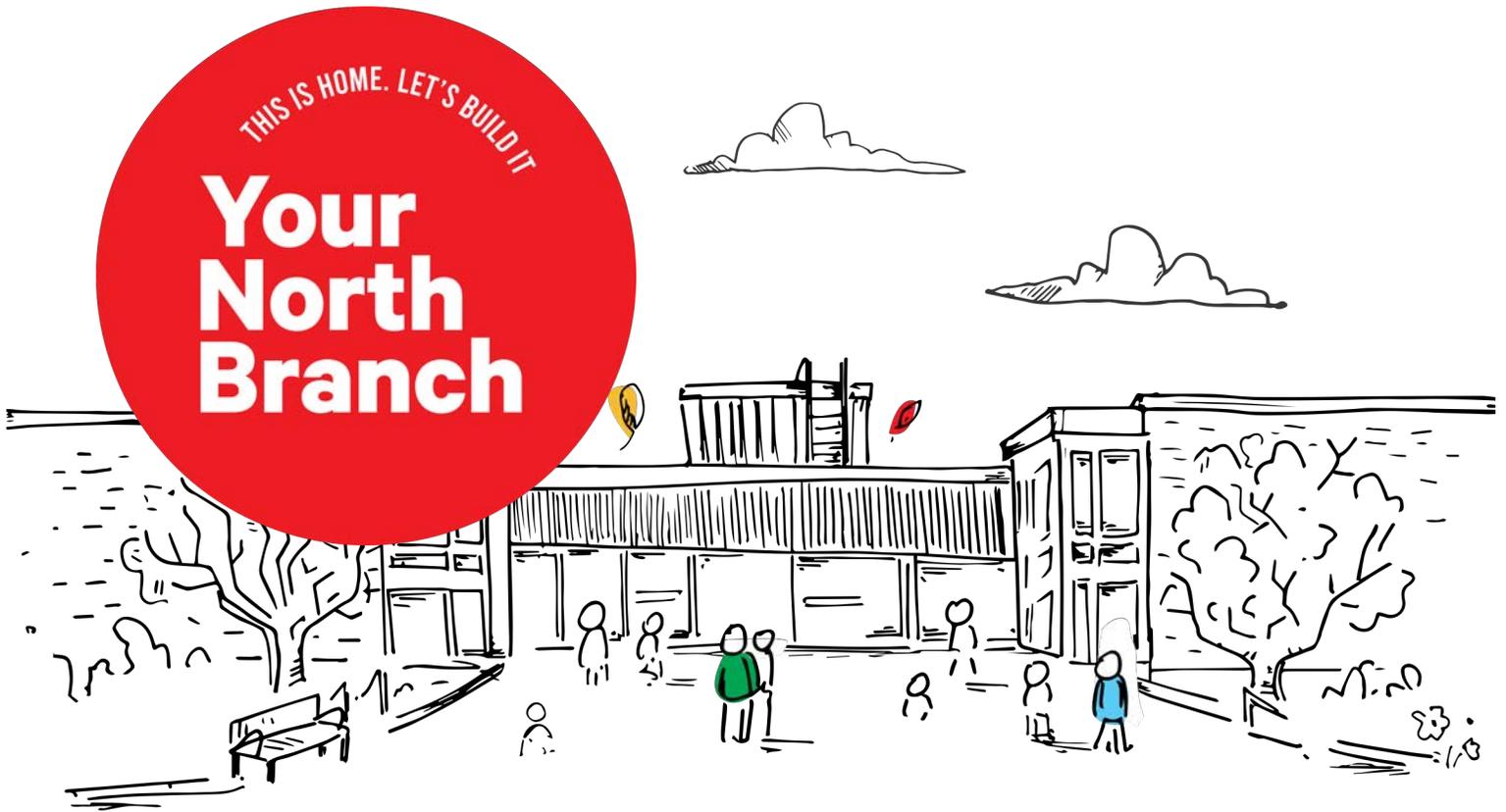


THIS IS HOME. LET'S BUILD IT

Your North Branch



What We Learned

Phase 1

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



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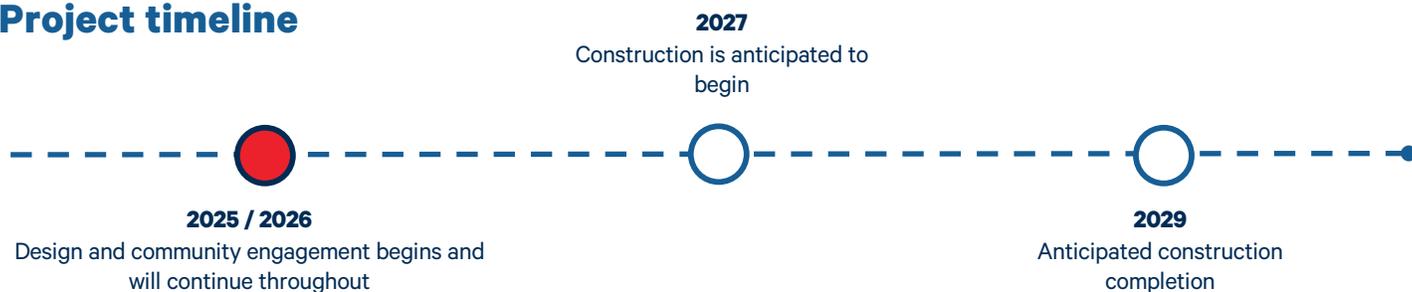
Engagement summary

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 create awareness, gather values and stories, identify priorities for interior and exterior spaces, and continue building trusting relationships with the North End community and its members.

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)
10 Community leaders & 2 special advisors
Staff Advisory Committee (SAC)
10 Library staff



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

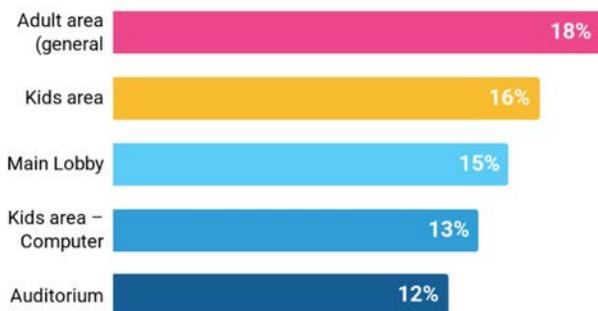
Comfort, cleanliness, sound control, and access to washrooms and seating affect whether people feel welcome and able to stay.



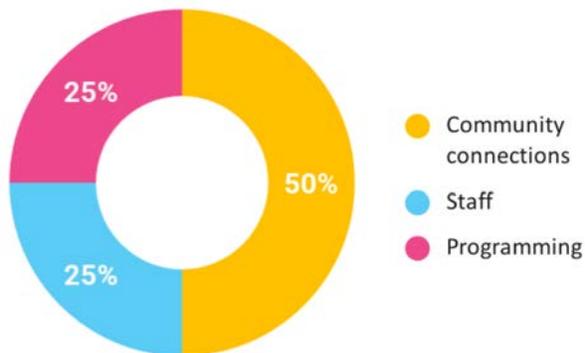
Community learning & identity

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

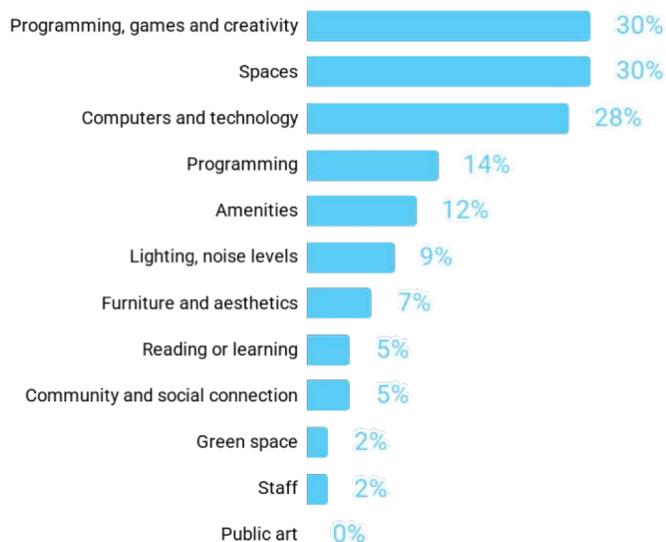
What spaces do people like?



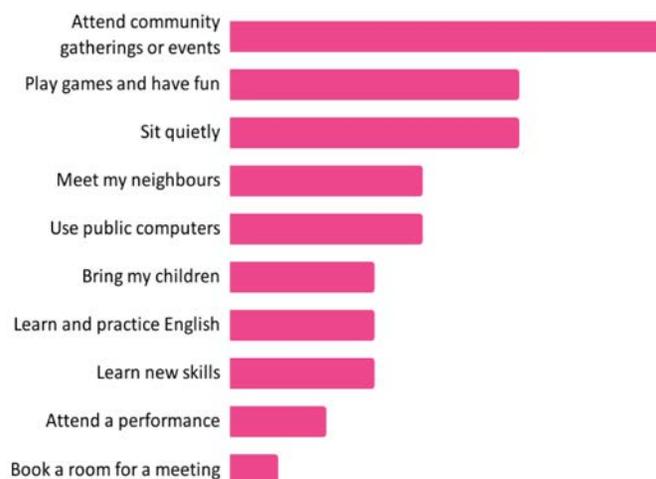
What makes the library feel like home?



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 quiet/reading spaces and active space
- 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

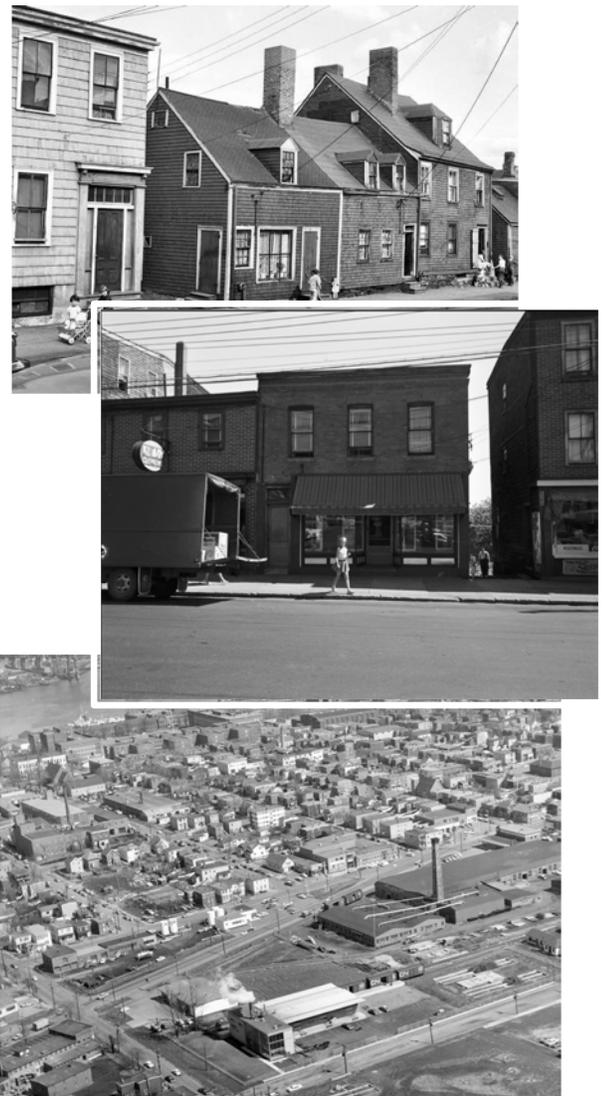
1. Introduction

The Halifax North Memorial Public Library is both a vital community resource and a place of profound historical significance. The building serves as a memorial connected to the Halifax Explosion and stands as a lasting symbol of remembrance, resilience, and civic responsibility. Over decades, the library has also been shaped by and has actively supported community advocacy, social justice movements, and grassroots organizing in the North End. It has long functioned as more than a place to access books and services; it is a space where community voices are heard, relationships are built, and collective care is practiced. As Halifax continues to grow and change, the library remains an important site of activism and community leadership, particularly in advancing equity, cultural preservation, and access to public space.

1.1 Site history and community context

The Halifax North Memorial Public Library holds a unique and deeply significant place within the North End and the broader Halifax Regional Municipality. Opened in 1966, the library was established as a memorial to the Halifax Explosion. Its opening coincided with the demolition of Africville, an historic African Nova Scotian community. Many former Africville residents were relocated to the newly constructed Uniacke Square Community, which opened the same year as the library. The close proximity of these two sites fostered strong connections, with the library becoming an important and well-used community space for Uniacke Square residents and other African Nova Scotian communities in the North End. From the outset, the branch was intended to serve not only as a place for learning, but also as a symbol of recognition, remembrance, and resilience.

Located on Gottingen Street, the Halifax North Memorial Public Library is the oldest branch in the Halifax Public Libraries system and has long served as a vital civic and cultural hub. Over decades, it has supported literacy, access to information, social connection, and community programming, particularly for African Nova Scotian communities and other equity-seeking groups. As the North End continues to experience growth, change, and development pressures, the library remains a trusted and welcoming space, often described by community members as feeling like “home.” While the branch is well loved and heavily used, the aging building no longer fully meets contemporary standards for accessibility, sustainability, or flexible programming. Halifax Public Libraries and Halifax Regional Municipality have therefore committed to a major renovation that honours the site’s legacy while preparing it to serve future generations.



Images: Historic photographs of the North End Halifax, Nova Scotia

1.2 Engagement goals

The project's engagement goals were informed by the IAP2 Spectrum, with an emphasis on collaborative engagement from the outset of the process. This approach supported community-led participation that is rooted in local histories and lived experience, transparent about scope and constraints. The engagement was guided by the following principles:

1. Community-led: Voices of residents guide every phase
2. Grounded: In local histories, cultures, and lived experience
3. Transparent: Open about project scope, timeline, and constraints
4. Inclusive: Engagement that is multilingual and open for all ages, abilities, and backgrounds
5. Trust-building: Building authentic, sustained relationships, rather than one-time interactions



Images: Photographs taken from the Engagement workshop

1.3 Project context and overview

Halifax Regional Municipality (HRM) and Halifax Public Libraries (HPL) have initiated a progressive design-build renovation of the Halifax North Memorial Public Library. Community engagement is a central part of this process, ensuring that local voices inform decisions throughout planning and design. The Halifax North Memorial Public Library renovation has been an important topic within the community for many years. Since 2020, Halifax Public Libraries has been gathering community feedback to better understand how the library is used, what it represents to the North End, and what residents hope to see in its future. This earlier engagement laid an important foundation for the current project and informed the overall engagement approach.

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

Following the hiring of the design-build team, a new phase of community engagement began in November 2025 as part of the first design phase of the project. This phase built on the engagement undertaken since 2020 and focused on deepening relationships, validating earlier input, and gathering more detailed guidance to inform design decisions. Engagement activities during this phase sought to build trust, gather community values and stories, and identify priorities for interior and exterior spaces, with particular attention to equity-seeking communities, youth, 2SLGBTQIA+ communities, elders, newcomer groups, and cultural organizations.

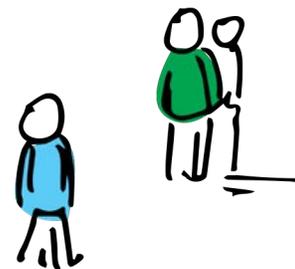
1.3.1 Early engagement (2020–2024)

Since 2020, Halifax Public Libraries has undertaken engagement to support the future renovation of the Halifax North Memorial Public Library. This work helped establish long-standing relationships and ensured that community perspectives were embedded early in the project's development.

Early engagement activities included:

- A multilingual community survey, offered in English, Somali, Arabic, and French, that explored:
 - What makes the Halifax North Memorial Public Library meaningful to residents
 - Which features and services are most valued
 - What community members would like to see in a renovated library
- The establishment of:
 - A Staff Advisory Committee (SAC)
 - A Community Advisory Committee (CAC) to support engagement planning and ensure diverse perspectives are reflected
- The development of a community partner network of approximately 50 hyper-local organizations to support outreach and participation
- Staff engagement session which collected 169 written responses in feedback

Insights from this earlier engagement informed the structure, focus, and inclusive design of the engagement launched in November 2025 and continue to guide decision-making as the project moves forward.



2. What we did

Engagement for the Halifax North Memorial Public Library Renovation follows 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. Across all phases, engagement prioritizes accessibility, inclusivity, and transparency through a mix of in-person, digital, and creative methods. Activities are designed along a spectrum from low-commitment to high-input opportunities, recognizing different capacities, time constraints, and comfort levels, and supporting participation from a wide range of voices and experiences.

2.1 Engagement strategy phase 1

The strategy for phase 1 engagement focused on building trust and understanding what matters most to the community. It introduced the renovation project, clarified scope and constraints, and gathered insight into the library's role as a place of belonging, community values, local identity, and priorities for interior spaces and overall use. Engagement emphasized inclusivity and connection, particularly in a neighbourhood experiencing gentrification and displacement pressures.

2.2 Promotion



Project page

Engagement and project updates were promoted through the [Your North Branch project page](#), which included a survey, regularly updated FAQs and event information. There was a total of 872 views on the page.



Library & staff-led promotion

Posters, digital screens, QR codes, colouring sheets, and on-site engagement materials were used to reach patrons directly within the library.



Pop-ups

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



Email outreach

Targeted newsletter recruitment and in-branch newsletter sign-ups were used to share engagement opportunities with library users and subscribers. A total of 432 emails were sent to the community.



Door-to-door outreach

Printed information was distributed to 259 homes located within a 10-minute radius of the library. With 42 interviews conducted.



Community and partner outreach

Outreach was shared with 42 community partners, local organizations & neighbourhood networks.

2.3 Engagement activities

The project team engaged with the community between November and December 2025 through a mix of in-person and virtual activities designed to reach a broad cross-section of the community. Engagement activities included:

1. Community survey - April to December 2025
2. Door-to-door outreach – November 8 & November 25, 2025
3. Community Advisory Committee Meeting & Staff Advisory Committee Meeting – Tuesday, November 18, 2025
4. Community Timeline: Your History, Our History Memory Sharing Drop in - Saturday, November 22, 2025 from 12:00 p.m. to 4:00 p.m. at the Halifax North Memorial Public Library
5. Design workshop - Thursday, November 27, 2025 from 5:00 p.m. to 8:00 p.m. at the Halifax North Memorial Public Library
6. Field office hours - From November 24, 2025 to November 27, 2025 from 9:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. at the Halifax North Memorial Public Library
7. Community Pop-ups: Two pop-ups were held at local community events.
8. Staff Advisory Committee (SAC)

2.3.1 Community survey

A paper and digital survey invited community members to reflect on what makes the library meaningful, identify features to retain, and suggest improvements to inform the renovation. The low-barrier survey was available from April to December 2025 through the [Your North Branch project page](#). The library screens in branches also provided a QR Code link to the survey. Paper copies were available in the branch and were actively promoted in September, at the Halifax North Memorial Public Library, and through the door-to-door outreach. The survey was offered in four languages: English, Somali, Arabic, and French.



Images: Door to door outreach conducted by the HPL staff and Happy Cities team.

2.3.2 Door-to door outreach

Multilingual (English, Arabic, French, Hindi, Urdu, and Somali) door-to-door outreach was conducted by HPL Staff and Happy Cities in the surrounding neighbourhood in November 2025. This outreach helped us connect and build relationships with community members who would be highly impacted by the library renovation. The outreach aimed to raise awareness of the project, upcoming engagement opportunities, gather local perspectives on the role of the library in the community, and understand priorities for improvement.

2.3.3 Community Advisory Committee Meeting (CAC) & Staff Advisory Committee (SAC) Meetings

Engagement was supported by a Staff Advisory Committee (SAC) consisting of 10 Halifax Public Libraries staff, the Halifax North Branch Manager, and guided by HPL leadership. Feedback from SAC sessions was captured through facilitated discussions. This input has been incorporated into the findings summarized in this report. The SAC collectively selected community leaders to form the Community Advisory Committee (CAC) which consisted of 10 community members and two special advisors. These members reflect and work with the diverse community the library serves.

The session reviewed project objectives, opportunities, and challenges for the renovation, and explored community values and design priorities, helping to establish shared principles to guide subsequent engagement and design phases. CAC members were provided with information about upcoming engagement opportunities to share within their networks.

2.3.4 Community Timeline: Your History, Our History: Memory Sharing

An interactive, drop-in event was hosted at the Halifax North Memorial Public Library, centered around storytelling and shared histories at the library and in the North End. The engagement blended spoken and written storytelling with visual and arts-based activities. With a base timeline showing key moments of the library’s history, people contributed personal stories, reflections, photographs, and mementos that highlighted community identity, values, and aspirations for the renewed library.

This culminated in a community-created timeline that reinforced the library’s role within the neighbourhood and created a space to acknowledge the stories that have shaped this community which in turn will shape the redesign process. The timeline built a collective understanding of what Halifax North means to residents and what values should be carried forward as the library and neighbourhood continue to evolve. As the memory drop-in took place, a concurrent pop-up engagement was hosted using engagement boards. The timeline remained posted throughout the week, letting people add to it during the field office hours.

2.3.5 Design workshop

A participatory design workshop was held with members of the public to provide an opportunity for more in-depth engagement about the redesign process. The session focused on how the library is currently used, as well as ideas, priorities, and trade-offs for the future. Community members reviewed key project parameters, including budget, timeline, and technical considerations, and shared input on how the library could better serve and reflect the North End community.

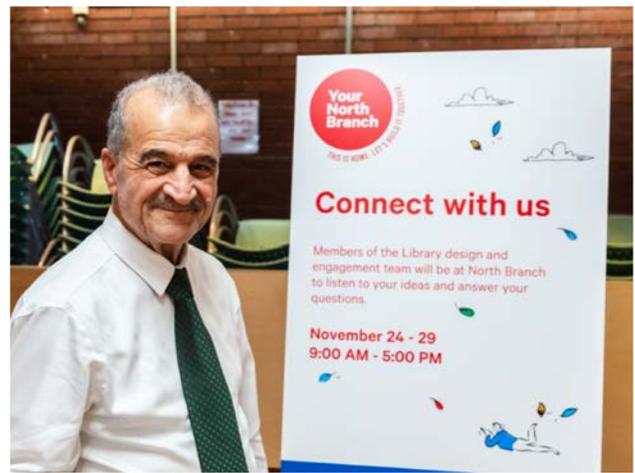
The workshop outputs provided the design team with detailed community-informed insights to support the development of concept designs to be shared in the second phase of engagement. As the workshop took place within the Halifax North Memorial Public Library, a concurrent pop-up engagement was hosted using engagement boards. This allowed visitors who were not previously aware of the project to learn more and provide light-touch input through low-commitment activities such as dotmocracy exercises and open-ended questions.



Image: Photographs taken from the Community Timeline Memory Sharing event.

2.3.6 Field office hours

Field office hours were held over the course of one week, with a Happy Cities team member present at the Halifax North Memorial Public Library from 9:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m., supported by Halifax North Memorial Public Library staff. Library staff assisted in welcoming visitors, answering procedural questions, and helping to connect community members with the project team, which enhanced accessibility and encouraged participation. The consistent, visible presence provided space for community members to ask questions, share feedback, and engage informally with the team. It also allowed team members to observe daily activity in the library, noting how different spaces were used, which groups visited at various times, and the interactions that naturally occurred in the space. These conversations and observations offered valuable insights into the library's daily rhythms, user needs, and the strengths and challenges of the existing environment, directly informing design priorities for the renovation.



2.3.7 Community pop-ups

Two community pop-up events were held to engage residents in informal, accessible settings. The first took place at Joe Howe School, and the second at the Agricola Street Holiday Festival. These pop-ups provided opportunities for the project team to meet community members where they were, share information about the Halifax North Memorial Public Library renovation, and invite participation in upcoming engagement activities.



Images: Images collected from the community pop-ups, field office hours and timeline event.

3. Learnings

3.1 Overview

Phase 1 engagement for the Halifax North Memorial Public Library renovation prompted rich, consistent, and deeply grounded input across multiple formats, sessions, and community groups. With a number of different ways to engage, from surveys and engagement boards to a co-design workshop and informal conversations, the learnings converge around a shared understanding of the library as a place of belonging, dignity, and everyday support. Community members consistently emphasized that what makes the library special is not only what it offers, but how it feels — welcoming, familiar, and rooted in the North End’s history and community.

Across the board people expressed a strong appreciation for existing staff, programming, and the library’s lived-in character, alongside clear and actionable requests for improvement. These requests focus on spatial clarity, comfort, accessibility, sound management, and the ability for different users to coexist without conflict. There is also a strong call for the library to continue to strengthen as a place that supports learning, basic needs, youth development, cultural expression, and community partnership.



Images: Photographs taken of the engagement boards at the design workshop/

3.2 Findings by theme

This section outlines key themes from community feedback across all engagement activities.



1. Belonging, welcome, and relationships

The strongest and most consistent theme is that the library feels like home because of the people, and particularly the staff. Kindness, familiarity, trust, and feeling known are repeatedly cited as the foundation of the library experience.



2. Youth, teen, and family needs

There is high demand for more space, programming, and infrastructure for children and teens. People of all ages (including youth) describe crowding, noise conflict, and limited room for active or social use. Youth spaces are expected to be louder, more playful, and better equipped, rather than constrained by adult norms.



3. Comfort, quiet, and sound management

Noise is a recurring pressure point, particularly on weekday afternoons with after-school youth use and adult or senior needs. Importantly, community members frame this as a design issue rather than a behaviour issue, calling for spatial separation and acoustic treatment



4. Programming and learning

Programming is viewed as core to the library's role. Learning, life skills, culture, music, tutoring, and social programs are seen as essential supports, particularly for youth, newcomers, and adults facing barriers.



5. Technology and access

Computers, printers, charging stations, and digital access are highly valued and heavily used. Requests focus on more computers, longer access time, updated hardware, and better integration of technology with learning and quiet use.



6. Safety

Community members often said that the library was a space that felt safe to them and their families. However there was also mention that the spaces outside of the library felt unsafe at different times.



7. Plaza, outdoors, and connection to place

The plaza at the front entrance is seen as an extension of the library — a place for gathering, play, and performance. Safety, greenery, seating, and activation were noted as important to have in the renovation of the plaza.



8. Dignity and basic needs

Washrooms, seating, lighting, air quality, and cleanliness directly affect whether people stay and return. These are framed as dignity issues, not amenities.



9. Identity, culture, and North End character

Community members emphasized retaining the library’s North End character through design. They valued existing materials like brick and textured surfaces, and expressed concern about a renovation that feels sterile or over-designed. Participants wanted design choices that reflect the local community, celebrate cultural diversity, and preserve the library’s warmth and human scale.

3.3 Community survey

A community survey* (paper and digital) was available from April to December 2025 on the [Your North Branch project page](#), at the Halifax North Memorial Public Library, and was also shared through door-to-door outreach. The open answer survey offered an accessible, low-barrier way for community members to share their experiences and ideas over an extended period of time. These questions encouraged reflection on the library's role in the community while also gathering forward-looking input to help inform the renovation. Community members were invited to reflect on:

- What they love about the library
- How the library could feel more like home
- What makes the library a special place
- What they would like to see updated
- What new features or spaces should be added



What you love about the library

- Friendly, consistent, and helpful staff
- Access to books, computers, printing, and free resources
- A welcoming, familiar atmosphere
- Children's and teen programming
- Feeling safe and known in the space

How the library can feel more like home

- Comfortable seating and places to linger
- Clear zones for different activities (quiet, social, youth)
- Warm materials and design that feel human and lived-in
- Visibility of community identity, culture, and stories
- Better sound control to reduce tension between users

What people would like to see in the renovation

- More programs for all ages, especially youth and seniors
- More computers and longer access time
- Dedicated teen and youth zones
- Movie nights, music, cultural events, and learning programs
- Outdoor programming and plaza activation

What makes it a special place

- The people and relationships
- Staff care and consistency
- Free, accessible support for learning and daily needs
- A place to connect, not just consume services

What features should be updated

- Washrooms (number, accessibility, cleanliness)
- Seating and furniture
- Lighting and acoustics
- Accessibility (stairs, circulation, entrances)
- Computer infrastructure

What should be added

- Soundproof or semi-private rooms and phone booths
- Clear spatial separation by activity and age group
- Youth-focused spaces designed with youth
- Gardens, greenery, and outdoor seating

*Survey included in Appendix A.

3.4 Door-to-door outreach

The key learning from door-to-door outreach was that the Halifax North Memorial Public Library is a valued and essential community hub, particularly for newcomer families, children, teens, and residents who rely on public technology and staff support. While overall sentiment toward the library is positive, the community clearly identified priorities for improvement related to safety, programming, technology, and physical comfort.

What we did

- Doors knocked: 166
- Flyers distributed to homes: 259
- Households interviewed: 42



- 42 interviews total
- Mix of long-term residents, newcomer families, parents, teens, young children, and occasional users
- Several households use the library daily or multiple times per week

Key themes & findings

1. Programming is central

- Programming is the main reason people visit the library, there is a demand for children, youth, and teen programming, as well as adult education and skill-building
- Skill-building, productive programs are especially valued
- Providing food at programs supports participation and inclusion
- Desire for local art and performance spaces

2. Safety, comfort, and space separation

- Concerns about safety, particularly at the Gottingen Street entrance
- Parents want clearer separation between children, teens, and adults
- Noise, conflict, and perceived risk affect how often families use the library
- Requests for zoned spaces for safety

3. Technology & access

- Computers, printers, and internet are essential services
- Requests for more computers, updated technology, and reliable connectivity
- Staff assistance with forms, resumes, and systems is highly valued

4. Newcomer support & inclusion

- The library is seen as a lifeline for newcomers
- High demand for settlement support, translation, language learning, and culturally relevant programming
- Multiple requests for Sunday hours, especially from newcomer families

5. Space, design, and experience

- Creating an accessible layout with clear circulation and wayfinding
- Interest in modernizing interiors, improving amenities, adding bike racks, and creating a more welcoming environment

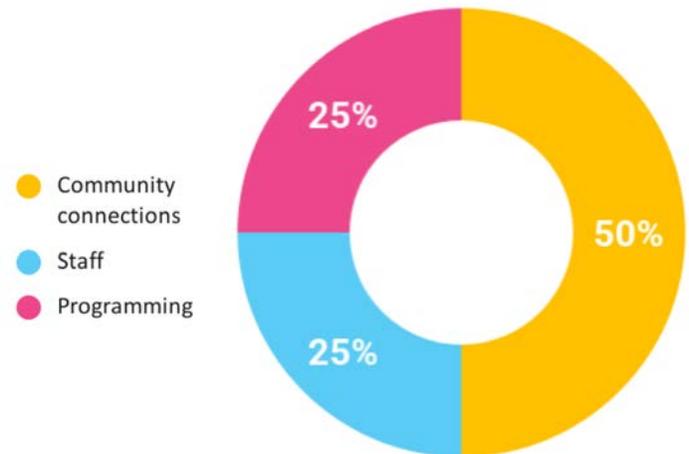
3.5 Public community sessions

Engagement boards* were used during both the Community timeline event and Design workshop to gather input from people. The following pages summarize and analyze the responses collected from the questions on these boards, highlighting key themes and insights from the community.

3.5.1 Engagement boards

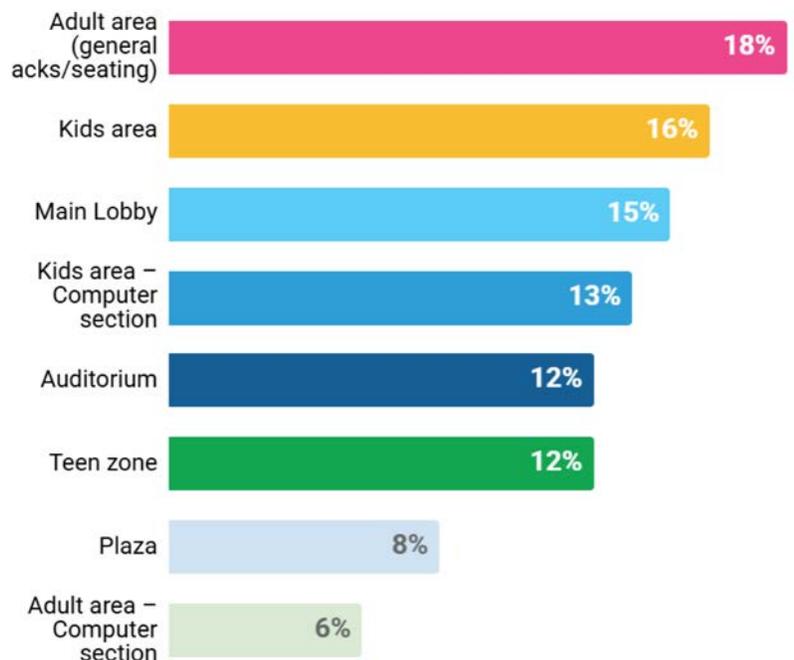
Q1: What makes Halifax North Memorial Public Library feel like home?

Engagement boards responses highlighted that a strong sense of community connection is central to why the Halifax North Memorial Public Library feels like “home.” Half of the community members pointed to community connection, while staff and programming were equally cited as important contributors, reflecting the library’s role as a welcoming place and a community hub.



Q2: What are your favourite places at the Library?

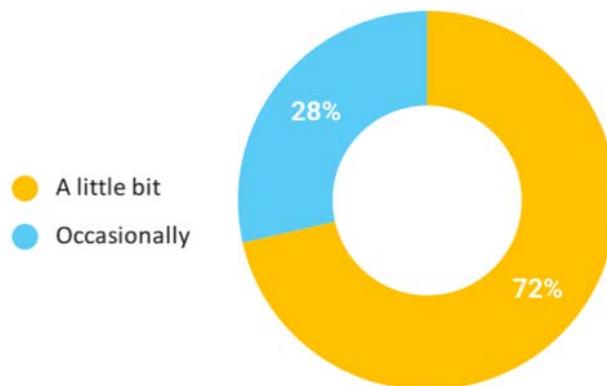
The Adult area and Kids area received the highest overall engagement, suggesting these are the most used spaces. The Main Lobby also attracted a high number of stickers, indicating it plays an important role in both comfort. Teen zone and Auditorium show moderate engagement, pointing to spaces that are valued but may benefit from targeted enhancements. The Plaza received the fewest stickers overall, suggesting lower use.



*Engagement boards included in Appendix B.

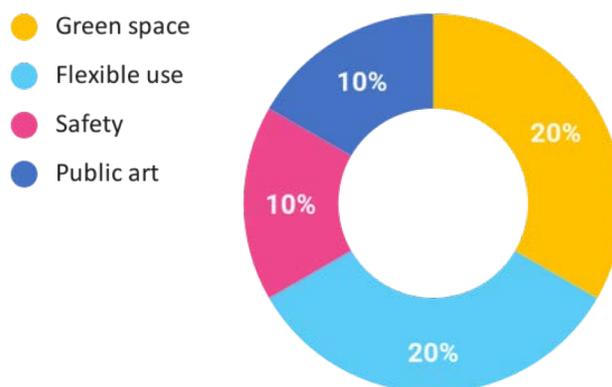
Q3: How much do you use the plaza in front of the Library today?

Responses show that the plaza in front of the library is infrequently used. Most respondents said they use the plaza only a little bit (72%), while just under a third (28%) reported using it occasionally, suggesting the space has potential to be more active and inviting.



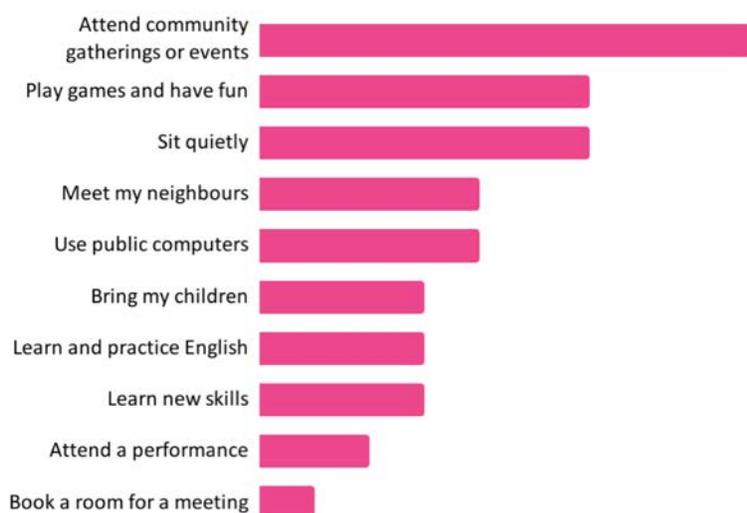
Q4: What do you like the most about the plaza? What kinds of improvements would you like to see to the plaza?

Community members expressed appreciation for the plaza as an outdoor gathering space, valuing its openness and connection to the library. At the same time, feedback pointed to a desire for improvements that make the space more comfortable and usable, such as better seating, shade, weather protection, and features that support lingering, informal socializing, and small-scale programming. Overall, comments suggest that there is an interest in the plaza becoming a more welcoming, flexible, and people-oriented space.



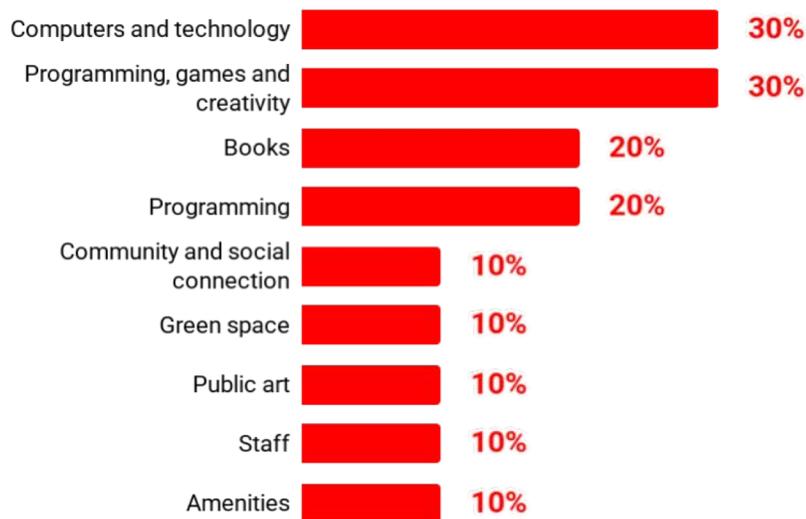
Q5: What is something new you would like to see or do at the renovated Library?

Responses show strong interest in using the renovated library as a place for connection and activity. The most common interest was attending community gatherings or events (22%), followed by playing games and having fun (15%) and sitting quietly (15%). People also expressed interest in meeting neighbours and using public computers (10% each), while smaller but meaningful interest was shown in bringing children, learning and practising English, learning new skills, and attending performances.



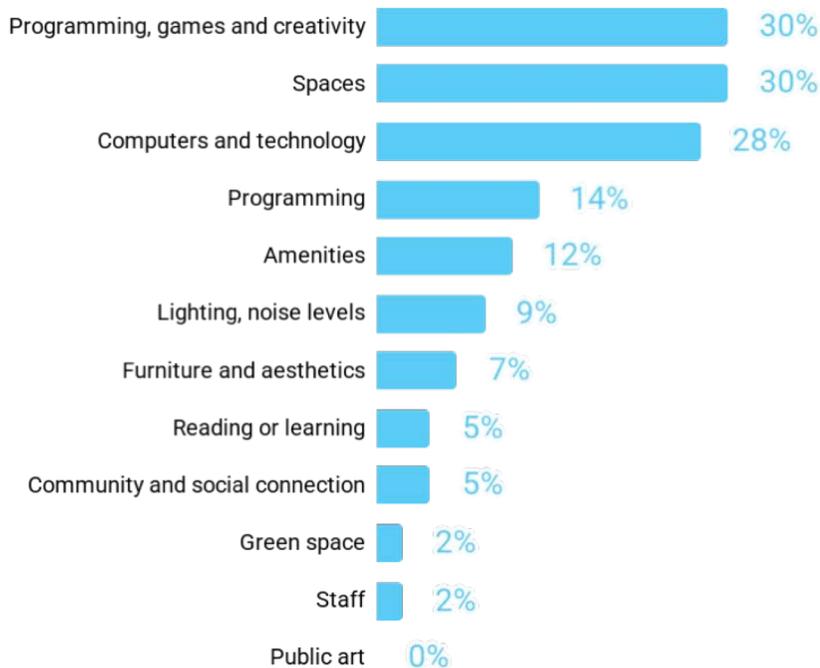
Q6: What would you like to stay the same about the Library?

Community members want to preserve the library's technology spaces, book collections, and programming offerings. Books and general programming remain central to the library's educational role, while staff, community connection, green space, public art, and amenities are also valued. Overall, residents want to maintain the library as a technology-enabled, creative, and welcoming community space.



Q7: What would you like to see changed at the library?

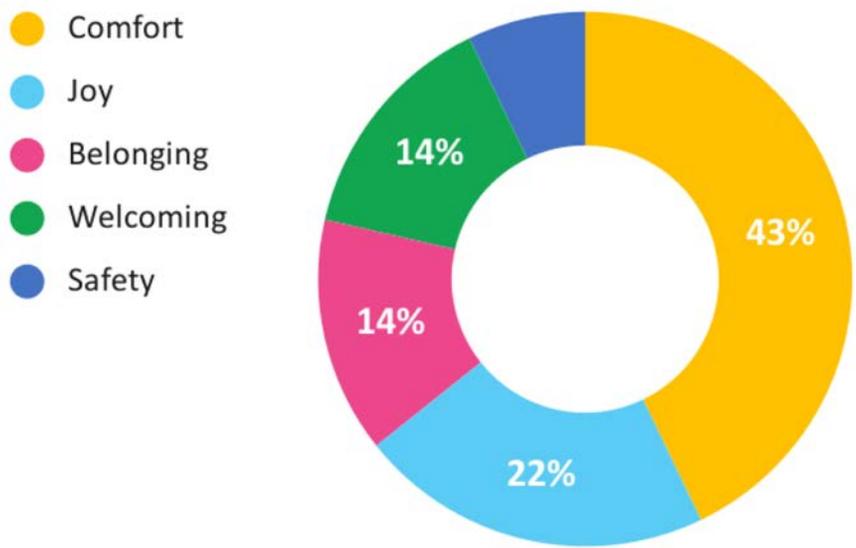
Community members highlighted programming, games and creativity, and technology as key areas for improvement, alongside requests for new or enhanced programs. There was also interest in improving the physical environment, including amenities, lighting, noise management, furniture, and aesthetics. In contrast, there was less interest in improving elements such as green space, staff, and public art. Overall, feedback points to prioritizing upgraded technology, expanded programming, and refreshed interior spaces to enhance comfort and usability.



Q8: How should the new library feel?

Community members most strongly emphasized comfort, which accounted for 43% of responses, highlighting the importance of the library as a calm, supportive, and easy-to-use space. Joy was the next most common feeling (22%), reflecting a desire for the library to feel uplifting and enjoyable, not just functional.

Several respondents also identified belonging and welcoming (each 14%), underscoring the library’s role as an inclusive community hub where people feel accepted and at ease. Safety was mentioned less frequently (7%), but remains a foundational expectation that supports all other desired feelings. Overall, the responses point to a library that prioritizes comfort and warmth, while also fostering joy, inclusion, and a strong sense of welcome for the community.



3.5.2 Kids station

Children were invited to participate during the two public events (memory drop-in and design workshop) and were provided a table with colouring pages, markets, and other craft materials to imagine how they would like to see the library.

Children’s feedback focused on comfort, imagination, and playful learning. Ideas included a large, cozy chair that could fit many people, strong enthusiasm for books and “fun” reading experiences, and interest in a life-size dollhouse similar to one at [Keshen Goodman Public Library](#). Overall, children expressed a desire for welcoming, interactive spaces that support both reading and imaginative play.



Image: Photographs taken at the kids station during the design workshop.

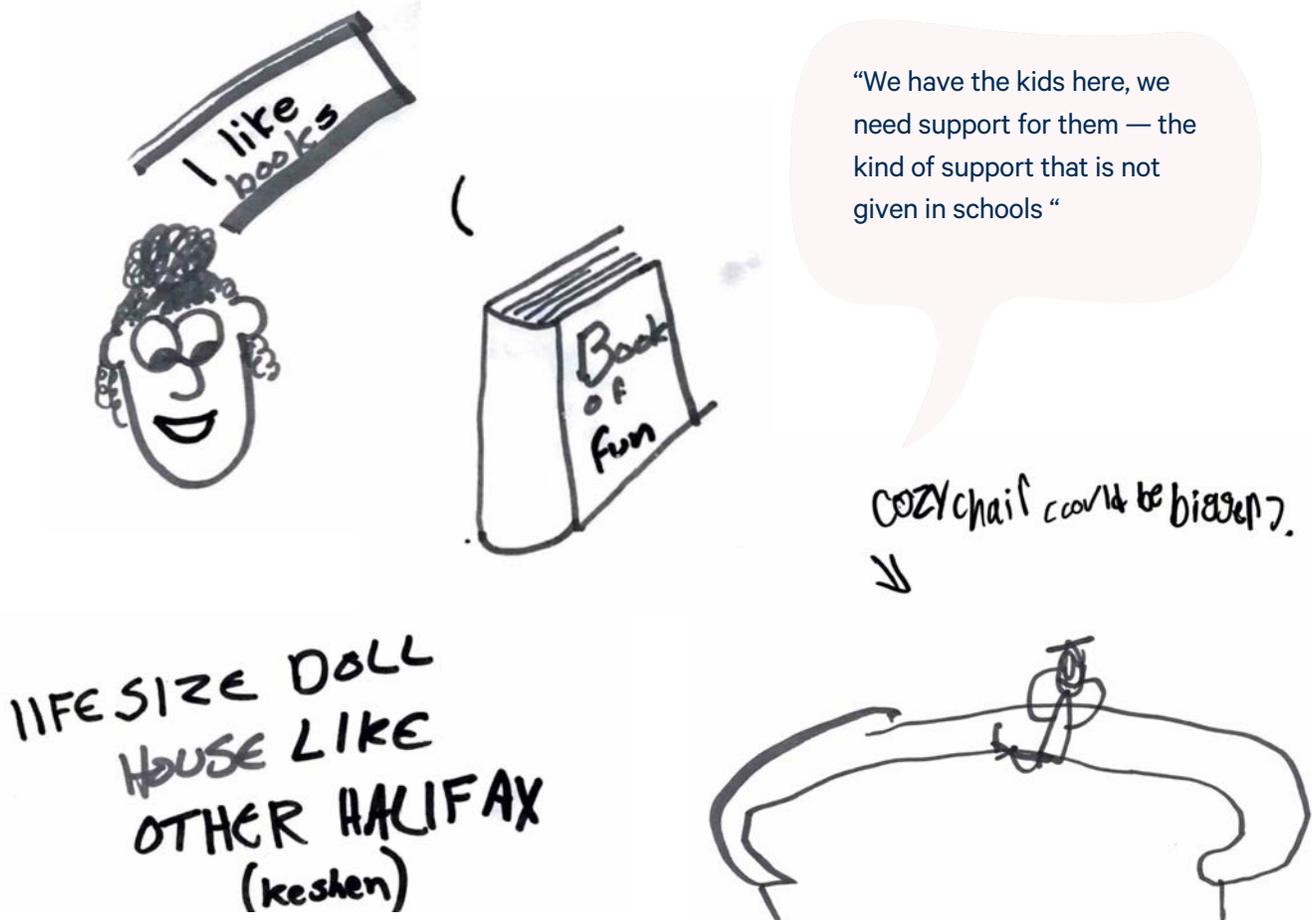


Image: Sketches included in this section were generated during facilitated design workshops and engagement activities led by the project team.

3.5.3 Community timeline

Your History, Our History Memory Sharing Drop-in

The community timeline drop-in gathered reflections on the memories and milestones that have shaped Halifax North and its library. Community members shared personal stories and key moments on a timeline, beginning at the library's start and highlighting the library's long-standing role as a place to gather, learn, and connect. The activity revealed how individual experiences are deeply tied to a shared sense of community and belonging.

Overall, the input emphasized the library as more than a traditional library — it was widely described as a welcoming, lively community hub where people felt accepted and equal, and where cultural identity and lived experience were reflected in resources, programs, and social space. Community members stressed the importance of carrying this legacy forward, ensuring future changes respect the library's historic role while continuing to serve an evolving and diverse community.

The full timeline can be found in Appendix C.



Image: Printed copies of photographs collected by HPL of local residents, library staff and residents of the community through history.



Images: Community members engaging in the community timelines and memory sharing drop-in.

Key themes

1950s to early 2000s

During the memory drop-in session, participants reflected that from the library's opening through the early 2000s, it served as a cornerstone of the community. The library hosted significant events such as Black History Month, African Heritage Month, the Black Educator Association Gala, and Kwanzaa. It was also an important meeting space for groups including the Halifax North Women's Group and the Black History Month Committee. Community members shared photographs and memories of classes, gatherings, and childhood experiences that marked important moments in their lives.

This portion of the timeline demonstrated the deep significance and enduring love the community holds for the library.

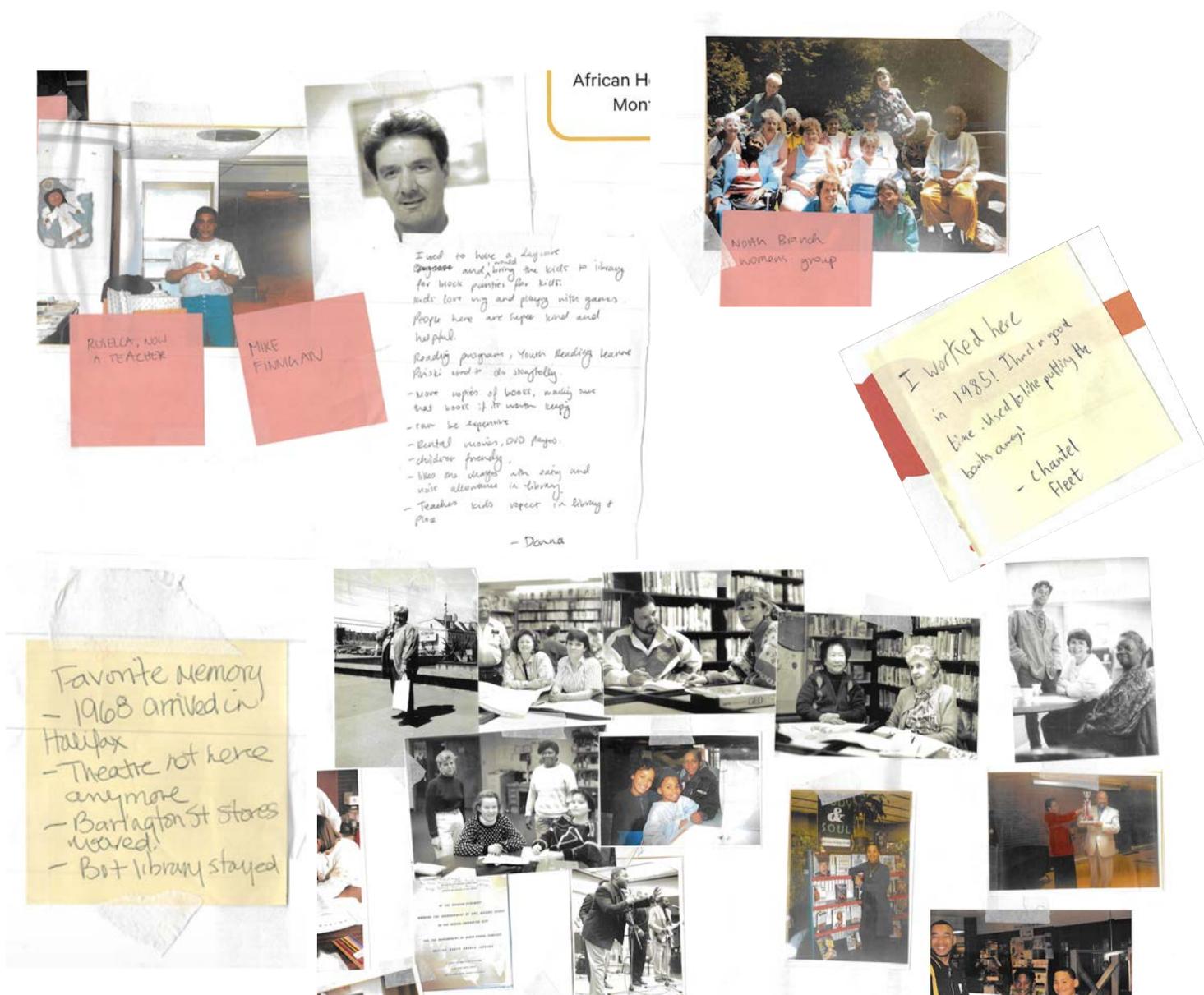


Image: Printed copies of photographs collected by HPL of local residents, library staff and residents of the community through history.

Key themes

2000s to present

From the early 2000s onwards, we observed that the focus was on key memories of how people used the library and what they like about the space now.

There were stories and photos from families, children, newcomers, and seniors — all noting how important the library is in their lives. There were many notes about the love and respect that the community has for the library staff, particularly their willingness to help community members with everything from finding their favourite books, to helping newcomers find their footing.

Community members shared some of their favourite activities to do in the library, including visiting the book stacks, reading, playing games on the computer, playing with toys in the children's area, renting movies, taking art classes (especially puppet making), learning new things, taking classes, and making new friends.

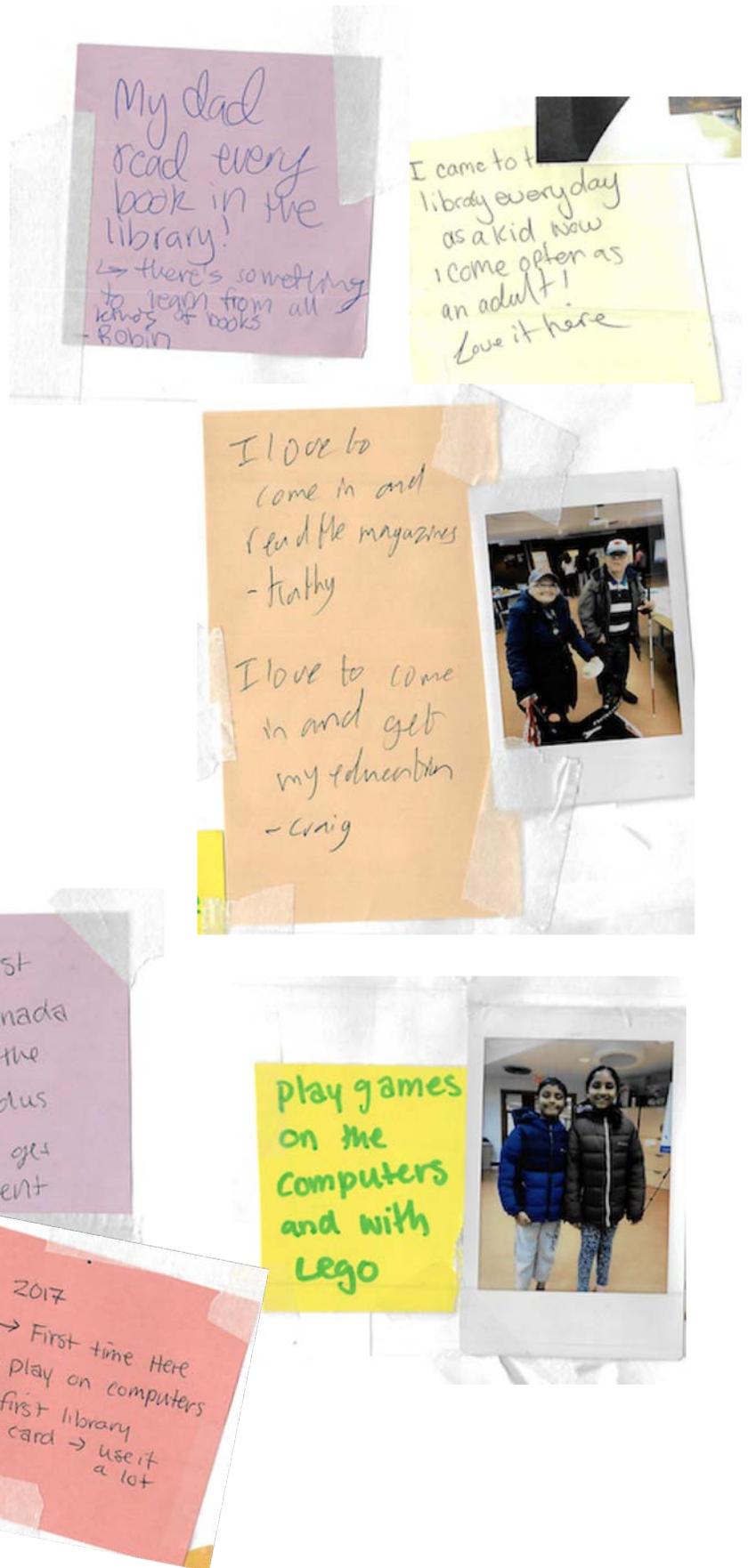


Image: Copies of comments collected from the timeline and memory sharing drop-in.

3.5.4 Design workshop

Three interactive activities took place during the community workshop to gather place-based insights, priorities, and design ideas for the North End and the renovated library.

Activity 1

Mapping special places invited people to identify important and meaningful locations within the North End community using maps, dot stickers, and notes. Through this activity, residents shared where people naturally gather, which places feel welcoming or underused, key routes and access challenges, and what they feel is missing in the neighbourhood. The exercise also helped connect community values and daily activities, across ages and cultures, to how the library could better support learning, gathering, creativity, and connection to surrounding places.

Activity 2

Clarifying priority improvements built on earlier engagement findings by asking people to focus on specific library spaces or programs identified as priorities. Community members provided more detailed feedback on how these areas should be improved, helping to translate high-level needs into clearer directions for design, programming, and functionality.

Activity 3

Everyday object co-design invited community members to imagine the future library using simple, everyday materials. Community members explored ideas related to spatial layout, programming, and access, both inside and outside the building, while considering real project constraints shared by the design team. This activity supported creative expression, dialogue, and collaboration, and helped surface practical, user-driven ideas for how the renovated library could better function and feel.



Images: Community members engaging in the design workshop.

Activity 2 - Clarifying priority improvements

Community members provided detailed input on how different library areas and programs could be improved. Feedback highlights a balance between creating spaces for active engagement and ensuring quiet, accessible areas for all users.

Teen zone

- Safe, inclusive space where teens can be loud without disturbing others
- Separate areas for teens and younger children, with easy family access
- Lounge/informal seating and acoustic treatments (e.g. ceiling flags) to reduce noise

Kids area

- Active, fun, and safe environment for children to move and play
- Separation of age groups (big kids vs. little kids) and quiet zones for adults
- Space designed to manage noise while supporting play

Adult area

- Quiet zones with natural light, ventilation, and improved air filtration
- Additional plugs, charging stations, and computer access
- Multilingual signage (including Arabic)
- Clear separation between reading/study areas and computer/work spaces

Auditorium

- Improved lighting and sound absorption
- More large meeting/event rooms with flexible storage to reduce visual clutter

Plaza / outdoor spaces

- Safe, accessible green spaces with seating, gardens, shade, and playground
- Enhanced visibility, lighting, and clear signage of daily programs
- Access ramps and additional program spaces on upper levels

Main lobby

- Dedicated kids' washrooms and senior-friendly programming
- Improved charging infrastructure and seating/eating areas
- Inclusive signage/programming for Indigenous and diverse communities
- Maintain safety and visibility near front entrance

Programming priorities

- Play and fun, board games, tactile/messy crafts, baby/children programs, retro and video gaming
- Community events including panels, concerts, open mic nights, community meals, bookable rooms, etc.
- Learning and skill development, including resume building, job readiness, digital literacy, tutoring, language, math/science, 3D printing, etc.
- Music spaces and programming, including instrument lessons, recording studio access, practice rooms, conversation circles with experts, etc.

Resources & equipment

- Rentable computers and portable Wi-Fi devices
- Water dispensers throughout the building
- Community/industrial kitchen for cooking programs and community gatherings, and events

3.6 Community reflections

3.6.1 Community sentiments

Based on informal conversations with the design team and library staff throughout the engagement period, this section summarizes key community sentiments shared by community members. Overall, the library is widely valued as a welcoming, inclusive, and safe space, with staff and a strong sense of belonging at the heart of its importance.

Across all groups, people emphasized that the design and layout of the library directly affect comfort, dignity, and the ability to accommodate diverse needs. There is strong support for expanded and flexible programming, which many see as the library's greatest opportunity for growth. Adults highlighted interest in skill-building and community-based programming, youth emphasized fun, social, and creative activities, and ELL and newcomers prioritized learning supports and consistent classes.

Reliable access to technology was identified as essential, particularly for youth and adults, and closely tied to equity and everyday needs. While priorities varied by group adults focusing on the library as a community hub and infrastructure needs; youth prioritizing social spaces, play, and technology; and newcomers emphasizing accessibility, quiet and family-friendly spaces, and strong staff relationships—several shared concerns emerged. These included managing noise and competing uses, supporting basic needs with dignity, and ensuring accessibility and inclusion through thoughtful, universally designed spaces.



"It's a meeting space where friends gather, children are encouraged."



"I love the morning coffees! The staff person who opens the doors at the morning. I feel like she is welcoming us into her home!"



Images: Photographs and quotes from the design workshop.

Learnings Summary

3.6.2 Field office hours

Field office hours were held at the Halifax North Memorial Public Library from 9:00am to 5:00pm over the course of a week, providing an opportunity for library users and community members to share feedback in person. The themes below summarize what we heard most consistently across conversations.

Location: Halifax North Memorial Public Library

Duration: Monday, November 24, 2025 to Thursday, November 27, 2025

Total number of conversations: 70



Key themes & findings

1. A safe, welcoming hub

- The library is seen as a “home” and trusted refuge
- Friendly staff are highly valued, and there was a request for more staff presence to support safety and comfort

2. Clear quiet & active zones

- Strong call for separation between quiet, scent-free areas and active kids/teen spaces
- Clear signage and staff reinforcement needed for noise, phone use, and gaming language

3. Accessible & inclusive for all

- Gaps identified in accessible washrooms, water fountains, seating, and lockers
- Desire for one-on-one support for computer use, especially for seniors and neurodivergent users

4. Technology & creative learning

- High demand for more computers, longer access times, and charging stations
- Interest in makerspaces, 3D printing, music/recording studios, and digital learning tools

5. Community connection & programs

- Strong interest in social programs for seniors, youth recreation, tutoring, and creative workshops
- Library plays a key role in hosting housing, victim, and support services

6. Improvements & ideas

- Requests for brighter interiors, more seating and shelving
- Interest in rooftop/outdoor spaces, sustainability features, and better event-time parking access

4. Design considerations

The first phase of engagement provided a great deal of insight for what the community envisions for the future of the library. The following is a summary for design considerations for both the indoor and outdoor spaces of the library.

4.1 Indoor design considerations

1. Keeping existing loved features

- There were a number of features of the library the the community hopes to retain, including
 - Comfortable seating
 - Browsable collections (books/DVDs)
 - Morning coffee traditions

2. Quiet spaces for focussed work and studying

- The most repeated request from community members, both in open comments and group discussions
- Requests for quiet rooms and reading nooks,, separation of loud and quiet zones, and better soundproofing

3. Maintaining a welcoming, community-centred environment

- Staff friendliness was repeatedly described as the heart of the library, and there was a desire to have staff be centrally located, visible, and easy to connect with
- The library already feels like home and the community wants the same atmosphere after the renovation
- Providing spaces for gathering and events to foster social connection
- Providing informal seating spaces near the library entrance

4. Program expansion and overall modernization

- Requests for programs to be expanded, including ELL programs, adult learning and job support, and youth programming (games, creative workshops, maker activities)
- Providing spaces that can support these programs (maker spaces, classrooms, art rooms, music rooms, etc.)
- Updated computer area to support online learning, games, and accessibility features
- Outlets for charging and charging stations

5. A spatial layout with clear boundaries and distinct spaces

- Requests for clearly defined zones, particularly for quiet and calm spaces
- Improved interior décor and lighting
- Better arrangement for high-traffic areas
- Clear reflection of community identity, culture, and history in the design
- Providing spaces that are large enough to host community events
- Providing a commissary kitchen to support events and learning activities
- Providing meeting rooms (large and small)

4.2 Outdoor design considerations

1. Safety and security

- Community members frequently expressed that they felt unsafe outside of the library, particularly on the Northern stairs
 - “Safety is a barrier for entry”
- Remove hiding places, improve lighting, and enhance visibility
- Increase foot traffic and activate blind spots with improved entrances and programming
- Ensure that book drop is in a well-lit, visible space

2. More greenery, gardens & natural areas

- Create a softer, less concrete-heavy plaza
- Add more trees, flowers, natural areas, and shade
- Opportunity to integrate natural areas with play areas or quieter spaces

3. Expand outdoor programming possibilities

- Activate the space with people through programming including outdoor activities, classes and events
- Provide outdoor play spaces for children and teenagers
- Consider connecting outdoor programming with YMCA programming
- Provide flexible open spaces that can be adapted for different uses over time
- Provide outdoor outlets and elevated platforms to support events and performances
- Design quieter spaces that have a noise buffer

4. Accessible & inclusive

- Ensure that the plaza and all outdoor spaces are Rick Hansen certified
- Provide even, slip-resistant, graded surfaces that can be used year-round
- Provide multiple accessible entrances to the library
- Provide accessible parking spots to enable easy library access, particularly when events are happening
- Clear reflection of community identity, culture, and history in the design

5. Comfortable and functional furnishings

- Provide furnishings that can support programming and gathering, including tables, play spaces, and seating
- Provide comfortable seating, water fountains, waste bins, bicycle racks, and tables to create a comfortable and welcoming environment

6. Mixed feelings about existing sculpture

- People like the figures, but not the “big slab”
- Requests to better integrate or redesign the sculpture
- Update signage to correct misspelled names

A. Community survey



What makes Halifax North Memorial Public Library a special place for you?

What features from the current library do you hope will remain in the updated space?

What's one new thing you'd like to see at the branch?

Tell us more! Email us at yournorthbranch@halifaxlibrary.ca



B. Engagement boards

Your North Branch

THIS IS HOME. LET'S BUILD IT TOGETHER.

What is happening at the Halifax North Memorial Public Library?

Since 1966, Halifax North Memorial Public Library has been a North End community hub. It's a place to meet neighbours, sit with a friend, look back, and dream forward.

As we plan for renovations, your voice matters. This project will be guided by community input at every stage. We invite you to share your thoughts and help reimagine this important space together.

Why?

Halifax North Memorial Public Library is over 60 years old and needs major building improvements to meet the public's needs. The branch is ready for a significant renovation to address building maintenance issues, introduce the highest levels of accessibility and sustainability features, and reimagine the public space.

Help shape the future of your North Branch

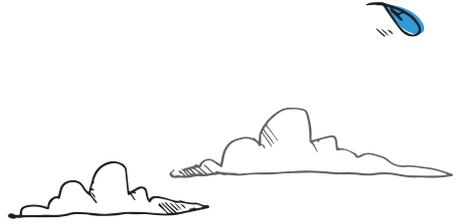
- ▶ **Take our survey** at halifaxpubliclibraries.ca/YourNorthBranch/survey
- ▶ Bring your memories, photos, and stories to add to the **memory drop-in** on November 22, from 12:00 - 4:00 PM.
- ▶ Join us for a **community workshop** on November 27, from 5:00 to 8:00 PM.
- ▶ Sign up for our **e-mail list**.
- ▶ Visit our **website** at halifaxpubliclibraries.ca/YourNorthBranch to learn more.



halifaxpubliclibraries.ca/YourNorthBranch



Halifax Public Libraries



What is happening at the Halifax North Memorial Public Library?

What has been decided?

We are in the early phases of the project. Halifax Public Libraries has selected the Design-Build Team for the renovation project. The selected Design-Build team includes the Marco Group, Lydon Lynch Architects and Teeple Architects.

Will the Library be closed during the renovation?

No. Library service and a reduced collection of material will be temporarily relocated during the renovation. We are currently working through those details now.

Will there be disruptions during construction?

Yes, we can anticipate disruptions in and around the property during this renovation. This might include disruptions to sidewalk access, traffic and near-by streets. Our construction partners will work with municipal departments to ensure safety precautions are followed and disruptions are well communicated and minimal.

What does this renovation include?

Halifax North Memorial Public Library is in need of major building improvements to better meet the community's needs. This multi-year renovation project will make the building more energy efficient, accessible, and climate-friendly. The renovation will work to protect the North Branch's cultural and community history, while updating its spaces for years to come.

The renovation will be shaped by you, through public engagement and community conversations—we want to hear from you!



[halifaxpubliclibraries.ca/
YourNorthBranch](http://halifaxpubliclibraries.ca/YourNorthBranch)



Halifax North
Memorial
Public Library

Halifax Public
Libraries



Designing within a framework

Every project has boundaries that we must work within. For this project, we will be working within timelines, budgets, land size, energy efficiency, building regulations, and standards.



Our team is designing within these key parameters:

Size of the building

We will be working within the existing lot footprint at 2285 Gottingen Street.

Budget & timeline

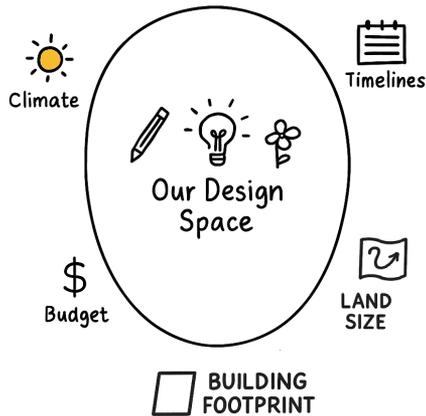
We will responsibly work within the budget and timeline.

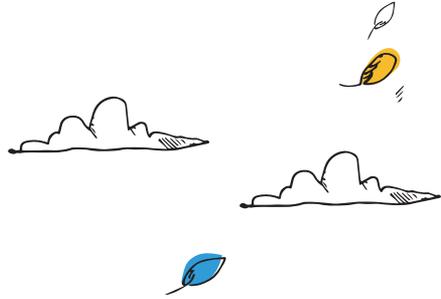
Energy efficiency

We will design a climate-resilient space that aligns with HalifACT - the municipality's climate action plan.

Building code requirements

We will ensure that designs meet all safety and accessibility standards.





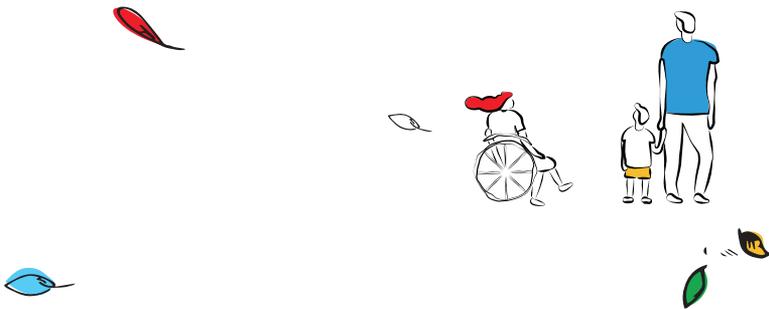
How will you honour the history and legacy of the Black community at Halifax North Memorial Public Library?

Since 1966, Halifax North Memorial Public Library has been a North End community hub and has been the home for many social justice movements.

This is more than an opportunity to renew a municipal building – it's a call to honour history, elevate lived experiences and create a more connected and equitable future for our community.

A Manager of Community Connections, Buranda Skinner, has been hired specifically for this project to capture your feedback at every stage, and help inform decisions like honouring history and reflection.

If you have ideas or suggestions, you can share them by emailing YourNorthBranch@HalifaxLibrary.ca, or visiting halifaxpubliclibraries.ca/YourNorthBranch to learn more.



halifaxpubliclibraries.ca/YourNorthBranch



Halifax Public Libraries



THIS IS HOME. LET'S BUILD IT TOGETHER.



How will the community be involved?

As we plan for renovations, your voice matters. This project will be guided by community input at every stage. We invite you to share your thoughts and help reimagine this important space together.

What happens with your input?

Here's how your ideas become action:

- 1. You share your ideas**, through surveys, conversations, and community events.
- 2. Designers turn your ideas into concepts**, inspired by what matters most to the North End community.
- 3. We bring designs back to you**, to share updates and get your feedback again before finalizing the plans.

What is the project timeline?

- 2025 / 2026**
Design and community engagement begins and will continue throughout
- 2027**
Construction is anticipated to begin
- 2029**
Anticipated construction completion

Stay connected

Scan the QR code to see project updates and future engagement opportunities.

Thank you for helping shape a library that reflects and celebrates the North End community.



halifaxpubliclibraries.ca/
YourNorthBranch



Halifax Public
Libraries



What makes Halifax North Memorial Public Library feel like home?



This space feels like home because...



[halifaxpubliclibraries.ca/
YourNorthBranch](http://halifaxpubliclibraries.ca/YourNorthBranch)



Halifax North
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What are your favourite places at the Library?



We want to know what spaces work well and where people feel most comfortable.

Add a **green sticker** where you spend most of your time.

Add a **blue sticker** where you feel most comfortable.

Add a **red sticker** for spaces that you think could be improved.



Adult area
Computer section



Adult area



Main Lobby



Auditorium



Plaza



Teen zone



Kids area



Kids area
Computer section



[halifaxpubliclibraries.ca/
YourNorthBranch](http://halifaxpubliclibraries.ca/YourNorthBranch)



Halifax North
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How much do you use the plaza in front of the Library today?

We want to know what exterior spaces work well and where people feel most comfortable.

Place a dot beside the best answer.



What do you like the most about the plaza?

What kinds of improvements would you like to see to the plaza?



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

Place a dot for your top 3 choices.

Use public computers

Book a room for a community meeting

Learn and practice English

Meet my neighbours

Attend a performance

Learn new skills

Play games and have fun

Bring my children

Attend community gatherings or events

Sit quietly

What else would you like to see?



What would you like to stay the same about the Library?



What would you like to see changed at the library?



halifaxpubliclibraries.ca/
YourNorthBranch



Halifax North
Memorial
Public Library

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How should the new Library feel?

We want the new space to reflect the spirit of the North End and feel welcoming to everyone.



[halifaxpubliclibraries.ca/
YourNorthBranch](http://halifaxpubliclibraries.ca/YourNorthBranch)



Halifax North
Memorial
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Connect with us

Members of the Library design and engagement team will be at North Branch to listen to your ideas and answer your questions.

November 24 - 29
9:00 AM - 5:00 PM



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YourNorthBranch](http://halifaxpubliclibraries.ca/YourNorthBranch)



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 Happy Cities