



# A Measured Space Expansion

The Next Step for Okotoks Public Library

Presented by Sarah Gillie, Director, Okotoks Public Library  
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For every \$1 invested in Canada's urban libraries, \$6 is generated in community economic impact, a return of over 600%

— Canadian Urban Libraries Council, 2023

# Community Need, Growth & Capacity

- Town of Okotoks' Social Needs Assessment & Strategy identifies priority needs:
  - Accessibility & inclusive services
  - Strengthening community connections
  - Growing in a way that supports everyone
- Public libraries are a primary delivery point for these priorities
- Town's Growth Strategy anticipates ~3% annual growth, reaching ~50,000 residents by 2034.
  - Growth expected to include more young families and school-aged children
- PLSB best-practice space planning indicates Okotoks Public Library should be ~33,868 sq. ft. today
  - Current space: ~25,000 sq. ft.
  - Does not account for future growth

# Literacy Matters

- 49% of adult Canadians do not reach Level 3 literacy (Level 3 is considered the minimum level needed to function effectively in society).
- Literacy challenges affect:
  - Employment and economic participation
  - Health outcomes
  - Civic engagement and community connection
- Public libraries play a critical role in literacy by providing:
  - Safe study and learning space for students
  - Access to reading materials across all income levels
  - Support for lifelong and adult learning
  - Early literacy programs for children

# What We're Asking For

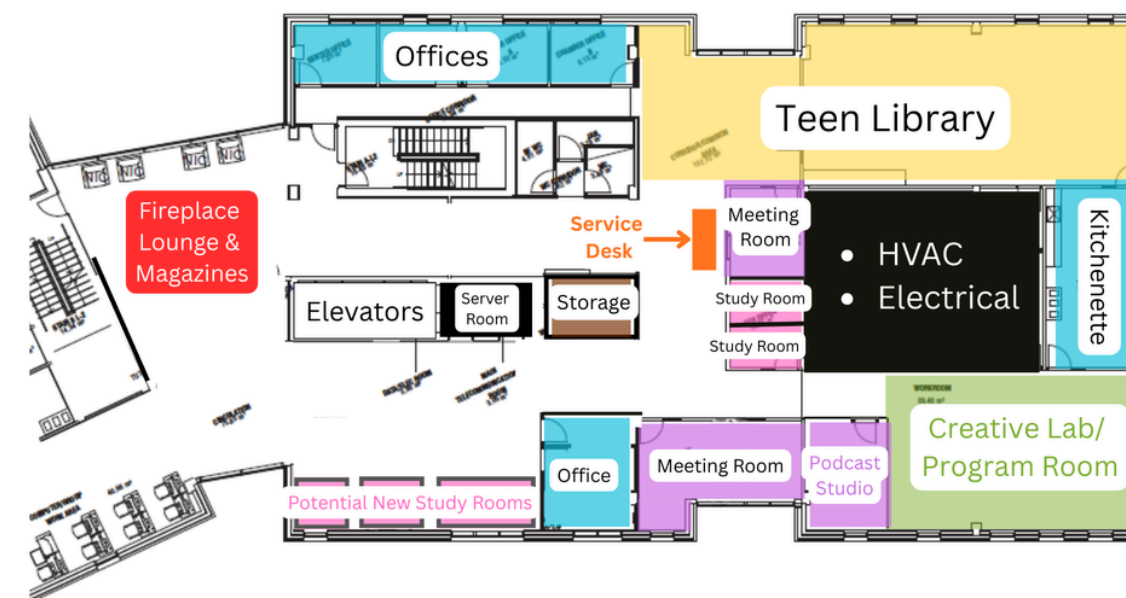
- Requesting approximately 1,600 sq. ft. of adjacent space within the existing building
- Minor construction required to connect the two areas
- Work can be completed with minimal disruption to library operations
- No change to hours of service or public access during construction

# Initial Use Plan

- Enclosed office space for members of the expanded leadership team
  - Current facility was not designed for growth in management staffing
  - Existing arrangements limit confidential conversations and effective supervision
- Additional rooms designated for flexible space (ie: study room, sensory room, meeting room)
- Program room may be rented for community use (limited revenue)

# How Space Evolves

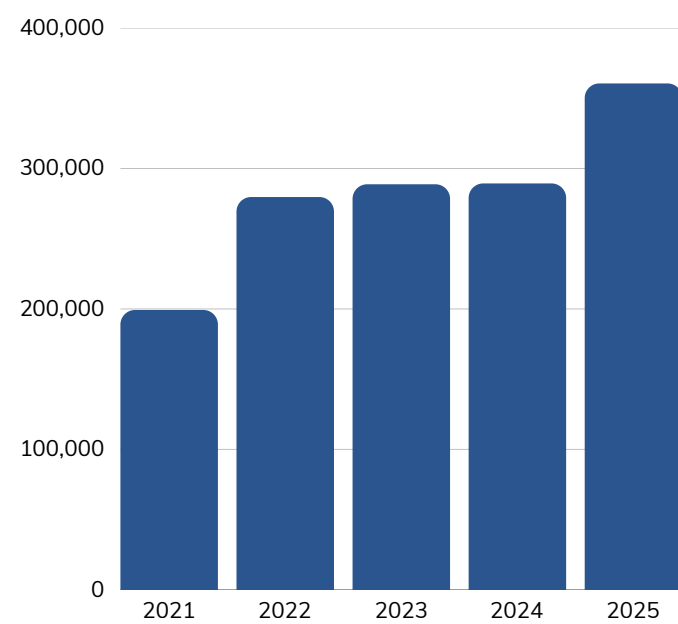
- This request is Phase One of a longer-term vision
- In 5–10 years, potential to expand further on the second floor
- Future possibilities may include:
  - Podcast / recording room
  - Expanded teen collection and space
  - Creative lab
- Any future expansion would be overseen by a Board-appointed ad hoc expansion committee
- No commitment today beyond the current 1,600 sq. ft.



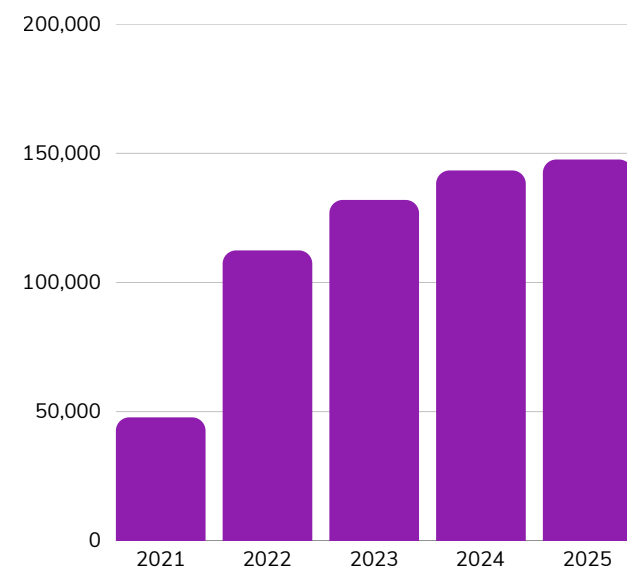
# Demand & Impact: Library Metrics

2025 Results:

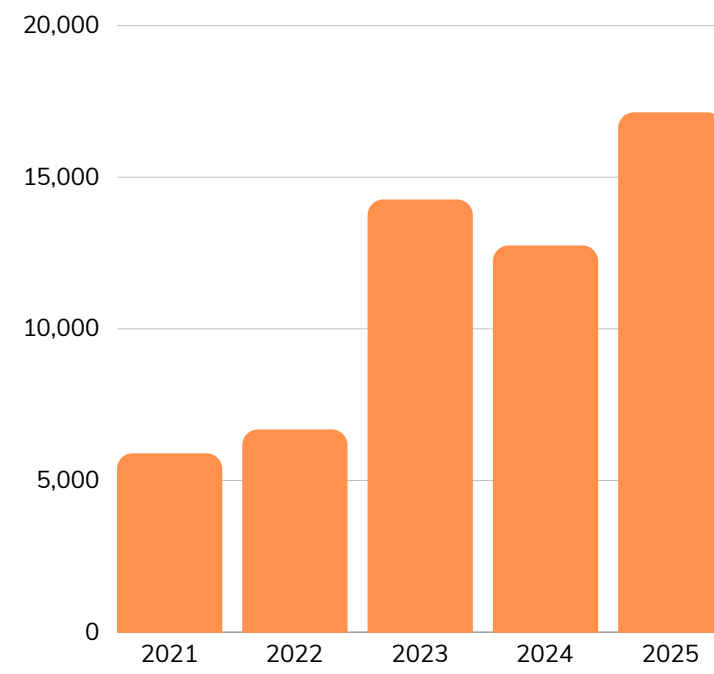
- 360,562 checkouts
- 147,601 visits
- 17,140 program attendees
- 11,651 public computer sessions



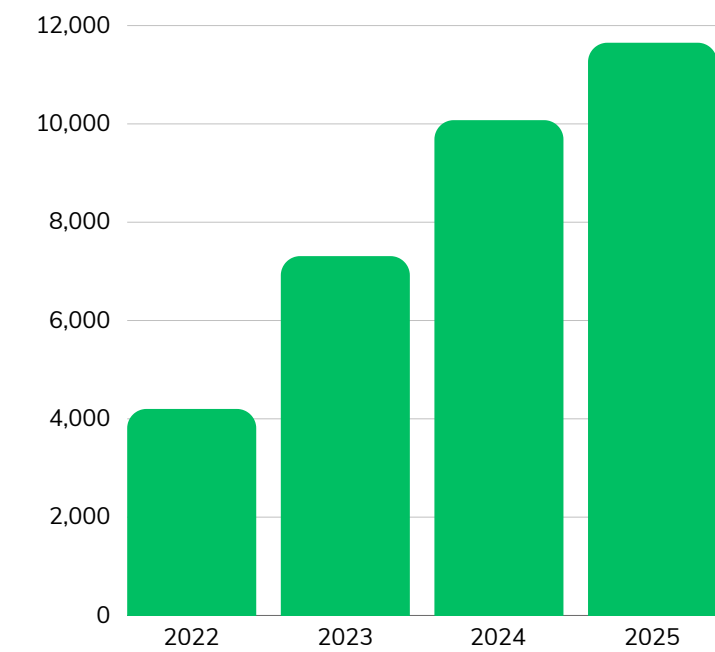
Checkouts



Visits



Program attendees



Public computers

# Measurable Use

- Study rooms will allow for higher utilization of space
- Program room provides flexible space and additional program capacity
- No increase in program staffing with this request
- Measurable indicators:
  - Study room use
  - Meeting / program room bookings

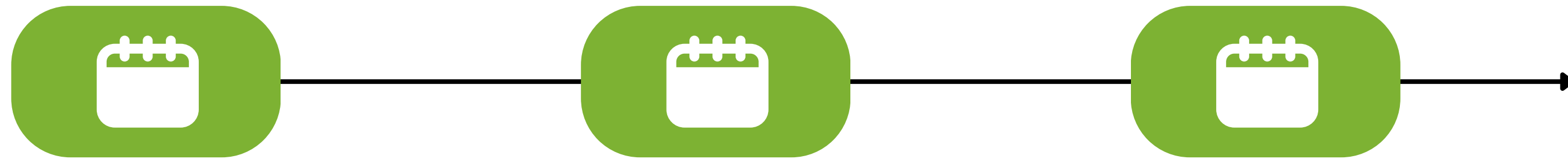
# Costs

- Additional space will increase annual rent by estimated \$14,515/yr
- This expansion does not change how the library is funded by the Town
- Town appropriation primarily offsets staff wages
- Other revenues fund rent, collections, programs, and administration
- Future year-over-year increases are expected to reflect wage competitiveness, not rent

# Alignment with Town Plans

- Social Needs Assessment & Strategy:
  - Accessibility & Inclusive Services
  - Strengthening Community Connections
  - Growing in a Way that Supports Everyone.
- Growth Strategy
  - identity-driven growth
  - complete communities
  - manage growth impacts with community infrastructure that scales.

# Phased Vision



## PHASE 1 (now)

- add ~1,600 sq ft (offices, study rooms, program/meeting space).

## PHASE 2 (3-5 years)

- evaluate space use; evolve use to meet community needs

## PHASE 3 (5-10 years)

- consider additional area if demand and building availability align (teen zone expansion; podcast; creative lab).

# Decision Requested & Accountability

- Council approval requested for lease of additional space.
- Library will track:
  - Study room usage
  - Program / meeting room bookings
- Board will monitor space effectiveness and report back as needed

# Resources

[Canadian Urban Libraries Council - The Impact of Canadian Public Libraries](#)

[Canadian Urban Libraries Council - OVERDUE: The Case for Canada's Public Libraries](#)

[ABC Life Literacy Canada - Literacy Overview](#)

[Government of Canada - Literacy, Numeracy and Adaptive Problem-Solving Skills of Canadians](#)

[CanLearn Society - Ten Things You Can Do to Support Literacy in Your Community](#)

[Innovating Canada - Literacy: The Key to Opportunity for Newcomers in Canada](#)

# Thank you

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