



Report to Committee of the Whole

From: Brian Masschaele, Director of Community and Cultural Services
Nicholas Loeb, Director of Legal Services

Date: April 22, 2025

Subject: Aymer Library Expansion - Lease and Space Needs Analysis

Recommendation(s):

THAT Elgin County Council hereby adopts the leasing and space needs analysis as criteria for the consideration of proposals to expand, relocate or construct premises for the Aymer Library as contained in the report titled "Aymer Library Expansion – Lease and Space Needs Analysis" from the Director of Community and Cultural Services and Director of Legal Services dated April 22, 2025; and

THAT a copy of this report be circulated to the Councils of the Town of Aymer and Township of Malahide and the Board of Directors of the East Elgin Community Complex.

Introduction:

This report provides County Council with a space needs and leasing analysis as future expansion opportunities are considered for the Aymer branch of the Elgin County Library. This analysis applies to any site within the Town of Aymer, including Council's current direction to proceed in principle with relocation to the East Elgin Community Complex (EECC).

Background and Discussion:

County Authority re: Library Location(s)

Elgin County has jurisdiction over the delivery of library services across its local municipalities. Elgin County is required to operate a branch of the library in each municipality that had a library branch when the County took over operations at the outset of the County library system, unless the County and the municipality agree otherwise.

Provided that the criteria is met that a library branch is located within the boundary of the applicable local municipality, the County has authority to decide where to locate its facility. The County does not require any consent or resolution from a local municipality

in order to construct, expand, relocate or enter into lease arrangements for a library branch.

As the entity that has jurisdiction over the delivery of library services, the County should decide on the location of its library branches having regard to optimizing its service delivery within the service levels established by County Council. A number of factors should be evaluated in coming to a decision.

The County is a Commercial Tenant of Old Town Hall, Aylmer

The relationship between the County library branch and the Old Town Hall in Aylmer is that of a commercial tenant and landlord. The tenancy is governed by a lease agreement that expires on December 31, 2027, unless the County exercises its renewal rights. Apart from its tenant rights and responsibilities that arise from the lease agreement, the County has no authority with regard to the Old Town Hall. The Old Town Hall is a Town of Aylmer facility. Should the tenancy of the County library branch come to an end, the decision of what to do with the leasehold premises currently occupied by the County, or the Old Town Hall more generally, rests solely with the Council of the Town of Aylmer.

As the County has identified that the current leasehold premises are deficient for its service delivery need, as further articulated in both this report and a report to Council of September 10, 2024, it is prudent for the County to undertake a process to evaluate potential alternative siting of the Aylmer branch prior to the expiration / potential authorization for renewal of the Old Town Hall lease.

Space Need(s) is a Critical Factor

Much of the discussion to date about space needs for the Aylmer branch has been focused on the optimal location, i.e. downtown versus locations outside of the downtown core, including at the East Elgin Community Complex. Across Elgin County, a local municipality's preferred location for a library is one of the factors that the County considers when selecting a branch location. The local municipality is in a good position to assess locations based on both local planning considerations and synergies that may be achieved with local municipal services. County Library branch locations have historically benefitted from alignment between the local municipality's preference for a branch location and the operational needs for the delivery of County Library services.

The County of Elgin is the service provider for branches of the Elgin County Library system. As such, it is critical that the County take the lead on ensuring space needs are addressed as part of any expansion, re-location or new build of a branch library in the system regardless of location so that service needs can be met. In this regard, County Council should establish space needs to guide the process for an expansion, relocation or new construction of the County's library branch premises. To date, the Town of Aylmer has not identified a preferred location for the Aylmer branch that meets the needs of the library system.

The following are service considerations and space needs that will be used in considering any future accommodation for the Aylmer branch, regardless of location.

This analysis is primarily based on *Guidelines for Rural/Urban Public Library Systems* as produced by the Administrators of Rural and Urban Public Libraries of Ontario (ARUPLO) in which Elgin County Library is a voting member. The 4th edition of these guidelines (June 2023) is available [here](#). This analysis utilizes the large branch category within the guidelines based on Aylmer's service catchment area of 15,738 residents (2023 figures) and specifically relies upon the "components approach" as outlined on pp. 15-16 of the document. This analysis also considers general planning guidelines, the Ontario Building Code and the *Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act* (AODA), 2005 and its associated regulations.

Aylmer Library Space Needs Analysis

Component	Minimum Range (square feet)
Collection space (based on 30,000 items)	4,200
Local history / cultural space	200
User seating	2,100
Public computers (8 currently)	280
Program room / area	750
Community meeting room	200
Study rooms (2)	400
Makerspace / Creative Commons	300
Circulation desk / customer service area	350
Staff work room	500
Storage	200
Supervisor office	150
Staff lunchroom	200
Staff washroom (barrier free)	150
Total assignable library space	9,980 square feet

Additional Considerations

Non-assignable space (eg. HVAC, janitorial space) @ 27%	2,700 square feet
Accessible public washrooms (based on maximum occupancy of 150): 1 Male, 1 Female, 1 Universal	400-650 square feet
Customer and staff parking spaces	20 to 75 spaces
Delivery area with ramp	Required
External signage with digital display	Required

Further Attributes For Consideration

Ability to Serve the Identified Catchment Area

The catchment area for the Aylmer Library was identified in the September 10, 2024 report as follows: The Town of Aylmer plus that portion of the Township of Malahide south of College Line (2023 population 15,738 residents). Consideration will be given regarding how well any proposed location can meet the service needs of the entire catchment area which can be described as a mixture of both small urban and rural residents. The requirement for parking availability is particularly important given that most residents served will need to drive to the branch.

The September 10th, 2024 report showed that the identified catchment area for Aylmer Library can justify a facility as large as 16,000 square feet according to the ARUPLO Guidelines. It is staff's recommendation that any assessment of available space for a future expansion of the Aylmer branch must at least meet the minimum threshold of 10,000 square feet of assignable library space as outlined under the large category of the ARUPLO Guidelines. Meeting this minimum threshold will address service needs for the foreseeable future. Proposals to exceed this minimum threshold can also be considered given the population serviced by the branch and future community growth projections.

Financial Considerations

Consideration will be given to the willingness and ability of any leasing partner to adopt the County's standard "Elgin County Library Municipal Library Lease" which is currently in place for all ten branches. Furthermore, and under the current leasing framework, any party interested in providing library premises must have the ability to make the space "library ready", meaning that any capital renovations will be at the cost of the owner and subject to the County's "Library Branch Construction Policy" as amended from time to time.

Public Consultation Results

The County is undertaking a public consultation process for potential re-location of the Aylmer Library to EECC which will take place throughout the month of May 2025. An analysis of this consultation process will be presented to County Council and the Councils of both the Town of Aylmer and Township of Malahide. Any proposal for the expansion, re-location or new build for the branch should be subject to a similar public consultation process, with similar reporting back to the respective councils.

Financial Implications:

Provision exists in the County's ten-year financial plan for an anticipated increase to lease payments for Aylmer Library expansion regardless of location. This amount currently stands at \$65,000 which is in addition to the \$55,181 already being paid to the Town for the current location. \$60,000 of additional funds would be required in the County budget to support a library in the vicinity of 10,000 square feet of assignable library space based on 2025 rates.

Advancement of the Strategic Plan:

Strategy #1 - Collaborative Engagement and Communication

Goal 1: This analysis strengthens relationships with local municipal partners, particularly the Town of Aylmer and Township of Malahide, by assisting in the assessment of any proposal to expand the Aylmer Library.

Strategy #5 – Community Well-being and Inclusivity

Goal 3: This framework lays the groundwork for future expansion of the Aylmer Library to increase utilization of the County's library system.

Local Municipal Partner Impact:

This analysis is being generated specifically to assess future expansion opportunities for the Aylmer Library. A similar approach can be taken with any municipal partner looking to relocate, expand or construct new library premises.

Communication Requirements:

Not applicable.

Conclusion:

The framework presented in this report gives County Council the ability to objectively assess any proposal to expand the Aylmer branch of the Elgin County Library system, regardless of location, based on how well the proposal meets library service needs. Space considerations amount to approximately 10,000 square feet of assignable library space at a minimum. Any future proposals to expand, relocate or construct new premises for Aylmer Library, regardless of location, can be objectively assessed relative to the components outlined in this report, including any future proposal received by the Board of Directors of the East Elgin Community Complex in response to County Council's direction to proceed in principle with relocation to that facility.

Meeting Aylmer Library's space needs through an actionable plan will become increasingly relevant as County Council considers the future renewal of the lease to accommodate the Aylmer branch with the Town of Aylmer which expires on December 31st, 2027. The current location at the Old Town Hall comprises 3,081 square feet of assignable space which is approximately 31% of the minimum identified space needs. Space needs must either be fully addressed, or be in the course of being fully addressed, before County Council contemplates the renewal of the lease for Aylmer Library for another five-year term. Any such proposal must be deemed feasible and actionable by County Council as soon as possible and well before the end of the current lease term.

This report also provides clarity regarding County Council's role in any decision to expand, relocate or construct premises for the Aylmer Library. County Council has

ultimate authority to enter into leasing arrangements for future accommodation of the branch and can do so with any party operating within the Town's limits for the term beginning January 1st, 2028 subject to the establishment of a leasing agreement with the County.

All of which is Respectfully Submitted

Approved for Submission

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